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Translated and Edited by Mary Gregor

Excerpt

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Critique
of
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Preface

Why this *Critique*^a is not entitled a *Critique of Pure Practical Reason* but simply a *Critique of Practical Reason* generally, although its parallelism with the speculative seems to require the first, is sufficiently explained in this treatise. It has merely to show *that there is pure practical reason*, and for this purpose it criticizes reason's entire *practical faculty*. If it succeeds in this it has no need to criticize the *pure faculty itself* in order to see whether reason is merely making a claim in which it presumptuously *oversteps* itself (as does happen with speculative reason). For, if as pure reason it is really practical, it proves its reality and that of its concepts by what it does^b and all subtle reasoning against the possibility of its being practical is futile.

With this faculty transcendental *freedom* is also established, taken indeed in that absolute sense in which speculative reason needed it, in its use of the concept of causality, in order to rescue itself from the antinomy into which it unavoidably falls when it wants to think the *unconditioned* in the series of causal connection; this concept, however, it could put forward only problematically, as not impossible to think, without assuring it objective reality, and only lest the supposed impossibility of what it must at least allow to be thinkable call its being into question and plunge it into an abyss of skepticism.

Now, the concept of freedom, insofar as its reality is proved by an apodictic law of practical reason, constitutes the *keystone* of the whole structure of a system of pure reason, even of speculative reason; and all other concepts (those of God and immortality), which as mere ideas remain without support in the latter, now attach themselves to this concept and with it and by means of it get stability and objective reality, that is, their *possibility* is *proved* by this: that freedom is real, for this idea reveals itself through the moral law.

But among all the ideas of speculative reason freedom is also the only one the possibility of which we *know* a priori, though without having insight^c into

^a *Kritik*. I have adopted the convention of using *Critique* when Kant seems to refer to a book or its content, even if the book does not have the title Kant uses, e.g., “the *Critique* of speculative reason.” Otherwise, “critique” or “critical examination” or occasionally “critical philosophy” is used.

^b *durch die Tat*, possibly “by a deed.” See AK 5:98 note r and 5:118 note n.

^c *einzusehen*. See note 9 to *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 4:446.

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it, because it is the condition* of the moral law, which we do know. The ideas of *God* and *immortality*, however, are not conditions of the moral law but only conditions of the necessary object of a will determined by this law, that is, of the mere practical use of our pure reason; hence with respect to those ideas we cannot affirm that we *cognize* and *have insight into* – I do not merely say the reality but even the possibility of them. But they are, nevertheless, conditions of applying the morally determined will to its object given to it a priori (the highest good). Consequently their possibility in this practical relation can and must be *assumed*, although we cannot theoretically cognize and have insight into them. For practical purposes it is sufficient for this assumption^e that they contain no intrinsic impossibility (contradiction). Here there is a ground of assent that is, in comparison with speculative reason, merely *subjective* but that is yet *objectively* valid for a reason equally pure but practical; by means of the concept of freedom objective reality is given to the ideas of God and immortality and a warrant,^f indeed a subjective necessity (a need of pure reason) is provided to assume them, although reason is not thereby extended in theoretical cognition and, instead, all that is given is that their possibility, which was hitherto only a *problem*, here becomes an *assertion* and so the practical use of reason is connected with the elements of the theoretical. And this need is not a hypothetical one for some *discretionary* purpose of speculation, where one must assume something if one *wants* to ascend to the completion of the use of reason in speculation, but rather a *need having the force of law*^g to assume something without which that cannot happen which one *ought* to set unflinchingly as the aim of one's conduct.

It would certainly be more satisfying to our speculative reason to solve those problems for itself without this circuit and to have put them aside as insight for practical use; but, as matters stand, our faculty of speculation is not so well off. Those who boast of such high cognition should not keep it back but should present it publicly to be tested and esteemed. They want to *prove*: very well, let them prove, and the critical philosophy lays all its weapons at their feet as the victors. *Quid statist Nolint. Atqui licet esse beatis.*^h Since they then do not in fact want to, presumably because they cannot, we must take up

* Lest anyone suppose that he finds an *inconsistency* when I now call freedom the condition of the moral law and afterwards, in the treatise, maintain that the moral law is the condition under which we can first *become aware* of freedom, I want only to remark^d that whereas freedom is indeed the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom. For, had not the moral law *already* been distinctly thought in our reason, we should never consider ourselves justified in *assuming* such a thing as freedom (even though it is not self-contradictory). But were there no freedom, the moral law would *not be encountered* at all in ourselves.

^d erinnern

^e Für die letztere Forderung

^f Or “authorization,” *Befugnis*

^g gesetzliches

^h In Horace *Satires* 1.1.19, a god, having given men the opportunity to change places with each other, says “What are you waiting for? They are not willing. Yet they might be happy.”

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these weapons again in order to seek in the moral use of reason and to base on it the concepts of *God*, *freedom*, and *immortality*, for the *possibility* of which speculation does not find sufficient guarantee.

Here, too, the enigma of the critical philosophy is first explained: how one can *deny* objective *reality* to the supersensible *use of the categories* in speculation and yet *grant* them this *reality* with respect to the objects of pure practical reason; for this must previously have seemed *inconsistent*, as long as such a practical use is known only by name. But now one becomes aware, by a thorough analysis of the latter, that the reality thought of here does not aim at any theoretical *determination of the categories* and extension of cognition to the supersensible but that what is meant by it is only that in this respect an *object* belongs to them, because they are either contained in the necessary determination of the will a priori or else are inseparably connected with the object of its determination; hence that inconsistency disappears because one makes a different use of those concepts than speculative reason requires. On the contrary, there is now disclosed a very satisfying confirmation of the speculative *Critique's consistent way of thinking* – 5:6 – one which was hardly to be expected before – inasmuch as it insisted on letting objects of experience as such, including even our own subject, hold only as *appearances* but at the same time on putting things in themselves at their basis and hence on not taking everything supersensible as a fiction and its concept as empty of content; now practical reason of itself, without any collusion with speculative reason, furnishes reality to a supersensible object of the category of causality, namely to *freedom* (although, as a practical concept, only for practical use), and hence establishes by means of a fact what could there only be *thought*. By this, the strange though incontestable assertion of the speculative *Critique*, that *even the thinking subject is in inner intuition a mere appearance to itself*, gets its full confirmation in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and that so thoroughly that one would have to arrive at it even if the former had never proved this proposition at all.*

By this I also understand why the most considerable objections to the *Critique* that have so far come to my attention turn about just these two points: namely, *on the one side* the objective reality of the categories applied to noumena, denied in theoretical cognition and affirmed in practical, and *on the other side* the paradoxical requirement to make oneself as subject of freedom a noumenon but at the same, with regard to nature, a phenomenon in one's own empirical consciousness; for, as long as one had as yet formed no determinate concepts of morality and freedom, one could not conjecture, on the one side, what one was to put as a noumenon at the basis of the alleged appearance and, on the other side, whether it was at all possible even to form a concept of

* The union of causality as freedom with causality as natural mechanism, the first of which is established by the moral law, the second by the law of nature, and indeed in one and the same subject, the human being, is impossible without representing him with regard to the first as a being in itself but with regard to the second as an appearance, the former in *pure*, the latter in *empirical* consciousness. Otherwise the contradiction of reason with itself is unavoidable.

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5:7 it, since all the concepts of the pure understanding in its theoretical use had already been assigned exclusively to mere appearances. Only a detailed *Critique of Practical Reason* can remove all this misinterpretation and put in a clear light the consistent way of thinking that constitutes its greatest merit.

So much by way of justifying [the fact] that in this work the concepts and principlesⁱ of pure speculative reason, which have already undergone their special critique, are now and again subjected to examination; although this would not elsewhere be appropriate to the systematic procedure for constructing a science (since matters that have been decided should only be referred to and not raised again), it was *here allowed* and indeed necessary because reason is considered in transition to a quite different use of those concepts from what it made of them *there*. Such a transition makes it necessary to compare the old use with the new, in order to distinguish well the new path from the previous one and at the same time to draw attention to their connection. Accordingly, considerations of this kind, including those that are once more directed to the concept of freedom, though in the practical use of pure reason, should not be regarded as interpolations which might serve only to fill up gaps in the critical system of speculative reason (for this is complete for its purpose), or as like the props and buttresses that are usually added afterwards to a hastily constructed building, but as true members that make the connection of the system plain, so that concepts which could there be represented only problematically can now be seen in their real presentation. This reminder is especially relevant to the concept of freedom, with regard to which one cannot help observing with surprise that so many boast of being quite well able to understand^j it and to explain its possibility while they consider it only in its psychological context, whereas if they had earlier pondered it carefully in its transcendental context they would have cognized its *indispensability* as a problematic concept in the complete use of speculative reason as well as its complete *incomprehensibility*;^k and if they afterwards proceeded with it to practical use, they would have had to arrive by themselves at the very same determination of it with respect to its principles that they are now so unwilling to agree to. The concept of freedom is the stumbling block for all *empiricists*, but also the key to the most
5:8 sublime practical principles for *critical* moralists, who thereby see that they must necessarily proceed *rationally*. For this reason I beg the reader not to pass lightly over what is said about this concept at the conclusion of the *Analytic*.

I must leave it to connoisseurs of a work of this kind to estimate whether such a system of pure practical reason as is here developed from the *Critique* of it has

ⁱ *Grundsätze*. Here again, as in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant draws no consistent distinction between *Grundsatz* and *Prinzip*. *Prinzip* is always, and *Grundsatz* often, translated as “principle.”

^j *einzusehen*

^k *Unbegreiflichkeit*

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cost much or little trouble, especially so as not to miss the right point of view from which the whole can be correctly traced out. It presupposes, indeed, the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, but only insofar as this constitutes preliminary acquaintance with the principle of duty and provides and justifies a determinate formula of it;* otherwise, it stands on its own. That the *complete classification*^l of all practical sciences was not added, such as the *Critique* of speculative reason carried out, has a valid ground in the constitution^m of this practical rational faculty itself. For, the special determination of duties as human duties, with a view to classifying them, is possible only after the subject of this determination (the human being) is cognized as he is really constituted, though only to the extent necessary with reference to duty generally; this, however, does not belong to a *Critique of Practical Reason* as such, which has only to give a complete account of the principles of its possibility, of its extent, and of its limits, without special reference to human nature. Here, accordingly, the classification belongs to the system of science, not to the system of critique.

In the second chapter of the *Analytic* I have, I hope, dealt adequately with the objection of a certain reviewer² of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, one who is devoted to truth and astute and therefore always worthy of respect: that *there the concept of the good was not established before the moral principle* (as, in his opinion, was necessary).[†] I have also taken into

* A reviewer¹ who wanted to say something censuring this work hit the mark better than he himself may have intended when he said that no new principle of morality is set forth in it but only a *new formula*. But who would even want to introduce a new principle of all morality and, as it were, first invent it? Just as if, before him, the world had been ignorant of what duty is or in thorough-going error about it. But whoever knows what a *formula* means to a mathematician, which determines quite precisely what is to be done to solve a problem and does not let him miss it, will not take a formula that does this with respect to all duty in general as something that is insignificant and can be dispensed with.

^l *Einteilung*
^m *Beschaffenheit*

[†] The further objection could have been put to me, why have I not previously explicated the concept of the *faculty of desire* or of the *feeling of pleasure*, although this reproach would be unfair because this explication as given in psychology could reasonably be presupposed. However, the definition there could admittedly be so framed that the feeling of pleasure would ground the determination of the faculty of desire (as is in fact commonly done), and thus the supreme principle of practical philosophy would necessarily turn out to be *empirical*, although this has to be settled first and in the present *Critique* is altogether refuted. I will, therefore, give this explication here in the way it must be given in order, as is reasonable, to leave this contested point undecided at the beginning – *Life* is the faculty of a being to act in accordance with laws of the faculty of desire. The *faculty of desire* is a being's *faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations*. *Pleasure* is the *representation of the agreement of an object or of an action with the subjective conditions of life*, i.e., with the faculty of the *causality of a representation with respect to the reality of its object* (or with respect to the determination of the powers of the subject to action in order to produce the object). For the purposes of this *Critique* I have no further need of concepts borrowed from psychology; the *Critique* itself supplies the rest. It is easily seen that the question whether pleasure must always be put at the basis of the faculty of desire or whether under certain conditions pleasure only follows upon its

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consideration many other objections that have reached me from men who show that they have at heart the discovery of truth, and I shall continue to do so (for, those who have only their old system before their eyes and who have already settled what is to be approved or disapproved do not desire any discussion that might stand in the way of their private purpose).

When it is a matter of determining a particular faculty of the human soul as to its sources, its contents, and its limits, then, from the nature of human cognition, one can begin only with the *parts*, with an accurate and complete presentation of them (complete as far as is possible in the present situation of such elements as we have already acquired). But there is a second thing to be attended to, which is more philosophic and *architectonic*: namely, to grasp correctly the *idea of the whole* and from this idea to see all those parts in their mutual relation by means of their derivation from the concept of that whole in a pure rational faculty. This examination and guarantee is possible only through the most intimate acquaintance with the system; and those who find the first inquiry too irksome and hence do not think it worth their trouble to attain such an acquaintance cannot reach the second stage, namely the overview, which is a synthetic return to what had previously been given analytically; and it is no wonder that they find inconsistencies everywhere, although the gaps they suppose they find are not in the system itself but only in their own incoherent train of thought.

I have no fear, with respect to this treatise, of the reproach that I want to introduce a *new language*, because here the kind of cognition itself approaches popularity. This reproach with respect to the first *Critique* could also not have occurred to anyone who had thought it through and not merely turned over the pages. To invent new words where the language already has no lack of expressions for given concepts is a childish effort to distinguish oneself from the crowd, if not by new and true thoughts yet by new patches on an old garment. If, therefore, the readers of that work know of more popular expressions that are still just as suitable to the thought as the ones I used seem to me, or if they think they can show the nullity of these thoughts themselves and so too of the expressions signifying them, they would by the first very much oblige me, for I only desire to be understood; but with respect to the second, they would deserve well of philosophy. However, as long as

determination, is left undecided by this exposition; for it is composed only of marks belonging to the pure understanding, i.e., categories, which contain nothing empirical. Such a precaution – namely, not to anticipate one's judgments by definitions ventured before complete analysis of the concept, which is often achieved very late – is to be highly recommended throughout philosophy, and yet is often neglected. It may be observed throughout the course of the critical philosophy (of theoretical as well as practical reason) that many opportunities are presented to make up for defects in the old dogmatic procedure of philosophy and to correct errors that are not noticed until one makes such a use of concepts of reason as is directed to the whole.

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these thoughts stand, I very much doubt that expressions suitable for them 5:11
 and yet more common can be found.*

In this way the a priori principles of two faculties of the mind, the faculty 5:12
 of cognition and that of desire, would be found and determined as to the
 conditions, extent, and boundaries of their use, and a firm basis would thereby
 be laid for a scientific system of philosophy, both theoretical and practical.

Nothing worse could happen to these labors than that someone should
 make the unexpected discovery that there is and can be no a priori cognition
 at all.³ But there is no danger of this. It would be tantamount to someone's
 wanting to prove by reason that there is no reason. For, we say that we cognize
 something by reason only when we are aware that we could have known it
 even if it had not presented itself to us as it did in experience; hence rational
 cognition and cognition a priori are one and the same. It is an outright
 contradiction to want to extract necessity from an empirical proposition (*ex*
pumice aquam)ⁿ and to give a judgment, along with necessity, true universality
 (without which there is no rational inference and so not even inference from
 analogy, which is at least a presumed universality and objective necessity and
 therefore presupposes it). To substitute subjective necessity, that is, custom,

* Here I am less worried (about that unintelligibility) than about occasional misinterpretation with respect to some expressions that I have sought out with the greatest care in order that the concepts to which they point may not be missed. Thus, in the table of categories of *practical* reason under the heading Modality, the *permitted* and the *forbidden* (the practically objectively possible and impossible), have almost the same sense in the common use of language as the immediately following categories, *duty* and *contrary to duty*; here, however, the *first* mean that which harmonizes or conflicts with a merely *possible* practical precept (as, say, the solution of all problems of geometry and mechanics), the *second*, that which is similarly related to a law *actually* present in reason as such; and this distinction in meaning is not altogether foreign even to the common use of language, although it is somewhat unusual. Thus, for example, it is *forbidden* to an orator, as such, to forge new words or constructions; this is to some extent *permitted* to a poet; in neither case is there any thought of duty. For if anyone is willing to forfeit his reputation as an orator, no one can prevent him. We have here to do only with the distinction of *imperatives* under *problematic*, *assertoric*, and *apodictic* determining grounds. So too, in the note where I compared the moral ideas of practical perfection in different philosophic schools, I distinguished the idea of *wisdom* from that of *holiness*, although I explained them as identical in their ground and objectively. In that place, however, I understood by wisdom only that wisdom to which the human being (the Stoic) lays claim, and thus took it *subjectively*, as an attribute ascribed to the human being. (Perhaps the expression *virtue*, which the Stoic also made much of, could better indicate what is characteristic of his school.) But the expression, a *postulate* of pure practical reason, could most of all occasion misinterpretation if confused with the meaning that postulates of pure mathematics have, which bring with them apodictic certainty. The latter, however, postulate the *possibility of an action*, the object of which has been previously theoretically cognized a priori with complete certitude as *possible*. But the former postulate the possibility of an *object* itself (God and the immortality of the soul) from apodictic *practical* laws, and therefore only on behalf of a practical reason, so that this certainty of the postulated possibility is not at all theoretical, hence also not apodictic, i.e., it is not a necessity cognized with respect to the object but is, instead, an assumption necessary with respect to the subject's observance of its objective but practical laws, hence merely a necessary hypothesis. I could find no better expression for this subjective but nevertheless unconditional rational necessity.

ⁿ "water from a pumice stone" (Plautus, *The Persians* 1.1.42)

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for objective necessity, which is to be found only in a priori judgments, is to deny to reason the ability to judge an object, that is, to cognize it and what belongs to it; it is to deny, for example, that when something often or always follows upon a certain prior state one could *infer* it from that (for this would mean objective necessity and the concept of an a priori connection) and to say only that we may expect similar cases (just as animals do), that is, to reject the concept of cause fundamentally as false and a mere delusion of thought. As for wanting to remedy this lack of objective and hence universal validity by saying that one sees no ground for attributing to other rational beings a different way of representing things:^o if that yielded a valid inference then our ignorance would render us greater service in enlarging our cognition than all our reflection. For, merely because of our not knowing rational beings other than human beings, we would have a right to assume them to be constituted just as we cognize ourselves to be, that is, we would really know them. I do not even mention here that universality of assent does not prove the objective validity of a judgment (i.e., its validity as cognition) but only that, even if universal assent should happen to be correct, it could still not yield a proof of agreement with the object; on the contrary, only objective validity constitutes the ground of a necessary universal agreement.

Hume would be quite content with this system of universal empiricism of principles; for, as is well known, he asked nothing more than that a merely subjective meaning of necessity, namely custom, be assumed in place of any objective meaning of necessity in the concept of cause, so as to deny to reason any judgment about God, freedom, and immortality: and, if once his principles were granted, he certainly knew very well how to draw conclusions from them with all logical validity. But Hume himself did not make empiricism so universal as to include mathematics.⁴ He held its propositions to be analytic, and if this were correct they would in fact be apodictic also: but from this no inference could be drawn to reason's ability to make apodictic judgments in philosophy as well, namely judgments that would be synthetic (as the proposition of causality is). However, if one assumes a *universal* empiricism of principles, then mathematics will be included.

Now, if mathematics comes into conflict with a reason that admits only empirical principles, as inevitably happens in the antinomy where mathematics proves incontestably the infinite divisibility of space, which empiricism cannot allow, then the greatest possible evidence of demonstration is in manifest contradiction with the alleged inferences from empirical principles, and one has to ask, like Cheselden's blind man, "Which deceives me, sight or touch?"⁵ (For empiricism is based on a necessity *felt*, but rationalism on a necessity *seen*.)^p And thus universal empiricism reveals itself as genuine skepticism, which

^o *Vorstellungsart*^p *eingesehenen*