

# Proposal

## Oxford Guide to Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*

### *Aims*

Immanuel Kant defended his central ideas in three works, the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, 1787), the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). Kant's first *Critique* articulated his view about the nature and limits of metaphysics, or what can be known by reason alone, independently of experience. His second *Critique* by contrast, set out and defended his view of reason's power to affect the world and grounded morality in the freedom of rational agency to do so. The third *Critique* addressed the power of judgment in aesthetic and teleological thought and related the first *Critique's* reason as knower of the world to the second *Critique's* reason as agent in that world. The first *Critique* has by far gotten the most attention and has led to a wealth of commentaries and introductory guides. By contrast, while there is a literature on the second *Critique*, it has had only a single English language commentary, Lewis White Beck's *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (1960). Beck's commentary of course did not have the benefit of recent scholarship and work on practical reason. Moreover, it was written in a way that is appropriate primarily for Kant scholars. The recent surge of interest in Kant's ethical thought, and especially in his views on the nature of practical reason highlights the fact that there exists no contemporary guide to provide an overview and contemporary context to the second *Critique*. I am aware of no other books of the sort I am proposing that are on the market.

I aim to remedy this lack. I wish to produce a guide to the second *Critique* suitable to be a part of the Oxford series of guidebooks. The presentation would be an overview aimed at advanced students of philosophy, particularly those interested in ethical theory and practical rationality. I am well aware of the challenges this presents. As Beck himself put it, "attempts at simplification" of Kant's works "have usually produced only faint and distorted echoes of Kant's meaning" and only succeed "by making his views seem silly". There is, however, also the risk of not being helpful. In my view, a weakness in some work on Kant's views is that in its quest to be true to the text, it fails to sufficiently escape his insular argot. The result is that Kant scholar profitably talks to Kant scholar, but outsiders can only look on in bafflement. To be sure, as Beck himself noted, Kant's writing style in the second *Critique* presents less of a challenge to the reader than many of Kant's other works. However, someone needs to present the arguments and positions in a way that facilitates the reader's comprehension of the text. In navigating these potential difficulties, I aim to err on the side of being helpful. I also aim to avoid another risk of historical work, that of too much enthusiasm for discovering and displaying insights on some obscure bit of text that drowns out awareness of the author's errors and obscurities. One kind of collateral damage this can produce is failing to validate the reader's own—perhaps not unjustified—puzzled reaction to that text.

The text will be aimed at mid- to upper-level undergraduate courses as well as graduate courses. It will also be of interest to professionals working in ethics with particular interests in virtue and/or Kant. I think there will be interest outside of the U.S. as well, obviously Europe where there is a great deal of interest in Kant's ethics. I myself have learned from Chinese and Indian students studying in the US that there is increasing interest in Kant's ethics in China and India.

I expect the text to be between 75,000 and 90,000 words. I think a reasonable estimate of when I could complete a draft of this manuscript would be January 2023. I will have time to get the manuscript underway this year.

### *Author*

I am Professor of Philosophy at the University of Missouri. I am author of a number of articles on a range of topics in Kant's ethics and in ethical theory generally, and an OUP book in Kant's ethics *Self-Improvement: an Essay in Kantian Ethics*. I am also the author of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry "Kant's Moral Philosophy" (now with a co-author, Adam Cureton). I have co-edited two collections from OUP, one with Michael Smith *Passions and Projections: Themes from the Philosophy of Simon Blackburn*, and another with Mark Timmons, *Reason, Value and Respect: Kantian Themes from the Philosophy Thomas E. Hill, jr.*

### *Overview*

In what follows I present a working structure of the contents, including a sketch of what will be in each chapter. Although there will be opportunities to present my own views in the finished text, I do not intend to produce an overly "opinionated" guide. Rather, where appropriate, I aim to briefly canvass in accessible terms the diversity of approaches and uses of elements of Kant's work, and indicate some significant secondary readings to which the reader can turn to investigate the questions further themselves. That said, a strong interest of mine in this project is that it would provide me the opportunity to present my own ideas about the individual passages and secondary literature as part of an organic whole.

To that end, my proposal is to go section by section to help the reader understand the content, as well as its significance, both in terms of the entire work as well as contemporary issues. Naturally, some of the sections will require a much fuller treatment than others in light of their influence on subsequent philosophical thinking.

## **I. Background of the *Critique of Practical Reason***

This first part would provide a general foundation on which to understand the second *Critique*. An initial section would include a brief intellectual biography of Kant and his milieu and overview of his ethical theory, as well as an explanation of why Kant took the time to address the topic.

A second section would briefly summarize arguments and claims from the first *Critique* and the *Groundwork* that are relevant to Kant's project. Among the most important would be a review of the first *Critique's* treatment of the Third Antinomy (which make room for the possibility of free causes); the *Groundwork's* discussion of practical reasoning within the framework of hypothetical and categorical imperatives; and *Groundwork III's* arguments that the fundamental principle of morality is the law of an autonomous will.

A third section would discuss Kant's rationale for producing the *Critique of Practical Reason*. The discussion would be built primarily around material in its *Preface* and *Introduction*. The critical treatment of reason in its practical mode is structured in the same way as it is in the critical treatment of reason in its theoretical uses, though in a way that attempts to note the differences in how reason operates when it is not concerned with guiding us in what to believe, but in what to do. Of particular importance here would be an explanation of what Kant means by the terms "pure reason", "pure speculative reason", "practical reason", "pure practical reason" and

“empirical practical reason”. In my view, much of the difficulty in reading and understanding the text can be reduced by avoiding where possible Kant’s terminology, and bringing it in only if it is essential to understanding his arguments and ideas.

A fourth section would explain the relevance of two developments that come after the second *Critique*. First, I will briefly explain the rationale for his important distinction between two facets of the will: *Willkür* or willing something as in “choosing” it, as opposed to *Wille*, or willing something as in “prescribing” it (universally and necessarily for Kant). Second, it will be important for readers to understand Kant’s notion of a *disposition* of the will or *Gesinnung* and how Kant conceives of its role in our practical reasoning. While Kant’s account of these developments is subsequent to, the ideas are arguably implicit in many of his arguments in the second *Critique*, and are certainly important for comprehending the views he is arguing for.

I will then explain Kant’s rationale for the overall structure of the second *Critique*. I will do this here instead of discussing in the order Kant did, namely, at the end of the *Analytic* in the “Critical Elucidation of the Analytic of Pure Practical Reason”.

### ***Part one. Doctrine of the elements of pure practical reason.***

The 2<sup>nd</sup> *Critique* is unevenly divided between two parts. Almost the entirety of Kant’s main theses and arguments are contained within the first part, the “Doctrine of the elements”. The second part is dubbed the “Methodology” of pure practical reason. It is primarily meant to show how, given the views about what practical reason is and how it operates, it nevertheless can be and is developed in moral education.

“Part one” contains the bulk of the most important of Kant’s views and arguments concerning practical reason, and so I will spend the most time on it.

### ***Book one. The analytic of pure practical reason***

This section will focus on the topics raised and discussed in this “Book one”, the “analytic” of pure practical reason. These topics I believe are of most interest to contemporary philosophy. This part is divided into three Chapters: “On the Principles of Pure Practical Reason”, “On the Concept of and Object of Pure Practical Reason”, and “On the Incentives of Pure Practical Reason”. This division and order tells us something about Kant’s conception of practical reason: Establishing and explaining of principles of practical rationality must come first. Only against the background of principles of reasoning can we then address questions regarding the objects of reasoning so construed. And, having the principles and object of practical reasoning in hand, we can next turn to the question of what sort of incentives are needed for agency operating on the basis of such principles with such objects.

My overall focus in this part will be to highlight Kant’s “principle-based” conception of practical reasoning. My aim will be to distinguish this from other conceptions. In particular, many contemporary conceptions of practical reasoning are “reasons-based”, in which practical reasoning consists of taking notice of and weighing reasons for or against actions. There are a range of such views of reasons, from Humean ‘desire-based’ reasons to objective value-based reasons. All contain important elements that are incompatible with Kant’s principle-based conception. My aim is to highlight the distinctiveness of his view, both in contrast to reasons-based theories on the one hand, and other principle-based theories (such as Hobbes’ or Locke’s) on the other. The foundation of that distinctiveness is, perhaps unsurprisingly, Kant’s wanting to make room for the possibility of autonomous practical reasoning, or principled reasoning about action that is not tied to the satisfaction of desire nor to objective edicts (e.g., Divine) or values.

Despite the fact that Kant's view of practical reasoning is principle-based, as I present it, this is nevertheless compatible with the practice of justifying what we do by citing the 'reason' we did it, and how we might have considered reasons for and against what we did before acting, weighing reasons and so forth. The compatibility, as I hope my exposition of Kant's theory will show, has to do with the fact that these sorts of considerations are themselves *dependent* on principle-based reasoning. As such, reasons are not foundational to practical reasoning as are practical principles.

## **Chapter I. On the Principles of Pure Practical Reason**

This first Chapter begins with 8 numbered sections consisting of a "Definition", four "Theorems", two "Problems" and one section entitled "Fundamental Law of Pure Practical Reason". All but two of these sections are in turn separated into a primary exposition and "Remark" containing a discussion. "Theorem II" and "Fundamental Law" contain "Corollaries" which discuss implications of the primary exposition. Following the last of these numbered sections are the two final parts of the Chapter, "I. On the Deduction of the Principles of Pure Practical Reason" and "II. On the Warrant of Pure Reason in its Practical Use to an Extension Which is not Possible to it in its Speculative Use." I propose to use each of these sections as titled breaks in my text, to allow readers to easily locate the section they are reading and the commentary on that section.

The overall focus of discussion will be on five main elements of Kant's treatment. The first is the nature and role of principles, rules and 'maxims' in practical reasoning. The second is the moral law as a so-called 'fact of reason' and its relation to freedom of the will and moral obligation. The third focus will bring to bear the work of Henry Allison on what he dubs the 'reciprocity thesis' or the mutually reciprocal nature of the moral law and freedom of the will. Fourth, although Kant in this work denies that any 'deduction' of the moral law is required (it being a fact of reason), I will spend some time discussing what a deduction could be with regard to the use of reason in practical matters. Obviously Kant's reference to a deduction is intimately tied up with his work on the deduction of the pure categories of the understanding in the first *Critique*. What will be of interest here is highlighting what would distinguish a deduction in the second *Critique* from that of the first, and the problems that it presents. Fifth, I will explain how all of these aspects of Kant's discussion of practical principles factor into the important role autonomy plays in his moral theory. Finally, while Kant curbs the justifiable reach of pure *a priori* reasoning in its theoretical uses, he argues that there no such restriction in practical reasoning. I will end with a discussion of the significance of this view, especially with regard to skeptical doubts about the power of reason to be practical.

## **Chapter II. On the concept of an object of pure practical reason**

The second Chapter of the *Analytic* turns from the prior exposition of the principles of practical reasoning to the object of such reasoning so characterized. There are a variety of important ideas here, but what will structure my discussion will be the apparent priority Kant gives to the principles of right over the good. The result is a now familiar deontological picture of moral reasoning. Such reasoning does not proceed from a conception of the good to principles of reasoning, but the other way around. Here it will be particularly important to discuss non-deontological conceptions of moral reasoning some (for instance, Barbara Herman, Allen Wood and Paul Guyer) argue is compatible with Kant's account. At least on its face, what the text suggests is the following picture: The concepts of the objects of practical reasoning, good and evil, are, at least formally speaking, constructed from the principles of reasoning that he has just finished discussing. The cartoon of this is, for instance, that the concept of what is good is the concept of 'whatever it is we aim at when we conform our actions to rational principles of action'.

The account however, is much more subtle, for instance, involving the distinction between, on the one side concepts of what is good as in *pleasant* or perhaps *good for me* versus *unpleasant* or *bad for me*, and on the other side what is good as *opposed to evil*. This culminates in a ‘table of categories’ parallel to the categories that are the subject of the Transcendental Deduction in the first *Critique*. These are, more simply, the kinds of objects that practical principles have.

## **OF THE TYPIC OF PURE PRACTICAL JUDGMENT**

Given Kant’s principle-based account of practical reasoning, his insistence on the priority of the principles over the objects of practical reasoning, and that the fundamental principle is an *a priori* principle of pure reason, it is a difficult question how practical reason is supposed to be deployed. That is, moral principles and the concepts of good and evil must be applied to possible actions in circumstances in order for reason to be practical. This requires the use of judgment. This issue is parallel to that of applying concepts in theoretical reasoning that the first *Critique* takes up in the “Schematism”. The latter explains this by appealing to an imaginative construction. In the second *Critique* it involves what Kant dubs a ‘typic’ that brings together, one might say, the descriptive and the normative, or what is and what ought to be. That typic is the moral law conceived of as a moral realm. This idea is familiar from the *Groundwork* formulations of the Categorical Imperative, the idea of conceiving of one’s maxim as a universal law of nature, and, further, as the joint will of a realm of ends in themselves. One of the insights this part of the second *Critique* thus provides is into the function of these formulations from the *Groundwork* within Kant’s conception of practical reasoning. The role these formulations play in moral practical reasoning is in many ways parallel to the role a schema is supposed to play in theoretical reasoning.

Kant’s accounts both in the first and second *Critiques* of the schematism and the typic are notoriously obscure, and I won’t weigh in on the many controversies. Instead, I aim to explain the main differences between applying concepts and principles in practical as opposed to theoretical reasoning in Kant’s account, and to highlight how these differences figure into the distinctiveness of his view. In practical reasoning, the principles and concepts to be applied are normative, not descriptive as is the case in theoretical reasoning. As such, they do not come from the things to which they are applied. Further, practical reasoning presupposes the use of judgment in theoretical reasoning, since the principles and concepts apply to actions that are presented as possible by that theoretical reasoning.

### **Chapter III. On the incentives of pure practical reason**

Having developed a conception of the principles and concepts of practical reasoning, as well as the way in which these can be applied, what is left is to explain how a will such as ours can operate on the basis of such principles and concepts. My aim is to frame this problem in the context of how, on the Kantian conception of this, practical reasoning based on principles and not based on a conception of the good, can be rational. This is ultimately the critical question of whether Kant’s account is a deontological rather than teleological conception of practical reason.

Part of the scene-setting of this account is as I see it to note the sea-change that Hobbes’s views represented. “Every man,” as he famously held “for his own part, calleth that which pleaseth and is delightful to himself GOOD” (*Elements* I, vii, 3). This represents in essence a radical reversal in the conception of practical reasoning. In overly simple terms, ‘good’ is explained as ‘whatever is the object of pleasure, delight, or (in a word) desire’. This account, of course, is one that Kant would reject, but not because of the radical reversal in the explanation of the good. Rather, Kant rejects the idea that it is *desire* that explains goodness. This, however,

leaves a profound puzzle: If the good is a consequence of, rather than a cause of, the will, but the will is not conceived of in terms of desire as it is in Hobbes, what could play that role in Kant's views? How, in other words, can principles of practical reasoning themselves ground rational planning and choice if they themselves may not be generated by what we desire?

The challenge here for Kant is that a Hobbesian picture is simple and elegant. There are a range of options available to Kant, all of which are problematic. I will take time to explain the choice points for those who would fill in details of these options in conformity with Kant's arguments here.

## **CRITICAL ELUCIDATION OF THE ANALYTIC OF PURE PRACTICAL REASON**

Kant gives an overview of the structure of his work in relation to the first *Critique* primarily here, and there is reason to think this is appropriate. Many readers are put off by his structure, and so here he gives a rationale for that structure beyond its being simply a clunky framework inherited from the latter work. Often Kant's division of topics and terminology is cited as evidence that he treated the structure of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a procrustean bed into which he unhelpfully crammed his ideas. Whatever truth there is to this notion, there is a reasonable alternative explanation for the similar structure, namely, that the second Critique was an extension of the project in the first. In this section, Kant discusses the structure of the work in the context of a discussion of reason in its theoretical and practical uses. Moreover, Kant embraces the unity of reason, and this section provides much of his reasoning for just this thesis. The structure of the work reflects Kant's understanding of reason as a unified faculty.

### **Book two. *Dialectic of pure practical reason***

This section will contain my explanations of Kant's views about some important features of reason in its practical uses as opposed to its uses in theoretical reasoning. The topics in Book two that I will focus on are 1) what a 'dialectic' is in theoretical reasoning and its need of a 'skeptical method'; 2) the apparent lack of such a need because of the nature of practical reasoning; 3) the nature and role of the 'highest good' in practical reasoning, contrasting this with other conceptions of the highest good (such as Aristotle's); 4) what a 'postulate' of practical as opposed to theoretical reasoning is; 5) Kant's treatment of the postulates of freedom, immortality and the existence of God and to what extent this can be treated as a 'pragmatic' argument for these three things; and 6) the meaning and significance of the primacy of practical reasoning over theoretical reasoning.

### **Chapter I. On the dialectic of pure practical reason in general**

A 'dialectic', in Kant-speak, is a kind of 'logic of illusion' that characterizes *a priori* reasoning in the absence of experience when reason's need for an 'unconditioned' condition leads to substantive conclusions. *A priori* reasoning in such a case plays tricks on the reasoner because it is not kept within the bounds of possible experiences. In the first *Critique*, this is connected to what Kant calls a 'skeptical method'. *A priori* reasoning poses certain contradictory claims ('antinomies') the truth of which would require us to extend our knowledge beyond any possible experience—for instance, that the world must have and yet cannot have a 'first cause' or that the will is free but also must be wholly determined by prior causes. The skeptical method argues these to a stalemate, dispelling the illusion that reason can produce such knowledge.

Because practical reasoning is reasoning, and, moreover, *pure* practical reason is *a priori*, it too seeks an unconditioned condition. However, practical reasoning does not produce theoretical cognition. It produces, rather, action (although in some places, such as the *Jäsche Logic*, Kant

speaks of a kind of ‘practical’ cognition). As such, it is not in danger of producing the sort of illusion Kant thought plagued pure theoretical reasoning. Instead, the unconditioned condition that it seeks is the *highest good*. Kant in many ways accepts the classical doctrine that this is the ultimate object of practical reason. Kant warns the reader, however, that his theory forbids the highest good from playing the role of a ground for moral action. That is supposed to be reserved for the moral law, which is supposed to be conceived of as purely *formal*.

## **Chapter II. On the dialectic of pure reason in determining the concept of the highest good.**

Kant of course holds that the highest good is happiness together with *virtue* (understood as *worthiness to be happy*), the former in strict proportion to the latter. In this section, I will explain the features of Kant’s conception of happiness and note reasons for thinking he had more than one such conception (a maximum amount of pleasure versus a systematic integration of ends over one’s entire life). Then I will explain Kant’s discussion of the ‘ancient’ doctrines of the highest good, in Stoicism and Epicureanism and their views that happiness is either identical with or produced by virtue, both of which Kant rejects. I will also provide a brief discussion of views about ‘the meaning of life’ and what relationship such views might have to Kant’s highest good. This then provides the backdrop of the problem: How is the total object of pure practical reasoning, happiness in proportion to virtue, even possible? I will discuss the significance of it’s not being possible and what kind of threat Kant thought this posed.

### **I. THE ANTINOMY OF PRACTICAL REASON.**

I will briefly here discuss the cogency of Kant’s argument that there is, in fact, an antinomy of practical reason that needs resolution. His thinking is very roughly this: The identity of happiness and virtue would be an *analytic* connection between the two, which Kant rejects. But a *synthetic* connection between the two means either the pursuit of happiness produces virtue, or virtue produces happiness. Neither is acceptable to Kant, thus resulting in the ‘antinomy’ of practical reason. The highest end must then be illusory. It is worth considering how, if cogent, this might actually affect the rationality of morality.

### **II. CRITICAL RESOLUTION OF THE ANTINOMY OF PRACTICAL REASON**

Kant wants to draw the reader’s attention to a supposed parallel with the resolution of antinomies in theoretical reasoning. The resolution of these antinomies involves the doctrine of transcendental idealism that every event can be regarded both as *appearance* and as *noumenon*, causally determined when regarded the former way, but an uncaused cause in the latter way.

Kant proposes to resolve the antinomy of practical reason by noting that while the idea that happiness could be the ground of virtue is *absolutely* false, the idea that virtue produces happiness is only *conditionally* false. Again, an agent can be regarded as *appearance* or as *noumenon*, and insofar as they are regarded as an *appearance* it is false that virtue produces happiness, as *noumenon*, the moral law can be the ground of our actions. And while that will not produce our happiness insofar as we are regarded as appearances, it would be possible through the intervention of “the author of the natural order”.

The bulk of my discussion here will be focused on whether this is indeed an ‘antinomy’ as Kant thought, to explain Kant’s discussion of the mistake of Epicureanism in making pleasure the motive of virtue, the role of consciousness of one’s own virtue in one’s happiness and the expectation of it, and to explain the nature and role of ‘respect’ for the moral law as the ground of virtue and the feelings connected with this.

### **III. ON THE PRIMACY OF PURE PRACTICAL REASON IN ITS CONNECTION WITH SPECULATIVE REASON**

In this section, I explain what Kant might mean by the ‘primacy’ of practical reason over theoretical reason. Since Kant conceives of this as the primacy of the practical *interest* of reason over the theoretical *interest*, this requires an explanation of what an ‘interest’ of reason is in these circumstances. It also requires a clear exposition of the ways in which these two vocations of reason interact as they are pursued. Kant’s striking thesis in this section is that if certain propositions ‘belong inseparably’ to the practical interest of reasoning, theoretical reason must ‘accept’ them, even if theoretical reasoning itself cannot establish their truth. Practical reasoning is not supposed to be a faculty that produces theoretical ‘cognitions’. So, I will take some time to explore the meaning and significance of Kant’s view that when there is an *a priori* ‘union’ between theoretical and practical reason in one ‘cognition’, practical reason has ‘primacy’. This ‘union’ is what each of the ‘postulates’, or indemonstrable propositions, of pure practical reason represent. Rational willing, in other words, requires believing certain things, most fundamentally, that achieving the highest good is possible.

### **IV. THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL AS A POSTULATE OF PURE PRACTICAL REASON**

Kant’s arguments in the sections on the postulates are some of his clearest, and yet it is important to take care in explaining what they might have meant. They are often portrayed as ‘practical’ or ‘moral’ arguments for freedom, immortality and the existence of God, but there is considerable room to explore to what extent these postulates, not being theoretical cognitions, amount to beliefs. The proposition that the soul is immortal is supposed to be required by the endless task of making oneself worthy of happiness. If being worthy of happiness is possible, then so must the endless task be. Endless tasks require endless existence, and the latter is the sense in which Kant understands ‘immortality’, and this raises issues worth discussing about whether immortality so conceived is really a presupposition of the possibility of the highest good.

### **V. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AS A POSTULATE OF PURE PRACTICAL REASON**

This section is the most discussed part of the *Dialectic*, so I will explain and discuss the variety of views commentators have about it. First, however, it will be important to review his refutation of the ontological argument from the first *Critique* and discuss in general his views about belief in the existence of God outside of this argument. The centrality of freedom of the will to Kant’s moral views gives it a more critical status than the existence of God. Nevertheless, while *belief* in God, like freedom, cannot be justified from a theoretical perspective, the proposition that there is a God, again like freedom, is supposed to be vital to the rationality of morality. I will discuss whether this is so or not and in what sense, and the role that the proposition that there is a God is supposed to play in the rationality of morality.

Other themes in this section will come from examining some elements of Kant’s discussion of Christianity, not necessarily as a religious doctrine but as a representation of what practical rationality requires as a conception of the highest good and its attainment. Among these elements taken up in the later *Religion* are the ‘fallen’ character of rational agents such as ourselves, a divine realm in which nature and morals are harmonious rather than operating independently of each other, moral requirements seen as divine commands, holiness and beatitude.

## **VI. ON THE POSTULATES OF PURE PRACTICAL REASON IN GENERAL**

In the *Groundwork*, Kant argues that because a rational agent cannot act except ‘under the Idea’ of freedom, for all practical purposes they are free. In this and the next section there is some further developments of this argument to include the idea that cognition can be extended by the demands of practical reason, again only for practical purposes. The postulates are the extensions of cognition, ‘unified’ in the ‘practical concept’ of the highest good. Here, I will discuss what Kant might be thinking in holding that these postulates ‘extend cognition’ yet themselves do not give us any theoretical cognition of the nature of the soul, free will or God. Briefly, does he mean to say that morality consists of acting ‘as if’ we have freedom, and so on? Are these the necessary presuppositions of morality making sense? Can we ‘presuppose’ something without believing it in the sense of having a theoretical (in Kant’s sense) cognition of it? I will discuss these ideas further to help the reader get a foothold on Kant’s position here.

## **VII. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO THINK OF AN EXTENSION OF PURE REASON FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES WITHOUT THEREBY ALSO EXTENDING ITS COGNITION AS SPECULATIVE?**

Kant’s central idea is that moral agency makes the highest good a *rationally necessary* end. Since that in turn presupposes the possibility of God, freedom and immortality, in having the highest good as an end, one thereby presupposes these three things. How Kant means this to be taken requires some explanation. One way of taking it is this: Since the highest good is necessarily a rational agent’s end (insofar as they are rational), and the postulates are necessary for the possibility of the highest good, a rational agent actually *believes* these three postulates ‘for all practical purposes’ and is justified in believing them. However, for any other purposes (primarily theoretical) they are not justified in believing them. Or perhaps, instead, Kant thinks a practical cognition is less than full blown belief, something such as ‘acceptance’, that is presupposed by having this end. He does explicitly refer to “Fürwahrhalten” or holding true these things as a need of pure reason. Is ‘holding’ something to be true something short of just *believing* it to be true in a theoretical sense? Finally, these three postulates are for Kant ‘ideas of reason’, so I will include an explanation this concept, as well as how some readers have glossed ‘acting under the Idea’ of freedom, God and immortality.

A large portion of this section is concerns theology, and Kant continues discussions he began in the first *Critique* of the failures of the ontological, teleological and cosmological arguments. I will briefly rehearse those arguments and then turn to a final consideration of Kant’s moral or ‘practical’ argument for the existence of God.

## **VIII. ON ASSENT [FÜRWAHRHALTEN] FROM A NEED OF PURE REASON**

In this section, I discuss the striking position Kant lays out here that the postulates are a ‘need of reason’ arising from an ‘absolutely necessary point of view’, and not merely permissible conjectures or hypotheses. Kant refers to the ‘need’ of pure reason operating differently in its theoretical as opposed to its practical aspects. The latter need leads to a moral, and therefore necessary, demand that we aim at the highest good and hence the postulates. The former, leads only to an explanatory hypothesis about an ultimate cause in nature, and that cannot be represented as more than a merely reasonable opinion that cannot be proven. Kant contrasts the need of practical reason to hold as true the existence of God, freedom and the immortality of the soul with mere wishful thinking that is grounded in non-rational desires and interests. It is, he claims, the only case in which an interest permissibly determines our judgment because it is an unavoidable need of our own reason. These postulates, then, are what Kant dubs ‘pure practical

rational beliefs' that reason demands, but they are nevertheless not beliefs that we are 'commanded' to have. Kant claims that we have choice about the way we think these things are possible. I discuss what it might mean to choose different ways of harmonizing the natural world with the achievement of the highest good.

## **IX. ON THE WISE ADAPTATION OF THE HUMAN BEING'S COGNITIVE FACULTIES TO HIS PRACTICAL VOCATION**

### ***Part two. Doctrine of the methodology of pure practical reason***

#### ***Conclusion***

For Part two, what I propose to do is to develop and extend my forever forthcoming discussion of "The Methodology of Pure Practical Reason" in *The Kantian Mind*, S. Baiasu and M. Timmons, eds., (Routledge). In it, I discuss how Kant thinks laws, rules or principles that do not appeal to any natural human interest "secure access to the human mind", especially if this is what is required for our actions to have genuine moral worth and for our wills to be good. How, in concrete terms, could an autonomous principle motivate? Among other things, I discuss the use Kant makes of an example in which a moral teacher describes to a ten-year-old someone of whom morality demands everything of them. In that moment, their autonomy is revealed to them, and presumably to the ten-year-old. I compare this with the more well-known example earlier in the second *Critique* of a man tempted to commit adultery who if he thinks 'I can't help myself' would be shown his autonomy first by imagining gallows to be the immediate consequence, and then noticing that he could face those same gallows if he does not lie as demanded by some royalty.

#### **Guide to Terminology**

#### **Bibliography**

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