

KANT ON VIRTUE

Seeking the Ideal in Human Conditions

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THE early Latin and Greek terms for virtue, Kant notes, originally meant courage, strength, and valor in the face of a strong but evil enemy.¹ The symbol for virtue was thought to be Hercules, who bravely subdued all vice in the form of the hydra.² Kant returns to this ancient understanding of virtue by defining it as a kind of strength and resoluteness of will to resist and overcome obstacles that oppose fulfilling our moral duties.³ The obstacles on which Kant focuses are the tendencies we have to indulge our natural desires, impulses, and inclinations when they tempt us to act in ways that conflict with moral demands.⁴ Although we may speak of many virtues (corresponding to different kinds of duty), there is only one true virtue, which is the wholehearted commitment and effective capacity to fulfill our moral duties out of respect for the moral law, despite our tendencies to indulge our opposing natural desires.⁵

Moral laws, on Kant's view, are objective, unconditional, and necessary principles of reason. Principles of *right* concern external acts that can be coercively enforced by others. Principles of *ethics* concern the ends and maxims that we ought to adopt even though we cannot be forced by others to do so. Among Kant's ethical principles are specific duties of beneficence, respect, and gratitude, as well as prohibitions on suicide, lying, and servility. Also we must comply with all moral requirements simply because they are demands of authoritative moral laws.⁶ These juridical and ethical principles are ways of interpreting and applying the Categorical Imperative to human conditions.⁷

Human beings, according to Kant, are subject to natural and rational motivations that often conflict with one another, but he also thinks we have a free power of choice, which is susceptible to competing natural and rational desires but not necessarily determined by any of them.⁸ All rationally competent persons inevitably recognize moral principles as authoritative, but each individual must decide whether to fulfill or to violate them.⁹ Moral *duties* and *imperatives*, in Kant's view, are principles of morality addressed to rational agents who are disposed to comply with them but who can also choose to indulge their opposing inclinations instead.¹⁰ Kant thinks that human persons

are always reluctant to break the moral law, even when we nonetheless choose to do so, because we experience our rational desires as constraints that oppose our natural inclinations; yet he also thinks that our natural inclinations often make us reluctant to follow the moral law as well when, as often happens, they oppose our doing so.¹¹

We can exercise our power of choice by adopting and revising policies, commitments, and principles for how we resolve to conduct ourselves. These resolutions, according to Kant, can be regarded as something like promises we make to ourselves.¹² We also have the power, in Kant's view, to decide on particular occasions whether or not to execute or live up to the principles and policies that we have settled on.¹³ A human person with a *good will* has adopted a commitment to morality and has made it her most basic life-governing standard.¹⁴ A fully *virtuous* person not only has a good will, but also maintains and executes this policy on every occasion, despite temptations she may have to the contrary.¹⁵ Our natural desires, according to Kant, can interfere with both aspects of moral perfection, that of having a good will and of being virtuous. They can lead us to question and alter our basic moral commitments in the service of other ends or principles that we favor, thereby leading us to abandon our good will. And our natural desires can dissuade us from living up to the moral commitments we have adopted for ourselves, thereby exposing our moral weakness or lack of virtue.

Kant claims that it is impossible for human beings to eliminate our natural desires and our tendencies to indulge them in immoral ways, so even virtuous people will at times be tempted to alter or violate their moral commitments.¹⁶ He also argues that the best that human beings can hope for is continual and unending progress toward virtue that "can never settle down in peace and quiet with its maxims adopted once and for all."¹⁷ Although virtue can never be fully achieved in this life by our own efforts, Kant claims that we have reason to strive for it and hope that achieving perfect virtue is nevertheless possible in ways that we cannot comprehend.¹⁸

In Kant's works on pedagogy and practical anthropology, he describes some of the empirical conditions that he thinks will help to prepare children for virtue. Children, Kant claims, are born with a moral predisposition or "germ" that parents and teachers must help to nurture and develop.¹⁹ Initially, children must be subjected to discipline that sets constraints on their "lawless freedom," but once they reach the age of reason, children must be taught to "make good use of [their] freedom."²⁰ A child's natural desires for honor and love can be used as "aids to morality" while the child's latent notion of dignity should be made "perceptible" to her.²¹ The Socratic method should also be used to elicit a "dry and earnest representation of duty" from the child, to help her refine her powers of moral judgment, to lead her to admire those who display a firm and steady resolve to do their duty from duty, and to bring out an awareness and exaltation of her ability to master her inclinations and to govern herself by reason.²²

Once a person has reached the stage in which her rational capacities are sufficiently developed that her actions can be fully imputed to her, she is then under a self-regarding and imperfect duty to continue developing her own moral powers.²³ Scrutinizing our motives and principles, listening to our conscience, practicing virtuous acts, and keeping the basic moral law before our minds can all help us to strive for moral perfection.²⁴

But, in Kant's view, there are no specific steps or empirical conditions that can guarantee progress toward moral perfection because this is ultimately a matter of freely adopting, maintaining, and executing a basic commitment to morality.²⁵

I. THE PLACE OF FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS IN A VIRTUOUS LIFE

Although Kant held that feelings and emotions are often obstacles to clear thinking and good moral decision-making, he claimed that some feelings are simply aspects of all moral experience, and others should be cultivated aids in our efforts to avoid wrongdoing and to promote moral ends. Kant's position is complex and often misunderstood.

Consider, first, the context of moral decision-making. Here Kant calls attention to the fact that our passions often cloud our judgments and seduce us away from what we know is the right path. Some emotions, such as malicious envy, are bad in themselves, but even inherently good or innocent feelings, such as affection for a friend, can on occasion tempt us to neglect our moral responsibilities. Few would deny these elementary observations, but Kant's explanation points to a deeper philosophical controversy about the nature of moral judgment and motivation. What enables us to tell the difference between right and wrong? And why does the distinction matter to us? Kant argues that particular moral judgments are ultimately based on principles of practical reason, not on human sentiments. In making particular moral judgments, of course, we need to try to understand the empirical facts of the case at hand. As philosophers, in using the basic moral principles (as expressed in the Categorical Imperative) to articulate and defend more specific (mid-level) principles for recurring human conditions, we need also to take into account general anthropological facts about human nature. Facts about feelings and emotions can be relevant as data at both stages. The aim is to determine what we ought to do, that is, what we imperfectly rational agents have compelling moral reason to do. Kant argued that common morality presupposes that we can make judgments from this moral point of view and that insofar as we are rational agents, we can act on the basis of these judgments. When our strong passions distort our judgment and prompt us to abandon our good will, this is not (as Hume famously argued) because violent passions overwhelm the "calm passions" aligned with morality. Rather, we allow our emotions to cloud our rational judgment, and we choose to follow our feelings rather than reason.

Consider now the contexts of moral assessment and aspiration. To assess whether a person was virtuous or whether her particular act had "moral worth," we would need to know what motivated the person, and Kant repeatedly warns that we can never know for certain what maxims a person was acting on. Nevertheless, Kant thought that the *ideas* of virtue and morally worthy actions can prod our consciences and inspire us to respect the priority of morality over self-love. The primary question in ethics for each person

is “What ought *I* to do?” The question arises from a first-personal perspective, focused on one’s alternatives for choice now and for the future, rather than on third-personal judgments of praiseworthiness or blameworthiness for past acts or character. From the agent’s first-personal perspective, the *ideas* of perfect virtue and morally worthy acts can inspire us toward moral improvement, even though our progress cannot be measured. In Kant’s view, we must rely on reason, not sentiment, to determine what we ought to do now, what we ought to resolve for the future, and what sort of persons we should try to become. The rational ideas of perfect virtue and morally worthy action can help to guide our judgments and constrain our acts independently of how we are disposed to feel. Our feelings and emotions, though potentially relevant, do not provide the answer to the primary ethical question.

More positively, what role do feelings and emotions play in a moral life? First, Kant held that the feeling of respect for the moral law is an experiential expression of our inescapable recognition of moral requirements. The feeling is the product, not the cause, of our moral consciousness. A feeling of respect for the moral law, as we might say, is concept-dependent because it cannot be understood apart from its reference to an authoritative standard. Other moral feelings, such as guilt, shame, and the satisfaction of having done one’s duty, are similar in these respects. Second, Kant notes that positive feelings of caring for others can counteract contrary inclinations, and so such affectionate feelings should be cultivated as an aid in our efforts to avoid wrongdoing. Finally, the healthy feelings and emotions, when morally constrained, are integral to human happiness, and, Kant argues, we have an imperfect duty to adopt the happiness of others as an end, as well as a permission and an indirect duty to pursue our own happiness. Even when we act well in other respects, if we do so grumpily, wallow in self-pity, or indulge our needless fears, malicious envy, or bitter resentments, we will inevitably diminish others’ happiness as well as our own.

II. THE PLACE OF THE MOTIVE OF DUTY IN A VIRTUOUS LIFE

In Kant’s view, *law* makes demands on what we do and enforces these demands (for example, by threats of punishment), but for the most part law is not concerned with why we conform to its demands.²⁶ State laws, for example, can require citizens to pay taxes but not that they do so eagerly, lovingly, or from duty. The fundamental aim of a just legal system is not to make citizens virtuous, but rather to affirm and secure citizens’ equal freedom to act without wrongful interference from others. *Ethics*, in contrast, requires not only that we behave in the right way, but also that we do so for the right reasons. We have an indirect ethical duty to conform to legal duties, but we have direct “duties of virtue” to adopt two fundamental ends: one’s own perfection and the happiness of others. The ethical duties are not merely to behave in ways that in fact promote these ends, but

also to make it a principle (or maxim) to promote them. Moreover, we must make this our principle because it is right (i.e. out of respect for moral law), not simply because it makes us happy or promotes our personal ends. If we are fortunate, adopting “the ends that are duties” may contribute to our happiness and encourage others to help us in our own personal projects, but for a virtuous person the fact that adopting and pursuing these ends is morally obligatory is a sufficient reason by itself to do so. We must strive to develop and improve in virtue, which is understood as an effective capacity to promote these ends and avoid all wrongdoing “from duty.”²⁷

Understandably, readers are puzzled and sometimes repelled by Kant’s frequent references to doing one’s duty *from duty*, and so it is important to separate several different claims that might be thought to be involved. Consider the extreme claim that (1) we ought always to be thinking explicitly of *the moral law* and moved by that thought whenever we conform to duty. If acting from duty means being moved at that time by an explicit thought of some formula of the Categorical Imperative, then (1) is an unrealistic demand and arguably we should not even try to fulfill it. Consider, for example, negative duties. We are constantly *conforming* to negative duties whenever we do not engage in fraud, murder, and rape. Decent people avoid these crimes routinely and without needing to think explicitly of the Categorical Imperative or any other abstract foundational principle. Normally the question of whether or not to do these things does not arise, and if it did, decent people would not be tempted. They stand ready to refuse any proposal to use these as means even to good ends because they see these acts as wrong. If pressed, they might struggle to articulate the basic reasons in the way that would satisfy philosophers, but even if they could not do so, they would nonetheless understand and deeply care that fraud, murder, and rape are morally wrong. Similarly, when good people conform to a positive duty, such as helping a friend or teaching a favorite class, they do not (and probably cannot) always have a formula of *the moral law* explicitly in mind. Normally they help friends and fulfill their contracts gladly without explicit thought of abstract principles, even though they understand that they are doing something obligatory.

Suppose, then, that we need not always be thinking explicitly of a formulation of the moral law when we fulfill our duties. A more limited thesis that may be closer to Kant’s intentions would be (2) that in conforming to duty, a perfectly virtuous person always would, and so ideally we should, recognize and be moved by the thought that our conformity is morally obligatory.²⁸ This does not require having an explicit formulation of the moral law in mind. To think that an act is a *duty* is to think that whether or not one happens to be inclined to fulfill it, there are good and sufficient moral reasons to do so, but we can (and ordinarily do) think this without having ready a full explanation that refers back to the moral law as the ultimate ground of all moral judgments. So (2) seems more tenable than (1), but (2) is still at odds with common opinion for many cases. Intuitively, when we conform to duty, sometimes we should be consciously thinking of duty and sometimes not. For example, as a conscientious juror deciding how to vote, one should keep in mind a juror’s moral duty to make a fair and informed decision, but as a parent giving loving care to one’s children, normally not thinking of duty at the time does not show that one is deficient in virtue.

he can uncover the standard of morally worthy action implicit in this common moral idea, but he acknowledges that this method does not establish or prove the validity of the supreme principle. Here, in effect, Kant appeals to the common *idea of a morally good person* in order to reach a principle (the Categorical Imperative) that, among other things, can guide moral decision-making, but in Kant's view the standard is implicit in the idea, rather than drawn from actual examples. Later, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant holds out the idea of a *person of perfect virtue* as exemplifying the kind of person that we should aspire to be, even though life is at best an endless attempt to improve in virtue, and we have no measure of our progress.⁴⁶ Here the idea of a perfectly virtuous human being serves not only to inspire us, but also to guide insofar as it represents an instantiation of the formal aim of morality—always to do one's duty from duty. Kant also writes of the "idea" and "ideal" of "humanity" as representations of human capacities and their perfection, not as a list of properties, but ideas of them as combined in an individual.⁴⁷

These ideas of a good will, perfect virtue, and humanity are not empirical concepts, abstracted from our experience with actual human beings, but ideas of reason by which we judge how we ought to think and act.

IV. THE PLACE OF COMMUNITY IN A VIRTUOUS LIFE

What is the role of communities in a moral life? Kant's ideas about the moral and non-moral value of communities are quite rich and nuanced. Communities of various kinds, according to Kant, are both the greatest obstacles, as well as the best means, to approaching perfect virtue. This is often missed by critics who object that Kant denied or downplayed the value of community and the essential role that communities of various kinds play in giving shape and meaning to our lives and in developing our moral capacities and other worthwhile traits and skills.⁴⁸

Human beings, according to Kant, have a variety of sociable desires and inclinations that tend to lead us to value close personal relationships, community ties, and joint-projects, which for many of us are inextricably bound with our conceptions of happiness and meaning in life.⁴⁹ Yet Kant thinks that human nature also includes many unsociable desires and inclinations that are destructive to personal relationships, communities, and societies.⁵⁰ Our unsociable inclinations have a tendency to destabilize personal relationships and community bonds.⁵¹ And, as we shall see, Kant regards our unsociable propensities as significant impediments to moral progress.

Kant thought that associations and communities of various types are morally good as effective and in some cases as essential means to the development and full realization of our rational capacities.⁵²

First, when we are in associations, we tend to develop and exercise taste, which is the faculty to make judgments of beauty on the basis of disinterested pleasures that can be

communicated and shared by all. As this faculty develops, a person tends to have less concern for an object of his crude and vehement inclinations if he cannot “feel his satisfaction in it in community with others.”⁵³ This sort of training, which calls on our higher powers of imagination and understanding, helps us to develop our capacity to freely choose our own ends by reducing “the tyranny of sensible tendencies,” and it paves the way for morality by preparing “humans for a sovereignty in which reason alone shall have power.”⁵⁴

Second, certain communities, associations, and societies tend to help people to develop the natural talents and abilities that allow them to pursue whatever ends they may freely choose. Such groups often provide opportunities for experimentation, practice, and instruction, which are necessary for human beings to perfect our natural abilities over many generations.⁵⁵

Third, there is one sort of community that Kant thinks is absolutely essential for us to become truly virtuous, namely an ethical commonwealth. The most challenging obstacles we face to achieving moral perfection are, according to Kant, other human beings, and in particular the ways they tend to enliven our unsociable inclinations when we are in association with them.⁵⁶ Even if someone, by his own efforts, managed to achieve some degree of virtue, “he would still be held in incessant danger of relapsing into” an immoral character because his moral predispositions are “incessantly attacked by the evil which is found in him and in every other as well.”⁵⁷ To the best of our knowledge, Kant thinks, the only way human beings can counteract these dangers is by establishing an ethical commonwealth, which is “an enduring and ever expanding society, solely designed for the preservation of morality by counteracting evil with united forces.”⁵⁸ Everyone has a duty to establish or join an ethical community because the only way for people of good will to come close to moral perfection is “a union of such persons into a whole toward that very end”;⁵⁹ that is, human beings must come together in an ethical community in order to create the circumstances in which we can approach perfect virtue and maintain the virtue we have achieved.

In an ethical community, people are united by public laws of virtue that cannot be externally coerced by other people because they require the adoption of maxims and ends.⁶⁰ We must therefore figuratively suppose that someone else exercises constraint in an ethical community by representing it as a sort of religious family under divine laws.⁶¹ In order for us to develop actual ethical communities that approach this ideal, human beings need to establish traditions, rituals, and institutions that bind them together against their unsociable inclinations.⁶²

V. THE ROLE OF MORAL RULES IN A VIRTUOUS LIFE

Although in Kant’s ethics nothing is more important than cultivating and living in accordance with virtue, his theory is often mistakenly taken to be a paradigm of a “law

conception of ethics,” one that is exclusively concerned with overriding duties and obligations, that provides a comprehensive system of impartial, exceptionless, and universally applicable moral principles, and that gives an algorithmic decision-making procedure that anyone can use for generating and applying those rules.⁶³

Undeniably, Kant aimed to find or construct a framework for making objective moral judgments that is rooted in our nature as rational beings and that enables everyone to reach free and reasoned agreement in our moral judgments on the basis of mutually recognized principles and evidence. Across his ethical writings, he describes a complicated moral structure that consists of various levels, distinctions, and application procedures. Rather than applying the Categorical Imperative directly to everyday contexts, Kant claims that “principles of application” are needed “to *show* in [human nature] what can be inferred from universal moral principles.”⁶⁴ The two most basic principles of application, which are supposed to express different aspects of the Categorical Imperative as it applies to human beings in the natural world, are the Universal Principle of Right and the Supreme Principle of the Doctrine of Virtue.⁶⁵ These principles in turn generate more specific duties of right, as well as duties of ethics and virtue.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, Kant shares some of the concerns that virtue ethicists have raised about the proper role of moral principles in a virtuous life. In Kant’s system, moral principles vary in how precisely they specify the actions that are required or forbidden. Although narrow and perfect duties require or forbid very specific actions, wide and imperfect duties leave significant latitude in deciding how to fulfill them.⁶⁷ For example, Kant thinks the duty not to lie is narrow and perfect because it precisely defines a kind of action we may not perform, while the duty of beneficence is wide and imperfect because it requires us to set the happiness of others as one of our ends without specifying exactly how much help and assistance we must provide. Kant is also skeptical of pedantry and purism with regard to the fulfillment of wide duties, which should not be treated as if they were narrow duties.⁶⁸ He chastises the “fantastically virtuous” who allow “*nothing to be morally indifferent*” and who “turn the government of virtue into tyranny.”⁶⁹ Kant wants to avoid the “tyranny of popular mores,” he cautions against a “mania for spying on the morals of others,” and he argues that many moral principles cannot be coercively enforced by others because they govern our internal commitments, goals, and aspirations.⁷⁰

Moral principles and duties, according to Kant, establish a general, multi-faceted, and limited framework of thought for agents who must rely on their powers of deliberation, judgment, and conscience to determine what they ought to do in concrete cases.⁷¹ We are morally required to develop these moral powers, gather relevant facts, understand what duties are at stake in given cases, take due care in our deliberations, and scrutinize our own motives.⁷²

Kant emphasizes that *ethical duties* are “of wide obligation.”⁷³ Principles that require us to set ends or adopt ideals do not specify exactly what we must do with regard to them. And for those moral principles that require the adoption of maxims, “one can always ask for yet another principle for applying this maxim to cases that may arise,” so judgment is needed to determine how to satisfy such principles.⁷⁴ Kant’s discussions

of ethical duties of both kinds often emphasize the ways that certain ends, ideals, and maxims are indeterminate, epistemically inaccessible, or characterized by thick moral concepts.⁷⁵

The *duties of right* that Kant presents, by contrast, do seem to invite the charges of rigorism that virtue ethicists aim to avoid. The Universal Principle of Right, Kant says, aims for “mathematical exactitude” in specifying reciprocal relations of equal freedom under universal laws.⁷⁶ Kant argues, however, that there is significant room for indeterminacy and disagreement in judgments of right or wrong, even among conscientious and reasonable people.⁷⁷ The general problem is that “though laws must be meticulously observed, they cannot, after all, have regard to every little circumstance, and the latter may yield exceptions, which do not always find their exact resolution in the laws.”⁷⁸ A virtuous person must rely on her powers of judgment to interpret and apply her duties of right as well as her ethical duties.

Judgments of right and wrong sometimes require the application of thick moral concepts, such as equity and fairness, that Kant treats as concepts of right that cannot be fully specified by moral principles.⁷⁹ For example, how, as a matter of right, should the profits of a company be distributed when its founders originally agreed to share them equally, but one of the partners contributed significantly more to its success than the others?⁸⁰ Other cases involve contracts that are not explicit enough to easily determine what is right and wrong. If I promise a charity to donate a sum of money to them, but later regret my decision and refuse to send the funds, does the charity have the right to force me to pay up?⁸¹ And some cases of right or wrong involve apparent conflicts of rights. If I purchase a horse in a public market in accordance with public ordinances without knowing that it was stolen, it seems that both I and the original owner have a right to the horse.⁸²

When we encounter controversial cases of right and wrong, Kant claims that each of us must use our own reason, judgment, and conscience to ascertain the relevant facts and determine as best we can what is right or wrong “in itself.”⁸³ These deliberations, in some cases, must be guided by our best guesses about what the parties to a contract most likely intended to do in making it. Also our deliberations about right and wrong should avoid concerns about the feasibility of a system of property rights. For instance, our judgments about who owns stolen property that was purchased in good faith should not be influenced by the fact that it is often impractical for people to fully investigate titles before the time of purchase.⁸⁴

According to Kant, applying the Universal Principle of Right, especially in controversial cases, can be very difficult, if not impossible. He acknowledges that these difficulties can result in disagreements about right and wrong, even among conscientious people who are using their best judgment.⁸⁵ Yet, in Kant’s view, rights necessarily involve an authorization to coerce others. If everyone were allowed to unilaterally follow his or her own best judgment about “*what seems right and good*” without being “dependent upon another’s opinion about this,” then they could be authorized to coerce one another in ways that are inconsistent with the equal freedom of all.⁸⁶ This is one of Kant’s main arguments for why we must join together in a public legal order in which judges

are given the rightful authority to settle disputes about rights.⁸⁷ Our rights and duties, which are often in themselves indeterminate and subject to interpretation, are given an artificial specificity in a “rightful condition” that is necessary in order to determine and secure the equal freedom of all.⁸⁸

In order to serve this public role, Kant claims that judges should be guided by additional principles of right.⁸⁹ They should make judgments only on the basis of what is most certain and clear because otherwise their task would be too difficult or impossible.⁹⁰ Judges, according to Kant, may also take account of the conditions that must be satisfied in order for a feasible system of property transfer to exist by, for example, not requiring buyers to fully establish the titles of the goods they purchase.⁹¹ And because equity and fairness are indeterminate concepts of right, judges should not take them into account at all in settling disputes about rights.⁹²

In sum, moral principles and rules of various kinds play an essential role in the life of a virtuous person. She is committed to these standards as fully regulative in her life, but she must carefully exercise her powers of judgment to interpret and apply them to specific cases. She also recognizes the need for a minimally decent legal framework of enforced public laws, which she obeys except when legal orders “conflict with inner morality.”⁹³

VI. CONCLUSION

Human agents, according to Kant, owe it to ourselves to strive for perfect virtue by fully committing ourselves to morality and by developing the fortitude to maintain and execute this life-governing policy despite obstacles we may face. Although Kant thinks that we can never achieve perfect virtue because of the inherent “*frailty (fragilitas)* of human nature,” our journey of moral self-improvement nonetheless requires communities of good persons, a precise system of legally enforced rules as well as indeterminate moral principles that we must interpret and apply with care and good judgment. Exemplars and cultivated good feelings can also be useful aids along the way, but Kant warns us against attempting to derive our moral standards themselves from examples or feelings. The best any of us can hope for, in Kant’s view, is to make constant progress in our difficult struggle for moral perfection.

NOTES

1. MM 6:380; R 6:57; V 27:492. Kant’s texts are referenced by these symbols, followed by volume and page numbers in the standard Prussian Academy Edition:

G—*Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*

MM—*The Metaphysics of Morals*

R—*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*

CPR—*Critique of Pure Reason*

CPrR—*Critique of Practical Reason*

CJ—*Critique of the Power of Judgment*

A—*Anthropology, History, and Education*

PP—“*Toward Perpetual Peace*”

TP—“*On the Common Saying: This May Be True in Theory, but It Does Not Hold in Practice*”

IUH—“*Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective*”

CB—“*Conjectural Beginnings of Human History*”

E—“*An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?*”

CF—“*The Conflict of the Faculties*”

LP—“*Lectures on Pedagogy*”

C—“*Moral Philosophy: Collins’s Lecture Notes*”

V—“*Kant on the Metaphysics of Morals: Vigilantius’s Lecture Notes*”

2. MM 6:380; V 27:492.
3. MM 6:205–221, 380, 405–408, 477. See also Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 162–179; Paul Guyer, *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 303–323; and Allen W. Wood, *Kantian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 142–158.
4. R 6:29.
5. MM 6:380, 383, 390.
6. MM 6:219–221, 394.
7. G 4:413–421.
8. MM 6:213, 218, 226; G 4: 414, 439.
9. Kant held out hope that all human beings are *persons*, who are, as such, rationally disposed to comply with moral requirements. It is possible, however, that some human beings, such as those we now call psychopaths, lack this rational disposition, although he thinks it would be difficult to know for sure that someone altogether lacked any moral motivation.
10. MM 6:218, 379.
11. MM 6:379–380.
12. V 27:656–657.
13. LP 9:487–488; V 27:656–657. See also Thomas E. Hill, “Kantian Virtue and ‘Virtue Ethics,’” *Virtue, Rules, and Justice: Kantian Aspirations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012a), 129–159; and, for a competing view, see Adam Cureton, “Kant on Cultivating a Good and Stable Will,” in *Questions of Character*, edited by Iskra Fileva (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 63–77.
14. G 4: 394–402. A good will in this sense is a person’s resolution to do one’s duty from duty, which is distinct from the inevitable predisposition to morality that, in Kant’s view, all moral agents possess.
15. MM 6:380, 383–384, 387, 390, 394, 404–410, 479–480; R 6:29–39.
16. MM 6:213–215.
17. MM 6:409. See also MM 6:384, 405, 447.
18. R 6:4–7, 97–98; CPrR 5:110–132.
19. LP 9:445.
20. LP 9:453, 459; C 27:467; CJ 5: 431.
21. LP 9:482–484, 489.
22. CPrR 5:35, 154, 160–161; MM 480–484; R 6: 48; LP 9:490.
23. MM 6:385–388, 391–394.

24. MM 6:387, 397, 400, 441, 484.
25. MM 6:447.
26. Note, however, MM 6:228.
27. MM 6:446.
28. Kant implies that virtue, as a kind of “strength of soul,” can vary in degree from perfect virtue, which Kant represents as “a+,” to utter weakness, which he represents as “o,” but weakness is not the same as vice, which Kant represents as “-a.” A person with the vice of ingratitude, for example, rejects the Kantian principle that he ought to honor his benefactors, but a morally weak person (deficient in virtue) accepts the principle but to some degree neglects to act accordingly (MM 6:384, 390).
29. See Marcia Baron, *Kantian Ethics Almost without Apology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Barbara Herman, “Making Room for Character,” in Herman, *Moral Literacy*, pp. 1–28. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007; Thomas E. Hill, “Kant’s Tugendlehre as Normative Ethics,” in Hill, *Virtue, Rules, and Justice: Kantian Aspirations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012c), 234–255.
30. G 4:393–399, R 6:36.
31. R 6:184–187; MM 6:401, 437–440; E 8:35–42. See also Thomas E. Hill, “Moral Responsibilities of Bystanders,” in Hill, *Virtue, Rules, and Justice: Kantian Aspirations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012b), 343–357.
32. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, edited by T. Irwin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1999).
33. Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Bernard Mayo, *Ethics and the Moral Life* (London: Macmillan, 1958), 183–232; Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
34. MM 6:483–484, 407, 409, 479–480; R 46–47.
35. LP 9:440–445, 459, 481–492. See Adam Cureton and T. E. Hill, “Kant on Virtue and the Virtues,” in *Cultivating Virtue*, edited by Nancy Snow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 97–102.
36. G 4:413–418, 441–444.
37. R 6:21–26.
38. MM 6:446.
39. CPrR 5:155, 157; R 6:49.
40. G 4:407.
41. G 4:408–409.
42. G 4: 408–409.
43. Kant, for example, held that the French Revolution “finds in the hearts of all spectators (who are not engaged in this game themselves) a wishful *participation*” despite his belief that they acted wrongly in service of their worthy ideals (CF 7:85). He thought that examples of good people can focus our attention on the moral law, reveal our own capacity to comply with the requirements of morality, strike down our selfish tendencies and prompt the workings of our conscience (G 4:402; CPrR 5:76–77). And Kant claimed that scandalous behavior can serve as a warning to us, but such public expressions of immorality can also tempt us to follow suit (PP 8:346; MM 6:394, 445, 460, 464). See also Onora O’Neill, “The Power of Example,” *Philosophy* 61 (1986): 5–29.
44. An *idea* in Kant’s technical sense is “a necessary concept of reason . . . , one to which no congruent object can be given in the senses” (CPR A327).
45. G 4:395–403.
46. MM 6:446–447.

47. See, for example, MM 6:418. See also Richard Dean, "Humanity as an Idea, as an Ideal, and as an End in Itself," *Kantian Review* 18 (2013): 171–195. As Dean notes, 'Idea' properly means a rational concept, while an 'ideal' is the "presentation of an individual being as adequate to an idea" (CJ 5:232).
48. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*; Roger Crisp and M. A. Slote, *Virtue Ethics*, Oxford Readings in Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
49. R 6:26–27; MM 6:401–402, 456–457, 471–472; LP 9:482, 484–485, 492, 498; A 7:278–279; IUH 8:21; CJ 5:296–297, 355.
50. MM 6:470; IUH 8:20–22; A 7:265–277; G 4:424; R 6:27, 93–94; CB 8:120; CJ 542–543; LP 9:492, 498.
51. CJ 5:276; A 7:270.
52. MM 6:386–387, 391–393, 444–447; LP 9:449; CB 8:116–118; CJ 5:431.
53. CJ 5:297.
54. CJ 5:433. See also CJ 5:297, 355–356; A 5:297–298.
55. IUH 8:18–23; LP 9:445.
56. MM 458–460, 465–466; R 6:93–94, 97; CJ 5:432–433; A 7:270–273; LP 9:492.
57. R 6:94; 97. See also R 6:93–98.
58. R 6:94. See also R 6:94–96, 97–98, 122–124.
59. R 6:97. See also R 6:95–98.
60. R 6:95, 101–108.
61. R 6:98–100, 102.
62. R 6:101–104, 151–152.
63. G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33 (1958): 1–19; Bernard Williams, "Morality, the Peculiar Institution," *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 174–197; Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*; McDowell, *Mind and World*; Michael A. Slote, *From Morality to Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View*.
64. MM 6:216–217.
65. MM 6:230, 395.
66. MM 6:218–220, 239, 381.
67. MM 6:389–391, 446.
68. MM 6:426, 437.
69. MM 6:409 (Kant's italics).
70. MM 6:239, 381, 464, 466.
71. CPR A133/B172.
72. MM 6:216, 441, 444–448; R 6:184–187.
73. MM 6:390.
74. MM 6:411.
75. MM 6:392–393, 422, 426, 428, 454, 467, 472; CB 8:121, PP 8: 363, 365–366; G 4:418.
76. MM 6:233. See also MM 6:411.
77. MM 6:238, 257.
78. V 27:574. See also CPR A133/B172.
79. MM 6:234–235; V 27:433, 532–533.

80. MM 6:234.
81. MM 6:297–298.
82. MM 6:300–303.
83. MM 6:297. See also MM 6:230, 235–236, 297, 301–302.
84. MM 6:301.
85. MM 6:312.
86. MM 6:312.
87. MM 6:307, 311–313.
88. MM 6:312.
89. MM 6:297, 303.
90. MM 6:298–330; 303.
91. MM 6:301–303.
92. MM 6:234.
93. MM 6:371. See also MM 6:322.

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