Freedom

Morality and Ethics: Not "first order" experience (morality) and "second order" reflection (ethics) with its built-in elitism but two kinds of imperatives: hypothetical and categorical

Natural: not automatically "given" by nature but "capacities" by birth that must be cultivated

Andalusia Aristotelianism and (Kant's) Copernican Turn: shift from phenomenal aggregates organized by "harmony" to lawful order

Religion and Morality[1]

Douglas R McGaughey
30 January 2019

Abstract

If there is anyone who was not (and today would not be) surprised about a disconnect "between religion and ethics, it would be Immanuel Kant.[2] Nonetheless, the two are deeply connected:

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[1] My sincerest thanks to Prof. James R. Cochrane, Emeritus Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town for providing feedback on an earlier draft of this paper. Of course, any and all errors are my responsibility.

[2] In the opening paragraphs of the "Conflict of the Philosophical with the Legal Faculty" (the second section of his *Conflict of the Faculties*), Kant not only rejects the notion of steady progress of humanity (not just with respect to morality), but also refuses to accept that humanity is doomed either to steady decline (e.g., because of "original sin") or stagnation to claim that, while progress is not guaranteed, what is constant is change. The task of true progress is an open-ended, moral task that involves those inalienable human capacities of transcendental reason (not merely instrumental reason narrowly attributed by many today to the "Enlightenment") that distinguish us as a species in degree, not in kind, from other species. See, as well, the proposal of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* AA VI: 19-20.

　　　　Already in 1796, just three years after the publication of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, there was a sophisticated spectrum of response to Kant's take on religion. However, Kant's *Religion* (1793) was not by any means his first engagement of religion. Already in his very first publication in 1747 (*Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces*), Kant engaged not only the theme of the necessity of the assumption of the irreducibility of living organisms, particularly humanity, to natural causes for our understanding of them but also religion, and in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), he formulated his argument demonstrating the inadequacies of the cosmological, physico-theological, and ontological arguments for God. The *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) as well as the *Critique of Judgment* (1790) contain his moral argument for God as a "regulative idea" (i.e., presupposition) necessary for practical reason. One can say that all of Kant's corpus is an exercise in philosophical theology, not just epistemology, and that philosophical theology drives not only his understanding of religion but also of history, politics, cosmopolitanism, and league of nations.

　　　　At the end of the 18th Century, the engagement of Kant's analysis of religion was far more complex (one could say "far more sophisticated") than the attempts today that claim he was only concerned with religion because he was trying to escape from his "Pietist" childhood. See, for example, Edward Kanterian*, Kant, God and Metaphysics: The Secret Thorn* (Routledge, 2018). The "Kantian" theological parties at the end of the 18th Century

there can be no morality without particular experience in the world and the transcendental conditions of possibility for which the term religion is appropriate.

Introduction

Two inter-related questions, concerned with the *origins* of rational capacities and *not with the consequences* of decisions and actions, drive the following paper with respect to the relationship between 'religion' and 'morality':

1) Are we humans playing *a zero-sum game*? Are we merely on a cruise ship with finite resources only able to re-arrange the chairs on the deck according to power relationships as we head towards the (melting) iceberg?

2) … or is there any place in nature that is open-ended? Is there a species capable of acting and thinking beyond the blind processes of natural events?

On the Role of the Imperceptible in Aristotle

Aristotle's *Metaphysics* begins with the observation: "All men [*sic.*] naturally have an impulse to get knowledge. A sign of this is the way we prize our senses […] especially sensing with the eyes." (980a21)

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all opposed the so-called Rationalists of the day, who rejected all claims for miracles in the bible and who had sought to provide an account of biblical miracles as the product of mis-perception, mis-guided, or even deceptive intent on the part of the reporters of the miracles.

Because the judgment of miracles constitutes a causal explanation of what can only be experienced as effects, there can be no proof or disproof that a miracle occurred. Kant proposed that the judgment concerning whether a miracle occurs or can occur depends, then, not on its empirical proof/disproof but on its effect upon the exercising of theoretical and practical reason. The ground for dismissing miracles, according to Kant, is that they undermine physical and moral lawfulness as well as focus attention on self-interest rather than the exercising of autonomous freedom exclusively (to the degree possible) on moral principles.

In *Versuch einer historisch-kritischen Darstellung des bisherigen Einflusses der Kantischen Philosophie auf alle Zweige der wissenschaftlichen und praktischen Theologie (Hannover: Verlag der helwingschen Hofbuchhandlung, 1796)*: 55f, 68f, 144, 147, 159, Christian Wilhelm Flügge describes three "Kantian" parties. The first two of Flügge's three Kantian parties elevate the text above the exegete (miracles confirm the authenticity of the revelation) 1) with the first party embracing all miracles and the notion that all true morality is already found in the text, 2) the second party viewing miracles as not harmful, some even are beneficial, to the practical goal of morality, and 3) the third party viewing the text from the perspective of a historical context/trajectory that places the exegete at the same "level" of the text but possessing the advantage of improved understanding based on theoretical reason along with a far more sophisticated practical reason in the post-Copernican world. In short, scriptures are manifestations in history, and history as a human process is developmental.

All three Kantian parties, though, view the key to the text to be morality with the decisive question being: Is morality grounded in religion, or is religion grounded in morality? The first party claims that morality is grounded in religion (revelation); the second party claims that religion is grounded in morality but can be supplemented by miracles; whereas the third Kantian party claimed that revelation (including miracles) undermines both theoretical and practical reason. Although the third party rejects the revelations, speculations, and heteronomy of historical religion, it views pure religion to be a communal project devoted to moral improvement in history.

To be fair to Kant, he did not reject all traditions, rituals, and doctrines of historical religion. He did reject all heteronomous traditions and doctrines that were grounded in unfounded speculations and raptures beyond the limits of reason and/or that crippled the exercising of autonomous, practical reason.

As important as the senses, especially sight, are for knowledge, Aristotle then points out that knowledge is more than knowing "what" but includes "why." (981a29-30) The answer to "why?" takes Aristotle *beyond the senses* to identify *imperceptible* causes (formal, material, efficient, and final) (983a-25-983b) that must be applied to the four, *perceptible* "eternal," natural elements (earth, air, wind, fire) (984a8-11) to account for the particular "what" of perception. Explanation addresses the question, "why do combinations and separations [in perception] come about?" (984a19-22), by applying the *imperceptible* causes to the *perceptible* elements. This constitutes a shift from appearances to imperceptible conditions of possibility for appearances that is the key to Immanuel Kant's notion of *the Copernican Turn*.[3]

The same logical structure (first, appearances, then turning to imperceptible conditions) drives Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* begins:

> "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and choice, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim." (1094a1-3)

Again, as important as is the *perceptible* aim of action, the actual answer to the question "why" illuminates the role of *imperceptible* capacities that are presupposed by the goal, that is, the good.[4]

What Aristotle did not provide is an account of causal explanation grounded in laws.[5] His account is limited to concepts (forms) and descriptive elements (substances: earth, air, wind, and

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[3] See the "Forward" to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* B xxii* and B xvii.

[4] The very first capacity, "art" (Greek: ἡ τέχνη, téchne) is Aristotle's general label for humanity's imperceptible capacity to create things that, otherwise, cannot occur in nature – the very notion that Kant calls *autonomous* freedom.

[5] The limitedness to particularity in Aristotle is clear in his causal explanations of physical phenomena in terms of balancing of observable elements (earth, air, wind, fire) and in his account of moral virtue rooted in observable consequences of the individual's establishing a "mean" between excess and deprivation with respect to those (particular) things in life of which one can have too much and too little. Nonetheless, both Aristotle's empiricism and moral virtue are grounded in the givenness of imperceptible concepts (forms and intellectual virtue), which for him are merely are an aggregate of particulars in the absence of an awareness of lawful totality. On intellectual virtue and contemplation in Aristotle, see Matthew D. Walker, *Aristotle on the Uses of Contemplation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) as well as the review on-line of same by Tom Angier from Nov. 11, 2018, in "Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews."

This restriction to the description of particularities absent lawful accounts for them constitutes Aristotle's ambiguous influence on the revolution in the natural sciences marked by Copernicus in the 15th Century. On the one hand, the "new" Aristotle of the 13th Century in the West led directly to "empiricism," but the absence of physical laws led to the rejection of Aristotle in the sciences.

The introduction of Aristotle's writings into the West over Andalusia and the commentaries of the Islamic scholar (Averroes) constituted a (misunderstood?!) break with Platonic Idealism and embracing of Aristotelian Empiricism with Thomas Aquinas offering a theological synthesis that led to Scholasticism but not science! The success on the part of the natural sciences as a consequence of using imperceptible mathematics to explain perceptible phenomena allowed for the denial of the senses in the Copernican Revolution and resulted in opening the door to the mathematical worlds of Leibniz, Newton, Wolff. The on-line "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy" writes: "According to Kant, in the 'Preface' to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (2nd ed), [Christian] Wolff is 'the greatest of all dogmatic philosophers.' Wolff's 'strict method' in science, Kant explains, is predicated on 'the regular ascertainment of principles, the clear determination of concepts, the attempt at strictness in proofs, and the prevention of audacious leaps in inferences' (Kant, 1998, 120). Like many other philosophers of the Modern period,

fire). *In the absence of "laws," Aristotle's empiricism is merely descriptive*. As a consequence, any sense of a "totality" is absent, and the focus is on particular aggregates (absent any, lawful, organizing coherence)[6] of phenomena.[7]

This paper seeks to retrieve the significance of the *totality of theoretical* reason (understanding) and *practical* reason (responsible agency) as grounded in lawful causal orders both perceptible and imperceptible for the sake of identifying the significance of finite reason, grounded in religion, not for exercising power[8] over nature and others but rather for exercising our rational capacities responsibly.

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Beyond a Zero-Sum Game to Rational Open-endedness:
Practical Reason Is As, If Not More, Important
Than Theoretical Reason

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The call to papers invokes Aristotle on moral virtue as a model for reflection on moral and ethical frameworks and performances. Not only did Aristotle himself use a logic of perceptible phenomena grounded in imperceptible aggregates (not lawful orders), an examination of the Aristotelian reception in the Latin West will claim that the persistent dualism that remains today

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such as Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza, [plus Leibniz, Newton, and others] Wolff believed the method of mathematics, if properly applied, could be used to expand other areas of human knowledge." Note: Kant speaks of post-Copernican science as focused on "areas" of human knowledge (i.e., theoretical reason), not the "totality" of human knowledge, which would include the moral laws of practical reason.

[6] In the absence of a causality governed by a lawful order, the Gospels, for example, provide only an "aggregate" of moral principles, not a moral system.   This is an insight already articulated by the Kant reception at the end of the 18th Century. Christian Wilhelm Flügge points out in *Versuch einer historisch-kritischen Darstellung des bisherigen Einflusses der Kantischen Philosophie auf alle Zweige der wissenschaftlichen und praktischen Theologie* that, although the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament is frequently taken to be a revolution in moral understanding, in fact, 1) there is nothing in Jesus's teaching that is not found in the Mosaic tradition (232-233), 2) Jesus' teaching is anchored in his cultural context of fear of God (303), and 3),for this context important, the moral teaching is merely an "aggregate" of moral principles without any organizing principle (the causality of autonomous freedom and moral lawfulness) that makes it a totality (297).

[7] Aristotle accounts for objects, natural events, and human agency from the perspective of their unique particularity, not because they constitute a lawful, coherent totality.
　　　Arguably, the most enduring influence of Kant on the natural sciences has been his notion of *totality*. However, already with his student, Herder, the notion of totality was restricted to theoretical reason as the merely empirical investigation of nature. Herder's vision of nature in *Ideas on the Philosophy of History and Humanity* (4 Vols. Between 1784–1791) was that it constituted a physical totality governed by an ultimate, single causality: energy that unites all phenomena. This view of nature driven by energy inspired Goethe' as well as Alexander von Humboldt's materialism, and it continues to govern the natural sciences today. It overlooks, that causal explanations are always *a priori* and synthetic (added to the phenomena) because we cannot perceive causes, only their effects. In other words, Herder's notion of energy presupposes Kant's theoretical reason not to speak of practical reason!
　　　In the absence of an account of the lawfulness of practical reason (freedom and morality) as complementary to the lawfulness of theoretical reason in the natural sciences, even our age is one of materialistic Cyclopses absent the "second eye" of the Critical Idealist's Philosopher's Stone. See "The Cyclops and the Philosopher's Stone" at https://criticalidealism.org.
[8] On "power" as central to "archaeological" and "genealogical" understanding of humanity and "character," see "Enlightenment: Reflections on Michel Foucault's 'Was ist Aufklärung?' ['What is Enlightenment'], 7 February 2016," at https://criticalidealism.org.

between subjective Idealism and objective Empiricism comes from the 13ᵗʰ Century, which leaves us with the moral options: heteronomous laws imposed upon us from without (e.g., by God's revelation in the senses) or socially constructed rules and performances.

The Aristotelian corpus that we have today arrived in the Latin West only in the 12ᵗʰ Century.[9] Duns Scotus (d. 1308) articulated an Aristotelian Christian theology sharply in contrast to Platonic Christian theology.[10] Distinct from Platonic "Intellectualism" (God has no choice because "He's" rational), Scotus articulated a new Theism, Aristotelian "Voluntarism" (God has absolutely free choice because "He" is will). The issues at issue in Intellectualism and Voluntarism are framed in terms of anthropomorphic capacities – Which has priority in experience: the "intellect" (reason) or the "will" (creativity); stated otherwise, absolute moral principles (reason) or socially constructed moral principles (will)?[11]

Platonic anthropomorphism gives the "intellect" priority over the "will." Divine concepts and moral principles are taken to be prior to, and to stand above, the decisions and agency not only of humanity but also of God. Even God *must* adhere to "His" universal, eternal concepts and moral principles. This is anthropomorphic because it is our experience that thought presupposes concepts, which in turn "must" precede reflection and action. Hence, according to Intellectualism, because God is good and aims for the good, God must be "self-limited" by concepts and moral principles.

Furthermore, Intellectualism is based on a dualism of "originals" and "copies," also an anthropomorphic projection. Eternal, universal concepts are taken to be the a priori "originals" whereas finite, particular things are taken to be "copies" of the originals.[12] The result is a theological understanding that aims to ever fuller participation in the realm of the "originals" by escaping sensuous particulars (e.g., Greek Logos theology and mysticism[13]).

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[9] The Aristotelian corpus that we possess today did not arrive in the Latin West until the 12th Century when translations of Aristotle were made into Latin from Arabic sources. These translations were accompanied by a commentary, also in Latin, from the Islamic scholar Averroes. In the mid-13ᵗʰ Century, Thomas Aquinas along with Albert the Great, his teacher, were among the first to employ the Aristotelian corpus in Christian and followed in the footsteps of Boethius (6th Century) in defending an ultimate harmony between Platonism and the "new" Aristotle.

[10] The debate over the relationship between Aristotle and Plato, particularly on the "doctrine of the forms" but framed by the theological anthropomorphism of both of them, continues today. See for example, the June 3, 2018, review by Etienne Helmer on-line at "Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews" of Mor Segev, *Aristotle on Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[11] The (anthropomorphic) epistemologies and agencies of Intellectualism and Voluntarism are illuminating for our discussion of universal moral principles (we have no choice in light of moral principles) over against particular "moral and ethical frameworks and performances" (we are able to create ethical systems)

[12] Philo of Alexandria explained the need for the two accounts of creation in the opening of Genesis precisely on this anthropomorphic model of "original" and "copy." The first account is the ultimate origin of creation that occurred when God thought internally (Logos endiathtos, λόγος ἐνδιάθετος), literally, the "word within;" the second account is the "copying" of those thoughts into matter (Logos prophorikos, λόγος προφορικός), literally, the "spoken word"). See Philo's "On Creation" (de mundi opificio. § 1) as well as, David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Minneapolis, 1993). Philo is so indebted to Plato that Jerome, apparently, coined the famous aphorism: "either Plato follows Philo or Philo Plato—so great is the similarity in doctrines and style." (Ibid., 313, see as well, 4, 188, 208, and 338).

[13] Kant was dismissive of mysticism. In his *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion* from the 1770's and '80's (published posthumously in 1817), he spoke of mysticism as "self-annihilation" in which one eliminates the self by sinking into the Godhead. He called mysticism the cessation of understanding in The End of All Things of

Aristotelian anthropomorphism rejects the notion of the *a priori* character of concepts and moral principles. Here, concepts and moral principles are *a posteriori* abstractions, *created by the individual (and corporate) consciousness following the experience of particulars* with particulars preceding universals.

This Aristotelian Voluntarism (Nominalism) maintains that we only experience *particulars*, and only after we have experienced a set of particulars are we able to abstract from this to create a concept (name) common to the particular phenomena. For Scotus, then, the will precedes the intellect: we must exercise our will in order *to create* concepts and moral principles. Similarly, the divine will is good in itself so that, because "perfect," whatever it wills is good even if it ignores the conceptual order of nature (i.e., performs miracles).

Although Voluntarism, too, has its own "original" and "copy" structure, it is exactly the reverse of Platonic Intellectualism: the "originals" are particular things, and the "copies" are the abstracted concepts that are generated *a posteriori*. However, Voluntarism's "originals" are not as original as it claims. The world of particular things (presumed to be the "originals") must already be organized by universal concepts in order for us to be able to abstract concepts out of the particulars.

Platonic Intellectualism is grounded in unchanging concepts (the mind is grounded in the eternal) whereas Aristotelian Voluntarism is grounded in the endurance of the material order of particular things (the physical world endures, the mind is merely subjectively transient).

Above all, both Intellectualism and Voluntarism are anthropomorphic: Finite, limited experience is used to make claims on the basis of analogies for an infinite, eternal, perfect reality. Because of the difference between finite and infinite, there cannot be a greater μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος, that is, misapplication of characteristics of one genus to another. To claim to know how *God must be* on the basis of *the way humanity is* constitutes a fantastic leap of human arrogance. History teaches that humanity is no more dangerous (and more often than not, no more wrong) than when it claims to know the "thoughts" or the "will" of God.

1794 (AA VI, 335-336); whereas in On a Recently Prominent Tone of Superiority in Philosophy of 1796 (AA VIII, 398), he spoke of the mystical as the "death of philosophy," and in What Real Progress has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff? of 1791/1793, he warned of three dangers: turning theology into Theosophy; moral teleology into mysticism; and psychology into "pneumatics" (AA XX, 309-310). Nonetheless, Kant appears to have seen one crucial value in mysticism: it is less threatening to morality than empiricism (see *Critique of Practical Reason* of 1788 AA V, 71); see as well, *Conflict of the Faculties* (AA VII, 74-75). Empiricism is threatening to morality because it eliminates the autonomous freedom that grounds morality by reducing all explanations of human behavior to physical causality. Already in the Lecture on Moral Philosophy of 1774/5, Kant had acknowledged this "value" of mysticism's liberation from the senses, but he immediately dismissed it's "transcendental" character because of its enthusiasm (flying high above the empirical) rather than its reason (anchored in and inseparable from the empirical). Even further, at the end of Section I of the *Conflict of the Faculties* (AA VII, 69-75), which is the section on the conflict between the philosophical and the theological faculties, Kant adds a report ("On a pure Mysticism in Religion") written by a former student (Carol. Arnold Willmans) on the Moravians in which the student praised what he called "Kantian" mystics. Kant rejects the claim. He asked his former student, Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann, to write a response to Willmans. Kant wrote a supporting forward to Jachmann's *Prüfung der Kantischen Religionsphilosophie* (1800) (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1999).

Despite their anthropological projections, Intellectualism and Voluntarism are Top-Down explanations of experience that claim to *begin with the most universal* (absolute "reason" or absolute "will") in order *to account for particularity*. Both impose their respective notions of universal "necessity" on finite humanity.[14]

In contrast and of crucial importance for our discussion of religion and morality, Critical Idealism is Bottom-Up: *All experience begins with particular, historical phenomena*, but the *capacities* of understanding and responsible agency are universal at least to all finite, "rational" beings.

Other than to say *what is necessary and imperceptible* for *our experience* that *commences in, is grounded in, and possible only because of the particularities of appearances in history*, the concern of Critical Idealism is not with determining the correct predicates for *the most universal dimension of experience*, God, but with what we are able to say *in light of the limits of finite reason* about human understanding (theoretical reason) and responsible agency (practical reason) in the world?[15]

The threshold into Critical Idealism is: What is necessary for us to be able to experience this unitary flow of particular, historical appearances (which includes what we mean by morality)? The short answer is: all consciousness must have a structure of elements *not found in the particular appearances directly* that it applies to the *particular* phenomena in order to grasp their "lawful order" so as to understand and at least be able (even though we may ignore it) to exercise its finite agency responsibly.[16] It is precisely this finite, unitary and universal, rational structure that allows us to deny our senses of particulars in order to understand "properly" (for example, that the sun is *not* moving).

As with Intellectualism and Voluntarism, Critical Idealism (like the physical sciences) is unable to empirically prove or disprove the reality of the universal, imperceptible, transcendental conditions of possibility for experiencing appearances. However, contra Intellectualism and Voluntarism, the elements that Critical Idealism can neither prove nor disprove are *necessary* (but not always determining, as in the case of autonomous freedom, which is necessary but not determined) for us *to experience particular appearances* as we do.[17]

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[14] For Intellectualism, humanity is necessarily dependent upon the divine intellect for its grasp of eternal truth and morality. For Voluntarism, humanity is necessarily finite and in need of an exercising of the divine will to correct our finite understanding and preserve our immorality by means of a grace not limited by humanity's understanding of any conceptual and moral order by its dependence upon particularities.

[15] Critical Idealism is not concerned with a dualism of copies and originals as is Intellectualism (Idealism) and Voluntarism (Nominalism) but with the identification of the structures of reason that are necessary in order for there to be a conscious experience of particular appearances. All reason, so far as we experience, is finite and arises in, is called for, and is a response to particular appearances. The immediate content of any and all experience of the world and the self is a unitary and constant flow of particular appearances by an individual consciousness.

[16] Universality here is a question of finite capacities for the experience of a world of particularities, not a question of the infinite capacities of a reason and will somehow absolutely beyond the limits of any and all particularities.

[17] Although *possible*, it is not *necessary* that God be a pure, universal "intellect" or "will" in order for us to experience the world of appearances as a rational species.

What is necessary is that the stream of particular appearances and the universal structures of finite, transcendental consciousness are "given" *and not of our creation*. However, we can only speculate about this "given" other than that it is structured to allow us consciously to experience and act in a world of appearances.[18]

However, most significantly, practical reason indicates that there is a place in the midst of the particularities of appearances that is not entirely governed by the "blind," mechanical causal order of physical appearances. It is precisely this place that announces the "open-endedness" of reality: the place is occupied by a finite, "rational" species neither playing a zero-sum game with the appearances nor merely consisting of "mechanical" automatons blindly driven by physical causality.

In short, reason is not limited to merely understanding the world, it is also concerned with changing it – and changing it responsibly. Long before Karl Marx, then, Kant suggests that the aim of philosophy (Kant's terminology was "philosophical theology[19]") is not merely to describe the world but to change it – although Kant adds, with the capacity to change it *responsibly*.

Finally, it is precisely the universality of practical reason that grounds the dignity of the individual. Dignity is not something that can be legislated by a social group. Dignity is anchored in the rational capacity consciously to change the world in ways that nature on its own cannot *and to be able to take responsibility* for those personally initiated changes.[20] In other words, practical reason with its open-endedness in the order of nature and its moral order is at the core of what it means to be and become a rational species to a degree not found in any other species of which we are aware.[21] We have now arrived at the link between religion and morality.

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Reason and Religion:
Technical and Moral Culture
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The Call for Papers stresses that the track record of religion and morality hardly justifies the conclusion that religion has contributed much to the moral life of humanity. This paper claims, differently, that historical religions with their revelations, rituals, traditions, and institutional structures illustrate the "precariousness" of humanity that results from its open-endedness in the natural order.[22] Human dignity is grounded in a creative capacity *never separate from but also not reducible to natural causality* – as far as we have experienced.[23] We cannot ignore the laws

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[18] The "giver" of the "given" of these structures makes it possible for us to be a rational animal capable of understanding appearances (theoretical reason) and of acting responsibly in appearances (practical reason). Speculations beyond this sufficiency and necessity, though, are a threat to the very theoretical and practical reason that is dependent upon this sufficiency and necessity.

[19] See *Religion* AA VI: 9.

[20] Respect is due to those who not only acknowledge the dignity of all rational beings but also who themselves respect and strive to live by the two domains of law that are the ultimate ground of dignity: nature and freedom.

[21] The qualifications of "degree" and "of which we are aware" denies that this is a claim of speciesism.

[22] On humanity's precarious position, see *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* AA IV: 425-426.

[23] This qualification "as far as we have experienced" constitutes no denial of an afterlife. Kant even says that "a religion without the afterlife is no religion." (*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* AA VI: 126) Kant's claim is not that there necessarily is an afterlife (something along with grace and miracles that is incapable of proof or disproof) but that it is necessary to *presuppose* an afterlife (see Flügge, *Versuch einer historisch-kritischen Darstellung des bisherigen Einflusses der Kantischen Philosophie auf alle Zweige der wissenschaftlichen und*

of natural causality, but, because freedom is *autonomous*,[24] we can ignore the moral laws that govern autonomous freedom precisely because, unlike physical laws (along with statistical significance and algorisms), those moral laws are anchored in freedom, not determinism.

Only a rational animal can recognize and act upon the difference between *can* and *ought*. Although that recognition must occur in everyone for her-/himself, the fulfilment of the promise of theoretical (what *can* be) and practical reason (what *ought* to be) requires more than an isolated subject. It requires both nature and a social order.

However, the social order is not simply a "culture of technical skills" that serves self-interests[25] but also a "moral culture[26]" that is anchored in "broader," universal principles *above* self-interest.[27] Among these broader, universal principles[28] are: not allowing ourselves or treating the other as merely a means rather than an end, acknowledging the autonomous freedom (hence, dignity) of all other rational beings,[29] not lying, not taking one's own life out of social

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praktischen Theologie, 319) because the successful moral improvement of humanity requires an endless process. Therefore, any religion that would deny the afterlife 1) would be claiming to know something that we cannot know and, more importantly, 2) that whatever content such an afterlife would involve would have to encourage our moral effort in this life. If otherwise, we would be more concerned about what is in our self-interest for the next life than with doing the right thing because it is right (doing precisely what is well-pleasing to God) even though it may be contrary to our self-interests. If there is an afterlife, the only role it can play in terms of pure religion is to be a confirmation of our subjective worthiness of it through our moral effort in this life. (See *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 774–77; *Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft*, 149; *Vorlesungen über die philosophische Religionslehre* (Leipzig: Bei Carl Friedrich Franz, 1817), 130, 133, as well as, *Religion* [Cambridge], 84–85.) "Worthiness," however, is not an attainment that places a demand of one's "right to an 'objective' salvation in the next life," but it consists in concentrating one's efforts on one's subjective, moral improvement in this life.

[24] Autonomous freedom in Critical Idealism refers to any rational animals' capacity consciously to initiate sequences of events and to create things that nature on its own is incapable of doing. Humanity appears to possess autonomous freedom to a degree found in no other species of which we are aware. Some other species create and employ degrees of technical skills, but the degree of their difference to humanity borders on a difference in kind. That is, it is driven by instinct, not by rational in-sight. Note: autonomous freedom here is not Hegel's notion of relative freedom within a social institution. Otherwise stated, autonomous freedom does not refer to the degree of independence an individual (or group) has over against family, tradition, political entities, economic structures, and religion.

[25] Kant by no means claimed that we are to *deny self-interest.* The complete denial of self-interest is impossible for a finite creature. Furthermore, he explicitly acknowledged that we cannot ever know in any particular situation whether we have acted on the basis of self-interest (see the *Groundwork* AA IV: 407. Although we can never be certain whether we acted out of self-interest, we can be certain about our consciously acting on the basis of a moral principle: "[…] what is at issue here is not at all whether this or that does happen, but that reason by itself and independently of all appearances commands what ought to happen […]" (*Ibid*., 408.)

[26] For Kant's distinction between a culture of "skills" and a "moral" culture, see the *Critique of Judgment* AA V: 431-432

[27] See section "VII [Internal] Ethical Duties are of Wide Obligation, Whereas [External] Duties of Right are of Narrow Obligation" in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, AA VI, 390-391. Kant distinguished between "narrower" (unrelenting, *unnachlaßlichen)* and "wider" (meritorious, *verdienstlichen*) duty already in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* IV, 424.

[28] Although there is no proof or disproof that one is acting on a universal, moral principle, the first form of the *categorical imperative* offers a criterion to avoid merely acting on the basis of self-interest: We ought to act on the basis of a principle *that "we would want"* to be universal, like a law of nature. However, this is no excuse to turn capricious self-interest into a universal law. It is a commitment to seek universals to rein in self-interest.

[29] These two imperatives are the second and third forms of the *categorical imperative* articulated in Section II of the *Groundwork*. Rejecting the treating of others as a mere means to one's ends constitutes the ground for Kant's

embarrassment, developing one's talents, responding to the suffering of others,[30] not intentionally testifying falsely against another,[31] keeping promises,[32] not taking advantage of the inexperience of others,[33] proper care of animals,[34] ecological concern for nature (the material basis for all theoretical and practical reason),[35] etc.

Historical religions are not simply competing revelations, rituals, traditions, and institutional structures that have emerged in *particular* societies, but, in addition and more importantly, they are the social institutions in which it is possible (although not necessarily determined) to encounter the social conditions for encouraging "moral culture."[36]

Hypothetical and Categorical Imperatives

Finite life is governed by imperatives – *must do's*. One set of imperatives is a social construction.[37] Nonetheless, two sets of imperatives are "natural" even if they must be learned. Whereas socially constructed rules are imposed upon us *by society* (civic laws and rules that govern technical and personal welfare), other imperatives are imposed *by nature* in the broadest sense of *not created by or a mere construction of a finite, rational animal*. These natural imperatives come from physical causality and the causality of autonomous freedom.[38]

Imperatives are either *hypothetical* or *categorical*. Hypothetical imperatives are driven by a *particular* situation in the sense that "if" (the hypothetical marker) I want to do something in particular (e.g., drive a car, build a house, practice a profession), I must follow the rules

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rejection of racism, slavery, colonialism, and aristocracies. See "Was Kant a Racist? With an Addendum: On South Sea Islanders in Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" at https://criticalidealism.org.

[30] These four moral principles are Kant's examples of *categorical imperatives* in Section II of the *Groundwork*.

[31] This moral principle is discussed in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (AA V: 30, 155-156) to illustrate that moral principles are universal because everyone recoils in horror over the false testimony. The discussion of this moral principle is preceded by an account of humanity's ability to control even its most powerful, physical interest: sexuality (AA V: 30).

[32] See the *Metaphysics of Morals*, AA VI: 219-210.

[33] See the *Groundwork* AA IV: 397.

[34] See the *Metaphysics of Morals*., AA VI: 443-444.

[35] See *Ibid*., AA VI: 443.

[36] At its universal core, religion is where rational capacities are able to encounter their imperceptible conditions of possibility and limits. Religion reminds us that not only are we not the authors of our capacities and conditions of possibility for experiencing, understanding, and transforming the world but also that we are dependent upon three kinds of lawfulness: specific physical laws; socially constructed civic laws and technical rules; as well as broad, moral laws. Whereas civic laws and technical rules are a posteriori constructions by humanity, physical and moral laws constitute an a priori, imperceptible, internal divine order manifest in all perceptible, external reality.

[37] At least in the sense that this set of imperatives arises only in rational animals capable of acting on socially constructed rules, not just instincts.

[38] Already in his own lifetime, Kant's claim that theoretical (epistemology) and practical (morality) reason "constructed" nature and morality raised eyebrows. Moritz Kronenberg reports in *Geschichte des deutschen Idealismus*, Vol. II (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1912): 607, that Fichte, Schiller, and Goethe had doubts about the claim, whereas Schelling called it "constructivist" and "in this sense spoke of a construction of nature and the world." Kronenberg adds in a footnote, though, that this construction "[…] has nothing to do with that most horrendous misunderstanding based on the bizarre notion as though Kant [*der Philosoph*], who embraced this constructive method, took his personal vagaries and whim to be the objective, lawful order of nature." Kant's "constructivist" claim refers to humanity's *construction of understanding* of physical and moral laws, *not creation* of the world and morality at whim.

(imperatives) that govern that particular activity. Examples of such hypothetical imperatives are the civic laws of a given society, the "ethical" culture of a corporation, the technical rules required to build a house, and the rules that govern personal welfare like pursuing a specific career.[39]

Some hypothetical imperatives are universal and demanded by nature (for example, the sequence of constructing a house forbids hanging the roof before laying the foundation and building the walls). However, many hypothetical imperatives are demanded by a particular society out of self-interest. We need rules for the safety of all and want people skilled in their respective professions. Furthermore, we reward people for having learned the hypothetical imperatives by issuing drivers' licenses, professional credentials, and celebrating the creative achievements of our fellow citizens.

When hypothetical imperatives function well, they serve as a powerful motivation for the individual to make a positive contribution to her/his society. However, the rewarding of the fulfilment of hypothetical imperatives can lead to conscious deception to serve merely self-interest: one can be encouraged to and can personally manipulate the appearances of one's having satisfied the hypothetical imperatives.[40] In short, hypothetical imperatives govern the *successful negotiating of a particular, social world*, but the perceived success and rewards from society can be based on deception.[41]

Not all imperatives, then, are moral even when they satisfy the ethical rules of a particular society.[42] The civic law can convict the innocent and free the guilty. For a rational species to function even adequately (if not entirely properly), its citizenry must adhere to a set of imperatives that are "above" hypothetical imperatives. Hypothetical imperatives require at least a certain level of moral accountability on the part of the individual. This moral accountability is neither constructed by society itself nor can it be imposed upon the individual.

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[39] In order to drive a car, I must learn the rules of the road for the particular society in which I will drive the car. In order to build a particular house, I must necessarily lay a foundation before installing the roof. In order to pursue a particular career, I must necessarily cultivate the necessary skills and obtain the appropriate credentials of that profession (architect, teacher, physician, musician, etc.).

[40] For example: by practicing a profession without the required credentials, cutting corners in the construction of the house, fudging the data from one's research to portray a greater success than the original data warrant, etc.

[41] Patricia Churchland's *Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us about Morality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) defines "morality" as the successful negotiation of a social world. Morality is a "four dimensional scheme:" "(!) *caring* (rooted in attachment to kin and kith and care for their well-being), (2) *recognition of others' psychological states* (rooted in the benefits of predicting the behavior of others), (3) *problem-solving in a social context* (e.g., how we should distribute scarce goods, settle land disputes; how we should punish the miscreants), and (4) *learning social practices* (by positive and negative reinforcement, by imitation, by trial and error, by various kinds of conditioning, and by analogy)." (8) Rather than morality being grounded in autonomous freedom that calls for acknowledgement of broad, universal *categorical imperatives* (of course, that can be ignored), Churchland truncates "morality" to what is in reality social "ethics." the adherence to *hypothetical imperatives*. According to Churchland, the latter are grounded not in what Critical Idealism calls autonomous freedom, but in the brain's amygdala and physical hormones, like oxytocin.

[42] Taking hypothetical imperatives to be categorical moral imperatives turns morality into tyranny either because it is reduced to materialism, as the case with Churchland, or the application of every *hypothetical* rule is mistakenly taken to be the application of a moral, *categorical* imperative. See the *Metaphysics of Morals* AA VI: 409.

Hypothetical imperatives are called *heteronomous imperatives* because they are externally imposed upon the individual. The imperatives that only the individual can impose upon her-/himself are called *autonomous or categorical imperatives*. Categorical imperatives are *autonomous,* but here autonomy is a form of *causality*, not *resistance and/or selfishness*.[43]

As a form of causality, autonomy has its own lawful system without which we have chaos.[44] *Categorical imperatives* are neither natural, physical laws nor social constructions for the governance of the achievement of *particular* skills or personal welfare but stand "above" all such hypothetical imperatives. Only when we are concerned with *categorical imperatives* is it appropriate to speak of morality. All other imperatives are *hypothetical*, and at best *hypothetical imperatives* are a social ethic, not moral. We can do everything ethically according to socially constructed imperatives, but we can still be immoral.

Morality and Religion:
A Society that Encourages Moral Culture

Given that categorical imperatives can only be experienced and acknowledged *internally* by the individual, it is not possible to discern by the consequences which moral principle the individual chose to act upon much less whether or not the individual acted on a moral principle, at all. The individual can choose to act purely on self-interest, which by definition contradicts a moral

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[43] Kant also rejects the claim that morality involves suppression of the "flesh." The "flesh" (included in "animality") is affirmed as the most fundamental, material basis of any and all experience (see *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* AA VI, 26-27). The criterion for sexuality is found in the second form of the categorical imperative that is anchored in the recognition of human dignity: "So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of the other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means." (*Groundwork* AA IV: 429) Furthermore, our "animality" is necessarily presupposed for the two "higher" capacities (*Anlagen*) achievable by a rational being: "humanity" as status and prestige in the eyes of others, and "personality" as respect for the moral law as sufficient incentive for governing one's moral responsibility (see the *Metaphysics of Morals*, AA VI, 27-28). In short, Kant refutes that morality requires the denial of "sensuousness." See *ibid*., AA VI, 408 but also 384, 390, 394, and 405. Kant also rejects "ethical asceticism." See "Ethical Ascetics §53" of The Doctrine of Virtue in *ibid*., AA VI, 484-485: "[…] monkish ascetics, which from superstitious fear or hypocritical loathing of oneself goes to work with self-torture and mortification of the flesh, is not directed to virtue but rather to fantastically purging oneself of sin by imposing punishments on oneself […]. [I]t cannot produce the cheerfulness that accompanies virtue, but rather brings with it secret hatred for virtue's command." (*Ibid*., 485)

[44] See Kant's discussion of dreams in *Metaphysik Mrongovius* AA XXIX: 884f, 927. Kant wrote: "The dream is another phenomenon of the imagination. It occurs entirely naturally. Because the imagination is constantly at work and in sleep the effects of understanding have ceased, only the imagination remains and is thereby given free rein. It gives us representations of things [in the dream] rather than understanding … [The] productive imagination is especially manifest in a dream. The dream is a sequence of fabrications that are involuntary. When awake, we are in a shared world; in the dream, though, we are in our own world. – The dream's creativity is similar to that of the waking world but with a difference: in the dream the productive imagination is involuntary, without order and intentionality. In the waking world, in contrast, I can link my fantasy in many ways in all kinds of directions according to an order, and I can always call myself back from my fantasy whenever I wish. In the waking world, fantasy is also involuntary but the creative idea is not so strong as in the dream because in the waking world sense impressions limit us whereas in the dream all of the senses are suspended and only the field [in contrast to territory, where order is possible, and domain where order is necessary] of the productive imagination is active. This is because the dream suspends entirely our consciousness of our circumstance. As a consequence, we have that peculiar experience that we can represent the past without knowledge that it is past. Here a subject of the reproductive imagination is opened up in which we swim in fancies without being conscious of our actual situation." (*Ibid*., 885) ([McGaughey's translation]. See as well, Kant's *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics* AA IV: 290-291; and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* B 520–21.

principle because a moral principle is universal, not particular. In any and all event, though, the individual gives her-/himself "permission" to decide and act in a certain manner. The analogy from nature that "one can judge a tree by its fruit" is precisely an analogy and not a literal truth because the tree blindly produces its fruit (no "permission" is involved) whereas the individual is capable of consciously producing its "fruits."

In light of the fact that only the individual knows what principle s/he has acted upon and that one frequently has little if any control over the consequences, the "fruits" of human agency are no absolute indication of morality. The aphorism "the road to hell is paved with good intentions" reminds us that we don't control the consequences of our decisions and even our moral and ethical choices can lead to horrendous consequences.[45]

What we can control is the moral principle on the basis of which we make our decisions and govern the *oughtness* of our actions. This capacity, though, is one that must be cultivated to be recognized, and it is facilitated by social encouragement because our moral principles can require that we act even contrary to our self-interest. Our having to recognize and act upon physical laws is analogous: Just as the moral law can call us to act contrary to our self-interest, our grasp of the physical law can require us to contradict our senses and say, "the sun is not moving."

A moral culture, then, is one that not only encourages the cultivation of technical skills but also encourages the cultivation, decision taking, and action on the basis of moral laws simply because they are right and not because they further self- or group-interest.[46] Learning to apply consciously moral principles to govern one's decision-taking and agency benefits most from an environment in which such moral "skills" are appreciated and rewarded. This is the vital domain of religion,[47] far beyond revelations, traditions, rituals, and institutional structures.[48]

The theism of Platonic Intellectualism is top-down and claims to be absolutely, *a priori*. The theism of Aristotelian Voluntarism is top-down and claims to be entirely *a posteriori*. Both of these theistic options are based on a *literal* anthropomorphism. In contrast, the theism of Human Critical Idealism is also *a priori*, but it is not absolute. It is an *a priori* wager of faith (a *Fürwahrhalten*) that experience is governed by two lawful causal orders not of human creation

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[45] This moral "fact" points out the weakness of Lessing's "Ring Metaphor" in *Nathan the Wise* for the evaluation of the moral status of a religion. Rather than evaluating religions on the basis of their fallible human consequences, we are better served by focusing on the capacities and their moral cultivation that make it possible for us to be moral, in the first place. In short, we need an *archaeology of morality* that takes us to a core of universal capacities that make moral rationality possible.

[46] By this definition of moral culture, it is not only religion that has failed morally but human societies have failed.

[47] Kant spoke of "one pure religion," but he did not mean that one historical religion among all other historical religions is the "true" religion. Rather, he meant that at the core of all historical religions one finds the same pure religion: the religion that cultivates moral culture. See "One World, One Reason, One Faith, but Many Religions: Religious Studies in the Age of Pluralism 7 March 2016" and "Studying Religion: More and Less than Mapping Territories 4 December 2015" at https://criticalidealism.org.

[48] Kant viewed Christianity to be only one among *pure* religions but not on the basis of Christianity's "correct" doctrines. He viewed "Christology" (the teaching about Jesus) to be *inclusive*, not *exclusive*. Jesus is a moral model for all, not the sacrifice necessary for conquering "original sin" and for entering heaven. See Flügge, *Versuch einer historisch-kritischen Darstellung des bisherigen Einflusses der Kantischen Philosophie auf alle Zweige der wissenschaftlichen und praktischen Theologie*, 113-114. Furthermore, Jesus did not found a *pure* religion but was taken to be the founder of an *historical* church. See *ibid.*, 191.

but upon which all of experience is dependent. At best it employs *symbolic* anthropomorphism[49] to speak of God, but in such cases, the judgments of *symbolic* anthropomorphism say as much, if not more, about humanity's limits than allow for (wild) speculations about what God is.

Religions can by no means guarantee that humanity will act morally. Nonetheless, they can foster the capacities and encourage the application of moral principles by this extra-*ordinary* rational species.[50]

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[49] In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B723-724), Kant poses three questions: 1) "[…] whether there is anything distinct from the world, which contains the ground of the order of the world and of its connection in accordance with universal laws[?]" He answers: Undoubtedly!; 2) […] whether this being is substance […]? He answers: This question is meaningless because the limits of reason restrict our categories (of which substance is one) to objects of possible experience, which God is not; 3) […] whether we may not […] think this being, which is distinct from the world, in analogy with the objects of experience […]? He answers: Yes, "[…] but only as object in idea and not in reality," "[…] as a substratum, to us unknown, of the systematic unity, order, and purposiveness of the arrangement of the world […]." In the "Conclusion" to *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* AA IV, 350 f; especially, 355-358, Kant proposes speaking of a "symbolic anthropomorphism" when it comes to the "God question." On the heuristic value for understanding of the anthropomorphic analogy for understanding biological phenomena as well as Kant's emphasis in stressing that these projections onto the divine Noumenon in no way justify drawing conclusions about "divine predicates" but only for drawing conclusions about what is necessary for finite, human understanding, see "Part Two: Critique of Teleological Judgment" in *Critique of Judgment* AA V, 359 f.

[50] Without space to develop these themes further here, it should be underscored that Kant by no means restricted practical reason to religion. He also has a powerful philosophy of history grounded in moral capacities, a defense of representative democracy constitutionally by the separation of powers (legislative, administrative, and judicial), a cosmopolitanism that looks far beyond the boundaries of nationalism and views the individual as a member of a global community, as well as calling for a league of nations – but not a world government.

  Human reason is by no means merely subjective and limited to self-selected goals and achievements but, rather, is unequivocally social and historical. (See „Fünfter Teil: Geschichte" in Otfried Höffe's *Kants Kritik der praktischen Vernunft. Eine Philosophie der Freiheit* [Munich: C.H. Beck, 2012]: 273-337). Given that reason is profoundly limited, Kant's philosophy of history is not driven by an absolute goal (e.g., Christian salvation or Hegel's meta-Idea of the One). Kant's philosophy of history is governed by a "cunning of reason," again non-Hegelian, that he labels reason's "unsocial sociality." (See the „*Vierter Satz*" ["Fourth Thesis"] of Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim AA VIII: 20-22.) Given that history begins, for Kant, with the conscious emergence of humanity's transcendental capacities of autonomous freedom as the ground of its theoretical and practical reason, history is viewed here as an open-ended project in which humanity seeks to become human (i.e., to properly exercise both its theoretical and practical reason).

  Individual and groups can and will act contrary to their self-interests in the name of higher moral principles. Yet, even when humanity acts exclusively on the basis of self-interest, its ability to do so always includes the capacity of practical reason to act morally. Hence, the unsocial sociality of humanity consists in the possibilities of humanity's very practical reason. This by no means constitutes an embracing of dystopia because humanity's hope is not dependent upon its achievements or failures but on its originating capacities that can never be eradicated as long as there is such a rational species.

  In other words, the very rational capacities that constitute our species marker lead us not merely to exercise our individual, creative capacity but also to democratic social orders grounded in representative government with a constitutionally guaranteed division of powers (legislative, administrative, and judicial) as well as to international cosmopolitanism and the negotiation of national interests under the auspices of a league of nations but not a world government. (For an account of Kant's influence on Woodrow Wilson's vision for the League of Nations, see Gerhard Beestermöller, Gerhard, "Die Umsetzung der Völkerbundsphilosophie in politische Wirklichkeit durch Woodrow Wilson." In *Die Völkerbundsidee. Leistungsfähigkeit und Grenzen der Kriegsächtung durch Staatensolidarität* [Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1995]: 94-142.)

  The very "nature" of humanity's "unnatural" capacities – all of which, of course, are not of our own or any other human being's creation – ground reason in a social order, as fragile and precarious as is the human condition.

Succinctly, it is as misanthropic to take the hypothetical imperatives of heteronomous, socially constructed rules and performances to exhaust ethics as it is misanthropic to take heteronomous imperatives drawn from speculative analogies based on finite, human, transcendental capacities for understanding and responsible agency to serve speculations about the "reason" and "will" of God (or the gods), much less to constitute morality and religion. Furthermore, the distinction between hypothetical (externally imposes physical laws and social rules) and categorical imperatives (moral principles) provides a hierarchy of principles governing moral, human agency in which "narrow," particular hypothetical imperatives are necessarily subordinate to "broad," universal categorical imperatives.[51]

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[51] On the subordination of hypothetical imperatives to categorical imperatives as the key to the "good," that is, moral life, see Otfried Höffe, *Can Virtue Make Us Happy? The Art of Living and Morality*, trans. by Douglas R McGaughey (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010).