

The Transcendental Doctrine of Method
Second Chapter
The canon of pure reason

It is humiliating for human reason that it accomplishes nothing in its pure use, and even requires a discipline to check its extravagances and avoid the deceptions that come from them. But, on the other side, that reason can and must exercise this discipline itself, without allowing anything else to censor it, elevates it and gives it confidence in itself, for the boundaries that it is required to set for its speculative use at the same time limit the sophistical pretensions of every opponent, and thus it can secure against all attacks everything that may still be left to it from its previously exaggerated demands. The greatest and perhaps only utility of all philosophy of pure reason is thus only negative, namely that it does not serve for expansion, as an organon, but rather, as a discipline, serves for the determination of boundaries, and instead of discovering truth it has only the silent merit of guarding against errors.

Nevertheless, there must somewhere be a source of positive cognitions that belong in the domain of pure reason, and that perhaps give occasion for errors only through misunderstanding, but that in fact constitute the goal of the strenuous effort of reason. For to what cause should the unquenchable desire to find a firm footing beyond all bounds of experience otherwise be ascribed? Pure reason has a presentiment of objects of great interest to it. It takes the path of mere speculation in order to come closer to these; but they flee before it. Presumably it may hope for better luck on the only path that still remains to it, namely that of its **practical** use.

I understand by a canon the sum total of the *a priori* principles of the correct use of certain cognitive faculties in general. Thus general logic in its analytical part is a canon for understanding and reason in general, but only as far as form is concerned, since it abstracts from all content. Thus the transcendental analytic was the canon of the pure **understanding**; for it alone is capable of true synthetic *a priori* cognitions. But where no correct use of a cognitive power is possible there is no canon. Now according to the proofs that have previously been given, all synthetic cognition of pure **reason** in its speculative use is entirely impos-

On the ultimate end of pure reason

sible. There is thus no canon for its speculative use at all (for this is through and through dialectical); rather all transcendental logic is in this respect nothing but a discipline. Consequently, if there is to be any legitimate use of pure reason at all, in which case there must also be a canon of it, this will concern not the speculative but rather the practical use of reason, which we will therefore now investigate.²⁶

A 797/B 825

On the Canon of Pure Reason

First Section

On the ultimate end of the pure use
of our reason.

Reason is driven by a propensity of its nature to go beyond its use in experience, to venture to the outermost bounds of all cognition by means of mere ideas in a pure use, and to find peace only in the completion of its circle in a self-subsisting systematic whole. Now is this striving grounded merely in its speculative interest, or rather uniquely and solely in its practical interest?

I will set aside the good fortune of reason in a speculative regard, and ask only about those problems the solution of which constitutes its ultimate end, whether it may reach this or not, and in respect to which all other ends have merely the value of means. These highest ends must, in accordance with the nature of reason, in turn have unity, in order to advance, in a united manner, that interest of humanity which is subordinated to no higher one.

A 798/B 826

The final aim to which in the end the speculation of reason in its transcendental use is directed concerns three objects: the freedom of the will,^a the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. With regard to all three the merely^b speculative interest of reason is very small, and with respect to this an exhausting labor of transcendental research, hampered with unceasing hindrances, would be undertaken only with difficulty, since one would not be able to make any use of the discoveries that might be made which would prove its utility *in concreto*, i.e., in the investigation of nature. The will may well be free, yet this can concern only the intelligible cause of our willing. For, in accordance with an inviolable fundamental maxim without which we could not exercise any reason in empirical use, we must explain the phenomena of its manifestations, i.e., actions, no differently than all other appearances of nature, namely in accordance with its unalterable laws. Second, we

^a *des Willens*. In what follows, *Wille* will be translated as “will” and *Willkühr* as “choice” or “faculty of choice.”

^b Following the second edition, which has *das bloß* instead of *bloß das*.

A 799/B 827

might be able to have insight into the spiritual nature of the soul (and with that into its immortality), yet that cannot be counted on either as an explanatory ground of the appearances in this life or for the special constitution of the future state, because our concept of an incorporeal nature is merely negative, and does not in the least expand our cognition nor offer any suitable material for any conclusions except merely fictional ones, which cannot be sanctioned by philosophy. Third, even if the existence of a highest intelligence were proved, we would, to be sure, be able to make that which is purposive in the arrangement and order of the world comprehensible in general, but would by no means be authorized to derive from it any particular arrangement and order, or boldly to infer one where it is not perceived, for it is a necessary rule of the speculative use of reason not to bypass natural causes and abandon that about which we could be instructed by experience in order to derive something that we know from something that entirely surpasses all our knowledge.^a In a word, these three propositions always remain transcendent for speculative reason, and have no immanent use, i.e., one that is permissible for objects of experience and therefore useful for us in some way, but are rather, considered in themselves, entirely idle even though extremely difficult efforts of our reason.

A 800/B 828

If, then, these three cardinal propositions are not at all necessary for our **knowing**, and yet are insistently recommended to us by our reason, their importance must really concern only the **practical**.

Everything is practical that is possible through freedom. But if the conditions for the exercise of our free choice^b are empirical, then in that case reason can have none but a regulative use, and can only serve to produce the unity of empirical laws, as, e.g., in the doctrine of prudence the unification of all ends that are given to us by our inclinations into the single end of **happiness** and the harmony of the means for attaining that end constitute the entire business of reason, which can therefore provide none but **pragmatic** laws of free conduct for reaching the ends recommended to us by the senses, and therefore can provide no pure laws that are determined completely *a priori*. Pure practical laws, on the contrary, whose end is given by reason completely *a priori*, and which do not command under empirical conditions but absolutely, would be products of pure reason. Of this sort, however, are the **moral** laws; thus these alone belong to the practical use of reason and permit a canon.

Thus the entire armament of reason, in the undertaking that one can call pure philosophy, is in fact directed only at the three problems that have been mentioned. These themselves, however, have in turn their

^a *Kenntnis*

^b *Willkür*

more remote aim, namely, **what is to be done** if the will is free, if there is a God, and if there is a future world. Now since these concern our conduct in relation to the highest end, **the ultimate aim of nature which provides for us wisely in the disposition of reason is properly directed only to what is moral.**

A 801/B 829

However, since we now cast our attention upon an object that is foreign* to transcendental philosophy, caution is necessary in order not to digress into episodes and injure the unity of the same system, but on the other side also in order not to say too little about the new material, thus allowing it to fail in clarity or conviction. I hope to achieve both by keeping as close as possible to the transcendental and setting aside entirely what might here be psychological, i.e., empirical.

And here the first thing to note is that **for the present I will use the concept of freedom only in a practical sense^a and set aside, as having been dealt with above, the transcendental signification of the concept, which cannot be empirically presupposed as an explanatory ground of the appearances but is rather itself a problem for reason.**²⁷ A faculty of choice, that is, is merely **animal** (*arbitrium brutum*) which cannot be determined other than through sensible impulses, i.e., **pathologically**. However, one which can be determined independently of sensory impulses, thus through motives^b that can only be represented by reason, is called **free choice** (*arbitrium liberum*), and everything that is connected with this, whether as ground or consequence, is called **practical**. **Practical freedom can be proved through experience. For it is not merely that which stimulates the senses, i.e., immediately affects them, that determines human choice, but we have a capacity^c to overcome impressions on our sensory faculty of desire by representations of that which is useful or injurious even in a more remote way; but these considerations about that which in regard to our whole condition is desirable, i.e., good and useful, depend on reason. Hence this also yields laws that are imperatives, i.e., objective laws of freedom, and that say what ought to happen, even though perhaps it never does happen, and that are thereby**

A 802/B 830

* All practical concepts pertain to objects of satisfaction or dissatisfaction,^d i.e., of pleasure or displeasure, and thus, at least indirectly, to objects of our feeling. But since this is not a power for the representation of things, but lies outside the cognitive power altogether, the elements of our judgments, insofar as they are related to pleasure or displeasure, thus belong to practical philosophy, and not to the sum total of transcendental philosophy, which has to do solely with pure *a priori* cognitions.

A 801/B 829

^a *Verstande*

^b *Bewegursachen*

^c *Vermögen*

^d *Wohlgefallens, oder Mißfallens*

distinguished from **laws of nature**, which deal only with that **which does happen**, on which account the former are also called practical laws.

A803/B831

But whether in these actions, through which it prescribes laws, reason is not itself determined by further influences, and whether that which with respect to sensory impulses is called freedom might not in turn with regard to higher and more remote efficient causes be nature – in the practical sphere this does not concern us, since in the first instance we ask of reason only a **precept** for conduct; it is rather a merely speculative question, which we can set aside as long as our aim is directed to action or omission.^a We thus cognize practical freedom through experience, as one of the natural causes, namely a causality of reason in the determination of the will, whereas transcendental freedom requires an independence of this reason itself (with regard to its causality for initiating a series of appearances) from all determining causes of the world of the senses, and to this extent seems to be contrary to the law of nature, thus to all possible experience, and so remains a problem. Yet this problem does not belong to reason in its practical use, so in a canon of pure reason we are concerned with only two questions that pertain to the practical interest of pure reason, and with regard to which a canon of its use must be possible, namely: Is there a God? Is there a future life? The question about transcendental freedom concerns merely speculative knowledge, which we can set aside as quite indifferent if we are concerned with what is practical, and about which there is already sufficient discussion in the Antinomy of Pure Reason.

A804/B832

On the Canon of Pure Reason
Second Section

On the ideal of the highest good,
as a determining ground
of the ultimate end of pure reason.

In its speculative use reason led us through the field of experiences, and, since it could never find complete satisfaction for itself there, it led us on from there to speculative ideas, which in the end, however, led us back again to experience, and thus fulfilled its aim in a way that is quite useful but not quite in accord with our expectation. Now yet another experiment remains open to us: namely, whether pure reason is also to be found in practical use, whether in that use it leads us to the ideas that attain the highest ends of pure reason which we have just adduced, and thus whether from the point of view of its practical interest reason may

^a *Thun oder Lassen*, the standard eighteenth-century German phrase for behavior subject to moral regulation and evaluation.

not be able to guarantee that which in regard to its speculative interest it entirely refuses to us.

All interest of my reason (the speculative as well as the practical) is united in the following three questions:

A805/B833

1. What can I know?

2. What should I do?

3. What may I hope?

The first question is merely speculative. We have (as I flatter myself) already exhausted all possible replies to it, and finally found that with which reason must certainly satisfy itself and with which, if it does not look to the practical, it also has cause to be content; but from the two great ends to which this entire effort of pure reason was really directed we remain just as distant as if, out of a concern for comfort, we had declined this labor at the outset. If, therefore, the issue is knowledge, then this much at least is certain and settled, that we can never partake of knowledge with respect to those two problems.

The second question is merely practical. As such, to be sure, it can belong to pure reason, but in that case it is not transcendental, but moral, and thus it cannot be in itself a subject for our critique.

The third question, namely, "If I do what I should, what may I then hope?" is simultaneously practical and theoretical, so that the practical leads like a clue to a reply to the theoretical question and, in its highest form, the speculative question. For all **hope** concerns happiness, and with respect to the practical and the moral law it is the very same as what knowledge and the natural law is with regard to theoretical cognition of things. The former finally comes down to the inference that something **is** (which determines the ultimate final end) **because something ought to happen**; the latter, that something **is** (which acts as the supreme cause) **because something does happen**.

A806/B834

Happiness is the satisfaction of all of our inclinations (*extensive*,^a with regard to their manifoldness, as well as *intensive*,^b with regard to degree, and^c also *protensive*,^d with regard to duration). The practical law from the motive of **happiness** I call pragmatic (rule of prudence); but that which is such that it has no other motive than the **worthiness to be happy** I call moral (moral law).^e The first advises us what to do if we want to partake of happiness; the second commands how we should behave in order even to be worthy of happiness. The first is grounded on

^a extensively

^b intensively

^c In the first edition, "as."

^d protensively

^e *moralisch* (*Sittengesetz*)

empirical principles;^a for except by means of experience I can know neither which inclinations there are that would be satisfied nor what the natural causes are that could satisfy them. The second abstracts from inclinations and natural means of satisfying them, and considers only the freedom of a rational being in general and the necessary conditions under which alone it is in agreement with the distribution of happiness in accordance with principles,^b and thus it at least **can** rest on mere ideas of pure reason and be cognized *a priori*.

A 807/B 835

I assume that there are really pure moral laws, which determine completely *a priori* (without regard to empirical motives, i.e., happiness) the action and omission, i.e., the use of the freedom of a rational being in general, and that these laws command **absolutely** (not merely hypothetically under the presupposition of other empirical ends), and are thus necessary in every respect.²⁸ I can legitimately presuppose this proposition by appealing not only to the proofs of the most enlightened moralists but also to the moral judgment of every human being, if he will distinctly think such a law.

Pure reason thus contains – not in its speculative use, to be sure, but yet in a certain practical use, namely the moral use – principles^c of the **possibility of experience**, namely of those actions in conformity with moral precepts which **could** be encountered in the **history** of humankind. For since they command that these actions ought to happen, they must also be able to happen, and there must therefore be possible a special kind of systematic unity, namely the moral, whereas the systematic unity of nature **in accordance with speculative principles^d of reason** could not be proved, since reason has causality with regard to freedom in general but not with regard to the whole of nature, and moral principles of reason^e can produce free actions but not laws of nature. Thus the principles^f of pure reason have objective reality in their practical use, that is, in the moral use.

A 808/B 836

I call the world as it would be if it were in conformity with all moral laws (as it **can** be in accordance with the **freedom** of rational beings and **should** be in accordance with the necessary laws of **morality**) a **moral world**.^g This is conceived thus far merely as an intelligible world, since abstraction is made therein from all conditions (ends) and even from all hindrances to morality in it (weakness or impurity^h of human nature).

^a *Principien*

^b *Principien*

^c *Principien*

^d *Principien*

^e *Vernunftprincipien*

^f *Principien*

^g Here Kant uses even **larger type** than his ordinary **emphasis**.

^h *Unlauterkeit*

Thus far it is therefore a mere, yet practical, idea, which really can and should have its influence on the sensible world, in order to make it agree as far as possible with this idea. The idea of a moral world thus has objective reality, not as if it pertained to an object of an intelligible intuition (for we cannot even think of such a thing), but as pertaining to the sensible world, although as an object of pure reason in its practical use and a *corpus mysticum* of the rational beings in it, insofar as their free choice under moral laws has thoroughgoing systematic unity in itself as well as with the freedom of everyone else.

This was the reply to the first of the two questions of pure reason that concern the practical interest: **Do that through which you will become worthy to be happy.** Now the second question asks: Now if I behave so as not to be unworthy of happiness, how may I hope thereby to partake of it? For the answer to this question, the issue is whether the principles^a of pure reason that prescribe the law *a priori* also necessarily connect this hope with it.

A809/B837

I say, accordingly, that just as the moral principles^b are necessary in accordance with reason in its **practical** use, it is equally necessary to assume in accordance with reason in its **theoretical** use^c that everyone has cause to hope for happiness in the same measure as he has made himself worthy of it in his conduct, and that the system of morality is therefore inseparably combined with the system of happiness, though only in the idea of pure reason.

Now in an intelligible world, i.e., in the moral world, in the concept of which we have abstracted from all hindrances to morality (of the inclinations), such a system of happiness proportionately combined with morality can also be thought as necessary, since freedom, partly moved and partly restricted by moral laws, would itself be the cause of the general happiness, and rational beings, under the guidance of such principles,^d would themselves be the authors of their own enduring welfare and at the same time that of others. But this system of self-rewarding morality is only an idea, the realization of which rests on the condition that **everyone** do what he should, i.e., that all actions of rational beings occur as if they arose from a highest will that comprehends all private choice in or under itself. But since the obligation from the moral law remains valid for each particular use of freedom even if others do not conduct themselves in accord with this law, how their consequences will be related to happiness is determined neither by the nature of the things in the world, nor by the causality of actions themselves and their rela-

A810/B838

^a *Principien*

^b *Principien*

^c The second occurrence of "use" is added in the second edition.

^d *Principien*

tion^a to morality; and the necessary connection of the hope of being happy with the unremitting effort to make oneself worthy of happiness that has been adduced cannot be cognized through reason if it is grounded merely in nature, but may be hoped for only if it is at the same time grounded on a **highest reason**, which commands in accordance with moral laws, as at the same time the cause of nature.

A 811/B 839

I call the idea of such an intelligence, in which the morally most perfect will, combined with the highest blessedness, is the cause of all happiness in the world, insofar as it stands in exact relation^b with morality (as the worthiness to be happy), **the ideal of the highest good**.²⁹ Thus only in the ideal of the highest **original** good can pure reason find the ground of the practically necessary connection of both elements of the highest derived good, namely of an intelligible, i.e., **moral** world. Now since we must necessarily represent ourselves through reason as belonging to such a world, although the senses do not present us with anything except a world of appearances, we must assume the moral world to be a consequence of our conduct in the sensible world; and since the latter does not offer such a connection to us, we must assume the former to be a world that is future for us. Thus God and a future life are two presuppositions that are not to be separated from the obligation that pure reason imposes on us in accordance with principles^c of that very same reason.

A 812/B 840

Morality in itself constitutes a system, but happiness does not, except insofar as it is distributed precisely in accordance with morality. This, however, is possible only in the intelligible world, under a wise author and regent. Reason sees itself as compelled either to assume such a thing, together with life in such a world, which we must regard as a future one, or else to regard the moral laws as empty figments of the brain, since without that presupposition their necessary success, which the same reason connects with them, would have to disappear. Hence everyone also regards the moral laws as **commands**, which, however, they could not be if they did not connect appropriate consequences with their rule *a priori*, and thus carry with them **promises** and **threats**. This, however, they could not do if they did not lie in a necessary being, as the highest good, which alone can make possible such a purposive unity.

Leibniz called the world, insofar as in it one attends only to rational beings and their interconnection in accordance with moral laws under the rule of the highest good, the **realm**³⁰ **of grace**, and distinguished it from the **realm of nature**, where, to be sure, rational beings stand

^a *Verhältnisse*

^b *Verhältnisse*

^c *Principien*

under moral laws but cannot expect any successes for their conduct except in accordance with the course of nature in our sensible world.³¹ Thus to regard ourselves as in the realm of grace, where every happiness awaits us as long as we do not ourselves limit our share of it through the unworthiness to be happy, is a practically necessary idea of reason.

Practical laws, insofar as they are at the same time subjective grounds of actions, i.e., subjective principles, are called **maxims**. The **judgment**^a of morality concerning its purity and consequences takes place in accordance with **ideas**, the **observance** of its laws, in accordance with **maxims**.³²

It is necessary that our entire course of life be subordinated to moral maxims; but it would at the same time be impossible for this to happen if reason did not connect with the moral law, which is a mere idea, an efficient cause which determines for the conduct in accord with this law an outcome precisely corresponding to our highest ends, whether in this or in another life. Thus without a God and a world that is now not visible to us but is hoped for, the majestic ideas of morality are, to be sure, objects of approbation and admiration but not incentives for resolve and realization, because they would not fulfill the whole end that is natural for every rational being and determined *a priori* and necessarily through the very same pure reason.

A813/B841

Happiness alone is far from the complete good for our reason. Reason does not approve of it (however much inclination may wish for it) where it is not united with the worthiness to be happy, i.e., with morally good conduct. Yet morality alone, and with it, the mere **worthiness** to be happy, is also far from being the complete good. In order to complete the latter, he who has not conducted himself so as to be unworthy of happiness must be able to hope to partake of it. Even reason free from all private aims cannot judge otherwise if, without taking into account an interest of its own, it puts itself in the place of a being who would have to distribute all happiness to others; for in the practical idea both elements are essentially combined, though in such a way that the moral disposition, as a condition, first makes partaking in happiness possible, rather than the prospect of happiness first making possible the moral disposition. For in the latter case the disposition would not be moral and would therefore also be unworthy of complete happiness, which knows^b no other limitation before reason except that which is derived from our own immoral conduct.

A814/B842

Thus happiness in exact proportion with the morality of rational beings, through which they are worthy of it, alone constitutes the highest

^a *Beurteilung*

^b *erkennt*

good of a world into which we must without exception transpose ourselves in accordance with the precepts of pure but practical reason, and which, of course, is only an intelligible world, since the sensible world does not promise us that sort of systematic unity of ends, the reality of which can be grounded on nothing other than the presupposition of a highest original good, since self-sufficient reason, armed with all of the sufficiency of a supreme cause, in accordance with the most perfect purposiveness, grounds, conserves, and completes the order of things that is universal though well hidden from us in the sensible world.

A815/B843

Now this moral theology has the peculiar advantage over the speculative one that it inexorably leads to the concept of a **single, most perfect**, and **rational** primordial being, of which speculative theology could not on objective grounds give us even a **hint**, let alone **convince** us. For neither in speculative nor in natural theology, as far as reason may lead us, do we find even a single significant ground for assuming a single^a being to set before all natural causes, on which we would at the same time have sufficient cause to make the latter dependent in every way. On the contrary, if, from the standpoint of moral unity, we assess the cause that can alone provide this with the appropriate effect^b and thus obligating force for us, as a necessary law of the world, then there must be a single supreme will, which comprehends all these laws in itself. For how would we find complete unity of purposes among different wills? This will must be omnipotent, so that all of nature and its relation to morality in the world are subject to it; omniscient, so that it cognizes the inmost dispositions and their moral worth; omnipresent, so that it is immediately ready for every need that is demanded by the highest good for the world; eternal, so that this agreement of nature and freedom is not lacking at any time, etc.

A816/B844

But this systematic unity of ends in this world of intelligences, which, though as mere nature it can only be called the sensible world, as a system of freedom can be called an intelligible, i.e., moral world (*regnum gratiae*),^c also leads inexorably to the purposive unity of all things that constitute this great whole, in accordance with universal laws of nature, just as the first does in accordance with universal and necessary moral laws, and unifies practical with speculative reason. The world must be represented as having arisen out of an idea if it is to be in agreement with that use of reason without which we would hold ourselves unworthy of reason, namely the moral use, which depends throughout on the idea of the highest good. All research into nature is thereby directed toward the form of a system of ends, and becomes, in its fullest extension,

^a Emphasized in the first edition.

^b *Effekt*

^c realm of grace

physico-theology. This, however, since it arises from moral order as a unity which is grounded in the essence of freedom and not contingently founded through external commands, brings the purposiveness of nature down to grounds that must be inseparably connected *a priori* to the inner possibility of things, and thereby leads to a **transcendental theology** that takes the ideal of the highest ontological perfection as a principle^a of systematic unity, which connects all things in accordance with universal and necessary laws of nature, since they all have their origin in the absolute necessity of a single original being.

What sort of **use** can we make of our understanding, even in regard to experience, if we do not set ends before ourselves? The highest ends, however, are those of morality, and only pure reason can grant us cognition of these. But though equipped and guided with these, **we still cannot even make any purposive use of our acquaintance^b with nature for cognition^c unless nature itself has introduced purposive unity; for without this we would not even have any reason, since we would have no school for it and no culture through objects that would offer the material for such concepts.** That purposive unity is necessary, however, and grounded in the essence of the faculty of choice itself, and therefore this one, which contains the condition of the application of that unity *in concreto*, must also be necessary, and thus the transcendental improvement of our rational cognition is not the cause but rather merely the effect of the practical purposiveness which pure reason imposes on us.

A817/B845

Hence we also find in the history of human reason that before the moral concepts were adequately purified and determined and the systematic unity of purposes was understood in accordance with them and from necessary principles,^d the knowledge of nature and even a considerable degree of culture of reason in many other sciences could, on the one hand, produce only rudimentary and vague concepts of the deity, and, on the other, leave a remarkable indifference with regard to this question in general. A greater refinement of moral ideas, which was made necessary by the extremely pure moral law of our religion, made reason attend more sharply to its object by means of the interest that it required reason to take in this object, and, without a contribution from either more ample acquaintance with nature or correct and reliable transcendental insights (which have been lacking at all times), produced a concept of the divine being that we now hold to be correct, not because speculative reason convinces us of its correctness but because it is

A818/B846

^a *Princip*

^b *Kenntnis*

^c *Erkenntnis*

^d *Principien*

in perfect agreement with the moral principles of reason.^a And thus, in the end, only pure reason, although only in its practical use, always has the merit of connecting with our highest interest a cognition that mere speculation can only imagine but never make valid, and of thereby making it into not a demonstrated dogma but yet an absolutely necessary presupposition for reason's most essential ends.

But now when practical reason has attained this high point, namely the concept of a single original being as the highest good, it must not undertake to start out from this concept and derive the moral laws themselves from it, as if it had elevated itself above all empirical conditions of its application and soared up to an immediate acquaintance with new objects. For it was these laws alone whose **inner** practical necessity led us to the presupposition of a self-sufficient cause or a wise world-regent, in order to give effect^b to these laws, and hence we cannot in turn regard these as contingent and derived from a mere will, especially from a will of which we would have had no concept at all had we not formed it in accordance with those laws.³³ So far as practical reason has the right to lead us, we will not hold actions to be obligatory because they are God's commands, but will rather regard them as divine commands because we are internally obligated to them.³⁴ We will study freedom under the purposive unity in accordance with principles^c of reason, and will believe ourselves to be in conformity with the divine will only insofar as we hold as holy the moral law that reason teaches us from the nature of actions themselves, believing ourselves to serve this divine will only through furthering what is best for the world^d in ourselves and others. Moral theology is therefore only of immanent use, namely for fulfilling our vocation here in the world by fitting into the system of all ends, not for fanatically or even impiously abandoning the guidance of a morally legislative reason in the good course of life in order to connect it immediately to the idea of the highest being, which would provide a transcendental use but which even so, like the use of mere speculation, must pervert and frustrate the ultimate ends of reason.

A819/B847

A820/B848

On the Canon of Pure Reason Third Section

On having an opinion, knowing, and believing.³⁵

Taking something to be true^e is an occurrence in our understanding that may rest on objective grounds, but that also requires subjective causes in

^a *moralischen Vernunftprincipien*

^b *Effect*

^c *Principien*

^d *das Weltbeste*

^e *Das Fürwahrhalten*

the mind of him who judges. If it is valid for everyone merely as long as he has reason, then its ground is objectively sufficient, and in that case taking something to be true is called **conviction**.^a If it has its ground only in the particular constitution of the subject, then it is called **persuasion**.^b

Persuasion is a mere semblance,^c since the ground of the judgment, which lies solely in the subject, is held to be objective. Hence such a judgment also has only private validity, and this taking something to be true cannot be communicated. Truth, however, rests upon agreement with the object,^d with regard to which, consequently, the judgments of every understanding must agree (*consentientia uni tertio, consentiunt inter se*).^e The touchstone of whether taking something to be true is conviction or mere persuasion is therefore, externally, the possibility of communicating it and finding it to be valid for the reason of every human being to take it to be true; for in that case there is at least a presumption that the ground of the agreement of all judgments, regardless of the difference among the subjects, rests on the common ground, namely the object,^f with which they therefore all agree and through which the truth of the judgment is proved.

A821/B849

Accordingly, persuasion cannot be distinguished from conviction subjectively, when the subject has taken something to be true merely as an appearance of his own mind; but the experiment that one makes on the understanding of others, to see if the grounds that are valid for us have the same effect on the reason of others, is a means, though only a subjective one, not for producing conviction, to be sure, but yet for revealing the merely private validity of the judgment, i.e., something in it that is mere persuasion.

If, moreover, one can unfold the subjective **causes** of the judgment, which we take to be objective **grounds** for it, and thus explain taking something to be true deceptively as an occurrence in our mind, without having any need for the constitution of the object,^g then we expose the illusion and are no longer taken in by it, although we are always tempted to a certain degree if the subjective cause of the illusion depends upon our nature.

I cannot **assert** anything, i.e., pronounce it to be a judgment necessarily valid for everyone, except that which produces conviction. I can preserve persuasion for myself if I please to do so, but cannot and should not want to make it valid beyond myself.

A822/B850

^a *Überzeugung*

^b *Überredung*

^c *Schein*

^d *Objekte*

^e [Because of] agreement with a third thing, they agree among themselves.

^f *Objecte*

^g *Objects*

Taking something to be true, or the subjective validity of judgment, has the following three stages in relation to conviction (which at the same time is valid objectively): **having an opinion**, **believing**, and **knowing**. **Having an opinion** is taking something to be true with the consciousness that it is subjectively **as well as** objectively insufficient. If taking something to be true is only subjectively sufficient and is at the same time held to be objectively insufficient, then it is called **believing**. Finally, when taking something to be true is both subjectively and objectively sufficient it is called **knowing**. Subjective sufficiency is called **conviction** (for myself), objective sufficiency, **certainty** (for everyone). I will not pause for the exposition of such readily grasped concepts.

A823/B851

I must never undertake **to have an opinion** without at least **knowing** something by means of which the in itself merely problematic judgment acquires a connection with truth which, although it is not complete, is nevertheless more than an arbitrary invention. Furthermore, the law of such a connection must be certain. For if in regard to this too I have nothing but opinion, then it is all only a game of imagination without the least relation to truth. In judging from pure reason, **to have an opinion** is not allowed at all. For since it will not be supported on grounds of experience, but everything that is necessary should be cognized *a priori*, the principle^a of connection requires universality and necessity, thus complete certainty, otherwise no guidance to the truth is forthcoming at all. Hence it is absurd to have an opinion in pure mathematics: one must know, or else refrain from all judgment. It is just the same with the principles of morality, since one must not venture an action on the mere opinion that something is **allowed**, but must know this.

In the transcendental use of reason, on the contrary, to have an opinion is of course too little, but to know is also too much. In a merely speculative regard, therefore, we cannot judge at all here, for subjective grounds for taking something to be true, such as those that can produce belief, deserve no approval in speculative questions, where they neither remain free of all empirical assistance nor allow of being communicated to others in equal measure.

Only in a **practical relation**, however, can taking something that is theoretically insufficient to be true be called believing.³⁶ This practical aim is either that of **skill** or of **morality**, the former for arbitrary and contingent ends, the latter, however, for absolutely necessary ends.

A824/B852

Once an end is proposed, then the conditions for attaining it are hypothetically necessary. This necessity is subjectively but still only comparatively sufficient if I do not know of any other conditions at all under which the end could be attained; but it is sufficient absolutely and for

^a *Princip*

everyone if I know with certainty that no one else can know of any other conditions that lead to the proposed end. In the first case my presupposition and taking certain conditions to be true is a merely contingent belief, in the second case, however, it is a necessary belief. The doctor must do something for a sick person who is in danger, but he does not know^a the illness. He looks to the symptoms,^b and judges, because he does not know of anything better, that it is consumption. His belief is merely contingent even in his own judgment; someone else might perhaps do better. I call such contingent beliefs, which however ground the actual use of the means to certain actions, **pragmatic beliefs**.

The usual touchstone of whether what someone asserts is mere persuasion or at least subjective conviction, i.e., firm belief, is **betting**. Often someone pronounces his propositions with such confident and inflexible defiance that he seems to have entirely laid aside all concern for error. A bet disconcerts him. Sometimes he reveals that he is persuaded enough for one ducat but not for ten. For he would happily bet one, but at ten he suddenly becomes aware of what he had not previously noticed, namely that it is quite possible that he has erred. If we entertain the thought that we should wager the happiness of our whole life on something, our triumphant judgment would quickly disappear, we would become timid and we would suddenly discover that our belief does not extend so far.³⁷ Thus pragmatic belief has only a degree, which can be large or small according to the difference of the interest that is at stake.

A825/B853

Since, however, even though we might not be able to undertake anything in relation to an object,^c and taking something to be true is therefore merely theoretical, in many cases we can still conceive and imagine an undertaking for which we would suppose ourselves to have sufficient grounds if there were a means for arriving at certainty about the matter; thus there is in merely theoretical judgments an **analogue** of practical judgments, where taking them to be true is aptly described by the word **belief**, and which we can call **doctrinal beliefs**.^d If it were possible to settle by any sort of experience whether there are inhabitants of at least some of the planets that we see, I might well bet everything that I have on it. Hence I say that it is not merely an opinion but a strong belief (on the correctness of which I would wager many advantages in life) that there are also inhabitants of other worlds.

^a *kennst*

^b *Erscheinungen*, here used in a non-technical sense.

^c *Object*

^d **Glaube**. While it would be natural to translate *Glaube* as “faith” when Kant is writing specifically about belief in the existence of God, in what follows there are numerous occurrences of the term which can only be translated by “belief,” so it seems better to use that translation throughout. This also allows us to translate the verb *glauben* as “believe.”

A826/B854

Now we must concede that the thesis of the existence of God belongs to doctrinal belief. For although with regard to theoretical knowledge of the world I have nothing at **my command** that necessarily presupposes this thought as the condition of my explanations of the appearances of the world, but am rather obliged to make use of my reason as if everything were mere nature, purposive unity is still so important a condition of the application of reason to nature that I cannot pass it by, especially since experience liberally supplies examples of it. But I know no other condition for this unity that could serve me as a clue for the investigation of nature except insofar as I presuppose that a highest intelligence has arranged everything in accordance with the wisest ends. Consequently, the presupposition of a wise author of the world is a condition of an aim which is, to be sure, contingent but yet not inconsiderable, namely that of having a guide for the investigation of nature. The outcome of my experiments also so often confirms the usefulness of this presupposition, and *nothing can be decisively said against it*, so that I would say too little if I called my taking it to be true merely having an opinion, but rather even in this theoretical relation^a it can be said that I firmly believe in God; but in this case this belief must not strictly be called practical, but must be called a doctrinal belief, which the **theology** of nature (physico-theology) must everywhere necessarily produce. In regard to this same wisdom, in respect of the magnificent equipment of human nature and the shortness of life which is so ill suited to it, there is likewise to be found sufficient ground for a doctrinal belief in the future life of the human soul.

A827/B855

The expression of belief is in such cases an expression of modesty from an **objective** point of view, but at the same time of the firmness of confidence in a **subjective** one. If here too I would call merely theoretically taking something to be true only an hypothesis that I would be justified in assuming, I would thereby make myself liable for more of a concept of the constitution of a world-cause and of another world than I can really boast of; for of that which I even only assume as an hypothesis I must know at least enough of its properties so that I need invent **not its concept but only its existence**. The word "belief," however, concerns only the direction that an idea gives me and the subjective influence on the advancement of my actions of reason that holds me fast to it, even though I am not in a position to give an account of it from a speculative point of view.

A828/B856

But there is something unstable about merely doctrinal belief; one is often put off from it by difficulties that come up in speculation, although, to be sure, one inexorably returns to it again.

It is entirely otherwise in the case of **moral belief**. For there it is ab-

^a *Verhältnisse*

solutely necessary that something must happen, namely, that I fulfill the moral law in all points. The end here is inescapably fixed, and according to all my insight there is possible only a single condition under which this end is consistent with all ends together and thereby has practical validity, namely, that there be a God and a future world; I also know with complete certainty that no one else knows of any other conditions that lead to this same unity of ends under the moral law. But since the moral precept is thus at the same time my maxim (as reason commands that it ought to be), I will inexorably believe in the existence of God and a future life, and I am sure that nothing can make these beliefs unstable, since my moral principles themselves, which I cannot renounce without becoming contemptible in my own eyes, would thereby be subverted.³⁸

In this way enough is left to us, even after the frustration of all the ambitious aims of a reason that wanders about beyond the boundaries of all experience, that we have cause to be satisfied with it from a practical point of view. Of course, no one will be able to boast that he **knows** that there is a God and a future life; for if he knows that, then he is precisely the man I have long sought. All knowing (if it concerns an object of reason alone) can be communicated, and I would therefore also be able to hope to have my knowledge extended to such a wonderful degree by his instruction. No, the conviction is not **logical** but **moral** certainty, and, since it depends on subjective grounds (of moral disposition) I must not even say "**It is** morally certain that there is a God," etc., but rather "**I am** morally certain" etc. That is, the belief in a God and another world is so interwoven with my moral disposition that I am in as little danger of ever surrendering the former as I am worried that the latter can ever be torn away from me.

A829/B857

The only reservation that is to be found here is that this rational belief is grounded on the presupposition of moral dispositions. If we depart from that, and assume someone who would be entirely indifferent in regard to moral questions, then the question that is propounded by reason becomes merely a problem for speculation, and in that case it can be supported with strong grounds from analogy but not with grounds to which even the most obstinate skepticism^a must yield.* But

* The human mind takes (as I believe is necessarily the case with every rational being) a natural interest in morality, even though this is not undivided and practically overwhelming. Strengthen and magnify this interest, and you will find reason very tractable and even enlightened for uniting the speculative with the practical interest. But if you do not take care to make human beings first at least half-way good, you will never be able to make sincere believers out of them!

A830/B858

^a *Zweifelsucht*

A830/B858

no human being is free of all interest in these questions. For although he might be separated from the moral interest by the absence of all good dispositions, yet even in this case there is enough left to make him **fear** a divine existence and a future. For to this end nothing more is required than that he at least cannot pretend to any **certainty** that there is **no** such being and **no** future life, which would have to be proved through reason alone and thus apodictically since he would have to establish them to be impossible, which certainly no rational human can undertake to do. That would be a **negative** belief, which, to be sure, would not produce morality and good dispositions, but would still produce the analogue of them, namely it could powerfully restrain the outbreak of evil dispositions.

A831/B859

But is that all, one will say, that pure reason accomplishes in opening up prospects beyond the bounds of experience? Nothing more than two articles of belief? This much common understanding could also have accomplished without taking advice from the philosophers!

I will not boast here of the merit that philosophy has on account of the laborious effort of its critique of human reason, supposing even that this should be found in the end to be merely negative, for something more about that will be forthcoming in the next section. But do you demand then that a cognition that pertains to all human beings should surpass common understanding and be revealed to you only by philosophers? The very thing that you criticize is the best confirmation of the correctness of the assertions that have been made hitherto, that is, that it reveals what one could not have foreseen in the beginning, namely that in what concerns all human beings without exception nature is not to be blamed for any partiality in the distribution of its gifts, and in regard to the essential ends of human nature even the highest philosophy cannot advance further than the guidance that nature has also conferred on the most common understanding.