

i.e., in a maxim. One cannot, however, go on asking what, in a human being, might be the subjective ground of the adoption of this maxim rather than its opposite. For if this ground were ultimately no longer itself a maxim, but merely a natural impulse, the entire exercise of freedom could be traced back to a determination through natural causes – and this would contradict freedom. Whenever we therefore say, “The human being is by nature good,” or, “He is by nature evil,” this only means that he holds within himself a first ground* (to us inscrutable) for the adoption of good or evil (unlawful) maxims, and that he holds this ground *qua* human, universally – in such a way, therefore, that by his maxims he expresses at the same time the character of his species.

We shall say, therefore, of one of these [two] characters (which distinguish the human being from other possible rational beings) that it is *innate* in him; and yet we shall always be satisfied that nature is not to blame for it (if the character is evil), nor does it deserve praise (if it is good), but that the human being is alone its author. But since the first ground of the adoption of our maxims, which must itself again lie in the free power of choice, cannot be any fact¹ possibly given in experience, the good or the evil in the human being is said to be innate (as the subjective first ground of the adoption of this or that maxim with respect to the moral law) only *in the sense* that it is posited as the ground antecedent to every use of freedom given in experience (from the earliest youth as far back as birth) and is thus represented as present in the human being at the moment of birth – not that birth itself is its cause.

6:22

Remark

At the basis of the conflict between the two hypotheses presented above there lies a disjunctive proposition: *The human being is* (by nature) *either morally good or morally evil*. It will readily occur to anyone to ask, however, whether this disjunction is accurate; and whether some might not claim that the human being is by nature neither of the two, others, that he is both at once, that is, good in some parts and evil in others. Experience even seems to confirm this middle position between the two extremes.

It is of great consequence to ethics in general, however, to preclude, so far as possible, anything morally intermediate, either in actions (*adia-*

* That the first subjective ground of the adoption of moral maxims is inscrutable can be seen provisionally from this: Since the adoption is free, its ground (e.g. why I have adopted an evil maxim and not a good one instead) must not be sought in any incentive of nature, but always again in a maxim; and, since any such maxim must have its ground as well, yet apart from a maxim no *determining ground* of the free power of choice ought to, or can, be adduced, we are endlessly referred back in the series of subjective determining grounds, without ever being able to come to the first ground.

¹ *Factum* (i.e. “something done”)

phora)^k or in human characters; for with any such ambiguity all maxims run the risk of losing their determination and stability. Those who adhere to this strict way of thinking are commonly called *rigorists* (a name intended to carry reproach, but in fact a praise); so we can call *latitudinarians* those at the opposite extreme. These latter, again, are either latitudinarians of neutrality and may be called *indifferentists*, or latitudinarians of coalition and can then be called *syncretists*.^{12*}

6:23 On the rigorist's criteria,[†] the answer to the question just posed is

* If the good = a, the opposite contradicting it is the not-good. Now, this not-good is the consequence either of the mere lack of a ground of the good, = o, or of a positive ground antagonistic to the good, = -a; in this latter case, the not-good can also be called positive evil. (With respect to pleasure and pain there is a similar middle term, whereby pleasure = a, pain = -a, and the state in which neither of the two obtains is indifference, = o.) Now, if the moral law in us were not an incentive of the power of choice, the morally good (the agreement of the power of choice with the law) would be = a, and the not-good, = o; the latter, however, would be just the consequence of the lack of a moral incentive, = a × o. In us, however, the law is incentive, = a. Hence the lack of the agreement of the power of choice with it (= o) is possible only as the consequence of a real and opposite determination of the power of choice, i.e. of a *resistance* on its part, = -a; or again, it is only possible through an evil power of choice. And so between an evil and a good disposition (the inner principle of maxims) according to which the morality of an action must be judged, there is no intermediate position.¹³

† A morally indifferent action (*adiaphoron morale*) would be one that merely follows upon the laws of nature, and hence stands in no relation at all to the moral law as law of freedom – for such an action is not a *factum*,^l and with respect to it neither *command*, nor *prohibition*, nor yet *permission* (*authorization* according to law), intervenes or is necessary.

† Professor Schiller, in his masterful treatise on *gracefulness* and *dignity* in morality (*Thalia*, 1793, 3rd issue),¹⁴ disapproves of this way of representing obligation, because it carries with it the frame of mind of a Carthusian. Since we are however at one upon the most important principles, I cannot admit disagreement on this one, if only we can make ourselves clear to one another. – I readily grant that I am unable to associate *gracefulness* with the *concept of duty*, by reason of its very *dignity*. For the concept of duty includes unconditional necessitation, to which *gracefulness* stands in direct contradiction. The majesty of the law (like the law on Sinai) instills awe (not dread, which repels; and also not fascination, which invites familiarity); and this awe rouses the respect of the subject toward his master, except that in this case, since the master lies in us, it rouses a *feeling of the sublimity* of our own vocation that enraptures us more than any beauty. – But *virtue*, i.e. the firmly grounded disposition to fulfill one's duty strictly, is also *beneficent* in its consequences, more so than anything that nature or art might afford in the world. Hence the glorious picture of humanity, as portrayed in the figure of virtue, does allow the attendance of the *graces*, who, however, maintain a respectful distance when duty alone is at issue. And if we consider the gracious consequences that virtue would spread throughout the world, should it gain entry everywhere, then the morally oriented reason (through the imagination) calls sensibility into play. Hercules becomes *Musagetes*^m only after subduing monsters, a labor at which those good sistersⁿ shrink back in fear and trembling. These same attendants of Venus Urania^o become wanton sisters in the train of^k morally indifferent

^l "deed," in the sense of "something done."

^m leader of the muses

ⁿ i.e. the muses

^o Heavenly Venus

based on the morally important observation that freedom of the power of choice has the characteristic, entirely peculiar to it, that it cannot be determined to action through any incentive *except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim* (has made it into a universal rule for himself, according to which he wills to conduct himself); only in this way can an incentive, whatever it may be, coexist with the absolute spontaneity of the power of choice (of freedom). But the moral law is itself an incentive in the judgment of reason, and whoever makes it his maxim is *morally good*. Now, if the law fails nevertheless to determine somebody's free power of choice with respect to an action relating to it, an incentive opposed to it must have influence on the power of choice of the human being in question; and since, by hypothesis, this can only happen because this human being incorporates the incentive (and consequently also the deviation from the moral law) into his maxim (in which case he is an evil human being), it follows that his disposition as regards the moral law is never indifferent (never neither good nor bad).¹⁵ 6:24

Nor can a human being be morally good in some parts, and at the same time evil in others. For if he is good in one part, he has incorporated the moral law into his maxim. And were he, therefore, to be evil in some other part, since the moral law of compliance with duty in general is a single one and universal, the maxim relating to it would be universal yet particular at the same time: which is contradictory.* 6:25

Venus Dione⁹ as soon as they meddle in the business of determining duties and try to provide incentives for them – Now, if we ask, “What is the *aesthetic* constitution, the *temperament* so to speak of *virtue*: is it courageous and hence *joyous*, or weighed down by fear and dejected?” an answer is hardly necessary. The latter slavish frame of mind can never be found without a hidden *hatred* of the law, whereas a heart joyous in the *compliance* with its duty (not just complacency in the *recognition* of it) is the sign of genuineness in virtuous disposition, even where *piety* is concerned, which does not consist in the self-torment of a remorseful sinner (a torment which is very ambiguous, and usually only an inward reproach for having offended against prudence), but in the firm resolve to improve in the future. This resolve, encouraged by good progress, must needs effect a joyous frame of mind, without which one is never certain of having *gained* also a *love* for the good, i.e. of having incorporated the good into one's maxim.

* The ancient moral philosophers, who have pretty well exhausted all that can be said concerning virtue, have also not left the two questions above untouched. They expressed the first thus: Whether virtue must be learned (the human being, therefore, would by nature be indifferent to virtue and vice)? The second was: Whether there is more than one virtue (and hence the human being can perhaps⁹ be virtuous in some parts, and vicious in others)? To both they replied with rigoristic precision in the negative; and rightly so, for they were considering virtue *in itself*, in the *idea* of reason (how the human being ought to be). If, however, we want to pass moral judgment on this moral being, the human being *as he appears*, such as experience lets us cognize him, we can then answer both questions in the positive. For then he would be judged, not by the scales of pure reason (before a divine court of justice), but according to empirical standards (by a human judge). More about this in what follows.

⁹ Venus as mother

⁹ The text reads “nicht etwa.” I am omitting the “nicht,” which does not seem to make any difference.

Moreover, to have the one or the other disposition by nature as an innate characteristic does not mean here that the disposition has not been earned by the human being who harbors it, i.e. that he is not its author, but means rather that it has not been earned in time (that he has been the one way or the other *always, from his youth on*). The disposition, i.e. the first subjective ground of the adoption of the maxims, can only be a single one, and it applies to the entire use of freedom universally. This disposition too, however, must be adopted through the free power of choice, for otherwise it could not be imputed. But there cannot be any further cognition of the subjective ground or the cause of this adoption (although we cannot avoid asking about it), for otherwise we would have to adduce still another maxim into which the disposition would have to be incorporated, and this maxim must in turn have its ground.⁷ Hence, since we cannot derive this disposition, or rather its highest ground, from a first act of the power of choice in time, we call it a characteristic of the power of choice that pertains to it by nature (even though the disposition is in fact grounded in freedom). However, that by the "human being" of whom we say that he is good or evil by nature we are entitled to understand not individuals (for otherwise one human being could be assumed to be good, and another evil, by nature) but the whole species, *this can only be demonstrated later on, if it transpires from anthropological research that the grounds that justify us in attributing one of these two characters to a human being as innate are of such a nature that there is no cause for exempting anyone from it, and that the character therefore applies to the species.*

I

CONCERNING THE ORIGINAL PREDISPOSITION
TO GOOD IN HUMAN NATURE

We may justifiably bring this predisposition, with reference to its end, under three headings, as elements of the determination of the human being:

1. The predisposition to the *animality* of the human being, as a *living being*;
2. To the *humanity* in him, as a living and at the same time *rational* being;
3. To his *personality*, as a rational and at the same time *responsible* being.^{*16}

* We cannot consider this predisposition as already included in the concept of the preceding one, but must necessarily treat it as a special predisposition. For from the fact that a being 'I have amended the text by moving the closing parenthesis from the end of the sentence, where it is in the Academy text, to after "asking about it." The clause starting with "for otherwise" provides no explanation why we should not be asking about the cause, but it makes sense as an explanation of why no further cause can be known.

RELIGION WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF MERE REASON

1. The predisposition to animality in the human being may be brought under the general title of physical or merely *mechanical* self-love, i.e. a love for which reason is not required.¹⁷ It is threefold: *first*, for self-preservation; *second*, for the propagation of the species, through the sexual drive, and for the preservation of the offspring thereby begotten through breeding; *third*, for community with other human beings, i.e. the social drive. – On these three can be grafted all sorts of vices (which, however, do not of themselves issue from this predisposition as a root). They can be named vices of the *savagery* of nature, and, at their greatest deviation from the natural ends, are called the *bestial vices of gluttony, lust and wild lawlessness* (in relation to other human beings).

6:27

2. The predispositions to humanity can be brought under the general title of a self-love which is physical and yet *involves comparison* (for which reason is required); that is, only in comparison with others does one judge oneself happy or unhappy. Out of this self-love originates the inclination *to gain worth in the opinion of others*, originally, of course, merely *equal worth*: not allowing anyone superiority over oneself, bound up with the constant anxiety that others might be striving for ascendancy; but from this arises gradually an unjust desire to acquire superiority for oneself over others.¹⁸ – Upon this, namely, upon *jealousy* and *rivalry*, can be grafted the greatest vices of secret or open hostility to all whom we consider alien to us. These vices, however, do not really issue from nature as their root but are rather inclinations, in the face of the anxious endeavor of others to attain a hateful superiority over us, to procure it for ourselves over them for the sake of security, as preventive measure; for nature itself wanted to use the idea of such a competitiveness (which in itself does not exclude reciprocal love) as only an incentive to culture. Hence the vices that are grafted upon this inclination can also be named vices of *culture*, and in their extreme degree of malignancy (where they are simply the idea of a maximum of evil that surpasses humanity), e.g. in *envy, ingratitude, joy in others' misfortunes*, etc., they are called *diabolical vices*.

has reason does not at all follow that, simply by virtue of representing its maxims as suited to universal legislation, this reason contains a faculty of determining the power of choice unconditionally, and hence to be “practical” on its own;’ at least, not so far as we can see. The most rational being of this world might still need certain incentives, coming to him from the objects of inclination, to determine his power of choice. He might apply the most rational reflection to these objects – about what concerns their greatest sum as well as the means for attaining the goal determined through them – without thereby even suspecting the possibility of such a thing as the absolutely imperative moral law which announces to be itself an incentive, and, indeed, the highest incentive. Were this law not given to us from within, no amount of subtle reasoning on our part would produce it or win our power of choice over to it. Yet this law is the only law that makes us conscious of the independence of our power of choice from determination by all other incentives (of our freedom) and thereby also of the accountability of all our actions.

¹⁷ *für sich*

3. The predisposition to personality is the susceptibility to respect for the moral law *as of itself a sufficient incentive to the power of choice*. This susceptibility to simple respect for the moral law within us would thus be the moral feeling, which by itself does not yet constitute an end of the natural predisposition but only insofar as it is an incentive of the power of choice. But now this is possible only because the free power of choice incorporates moral feeling into its maxim: so a power of choice so constituted is a good character, and this character, as in general every character of the free power of choice, is something that can only be acquired; yet, for its possibility there must be present in our nature a predisposition onto which nothing evil can be grafted. The idea of the moral law alone, together with the respect that is inseparable from it, cannot be properly called a *predisposition to personality*; it is personality itself (the idea of humanity considered wholly intellectually). The subjective ground, however, of our incorporating this incentive into our maxims seems to be an addition to personality, and hence seems to deserve the name of a predisposition on behalf of it.

6:28

If we consider the three predispositions just named according to the conditions of their possibility, we find that the *first* does not have reason at its root at all; that the *second* is rooted in a reason which is indeed practical, but only as subservient to other incentives; and that the *third* alone is rooted in reason practical of itself, i.e. in reason legislating unconditionally. All these predispositions in the human being are not only (negatively) *good* (they do not resist the moral law) but they are also predispositions *to the good* (they demand compliance with it). They are *original*, for they belong to the possibility of human nature. The human being can indeed use the first two inappropriately, but cannot eradicate either of the two. By the predispositions of a being we understand the constituent parts required for it as well as the forms of their combination that make for such a being. They are *original* if they belong with necessity to the possibility of this being, but *contingent* if the being in question is possible in itself also without them. It should be noted, finally, that there is no question here of other predispositions except those that relate immediately to the faculty of desire and the exercise of the power of choice.

II.

CONCERNING THE PROPENSITY TO EVIL IN
HUMAN NATURE

6:29 By *propensity* (*propensio*) I understand the subjective ground of the possibility of an inclination (habitual desire, *concupiscentia*), insofar as this possibility is contingent for humanity in general.* It is distinguished from a

*† *Propensity* is actually only the *predisposition* to desire an enjoyment which, when the subject has experienced it, arouses *inclination* to it. Thus all savages have a *propensity* for intoxi-