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Kant's System of Moral Law

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by

Zachary Biondi

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Kant's System of Moral Law

by

Zachary Biondi

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

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Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* has a surprisingly simple aim: to identify the Categorical Imperative, the single principle of morality. Yet Kant never directly says what the principle is. It is a scandal of Kant scholarship. One statement is the Formula of Universal Law: "act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." Shortly after, in a different formulation of the principle (called the Formula of Humanity), Kant says that you should "act in such a way that you treat humanity [...] always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means." The book includes as many as five or six other formulations, all of which are somehow the Categorical Imperative.

There is a natural puzzle: given that Kant presents his *single* moral principle in a variety of formulations, how do they all relate to each other? Any reading of the text demands an answer to this question. Literature tends to revolve around issues of equivalence and priority among formulations. The majority of scholars believe that the formulations are equivalent: the

formulations either yield the same results when applied to cases or can be derived from each other. Scholars also wonder whether some formulations are more important than others. For example, is the Formula of Universal Law *the* Categorical Imperative, while the others are subsidiary?

Fortunately, in some neglected and abstract passages, Kant discusses the relation among the formulas directly. In the *Groundwork* (p. 4:436), he says that the Formula of Universal Law highlights 1) the *form* of the law, 2) the Formula of Humanity the *matter*, and 3) most enigmatically, that there is a "complete determination" of laws in a possible kingdom of ends. Kant is invoking terms from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, an earlier work not directly about ethics. My dissertation uses a new reading of the terms in the *Critique of Pure Reason* to inform a new reading of the Categorical Imperative and *Groundwork* as a whole. On this approach, issues like equivalence and priority fall away and new, more productive readings of Kant's argument emerge. In my view, the best way to solve an enduring problem in the scholarship on Kant's ethics is to look outside his ethics.

The central claim of the dissertation is that the relation among the formulas is best understood through the theories of hylomorphism, modality, and reason implicit throughout the *Groundwork*. A possible law, like 'Do not lie', is a type of hylomorphic composite: the matter of rational nature under the form of universality. But reason treats morality as necessarily systematic. The individual laws are a plurality that is unified under the form of system. The *Groundwork* uses a sequence of formulas to identify the moral law as a single system. And if the law is a complete system, it cannot be stated in a single formula. The reading that the Categorical Imperative and *Groundwork* must be understood as parts of Kant's philosophical system provides responses to many objections to his moral theory. It also portrays the theory as a

commentary on figures in the history of philosophy—from Aristotle and Plato to Leibniz and Rousseau. In the end, this is how Kant wanted his system to be read: as one part of a larger whole.

The dissertation of Zachary Biondi is approved.

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10. "'The Very Same Law' (*Groundwork* II 4:436)" at the *North Carolina Philosophical Society*, February 20

NOTE ON SOURCES

All quotations of Kant, unless noted, are from the *Cambridge Edition of the Writings of Immanuel Kant* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992-).

Citations follow the standard of referencing pagination from the Akademie edition (*Immanuel Kants Schriften*. Ausgabe der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1902-). Unless the volume number is obvious, citations are typically to volume number and page (e.g. 4:436). In citing the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I supply pages for both the A and B editions.

Abbreviations of Kant's works:

G	*Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*
Prol	*Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*
MM	*Metaphysics of Morals*
KrV	*Critique of Pure Reason*
KpV	*Critique of Practical Reason*
KU	*Critique of Judgment*
Religion	*Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*
JL	*Jäsche Logic*
Frag	*Notes and Fragments*
Beweisgrund	*The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God*
Lectures	I will often specify the lecture (e.g. *Metaphysik Mrongovius*) or the class of lectures (e.g. *Lectures on Logic*) corresponding to the Cambridge Edition.
Anthropology	*Anthropology from a Practical Point of View*

I adopt the following stylistic conventions:

Single inverted commas	the mention of a term
Underline	the name of a concept
Bold	introduces or emphasizes a technical term

INTRODUCTION

The Arc

The *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* exhibits a type of unity. In it, Kant is concerned with a single principle of morality, the Categorical Imperative. It is an objective universal standard of rationality. At the same time, the Categorical Imperative exhibits a plurality. The single principle applies to various cases (as any decent principle of morality would), but it is expressed in various formulations. For instance, some readers come away from the *Groundwork* with the idea that we ought to act only in accordance with maxims that can be universal laws. Others most remember that we should never treat others merely as a means but always as an end in themselves. According to Kant, both are in some way different formulations of the same principle.

Kant discusses even more formulations throughout the *Groundwork*, leading the reader to wonder what, in the end, the Categorical Imperative is and how it might be stated. While scholars dispute exactly how many formulations are, I follow Paton's classification, according to which there are five in three classes:

Table I

I. Universality	**1. Formula of Universal Law (FUL)** "Act only according to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (*G* 421). **2. Formula of the Law of Nature (FLN)** "so act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature" (*G* 421).

II. Humanity	**3. Formula of Humanity (FOH)** "So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (*G* 429).
III. Autonomy and Kingdom of Ends	**4. Formula of Autonomy (FA)** "not to choose in any other way than that the maxims of one's choice are also comprised as universal law in the same willing" (*G* 440). **5. Formula of the Kingdom of Ends (FKE)** "so act as if your maxim were to serve at the same time as a universal law (for all rational beings)" (*G* 438).[1]

An enduring question of Kant scholarship is how the various formulas relate to the Categorical Imperative and each other. I call it the question of the **formula relation**. Fortunately, Kant himself supplies an answer at a pivotal moment in the *Groundwork*. The passage, found at *G* 436, includes several references that reach outside of the practical philosophy and into the theoretical philosophy, primarily the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's systematic style shines through at *G* 436. Scholars frequently and unfortunately neglect these references. In my view, by understanding several features of Kant's theoretical philosophy, we can make sense of the passage in the practical philosophy that explains the formula relation.

To prepare the way for a detailed treatment of *G* 436 and show the viability of my project, I will discuss the claim that *G* 436 is the pivotal moment of the *Groundwork* where Kant has completed the argument that enables him to identify and state the Categorical Imperative. Demonstrating these claims will involve taking a holistic view of the *Groundwork*, marking how

[1] H.J. Paton, *The Categorical Imperative*, 129. See also Wood, *Formulas of the Moral Law*, 4-5 and Nuyen, "Counting the Formulas of the Categorical Imperative," 37.

Kant carries out the methodology he mentions in the preface. But before proceeding to the details, it is worth pausing to make explicit some methodological complications.

In understanding Kant's practical philosophy, how much reliance on other parts of the system is instructive? How much should the reader search for 'architectonic unity'? These questions are especially germane to a project that invokes Kant's systematicity in explaining a particular passage. It is common to be skeptical of an interpretive project that involves chasing leads all over Kant's *Werke*. Among English-speaking readers since the mid 20th Century, his theory of system and reliance on the theory for the success of arguments or the elucidation of doctrines is frequently minimized or criticized.

Historically, there has been a sharp divide between the literatures on the practical and theoretical aspects of Kant's system. In one respect, the divide is perfectly natural. Kant himself distinguishes the practical and theoretical uses of reason and dedicates separate texts to them. It makes sense for the literature to separate itself along the same lines. However, as one would expect from a systematic thinker, the texts also include many references that bridge the divide. There is, after all, *one* system. The references are of three types:

1. He often provides holistic, programmatic statements about how a particular text or argument is situated concerning the whole system. The prefaces to many of his works, including the *Groundwork* and the Doctrine of Elements sections, are examples.
2. As an intermediate type that is not special to systematic thinkers, Kant will set out texts as having systematic internal structures of their own. This type of statement will be the focus of §I below.
3. Kant explicates specific points by relying on or drawing analogies to other specific points in the system.

My project is about one instance of the third type of connection. I will bridge the divide between the practical and theoretical aspects of Kant's system. To do so responsibly, I need to consider the complexities inherent in dealing with any system. Since my project is, at the bottom, interpretive of Kant's ethics in general and, in particular, a passage in the *Groundwork* that references his philosophy's theoretical aspect, the three issues will be an overarching concern. Dare I say, in Kant's case, any one contains a combination of the other two. Accordingly, my questions are not only explicitly about the role of system in Kant's moral law and other parts of his philosophy but also on broader issues, like the structure of systematic thinking in general.

These considerations structure my introduction. I start by introducing Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* as a whole to highlight the importance of a specific passage, *G* 436. The passage includes references to Kant's theoretical philosophy. Thus, the first part argues that an investigation into the connection between the practical and theoretical philosophy found at *G* 436 is vital for understanding the passage itself and, given its central importance, the *Groundwork* as a whole. In short, the first part sets the stakes of the discussion and provides some holistic considerations that motivate the project. The second part surveys the existing literature on the formula relation. I organize the literature along salient fault lines to demonstrate the need for a new approach. Then in the final part, I preview my own position and translate it into an outline for three chapters.

1. Structure

What is the *Groundwork* about? The question seems simple, but misunderstandings often begin here. The title suggests that the book is meant to prepare the way for a metaphysics of morals, published 12 years later. In the preface, Kant reveals that the text has a specific and narrow aim: "The present groundwork [...] is nothing more than the identification and

corroboration *of the supreme principle of morality*" (G 392). I take the principle to be the Categorical Imperative represented in various different formulas throughout the text. The task, it should be noted, has two different parts: 1) "identification" and 2) "corroboration." He undertakes the task in three sections. The first two sections are concerned with identifying or seeking out (*Aufsuchung*) the principle. The second section, in particular, unveils the formulas of the Categorical Imperative. The final section corroborates or establishes (*Festsetzung*) the principle.

After setting the twofold aim for himself, Kant ends the preface with a statement about his method. He depicts the book as an arc. He will "proceed analytically from ordinary knowledge to a determination of the supreme principle and then back again synthetically from an examination of this principle and its sources to ordinary knowledge where its application is found" (*G* 392). Kant places himself in a tradition, expressed most vividly in Plato's allegory of the cave, that conceives philosophy as an interrelated progression of *anabasis* (ascent) and *katabasis* (descent). Kant's membership in the tradition will be a recurring theme of my discussion. The first two sections, which *determine* the Categorical Imperative, utilize the analytic method. The third section is synthetic and *demonstrates* the application of the Categorical Imperative.[2] Then he says that the sections are titled "transitions" (*Übergang*):

> I. Transition from common to philosophical moral rational knowledge
> II. Transition from popular moral philosophy to metaphysics of morals
> III. Final step from the metaphysics of morals to the critique of pure practical reason[3]

[2] Kant discusses the two methods at *Prol* 263, 274-5, 277n. The method should be distinguished from analytic and synthetic types of judgments. His critical projects are synthetic, like the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the critique of pure practical reason in *G* III. See Allison, *Kant's Groundwork, 33-4;* Guyer, *Kant's Groundwork*, 33-4; Sedwick, *Kant's Groundwork,* 43-4.

[3] Sections II and III together have the structure 'B to C, C to D'. There is scholarly dispute over the place of section I in the work. Does it lead into section II ('A to B') or are the first two sections separate transitions to the same point ('A to C' and 'B to C')? Other readings are

I draw two conclusions from Kant's programmatic statements. First, there is an argumentative pinnacle of the book at which we should expect to find a pivotal statement of (or about) the supreme principle of morality, the Categorical Imperative. The arc has a peak. Second, each section has its own internal progression. Kant takes himself to be *transitioning* within the sections. Since the purpose of the *Groundwork* is to identify and establish the Categorical Imperative, we must take notice of both movements and their relation—the broader holistic arc of the *Groundwork* as well as narrower transitions within the particular sections. The two movements will also relate to each other. For instance, in the analytic part, the transition pushes towards a "determination" of the Categorical Imperative, which takes place in the metaphysics of morals, a more abstract portion of the text relative to what comes before. Any reading of the *Groundwork* should be mindful of where in the section transitions and holistic arc specific claims are made. Placement along the arc can close or open interpretive avenues.

Since the first two sections, despite having functions of their own in the holistic arc, together constitute the analytic part of the *Groundwork*, we discover that the end of the progression of the second section is also the turning point of the whole work. And because the *Groundwork* is about identifying the Categorical Imperative, the second transition should end with a definitive statement of the principle, one that Kant has been advancing towards for some time. The section focuses on various formulas of the Categorical Imperative. The argument, in other words, is framed through the formulas. Therefore, one would expect the pinnacle of the

available. While my holistic considerations incline me to view the sections as linked along a single transitional arc, this issue does not affect the substance of my arguments about the formula relation. Specific readings of the connection (or lack thereof) between sections I and II are consistent with the more general claim that Kant is transitioning, both within particular sections and in the work as a whole, from the concrete to the abstract.

section, and hence the whole *Groundwork*, to be about how the formulas relate to each other and to the Categorical Imperative—i.e. how the formulas are formulas of the Categorical Imperative. We should find an account of the formula relation at this point. With all of this in mind, the pinnacle is easy to spot. It comes at *G* 436, the passage that serves as the focus of the following chapters.

What happens at *G* 436? Kant says that three different formulas of the Categorical Imperative represent the same law. He then offers two remarks.[4] One utilizes 'matter', 'form', and 'complete determination', the other the 'categories of quantity'. So the passage has two parts: a preface to the remarks and the remarks themselves. Afterward, the tone shifts dramatically. There is a break in the text, and Kant says, "We can now end where we started at the beginning" (437). The analytic portion that began in the first section has ended. He can now give a summary and restatement (437-40) as well as comment on competing moral theories (442-4). In the last paragraph of *G* II he says that "this section, like the first, was merely *analytic*." To show that the Categorical Imperative is a true principle, "we require a possible synthetic use of pure practical reason" (445). Kant references the methodological plan from the Preface. We have arrived at the peak and are ready for the descent. He moves from the analytic to the synthetic portion. There is no doubt that a primary aim of the book has been accomplished with the remarks. The culmination of the first parts of the *Groundwork* and the setting for the third happens at G 436.[5] In some way, it is the determination of the supreme principle of morality.

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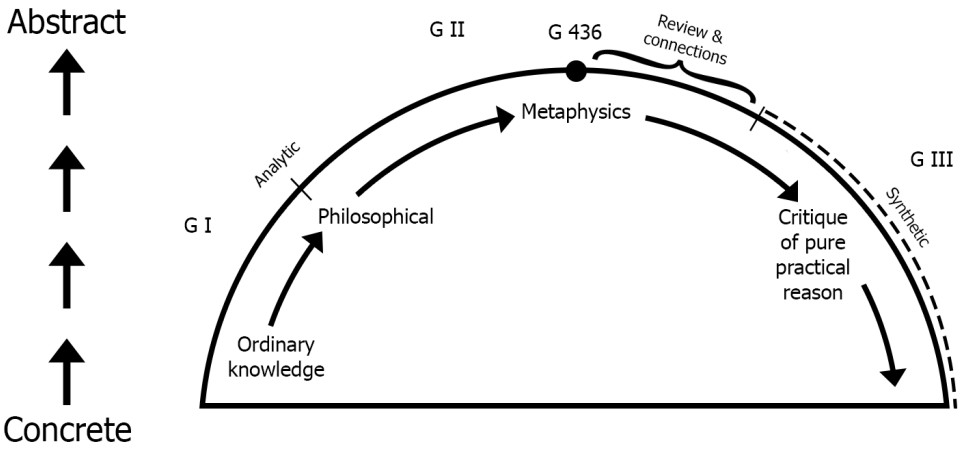
[4] I refer to the two passages as 'remarks'. It is difficult to know what status they have, and the various candidate labels ('demonstrations', 'illustrations', 'analogies', 'examples', or 'allusions', to use Wood's term (*Kant's Ethical Thought*, 185)) have loaded connotations. The status of the remarks is an open question that I will explore throughout.

[5] My claims about the arc are not groundbreaking. Other readers notice it. See Timmerman, *Kant's Groundwork,* 13-4; O'Neil, *Constructions of Reason*; Herman, *The Practice of Moral Judgment*, 209 n. 3; Allison *Kant's Groundwork*, 35, 273. My emphasis on the remarks is

While visual aids obscure or distort some of what they represent, my reading of the *Groundwork* can be diagrammed as follows:



The image of an arc is useful because, in addition to connecting Kant to an established historical tradition, it depicts the increase and decrease in the level of abstraction. However, while *G* 392 has us expect a return to ordinary knowledge in the synthetic portion, the critique of pure practical reason is anything but concrete. This raises questions about how *G* III should be interpreted relative to the preceding transitions and whether the arc might extend beyond the *Groundwork* into other works of practical philosophy, like the *Metaphysics of Morals*. The return to application may not be the topic of a work at all, but merely the moral lives we all lead, now informed or clarified by a more explicit awareness of the Categorical Imperative. I will not settle these issues here, but they call to mind the possible limitations of the diagram.

We can now move to the details of *G* 436. Every part of the passage is arduous. Kant prefaces the remarks with two sentences:

> The above three ways of representing the principle of morality are fundamentally only so many formulas of the selfsame law, one of which of itself unites the other two within it. However, there is yet a dissimilarity among them, which is indeed subjectively rather

justified by a holistic view of the text that scholars by and large accept. My complaint is that often readers downplay the significance of the transitions for their interpretive project. Evidence of this is the widespread neglect of *G* 436.

> than objectively practical, namely to bring an idea of reason closer to intuition (according to a certain analogy) and thereby to feeling.

The "above three ways" in the first sentence refers to the formulas he has been developing throughout *G* II and are summarized in the paragraph preceding the remarks. How do the three formulas represent the same law when they are certainly different, as Kant grants? Is he positing some equivalence among the formulas? Is one formula fundamental and the others derivative? And why does Kant make this claim at all? Given the broader context, the relation among the formulas amounts to Kant's cumulative statement of the Categorical Imperative. So whatever the answers to these questions, they are certain to have implications for understanding other parts of Kant's ethics.

There are a number of other puzzles. What is the meaning and role of subjective and objective practicality, as well as the related claim about "bringing an idea of reason closer to intuition"? What is the analogy? And, returning to the first sentence, what is meant by the combination of formulas? These questions recur in the subsequent chapters. Combination relations in particular will be a core concern.

Here it is important to note a translation issue in the phrase "one of them by itself contains a combination of the other two [*deren die eine die anderen zwey von selbst in sich vereinigt*]." There are two possible readings. First, should it be read to state that *each* formula taken alone contains the combination of the other two? Or second, is Kant saying that *a specific one* contains the other two? While the former appears in literature, it is widely agreed that the preferred translation is the latter.[6] Linguistic reasons aside, my reading will supply numerous

[6] For an explanation, see Wood, *Kantian Ethics*, 80. Timmerman provides more references on the translation (*Kant's Groundwork*, 100). Rawls, for instance, uses the dispreferred translation (*Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, 181, 183). I will note that the preferred translation does not preclude the further possibility that *each* formula contains a combination of the other

philosophical reasons for the latter translation. Kant is saying that, in some way(s), two of the formulas come to be contained in the third. This is a statement about the relation among the formulas. The remarks pick up and explain the point.

The first remark[7] immediately follows the above passage:

> For all maxims have
> 1. a *form*, which consists in universality, and then the formula of the moral imperative is expressed as follows: that maxims must be chosen as if they were to hold as universal laws of nature;
> 2. a *matter*, namely an end, and then the formula says: that a rational being, as an end according to its nature, and hence as an end in itself, must serve for every maxim as the limiting condition of all merely relative and arbitrary ends;
> 3. *a complete determination* of all maxims by that formula, namely: that all maxims from one's own legislation ought to harmonize into a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature.

It is immediately followed by the second:

> Here the progression takes place as through the categories of the *unity* of the form of the will (its universality), the *plurality* of the matter (of objects, i.e. of ends), and the *allness* or totality of the system of these. (*G* 436)

Both remarks are references to other parts of the system. To understand the remarks, one must follow the references. The following chapters undertake this task.

Kant mentions the "three ways of representing the principle of morality," by which he means three formulas of the Categorical Imperative. And both remarks have three points or parts. But since Kant gives at least five formulas throughout *G* II, we must ask about which three he is

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two. In other words, saying that one specific formula contains the other two is *not* to say that the others *do not* contain combinations of the others. Kant is simply not making the stronger claim in the line.

[7] Someone, perhaps even myself, might argue that there is truly only one remark. It is plausible to read the reference to the categories of quantity as a short elaboration. Little hinges on the issue. The bulk of my attention will be on the first remark. As will become evident, there is a limit to how much they can be separated. The continuation of my project would be a focused treatment of the categories of quantity.

using. He appears to reference one from each of the three classes in the remarks. According to Paton's sorting, I and Ia both fall under the heading of universality, and III and IIIa under autonomy. Despite the general commonality, the question of the FUL:FLN and FA:FKE relations is a difficult one, and there are plenty of theories in the literature. We know that Kant aims to formulate a single supreme principle of morality. Whether this principle is one of the given formulas or all taken as representative of the same law is the site of contention. If we opt for the former, as many people do (see Table 2 below), there are only two plausible options.

The privileged status of the Formula of Universal Law is obvious throughout the *Groundwork* (cf. *M* 225). It is the first formula found in the text, identified as the "single categorical imperative" (*G* 421), and foreshadowed as early as 402. He also appears to return to it (or something like it) immediately after the remarks.[8] Any treatment of the relation among the formulas must make sense of Kant's occasional apparent preference for the Formula of Universal Law. The second plausible option is the Formula of Autonomy. Kant officially unveils it under the grand heading "Autonomy of the Will as the Supreme Principle of Morality" (440) and uses the word "supreme" when he obliquely mentions it at *G* 431. Given Kant's method, the Formula of Autonomy is the completion of the transition of *G* II, so its supremacy is perhaps unsurprising. It 'contains' the previous two formulas. Since each section begins where the previous section ends, Kant gives autonomy a crucial role in *G* III. Yet the formula is conspicuously absent from the remarks. In them, Kant mentions the kingdom of ends, whose formula receives scant examination and only one mention in *G* III. So a large part of my project will be about the place the formulas have in the remarks and how the remarks help explain the formulas' role in

[8] I refer here to the "universal formula" at *G* 436-7. People usually assume that the universal formula is FUL, but the matter is disputed. I consider the issue in Chapter 1.

expressing the Categorical Imperative. Because *G* 436 is the identification of the supreme principle of morality, and the passage concerns the relation among the formulas, understanding the remarks, which explain the relation, is tantamount to understanding how Kant accomplishes the first part of the aim he sets out in the preface.

My project then can be summarized as an investigation into the meaning of the two remarks. The following chapters focus primarily on the first remark. It is more detailed, and examining it is a significant task. Nevertheless, I will at times consider the relation among the three categories in a class (in this case, the categories of quantity). Terms from the second remark will frequently appear in my discussion, even though an interpretation of the category relation and its application to the moral law would be part of a more complete account of the formula relation. The specific points in the first remark will structure the project. They include references to Kant's theoretical philosophy that require extended attention: the familiar matter/form relation and the less familiar concept of complete determination. Here I only wish to point out that a great deal rests on what Kant means by these remarks, especially the first one. Many perennial disputes in Kant's ethics can be attached to them. The investigation may seem archaic at times, but the account builds towards live questions in Kant scholarship. I return to some of the more specific questions in §III.

I hypothesize that understanding *G* 436 *is the same as understanding it as the key to the rest of the text*. The hypothesis should be taken in two senses.[9] First, in the standard historical-critical interpretative sense, I propose that my reading of *G* 436 provides the best basis for

[9] There may not be any meaningful distinction between the two senses I describe. The topic is a matter of hermeneutics and method in history. I leave these metaphilosophical issues aside for now.

reading the *Groundwork* as a whole. Thus, I will proceed through standard textual analysis. My contributions are to the project of understanding what Kant most likely meant. On this front, I am not undertaking a project of Kantian normative ethics. But second, since no reading of a text, let alone ones as difficult as the *Groundwork* and first *Critique*, can be conclusive, I hope to show that my interpretation bears fruit: it provides the means for solving other longstanding problems in Kant scholarship. To borrow a sentiment, "My assertions [...] would indeed receive much light from the application [...] to the entire system, and great confirmation from the adequacy that it exhibits everywhere" (*G* 392). So the project proceeds also on pragmatic grounds. My hypothesis is a *hypothesis*: what happens if one begins at *G* 436, the argumentative pinnacle of the book, and then uses what one finds to inform other points along the arc? The importance of the passage should give it priority, and other passages should be interpreted through it. The abstract center ripples out to the concrete edges. My proposal, one might say, is to read the book from the inside out. Or perhaps more accurately, from the top-down. This strategy has not been tried.[10] Other scholars start elsewhere and are then forced to ignore, downplay, or distort *G* 436.

In sum, the project is about, first, supplying a series of independent (and not altogether original) arguments for taking *G* 436 to be the pinnacle of the methodological arc of the book. I have outlined them here. These arguments heighten the stakes and engender a healthy suspicion towards exegeses concerning the relation among formulas of the Categorical Imperative and the *Groundwork* generally that do not foreground *G* 436. The second task is what comprises the following chapters. I will put forward a novel and detailed reading of *G* 436. As we will see, this task *is the same* as answering a classic question of Kant scholarship: what is the relation among

[10] It certainly stands at odds with how Kant is taught to students and first time readers. My approach is also the inversion of what one generally finds in *Groundwork* commentaries.

the formulas of the Categorical Imperative? The answer is a series of references to the theoretical philosophy. So I will follow the references. While this will at times take me far from the ethics and deep into the theoretical philosophy, the methodology and aim is nevertheless straightforward. The goal, at bottom, is to provide an account of the formula relation, an issue that has long occupied readers of Kant's ethics.

2. Literature

The *Groundwork* is about establishing the Categorical Imperative. There are numerous different formulas of the Categorical Imperative. Hence, how the formulas relate to each other is vital for judging whether Kant accomplishes his aim in the *Groundwork*. This section is about the variety of proposed answers in the literature. Instead of surveying a series of candidate readings, I sort them according to theme. The reason for this strategy is found in §I: the *type* of investigation that I propose does not currently exist. By outlining the types of investigations that currently exist, I can highlight how mine is distinctive. More specifically, discussing the literature thematically can highlight foundational differences in methodology or approach. Without this first step, a review of particular candidate readings risks being unorganized and counterproductive. It would be challenging to call attention to my contributions. Further, the heart of my hypothesis is prioritizing the remarks. If the existing literature does not approach the formula relation by foregrounding the remarks, given that the remarks exist to explain this relation, I can motivate a preference for my hypothesis. So in this section, beyond distinguishing my approach from others, I also explain the extent to which I am critical of other views in the literature. Along these lines, I can claim that, while someone might take issue with how I implement my strategy or what conclusions I draw, the preferability of my strategy can nevertheless convince them. I wish them well with their own implementation.

The literature can be sorted according to three themes:

1. *Formula priority*. What is the status of the formulas relative to each other? Some take one formula to be the full or complete statement of the Categorical Imperative. Others treat them as nonhierarchical. The question is about which, if any, formula has priority.[11]
2. *Equivalence*. Kant never uses the word 'equivalence', but there is some basis for thinking that he holds the formulas to be somehow and in some sense equivalent. We must ask what sort of equivalence it would be, whether all the formulas are equivalent or only some, and why the equivalence is important to Kant's aim in the *Groundwork* (or the *G* II transition specifically).
3. *The Role of the Remarks.* What place does the theoretical philosophy, or concepts elucidated within it, have in the *Groundwork*? Here there are two main groups. Some embark on explaining the formula relation without mentioning the remarks.[12] Others mention the remarks only in passing.[13] We can surmise that neither of the two groups takes the remarks to be instructive. A possible justification is that they may think the remarks are not about the relation among the formulas.[14] But rarely is a justification given.

The first two are the most salient overarching themes in the literature. The variety of views on the formula relation can be understood through the variety of possible approaches to formula priority and equivalence. In addition, the two topics are orthogonal: a position on formula

[11] Wood explicitly considered the issue of priority at *Formulas of the Moral Law*, 20-3.

[12] The following are sources that, given their stated aims, should mention the remarks but do not: Judith Baker, "Counting Categorical Imperatives"; Rescher, "On the Unity of Kant's Categorical Imperative" in *Kant and the Reach of Reason;* Rohlf, "Kant On Determining One's Duty: A Middle Course between Rawls and Herman"; Rawls, *Lectures On the History of Moral Philosophy*; Bernard E. Rollin, "There Is Only One Categorical Imperative"; A.T. Nuyen, "Counting the Formulas of the Categorical Imperative."

[13] Jeppe von Platz, "Singularity without Equivalence", 380; Guyer, "The Possibility of the Categorical Imperative," 356; M. Shalgi, "Universalized Maxims as Moral Laws," 174; Allison, *Kant's Groundwork*, 237, 249-50; Geiger, "How Are the Different Formulas of the Categorical Imperative Related?" 398.

[14] An exception is Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, 182-90. A partial exception is Guyer, "The Form and Matter of the Categorical Imperative" in *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*. Jennifer K. Uleman has a similar view to Wood but her treatment is brief (*An Introduction to Kant's Moral Philosophy*, 140-3).

priority does not immediately imply a position on equivalence or vice-versa. In the tradition of explaining Kant through two orthogonal distinctions, we can represent the literature as dividing into four broad camps (Table 2).

Table 2

	Formula Priority*	**No formula priority**
Equivalence**	**J. von Platz** (FUL) **Rohlf** (FUL) **Rawls** (FUL) **Shalgi** (FUL) **Rollin** (FUL) **Nuyen** (FUL)[15] **Timmerman** (FUL) Herman (FUL) **Wolff**	**O'Neill** Atwell[16] **Allison** **Sedgwick** **Guyer** **Geiger**
Nonequivalence	Korsgaard[17]	**Wood**[18] **Baker**[19]

** For the bolded names, I am confident in the position on formula priority.*

[15] Nuyen does not talk about equivalence, but he appears to hold something like it: "Kant employs three different but interchangeable ways of expressing the categorical imperative." "Counting the Formulas of the Categorical Imperative: One Plus Three Makes Four," 38.

[16] Atwell does not discuss FKE/FA and takes no position on formula priority. See "Are Kant's First Two Moral Principles Equivalent?"

[17] On equivalence, see *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, 143-4 (cf. 124). Korsgaard appears to prioritize FUL and FOH together. She calls the FKE a "corollary" of FOH (see p. 153).

[18] Wood has long and strongly opposed the equivalence reading. In *Formulas of the Moral Law*, he writes, "The claim that Kant's formulas are 'equivalent' is nearly ubiquitous in the literature on Kant's ethics and on the *Groundwork*. It is often stated as if it were a direct report of something Kant had explicitly asserted. But Kant never says any such thing. I think the 'equivalence' claim is either obviously false or else hopelessly confused. People should stop making it" (p. 57).

[19] Baker does not focus on equivalence. She focuses on three different "slots" that the formulas fill, and "each necessarily presupposes the rest" ("Counting Categorical Imperatives," 395). She also rejects the idea that "any one or more formulations is subordinate," which I take to be a statement about formula priority (390).

** *For the underlined names, I am confident in the position on equivalence.*[20]

Recall that my treatment is thematic. Within each of the quadrants, it is possible to make more granular distinctions. For instance, the 'formula priority equivalence' views have in common the general claims that 1) one of the formulas has priority and 2) Kant is positing a type of equivalence among some of the formulas (though not necessarily all). At the same time, two views that share the label might be mutually incompatible. They could disagree over which formula holds priority, which type of equivalence is at play, or which formulas are equivalent.

Concerning the first claim, if a formula is given a privileged position, Table 1 indicates that it is FUL. In the middle of the 20th century, readers typically took FUL as *the* Categorical Imperative, while the other formulas were useful but ultimately inessential aids in determining the moral law.[21] What Kant does in G II after stating FUL is a digression with limited philosophical significance. The view is less common today, but its impact is still felt. My project is a further attempt to push away from this tradition. It is possible (but rare) to claim that another formula takes priority. More common, however, is the view that there is no formula priority. On such a reading, *G* II is usually seen as a progression towards a more complete statement of the Categorical Imperative. The formulas serve distinct roles in the analysis and somehow combine in the end. The Formula of Autonomy and Formula of Kingdom of Ends may be the result of the

[20] Some of these readers do not see themselves as setting out to find their place in the table (though others do). Some are difficult to place in the table because the context of their work is different from mine or they do not state their position on equivalence or formula priority. For example, I do not place Rescher in the table, despite the fact that he is interested in the relation among the formulas in "On the Unity of Kant's Categorical Imperative" in *Kant and the Reach of Reason*.

[21] For examples see Bruce Aune, *Kant's Theory of Morals*, 1979, ch. 4; A.R.C. Duncan, *Practical Reason and Morality*, 1957, ch. 11; Robert Wolff, *The Autonomy of Reason*, 1973, ch. 4. Baker discusses this phase of the literature in "Counting Categorical Imperatives" (see 390).

combination, but they are not higher on a hierarchy of formulas. No hierarchy exists.

Equivalence is by far the most dominant theme in the literature. Some readers think that the interpretative issue comprises the core of the *G* II argument: the question of the formula relation amounts to the question of whether or how the formulas are equivalent. If the formulas are not equivalent, Kant has somehow failed.[22] *G* 436 is taken to be Kant's statement of equivalence: "The above three ways of representing the principle of morality are fundamentally only so many formulas of the selfsame law." Two other possible pieces of evidence help explain the preoccupation with equivalence. First, Kant uses the same four examples in discussing the Formula of Universal Law/Formula of Law of Nature and Formula of Humanity. One might be inclined to think that if the formulas yield the same results in the four examples, they yield the same results in all cases and are therefore equivalent, at least extensionally. It is plausible that, in principle, Kant could have chosen any four examples to illustrate the formulas. (Certain architectonic considerations informed his choice of examples.) Second, perhaps the strongest evidence is found at G 437, where Kant says, "The principle: so act with reference to every rational being (to yourself and others) that in your maxim it counts at the same time as an end in itself, is fundamentally one and the same as the principle: act on a maxim that at the same time contains in itself its own universal validity for every rational being." It is difficult to decipher Kant's meaning here, especially given its placement after the peak of the *Groundwork* arc. However, on its face, the passage suggests a type of equivalence (perhaps equality) between what appears to be two formulas of the Categorical Imperative. Which formulas they are is difficult to know.

[22] Two examples are Allison, *Kant's Groundwork*, 246f; O'Neill, *Constructions of Reason*, 127-8.

Nevertheless, the *G* 436 line is the *locus classicus* of the equivalence debate. Because it is so opaque, the literature is full of arguments about which type of equivalence is at play and which formulas are equivalent. Instead of critiquing the arguments directly, I wish to highlight their shared assumption. Another dominant theme in the literature is the general neglect of the remarks.[23] People either ignore the remarks altogether or mention them only in passing. This is noteworthy because the *G* 436 passage, which includes the line taken to be Kant's statement of equivalence, also includes the remarks. In fact, the remarks *explicate* the line. Both *G* 436 and the *Groundwork* arc illustrate the importance of the remarks in explaining the formula relation. Hence, an assumption in the literature is the following: *it is possible to explain the relation among the formulas or make progress on the equivalence issue without reckoning in any substantive way with the* G *436 remarks*.

There are two points to take from the assumption. First, a project that develops and prioritizes a full treatment of the remarks represents an original approach to explaining the formula relation. It is on the issue of the role of the remarks, the third theme listed above, that my approach can be distinguished from those in the literature.

The second point is about the extent to which my approach is preferable. I have depicted my methodology as stemming from the claim that the remarks explicate the formula relation—a claim that has strong textual support and does not require any adventurous interpretive moves. The above assumption represents a different methodology. Generally, the literature emphasizes the issues of equivalence and, to a lesser extent, formula priority at the expense of the remarks. My hypothesis is the reverse. I am motivated by the idea that setting the remarks aside, or

[23] Wood recognizes the role of the remarks, but he does not give them detailed treatment (see *Kant's Ethical Thought*, 184).

relegating them to the periphery, risks failing to recognize how Kant accomplishes the goal he sets out in the preface. They should instead be at the center.

There is a critique of the literature here. It is important to make explicit exactly what it is and, just as important, what it is not. At the level of the first two themes, my methodology does not entail a view that necessarily conflicts with existing views on formula priority or equivalence. All three themes are orthogonal, not simply the first two: the view that the remarks explicate the formula relation, or that the remarks are central to the *Groundwork* overall, does not immediately entail a position on formula priority or equivalence.

This leaves the third theme, the role of the remarks. There are two potential disagreements. First, I think it is safe to say that the above assumption is in many cases based on a mistaken view of the role of the remarks or a lack of consideration of their role altogether. If so, my methodology implies a substantively conflicting view of the text. In other words, those who ignore the remarks likely fail to appreciate their role as explanations of the formula relation. Thus the disagreement would be at the level of the third theme, not at the level of methodology (though, as I have suggested, the disagreement has implications for the methodology). Second, others do recognize the role of the remarks but choose not to focus on them. In this case, although I find such an approach risky or imprudent, I do not have any immediate disagreement. We agree on the third theme but go in opposite methodological directions. It is in principle possible, with some luck, to explain the formula relation without foregrounding the remarks, but I offer my methodology as a more promising and responsible alternative. We would be following Kant's lead more closely. We might avoid being distracted by types of equivalence that the remarks quickly rule out. Or we might spend less time worrying about different hierarchies of formulas. And as a matter of good interpretive practice, we would be seeking to discover the

formula relation by investigating the passage in which it is explained. While it is true that the remarks include a number of forbidding references to the theoretical philosophy, using that fact as a reason to sideline the passage is unwise, especially for a systematic thinker like Kant. So if someone recognizes the explanatory role of the remarks, the approach I take in this project is more appealing than the approach in the existing literature, which either fails to recognize the role altogether or, for some reason, chooses to look elsewhere for an explanation of the formula relation.

In sum, I distinguished my interpretive *methodology* of prioritizing the remarks from the *position* that the methodology yields, which I will outline next. Thus far I have been discussing what motivates my methodology with respect to the *Groundwork* text (§I) and the literature (§II). Neglecting the remarks means neglecting Kant's own explanation of the formula relation. For these reasons, my interpretive methodology is original and should be seen as preferable, even though it does not necessarily preclude other methodologies or specific positions within the first two themes.

3. Outline

To understand *G* 436 and the relation among the formulas, we look to the remarks. And to understand the remarks, we follow Kant's references to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, after which we can develop a picture of how Kant accomplishes his stated task in the analytic portion of the *Groundwork*.

The first remark has three points: 1) Form, 2) Matter, 3) Complete Determination. The second remark also has three points, one for each category of quantity: 1) Unity, 2) Plurality, 3) Totality. Each point corresponds to a formula—or more accurately, the concept included in a formula.

Table 3

Formula	Concept	First Remark	Second Remark
FUL/FLN	Universality	Form	Unity
FOH	Humanity	Matter	Plurality
FA/FKE	Autonomy/Kingdom of Ends	Complete Determination	Totality

Since matter and form are a familiar pair, I will treat them together. Pollock provides the useful label "transcendental hylomorphism" to describe Kant's general use of the matter/form relation.[24] Chapter 1 will outline Kant's hylomorphism and its place in the *Groundwork*. Complete determination is underexplored in the literature. The concept is difficult to understand even within the theoretical philosophy. So unpacking its role in the *Groundwork* requires extended attention. I split my reading into two chapters. Chapter 2 focuses entirely on Kant's Ideal of Pure Reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where we find his main critical period discussion of complete determination. Chapter 3 considers the implications of Kant's position in the first *Critique* for the Kingdom of Ends and *Groundwork* generally. As I indicated, because the second remark includes content from the first, I will consider it when it contributes to understanding matter and form, complete determination, and Kant's theory of system. We should also keep in mind that the account of the formula relation supplied by the first remark must be consistent with the second remark. Overall, my task will involve stepping far into the theoretical philosophy. This is done with the goal of bridging the gap between the theoretical and practical. I treat the remarks as the bridge.

[24] Pollock, *Kant's Theory of Normativity*, ch. 4-5

3.1. Matter and Form

The claims about matter and form in the *G* 436 passage are not special references to the first *Critique*. Kant uses the terms throughout the *Groundwork* (e.g. 387, 416, 427). In fact, they show up all across Kant's system to make all sorts of points. Perhaps the best known is the idea in the Transcendental Aesthetic that a priori intuition is the form of intuition while the matter is sensation. Because the topic is so broad, my goal is not to develop an exhaustive account of Kant's uses of matter and form. What I need is a picture of how matter and form operate in the remarks and in the Categorical Imperative. My treatment of Kant's hylomorphism will be structured around this goal.

At first glance, the claim is that the form of moral law is *universality*. All laws are universal. This is a theme of the *Groundwork* from the beginning and consistently repeated in the second *Critique*. Yet the universality of a law by itself says nothing about what the law is about. Universality is merely a *formal* property of laws. But it is impossible to articulate a universal law that has no content. Hylomorphists have been saying for millennia that form and matter are always found together.[25] What makes the moral law specifically *moral* is that its content has a certain unconditional worth. It exists as an end in itself. The *matter* of the Categorical Imperative is the humanity in persons, their rational nature. To make the point concrete, when we consider Kant's example of the false promise in the discussion of FUL/FLN, we see that the universality is found in the fact that, according to my maxim, I *always* lie when I am in need of money. But implicit here, and explicit in the discussion of FOH, is the fact that I am lying to another *person*—someone I am disrespecting and using only for my purposes. Although we can make a

[25] From Aristotle (*Physics* 192b8-194b16, *Metaphysics* 1029a30) to Suarez (*Metaphysical Disputation XV: On the Formal Cause of Substance)*.

conceptual distinction between the *universality* and *ends*, the *form* and *matter*, the moral law cannot have one without the other.

The lesson of hylomorphism is that individual entities (i.e. substances, in the Aristotelian sense) are a type of composite. The generation of a substance is the *combination* of matter of form. Kant says that a formula contains the combination of the other two, and it is the first two (FUL/FLN and FOH) that combine in the third (FA/FKE). Two notes for future elaboration. First, complete determination, for Kant, is about *individuation*. An entity is individuated because it cannot be determined further. In these initial words about the first remark, we find a fruitful connection between the practical and theoretical philosophy that helps explain the relation between the first two formulas of the Categorical Imperative. Not only do we see that a moral law has both matter and form, but Kant's claim about combination comes to make sense. The relation in the 'combination' is read as hylomorphic. In the hylomorphic context, we would expect the result of the combination to be an individual entity. Fortunately, the third point of the remark is about complete determination. On the surface, the reference to complete determination seems obscure or out of place. Kant's use of the hylomorphic tradition makes the progression from form and matter to complete determination natural and instructive. The individuation theme will also shed light on Kant's claim that there is a *single* supreme principle of morality.

Second, we should also note that the relation between the form of universality and rational nature has implications for autonomy. A large share of Chapter 1 will be spent unraveling the implications. The hylomorphic inseparability of the matter and form of the moral law is a description of autonomy, the concept highlighted in the Formula of Autonomy. That is, to have a rational nature is to will universal laws. The act of willing universal laws brings with it the will's standing as an entity with unconditional worth. To will universal laws is to be an end

in itself, and vice versa. The combination yields *autonomy*. Thus, the combination can yield both autonomy and a completely determined thing. As it happens, the completely determined entity that Kant has in mind is the kingdom of ends, as I will explain in chapter 3. Thus we have the means to make sense of both FKE and FA as the combination of the prior two formulas. Chapter 1, however, presents a reading of autonomy, its place within the *Groundwork* arc, and its status as an idea of reason. For purposes of setting up the next phase of my argument, I hint at the role of system. How should we conceive of a plurality of autonomous wills?

3.2. Complete Determination

There is relatively little scholarly attention paid to 'complete determination'. Kant discusses it in the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* titled "On the Transcendental Ideal," found early in the Ideal of Pure Reason. In it he talks about the "principle of determinability" and the "principle of *thoroughgoing determination.*" The principle of determinability (which is analytic because it purportedly relies only on the principle of noncontradiction) says that, with respect to what is not analytically contained in a concept, "of **every two** contradictorily opposed predicates only one can apply to it" (B 599). The principle of thoroughgoing determination (*durchgängigen Bestimmung*) says, "among **all possible** predicates of **things**, insofar as they are compared with their opposites, one must apply to it" (B 600).[26] The principles serve the role of individuation: the difference between a single entity and all that falls under a concept is that the former is thoroughgoingly determined. For a single entity, of all possible contradictory pairs of

[26] It should be noted that, in the *Groundwork*, Kant says "complete determination." The principle at the beginning of "On the Transcendental Ideal" is about thoroughgoing determination, though he later mentions "the complete concept of a thing [*vollständigen Begriff von einem Dinge*]" (A572/B601). I explain the difference between complete determination and thoroughgoing determination in chapter 2.

predicates, one in each pair applies. For example, the particular plant on my desk is determined with respect to the two predicates 'green' or 'not green'. It is green. However, not all plants are green. As a result, the concept plant is not thoroughgoingly determined: it is not the case that for all contradictory pairs of predicates, one of the predicates in the pair belongs to the concept. The predicate green does not belong to all plants—and neither does not green. But when, for some entity, one of each pair of contradictory predicates belongs, the entity is individuated. So with the two principles, Kant is distinguishing concepts and things. Concepts can apply to numerous things because their extensions are indeterminate with respect to some predicate pairs. Things, however, are not general but thoroughgoingly determined. I dedicate a chapter to these topics and Kant's broader argument in the section of the *Critique*. In particular, I develop an account of the ideal of pure reason by focusing on Kant's theories of refinement (*läuterung*), modality, and reality. I will also reckon with Kant's distinction between 'ideas' and 'ideals'. He uses the distinction and the above principles to discuss the idea of the totality of reality (*omnitudo realitatis*)—a transcendental substratum consisting of all possible affirmation (A 575/B 603). The *omnitudo realitatis* is an idea, which leads Kant to describe the *ideal* he calls the *ens realissimum*: "the concept of a single being, because of all possible opposite predicates one predicate, viz., what belongs to being absolutely, is found in this concept's determination." This *most real being* is what he calls the "transcendental ideal." It leads to Kant's discussion of the proofs for the existence of God in the later sections of the Ideal. The tendency to think of the transcendental ideal as a separate, actually existing being is the type of illusion that Kant considers in the Transcendental Dialectic (A580-1/B608-9).

With a detailed reading of this section of the first *Critique* we find that Kant takes the Kingdom of Ends to be the completely determined entity, and it is completely determined with

respect to all possible maxims or moral laws. This picture raises several questions. For example, is there any role for an *omnitudo realitatis* or transcendental ideal in practical philosophy? Is there a parallel theory of refinement, modality, and reality for the practical philosophy? Chapter 3 answers these questions and serves as the culmination of my account. There are a number of important relations between the transcendental hylomorphism and complete determination. I will pull together threads from the previous chapters to argue that Kant's conceives of the moral law as necessarily systematic. To explore the details of this view, I provide a reading of the Kingdom of Ends. The picture also invites us to make progress on several longstanding problems in Kant scholarship. My focus will be on the source of the positive content of the law and the extent to which the Kingdom of Ends is political or social. We are also able to understand the whole first remark and its place in *G* 436. The primary theme will be the role of system in the *Groundwork* and Kant's conception of the moral law.

3.3 Categories of Quantity

While I do not include a separate chapter on the second remark, I will say some words about it here. Kant uses the categories of quantity to describe the relation among the formulas of the Categorical Imperative as a "progression," language that does not appear in the first remark. The key is in understanding how the categories hang together as a class. Kant briefly considers the topic in a passage that follows the Metaphysical Deduction in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.[27] There are three categories in each class, and "the third category always arises from the combination of the first two in its class [d*ie dritte Kategorie allenthalben aus der Verbindung*

[27] There is dispute about where the Metaphysical Deduction begins and ends. My citations come from On the Clue to the Discovery of all Pure Concepts of the Understandings, the chapter that either is or contains the Metaphysical Deduction. Kant does not use the term 'metaphysical deduction' until late in the B edition Transcendental Deduction (B159).

der zweiten mit der ersten ihrer Classe entspringt]" (B110, cf. *Prol*. 4:325 n.). This supplies a look into how the combination relation works. Kant's position appears to be that the relation among the formulas of the Categorical Imperative is the same, or has the same structure, as the relation among the three categories of a class. And the categories of *quantity* specifically apply to or describe the progression of the formulas. Accordingly, the second remark provides two insights into the relation among the formulas. First and more generally, Kant describes the internal structure of a class of categories as involving the combination of the first two. This point is already familiar. Yet, when Kant discusses the relations among the categories in the first *Critique* and elsewhere, he gives the third category some type of foundational or grounding role. When plurality is considered as a unity, the category of totality arises. However, there would be no unity and plurality could not be combined without the totality. A part of the discovery of the third category is the further discovery that the third category, in some respect, underlies or makes possible the first two. These relations are a theme of the Transcendental Dialectic in the first *Critique*.

To further these points, after mentioning a combination relation among categories, Kant attempts to forestall an objection or confusion. He says, "But one should not think that the third category is therefore a merely derivative one and not an ancestral concept of pure understanding. For the combination of the first and second in order to bring forth the third concept requires a special act of the understanding, which is not identical with that act performed in the first and second" (B111, cf. 29:988, 10:366-7). The two sentences present a contrast. We are first told that the category relation does not make totality merely derivative (*bloß abgeleiteter*). The tone of the comment is that there are no second class categories. Kant seems initially to affirm a **category egalitarianism**: there is no priority or hierarchy among the categories; all are ancestral concepts

equally and to the same degree. In saying that the third category is not *merely* derivative, Kant means that it is not a **predicable**, a pure concept that owes all of its content ultimately to categories (A82/B108, 29:984, 988). A category, as an ancestral concept, is not (entirely) derivative *of other concept(s)*. The third category in a class will have new content not found in the other two.[28] This poses the question of whether and how derivation has a part in the category relation.

In the contrasting second sentence, we are told that, despite the egalitarianism, there is something distinctive about the third category. Its discovery requires "*einen besonderen Actus des Verstandes*." Kant's reference to a special act of the understanding is vital to the category relation. Yet he says little about the act and how it is special. After mentioning it, he supplies examples. With respect to quantity, he says, "the concept of a **number** (which belongs to the category of allness) is not always possible wherever the concepts of multiplicity and of unity are (e.g. in the representation of the infinite)" (B111).[29] The general point seems to be that the simple conjunction of plurality and unity is not enough to yield totality. If I generate a concept with the coordinate marks plurality and unity, I do not thereby have totality. In other words, abstracting from totality does not result only in plurality and unity. This is because there are cases in which unity and plurality are applicable but totality is not. The special act combines the

[28] Kant's phrasing allows for the third category to be derivative partially or in some other sense. Even if the category is not derivative of other concepts, it may be derivative of something else. Literature on the Metaphysical Deduction often phrases Kant's argument as the *derivation* of the categories from their corresponding forms of judgment (Reich, *The Completeness of Kant's Table of Judgments*, 1; Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 134; Longuenesse, *Kant on the Human Standpoint*, 17 (her phrasing is generally more careful in *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*); Santiago de Jesus Sanchez Borboa, "On Kant's Derivation of the Categories"). While this issue is not my focus, it should be noted that Kant does not speak this way in the Clue.

[29] Earlier in the paragraph, Kant indicates that he uses 'totality' and 'allness' interchangeably (B111, see also A322/B379).

two concepts in a special way.

The details of Kant's claims require extended treatment. The special act of the understanding and internal relation among categories are little understood. Yet we see that the same mereological or compositional relation, however it should be characterized, is meant to hold in the ethics. Considering humans as rational natures willing universal laws leads to the idea of a whole community—a totality called a Kingdom of Ends. Yet, as with the categories of quantity, the willing takes place within the context of the totality of moral law. We discover that a kingdom of ends underlies or makes possible an act of willing universal law, just as the totality makes possible the combination of unity and plurality. A law must fit within a systematic totality of moral law. I articulate these claims in Chapter 3. The second remark can be seen as substantiation and, to an extent, expansion of the formula relation.

In light of the second remark, Kant's prior line about the combination of formulas opens up into a more sophisticated picture. The combination relation is only one feature of the complex structure of the Categorical Imperative. The categories are the ancestral or root concepts (B111). We cannot say that the third is *derived* from the first two through their combination (at least, not in the sense that predicables are derived). Otherwise the third would not be a category. So the progression is not one of standard logical inference. The same is true of the progression through the formulas of the Categorical Imperative. As I will explore throughout the chapters, the main argument in *G* II is not an argument *for* formulas or the concepts they highlight. Instead, the formulas can be regarded as clues. The goal is the identification of the supreme principle of morality represented by the formulas.

Second, Kant specifically uses the categories *of quantity* in the remark. Here it is worth noting that he blends the first remark into the second. He says that there is the "the *unity* of the

form of the will (its universality), the *plurality* of the matter (of objects, i.e. of ends), and the *allness* or totality of the system of these." Each point follows the same pattern:

[*category*] [*corresponding point from first remark*] [*concept of corresponding formula*]

In other words, the second remark is a condensed version of Table 2. The will has a unity in that it wills only universal law. The laws are about ends. And together, there is a system of ends, completely determined with respect to moral laws. The exact role of each category warrants more attention. Fortunately, however, the first remark and the first insight above, about the structure of a class of categories, supply the bulk of the orientation for understanding *G* 436. The subsequent chapters will focus on them, while we should be mindful that an extended treatment of quantity would provide a deeper understanding of the formula relation.

The contours of the formula relation are already in view. It is a relation that fits nicely with the broader transitional nature of *G* II and the holistic arc of the text. If Kant follows through with the methodology that he lays out in the preface (and we owe it to him to assume that he does), the broader systematic whole helps explain the parts. Thus, *G* 436 presents the culmination of the first two sections of the text. What we find there is a statement of the Categorical Imperative that explains how three different formulas represent the same law. Roughly, they do so by serving distinct yet interconnected roles within a single system. Kant spends the first two sections of the text analyzing particular concepts in a way that enables him to organize them around formulas that together constitute a progression towards the supreme principle of morality. Once he has arrived at the end of the progression, he can state explicitly the relation among the concepts and formulas that was implicit before. At a moment of pivotal systematic significance, Kant reminds us that the sort of relation that holds among the formulas is a relation we have seen before. The

tools that he gives for understanding the relation are difficult to use, but they are there for us. Let us use them.

CHAPTER 1

Matter and Form

1. The Arc

There is an interpretive puzzle at the core of Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. The text presents the single principle of morality (*G* 392), but instead of providing a single definitive sentence statement of the principle, we instead find a three-step sequence of formulas. In *G* II, the section in which Kant claims to have identified the principle of morality, he begins with the universality of moral law (4:421), moves to humanity as an end in itself (429), then finishes with autonomy (431) and the kingdom of ends (433). Kant's prefered method for introducing and explaining these concepts is to feature them in a formula, like the Formula of Universal Law and Formula of Humanity, that can be used as decision procedures. The puzzle concerns what I call the **formula relation**: given the contrast of the moral law's individuality and plurality of formulas, how do the formulates relate to each other and the moral law? The question, at bottom, is about identifying the moral law, which is the aim of the first two sections of the *Groundwork*.

I aim to take the first step towards a formula relation account by focusing on a neglected passage at *G* 436. My focus on *G* 436 is a result of the *Groundwork's* structure. In the Preface, Kant describes his method as an arc. He will proceed "analytically from common cognition to the determination of its supreme principle and in turn synthetically from the examination of this principle and its sources back to common cognition, in which we find it used" (*G* 392). Following a long tradition, we start with an ascent (*anabasis*) that sets up a descent (*katabasis*).

There is a pinnacle of the book at which Kant gives a pivotal statement of the moral principle, phrased here as its 'determination' (*Bestimmung*).

With the methodological structure in mind, it is easy to identify the peak of the arc. It comes at *G* 436. There Kant describes the formula relation directly. He starts by saying:

> The above three ways of representing the principle of morality are fundamentally only so many formulas of the selfsame law, one of which of itself unites the other two within it. However, there is yet a dissimilarity among them, which is indeed subjectively rather than objectively practical, namely to bring an idea of reason closer to intuition (according to a certain analogy) and thereby to feeling.

The first line is typically interpreted as a statement that the formulas are equivalent, and a debate about types of equivalence proliferates the literature. However, the literature rarely includes a treatment of what Kant says next. In the rest of *G* 436, he gives two remarks about the formula relation, both of which include references to the theoretical philosophy—a fact that might explain their relative absence in the literature on Kant's ethics. The first remark is three numbered points:

> For all maxims have
> 1. a *form*, which consists in universality, and then the formula of the moral imperative is expressed as follows: that maxims must be chosen as if they were to hold as universal laws of nature;
> 2. a *matter*, namely an end, and then the formula says: that a rational being, as an end according to its nature, and hence as an end in itself, must serve for every maxim as the limiting condition of all merely relative and arbitrary ends;
> 3. *a complete determination* of all maxims by that formula, namely: that all maxims from one's own legislation ought to harmonize into a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature.

The second remark builds on the first:

> Here the progression takes place as through the categories of the *unity* of the form of the will (its universality), the *plurality* of the matter (of objects, i.e. of ends), and the *allness* or totality of the system of these.

My proposal diverges from what currently fills the literature. I hypothesize that the remarks are key to understanding the formula relation. They are Kant's identification of the principle of

morality and come at the end of the analytic portion of the text. Kant scholars assume that focusing on equivalence and dismissing these two remarks allows an understanding of the formula relation. I find this unwise.

Explaining both remarks is a large task and has not been attempted in any thorough way.[1] Here I restrict myself to points (1) and (2) of the first remark: the matter and form in the Categorical Imperative. On the one hand, the restriction means that I cannot yet fully state the formula relation. Although an initial picture will come into view, and the issue of what a full statement looks like is a theme of my discussion, I would also need to consider complete determination and the categories of quantity. On the other hand, concentrating on form and matter can teach us a great deal. For instance, I will show how the form and matter of the Categorical Imperative indicate an eventual third component of the moral principle; it is possible to get a glimpse of what the third formula will be, even before turning to it directly. Thus the incompleteness is instructive. It explains why Kant does not stop with the first two formulas but treats them as steps along a transition towards identifying the supreme principle.

I plan to outline pieces of Kant's view of matter and form.[2] Next, I show how his hylomorphism operates in the *Groundwork* and its implications for understanding the relevant formulas. The fourth section focuses mainly on passages that appear to conflict with my reading.

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[1] Wood gives the most detailed treatment (*Kant's Ethical Thought*, 182-90). Although the context and goal is different, it is worth mentioning Guyer, "The Form and Matter of the Categorical Imperative" in *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*.

[2] Konstantin Pollock uses the term 'transcendental hylomorphism'. The term is helpful because, as I will explain, it emphasizes that Kant's use of the familiar dichotomy is not (primarily) ontological. Pollock, *Kant's Theory of Normativity*, ch. 5.

In the final two sections, I explore how the matter and form of the moral law shed light on autonomy.

2. Hylomorphism in the Theoretical Philosophy

The matter/form distinction is among the most enduring in the history of philosophy. The terms are still embedded in the philosophical lexicon. In Kant's critical project (and even before), the distinction serves as a multipurpose conceptual tool. It has a general abstract structure that manifests in specific points across his system. Many of his signature doctrines are framed or phrased in terms of matter and form. My goal is not to provide an exhaustive account of Kant's hylomorphism and its many historical antecedents. That would be a monumental task. Rather, to prepare the way for my discussion of the *Groundwork*, I make several points about Kant's use of the terms in the theoretical philosophy. What features of Kant's hylomorphism are important for understanding *G* 436?

2.1. Individuation and Representation

Unlike Aristotle's use of hylomorphism to explicate ontology, Kant uses the form/matter in the theoretical philosophy to explain *representation*. It is in this respect **transcendental**: the subject of Kant's hylomorphism is primarily content of the mind, not objects in the world. Despite this difference, both share a fundamental similarity. A core feature of traditional ontological hylomorphism is its explanation of *individuation*.[3] An entity is individuated in virtue

[3] Kant tends not to talk about individuation directly. My use of this term is intended to bring Kant into closer contact with the hylomorphic tradition and establish language for discussing long standing puzzles surrounding Kant's claim that there is a single supreme principle of morality. I also take 'individual' to be preferable to 'singular' or 'particular' (which for Kant are logical forms of judgment) and 'unity' (a category that will feature heavily in my treatment).

of being, in some sense, a combination of matter and form. For an Aristotelian, no entity can lack matter or form; both are constitutive components of the entity as an individual. Kant's hylomorphism has the same role in his system. Each instance of cognition is a representational 'unity'.[4] In contrast to 'unity,' Kant often uses 'manifold,' a complex plurality of parts structured in a single cognition. This suggests a structuring process. We already notice a parallel between the first and second remarks. Form/unity and matter/plurality are natural pairs. Kant's account of the process routinely invokes hylomorphic language: the material of the manifold is structured formally through a mental process of unification.

The representations in question are the following types of cognition: 1) intuition, 2) concepts, 3) judgment, 4) inference, and 5) system.[5] Each has its characteristic type of form. There is form of intuition, form of concept, and so forth.[6] The types also have characteristic matters that combine with the forms. Further, the types of cognition are not discrete or

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Nevertheless, because talking about representations as individuals is nonstandard from a contemporary perspective, I largely avoid it.

[4] Strictly and historically speaking, there is a difference between individuation and unification, and it is possible to give different hylomorphic accounts of them. How this works in Aristotle is disputed. (See Anscombe, G.E.M., J. Lukasiewicz, and K. Popper, "Symposium: The Principle of Individuation." While I recognize the distinction, my claim is that Kant's hylomorphism explains both with respect to cognition. Discussing the nuances of the distinction is a task for another time.

[5] See Pollock, Kant's *Theory of Normativity*, ch. 5 for a lengthy account of each type. He does not focus on the role of systematicity that I will explore. That Kant conceives cognition as hylomorphic layers is evident from various lectures on logic. The *Jäsche Logic* is arranged as a progression through the types. See also *Vienna Logic* 790, 904, 928, and continuing into the *Heschel Logic* 89, 94, 114. This arrangement was common in logic textbooks from the time.

[6] In addition to the difference between the form of intuition and intuition itself, Allison warns of a possible confusion between mental content (*intuition*), an object (*intuited*), and a mental act (*intuiting*). Similar confusions loom for the other types of cognition. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 82.

disconnected but linked through hylomorphic relations. Each type of cognition is the matter for the subsequent type, giving Kant's overall picture of cognition a layered or nested structure.

5. (matter) SYSTEM (form of system (B89))
↑
4. (matter) INFERENCE (forms of inference (A323/B379))
↑
3. (matter) JUDGMENT (form: functions of judgment (B95))
↑
2. (matter) CONCEPT (form: universality (*JL* 9:91))
↑
1. (matter) INTUITION (form: space and time (A22-3/B37-8))
↑
0. Sensation (A20/B34)

Each layer includes three items: 1) the matter, 2) the form, and 3) the cognition as a hylomorphic composite of the two. The matter of empirical intuition is sensation, which, to use traditional language, can be considered as a type of cognitive *prima materia*.[7] For those of us with discursive intellects, sensation combines with the forms of intuition in sensibility. Concepts are intuitions or other concepts under the form of universality; judgments are concepts or other judgments under the forms of judgment (as displayed in the table at A70/B95); and so forth. The layered structure means that cognition increases in complexity and generality the further it is removed from immediate cognition of objects. In Kant's theory of reason, we naturally drive up the layers, seeking greater generality, ideally in the form of a system. All cognitions and their relations would then be parts of a single whole. At the same time, the objective validity of theoretical cognition must refer to sensible intuition, and thus there is also a sense in which we

[7] Above I said that Kant adopts hylomorphism as an explanation of the unity of representation. Although it is not itself cognition, a sensation might still be a representational unity. If so, it is difficult to see how Kant would account for the unity. Either there is a form of subjective representation separate from the form of intuition or hylomorphism explains only the individuality of objective representations.

drive down the layers.[8]

With the layers of cognition in mind, let us look more closely at some types. When discussing empirical intuition early in the first *Critique*, Kant defines form as "that which allows the manifold of appearance to be ordered in certain relations" (A20/B34). An intuition has an order that specifies relations among the parts of the objects it represents. Form accounts for these relations. It signifies the particular way that an intuition is structured and, to use Kant's terms, enables the plurality in the manifold to be a unity. In the case of empirical intuition, matter is "that in an appearance which corresponds to sensation" (A20/B34). Sensations are the subjective states of the individual who is perceiving objects. The sensations themselves are an unorganized plurality and do not yet represent the world. Matter combines with the form of intuition to become cognition. The result is a single intuition, an objective representation.

At bottom, Kant is making a point that occupies him from the first lines of the *Critique*: although the two are always found together in any particular instance of intuition, it is essential to distinguish between sensations and the organizing or structuring contributions made by cognitive faculties. Kant's project, or at least its presentation, proceeds on the basis of the matter/form distinction. As we will see, his substantive doctrines involve him placing forms in the mind a priori and giving them the objectifying function. His arguments utilize transcendental hylomorphism: a theory of matter and form that applies to cognition and its components, specifically the a priori aspects. In Kant's hylomorphic picture, the source of unification and objectivity is the mental act of *enforming* matter. But the important first step establishes the difference between matter and form in cognition.

[8] These dual drives of reason do not feature heavily in my account of matter and form of the moral law but will prove relevant to complete determination.

2.2. Determination

There is another important term to introduce. Kant uses 'determination' in the *Groundwork* preface and *G* 436. The first *Critique* reveals that he often (though not always) means the term in a hylomorphic sense. Among the more focused discussions of matter and form is the Amphiboly. There he describes the 'determinable/determination' relation (A261/B317, cf. 29:847). The determinable is *matter* while the determination is *form*. As he says, the two are inextricably tied in all reflection and uses of the understanding. He then provides several examples in quick succession. I will discuss two.[9] First, the hylomorphic relation is found in judgment: "In every judgment one can call the given concepts logical matter (for judgment), their relation (by means of the copula) the form of the judgment" (A266/B322). As with intuition, form constitutes the relations among a given matter. An assortment of concepts combined in a particular way constitutes a judgment. The concepts body and divisible[10] can be formed into the judgment "All bodies are divisible." The constituent concepts by themselves are not judgments. Their relations are unspecified. The logical functions in judgments are forms that determine them. Thus, for any judgment, as for any other type of cognition, it is possible to identify both the formal and material components (cf. *Jäsche Logic* §18 9:101). The formal component is often called the 'determination' of the cognition.

Kant provides another, more cryptic example in the Amphiboly. He says, "Also, in respect to things in general, unbounded reality is regarded as the matter of all possibility, but its limitation (negation) as that form through which one thing is distinguished from another in

[9] For a discussion of the examples and the Amphiboly generally, see Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 147-163.

[10] I underline names of concepts. When mentioning a term, I use single inverted commas. Bold introduces or emphasizes an important technical term.

accordance with transcendental concepts" (A266/B322). The passage is a glimpse at his picture of how the concept of a thing is determined, which is fleshed out only later in section two of the Ideal of Pure Reason in the Transcendental Dialectic. According to the Amphiboly passage, reality is a vast positive matter. The mind utilizes forms, like limitation and negation, in a procedure for individuating a thing. Each thing has a distinctive share of the matter of all possibility. Explaining the process in detail is a separate task, but I flag it to show that when Kant talks about form as determination, he has complete determination in mind. The concept is found in Kant's most detailed discussion of hylomorphism. The Amphiboly passage reminds us that an explanation of the matter and form in the moral law does not exhaust the formula relation. The third point—which Kant explains with the term 'complete determination' in the remark—suggests a practical analog to or version of the matter of all possibility. There will then be concepts that determine the matter into an individual of some kind.

I have made several general points about how Kant utilizes the matter/form distinction in his theory of cognition. A condensed version of the points is found in *Metaphysics Pölitz*/L_2. Much of the language is the same as what is found in the first *Critique*, so there is reason to think the passage represents Kant's mature view.

> *Matter* is the given <*datum*>, what is given, thus the *stuff*.—But *form* is how these givens <*data*> are posited, the manner in which the manifold stands in connection. We see matter and form in all parts. We find matter and form in our judging and effecting. [...] Matter in the *physical* sense is the substrate <*substratum*> of extended objects, the possibility of bodies. But in the *transcendental* sense every given <*datum*> is matter, but the form [is] the relation of the given <*dati*>. Transcendental matter is the thing that is determinable <*determinabile*>; but transcendental form the determination, or the act of determining <*actus determinandi*>. Transcendental matter is the reality or the given <*datum*> for all things. But the limitation of reality constitutes transcendental form. All realities of things lie as if in infinite matter, where one then separates some realities for a thing, which is the form. (28:575)

The claims are familiar. He begins with abstract statements about the matter/form relation. There

is a difference between *what* is given and *how* it is given (cf. A266/B322). He then distinguishes a physical and transcendental sense of hylomorphism. The former characterizes the Aristotelian tradition. The latter is Kant's hylomorphism of theoretical cognition ("in judging") and, as we will soon see, morals (in "effecting"). We again find the determinable/determination distinction. An "act of determining" combines forms with matter. Finally, Kant obliquely invokes complete determination when he talks about matter as an infinite substrate and the possibility of objects. The limitation of reality is meant to describe a procedure of determining or forming the concept of a thing. Notably, it is not obvious that Kant is restricting his statements about complete determination to theoretical cognition. They may also extend to the practical. *G* 436 is evidence that they do.

2.3. Priority

Let us now shift from the conceptual relations between matter and form to their role in Kant's substantive views. He says in the Amphiboly and elsewhere that form *precedes* or has *priority* over matter: "if it is only sensible intuitions in which we determine all objects merely as appearances, then the form of intuition (as a subjective constitution of sensibility) precedes [*geht...vor*] all matter (the sensations)" (A267/B323, cf. *Ref*. 5552). The abstract structure of Kant's hylomorphism does not by itself entail any type of priority. So what does he mean? Of course, Kant is not making a claim about time. Rather, the forms have a justificatory and transcendental priority. The use of forms in cognition can be justified a priori, even if matter and form combine in experience at the same moment in time. The distinction is found in the early lines of the B Introduction:

> **As far as time is concerned**, then, no cognition in us precedes experience, and with experience every cognition begins. But although all our cognition commences **with** experience, yet it does not on that account all arise **from** experience. For it could well be that

> even our experiential cognition is a composite [*Zusammengesetztes*] of that which we receive through impressions and that which our cognitive faculty (merely prompted by sensible impressions) provides out of itself. (B1)

Kant notes a possible view that experience is a hylomorphic composite of matter in sensation and forms in the cognitive faculties a priori. This is certainly the view Kant will champion in the book, but his point in this early passage is that there are two different types of priority. The first is temporal: on the timeline of my cognition, neither matter nor form predates my first experience. The second concerns justification: a type of a priori cognition makes experience possible and is therefore not derived from experience. Because experience is a "composite," and its matter is sensation (i.e. what is "received through impressions"), the relevant a priori cognition will concern the forms of experience. For Kant, experience is possible only if forms are *in us*, not delivered along with the sensations. The general structure of Kant's hylomorphism enables us to see how the terms can express his brand of idealism. It is an idealism according to which certain forms are a priori and have priority over matter (see 29:829). Cognition of objects in experience is possible through an act of hylomorphic combination. He even calls his position "formal idealism" in places (see B519, *Prol* 4:337).

Within transcendental priority, it is worth making a further distinction. The diagram of Kant's layered account of cognition shows multiple forms at play. When an intuition is considered as an individual cognition, the forms of space and time *precede* (in the transcendental sense) the matter. In other words, considering a layer on its own, there is a particular hylomorphic relation. However, further hylomorphic relations link the layers. When an intuition is instead considered as a part of a manifold, a matter for further cognition, the relevant form is different. A concept, as an individual cognition, is a hylomorphic composite that includes formal universality and intuitions (or other concepts) as matter. Thus, the distinction is between a

cognition as a composite of its own and a cognition as matter for a further, higher cognition. In either case, in Kant's view, the form has transcendental priority. The forms determine the relations among the matter such that the matter is unified into objective representation.

2.4. System

System deserves special consideration. Unlike the other types of cognition, system is not the matter for a higher form. Because a complete system would represent all cognition, the system as a whole has no relations to any other cognition. Every cognition would have its place within the single system, which is the ideal end point of thought. There would be nothing left to determine. However, the complete system is not a point that cognition can reach. Kant expresses this by saying that judgment is guided by the 'regulative idea' of system (*KU* 379). Both parts of the term are technical. First, system is special in its **regulative** function because it guides or sets rules for the operation of the cognitive faculties. Second, the form of system is an **idea** (*Idee*). An idea, for Kant, is a concept to which no object of experience is adequate. Thus, a regulative idea like system is a type of concept that directs our cognition without representing any object in experience. What does Kant mean, and how does this enter into Kant's hylomorphic picture of cognition?[11]

In the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic, where he discusses regulative ideas in detail, Kant says,

> If we survey the cognitions of our understanding in their entire range, then we find that what reason quite uniquely prescribes and seeks to bring about concerning it is the **systematic** in cognition, i.e., its interconnection based on one principle. This unity of reason always presupposes an idea, namely that of the form of a whole of cognition, which precedes [*vorhergeht*] the determinate cognition of the parts and contains the conditions for determining *a priori* the place of each part and its relations to others.

[11] For a discussion of the role of the system, see Guyer, "Reason and Reflective Judgment: Kant on the Significance of Systematicity" in *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*.

> Accordingly, this idea postulates complete unity of the understanding's cognition, through which this cognition comes to be not merely a contingent aggregate but a system interconnected in accordance with necessary laws. (A645/B673)

The priority of form over matter also describes the form of system. System precedes inferences with respect to their status as undetermined parts of a whole. It is tempting to see the picture as a process of building from granular singular parts, beginning with sensations and ending in a system. But Kant repeatedly insists that the building process is not one of aggregation (A832/B860, cf. First Introduction to *KU* 20:203, 209, 217). The parts do not naturally cohere together independent of acts of the mind (cf. *KU* 381). He believes that the same point extends to the form of the system as a whole. The system does not *arise from* the lower layers of cognition; the system precedes its matter. For cognition to comprise a system, the form of system must already be in the mind. Otherwise, the relations among cognition cannot be organized. The form of system, like the other forms, has the unifying function.

As an idea of reason, the form of system aids in the search for greater unity of principles, even though a complete system is a concept that cannot be exhibited in experience (A320/B377, A327/B384, A838/B866). Although the form of system precedes and determines its matter, it does so *regulatively*, not *constitutively* (A645/B673). Because reason uses ideas as a target for understanding, system is conceived as a useful but unattainable goal. It perpetually guides cognition and directs our thinking about objects. We naturally conceive of inferences and all other cognition as part of a system, even if we do not have cognition of the whole. Thus, the system is a "maximum" of cognition.

More can be said about how ideas operate in cognition. But since it is most relevant to complete determination and the categories of quantity, I only wish to emphasize that the form of system is a special aspect of Kant's hylomorphism that cannot be safely isolated from other

matter/form pairs. Its presence looms in the background as a ground for the possibility of cognition. Thus, my point is two-fold: 1) the structure of Kant's hylomorphism shows how the treatment of the matter and form in the moral law is necessarily incomplete if restricted to the first two points of the remark; and 2) because of the priority of form, the hylomorphic combination of the first two points serves as matter in something new—something pertaining to Kant's concept of a system and complete determination. Reason not only drives up the hylomorphic layers of cognition but also drives down through regulative ideas like system. Cognition in the lower layers is ordered by reason's presupposition that all cognition, even of the moral law, is systematic. This chapter's discussion of the will and autonomy will provide material for discussing the system in the following chapters.

To summarize, Kant's matter/form distinction has a generality and pervasiveness that shapes several of his major positions. The following aspects of the relation with be relevant:

1. Kant describes the matter/form relation as the relation between the *determinable* and *determination*.
2. The language of determination foreshadows complete determination, which arises in connection to Kant's example of a procedure by which a thing is individuated from unbounded positive reality with the use of concepts like limitation.
3. Form precedes or has priority over matter transcendentally, not chronologically. The form is a priori, even if the cognition as a whole is empirical.
4. Matter and form are always found together in an individual cognition. Yet they can be distinguished conceptually.
5. The various layers of cognition are linked through matter/form relations. Kant takes system to be the broadest form that structures/orders/organizes all of cognition.
6. System is an idea that structures/orders,/organizes through the regulative use of reason.

The question now is whether and how these features of Kant's hylomorphism apply to his practical philosophy. They will serve as a checklist for the following sections.

3. Hylomorphism in the *Groundwork*

The identification and determination of the Categorical Imperative is the culmination of

the analytic portion of the *Groundwork*. Analyzing the concept of will leads him in the course of the *G* II transition to delineate various features of the single moral law. When Kant unifies the plurality of formulas at *G* 436, he invokes hylomorphism explicitly. Given the longstanding explanatory role of hylomorphism, the move should be unsurprising. The formula relation concerns how a variety of different formulas can be represented in a single law. Kant says in the preface that his goal is a *determination* of the supreme principle. Determination, we have seen, suggests form and individuation. When Kant says that one unites the other two formulas in itself ("*deren die eine die anderen zwey von selbst in sich vereinigt*"), he is referencing the hylomorphic relation and its individuating function. The first remark makes this evident. So there are strong reasons to think that Kant's hylomorphism has a central role in the formula relation. The remark is not throwaway lines about coincidental architectonic connections.

My discussion of combination in subsequent sections will focus on how the precise structure of the matter/form relation leads to the third formula and step in the analytic argument of the *Groundwork*. But I begin here with the matter and form mentioned in the first remark. What do they say about the formula relation? I will focus on the issue of individuation that sits at the core of the *G* II transition, but I will also explore the perspective on the Formula of Universal Law and Formula of Humanity that my view of the formula relation yields.

3.1. Constitutive Components

The topline of the remark is that all maxims have a form and matter. Kant says in a footnote at the end of the first section, "A *maxim* is the subjective principle of willing; the objective principle (i.e. the one that would also subjectively serve all rational beings as the practical principle if reason had complete control over the desiderative faculty) is the practical *law*" (*G* 400, cf. *KpV* 5:19). Maxims are subjective principles of acting. Not all maxims are also

objective principles or moral laws. The practical law is the type of principle of volition that can serve as a principle for all rational beings. Since at *G* 436 Kant is stating the supreme principle of morality as the practical law, the context indicates that he is interested in the features of the objective principles. So I will consider maxims that *are* moral laws—cases in which a person is acting from duty. At this stage, Kant is neither testing maxims nor providing a procedure for testing them. Kant might be able to point to the form or matter in a diagnosis of faulty subjective principles. He is certainly interested in the diagnostic project. I simply wish to set merely subjective maxims aside to consider the structure of the moral law as revealed in the first remark.

The first point of the remark suggests a distinction between the law and its form. A moral law holds for everyone without exception. If a principle is to be a law, it must have the form of universality. Otherwise, it is not that it is a deficient or ill-formed law, but rather that it is not a law at all. We also see that the form, as in the case of theoretical cognition, makes the principle objective, applying to all rational beings. It is through enforming a matter that the principle becomes a moral law.

Kant's examples are meant to illustrate this. A prohibition on lying is general. Although the principle might include various components, it is in virtue of its form that the principle cannot allow exceptions. Objective principles are universal. Thus, when a liar attempts to make an exception for themselves, our moral evaluation need only refer to the principle's form. The liar knows implicitly or by implication that the prohibition applies to *all* cases, and thus their own. The result is a conflict between the liar's subjective principle and the objective principle. When we universalize the subjective principle, the principle states that it is permissible to lie in a certain set of cases (e.g. when a person needs a loan they cannot repay). But the cases also fall under the general prohibition stated in the objective principle. This is how the liar intends to get

away with the lie. Hence, the liar attempts to will two conflicting objective principles. The example illustrates that universal form is a constitutive feature of a moral principle and that it is in virtue of the form that the principle is objective. Kant makes this argument directly in the second *Critique* (5:27-8).

A similar analysis is available for the second point of the remark. We distinguish the moral law from its matter. If a moral principle is a type of unity, the principle will have a matter. Without it, the form is empty. The principle could not be *about* anything. So what does matter contribute?

For Kant, matter has the role of setting the type of law. There are various types of laws, each universal in form. The form of universality alone is unable to distinguish between laws of morality and laws of nature. Universal judgment can be either theoretical or practical. Kant says in the *Lectures on Ethics*, "Practical philosophy is practical not by form, but by the object, and this object is free acts and free behavior" (27:243). On the practical/theoretical distinction he says, "Any formula which expresses the necessity of an action is called a law. So we can have natural laws, where the actions stand under a general rule, or also practical laws. Hence all laws are either physical or practical. Practical laws express the necessity of free actions, and are either subjective, so far as we actually abide by them, or objective, so far as we ought to do so" (*Collins Lectures*, 27:272). The claim is that, because the form is the same in both, something besides form distinguishes practical and natural laws.

What type of matter makes a law practical? According to the remark, the answer is an *end*. Kant talks about ends in two senses, both of which appear in the second point of the

remark.[12] An end can be 1) humanity or the rational nature, or 2) the object that a rational being seeks to bring about through (free) action. Humanity is characterized by the capacity for setting ends. An end in the first sense is identified through its capacity for setting ends in the second sense. In short, humans have wills (*MM* 6:387, *Vig. Lectures* 27:671, *Rel* 8:26). Further, the remark says that a rational being as an end is the limiting condition on "all merely relative and arbitrary ends." So an end in the second sense ought to respect the end in the first sense. I focus on the relationship between the ends that rational beings will and the moral law in the next sections, but Kant's invocation of hylomorphism at *G* 436 leads us to see that, whatever the end of the moral law, the matter is indeterminate, though determinable, when considered on its own. An end cannot constitute a law, regardless of its nature. Recognizing the irreplaceable dignity of persons, or even recognizing that morality concerns the dignity of persons, is not a principle, moral law, or categorical imperative. It is a manifold without unity.

Where does this leave us? On Kant's hylomorphic view, the form of universality and the matter of ends are both constitutive features of a moral law. Any objective principle of acting will include them both. The first remark at *G* 436 does not lay this out in detail, but it does provide an impetus for seeing the thread of hylomorphism that runs through *G* II. It demonstrates Kant's underlying interest in the individuality of the moral law. If there is a *single* supreme principle, it is characteristic of Kant to employ his hylomorphism: the principle results from unifying a manifold, determining a determinable, enforming a matter. In the practical context, the form makes the law objective, while the matter types the law as moral.

[12] Guyer, "Form and Matter of the Categorical Imperative," in *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, 148-9.

3.2. Formulas

I can develop the account further by considering the formulas. The references to the formulas in the first remark encourage the reader to see them as steps in the analytic transition to a determination of the principle of morality. Kant is signaling, as he frequently does, the methodological arc of the book. On the analytic method, the formulas and their use in examples identify specific features of the moral law. The first point says that the Formula of Universal Law and Formula of Law of Nature highlight or make explicit the form. This is not to say that the formulas themselves have universal form (though they do). Rather, the two formulas include the concept of universality (or universal law) in their statements. The Formula of Universal Law says, "act only according to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" (*G* 421). The formula might be used in explaining or deriving examples of duties, but it is also a formula about the form of the law. From the perspective of the overarching *G* II argument, the Formula of Universal Law shows that maxims that can be objective principles are universal. When the moral law is eventually identified, it will have this formal feature.

The moral law will also have other features. The next formula along the arc is the Formula of Humanity: "So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (*G* 429). Here Kant states that the matter of the moral law is an end of a particular kind—namely, humanity. Why and how this is the matter is a complex issue I will consider later, but it is important first to situate the formula in the *G* II transition. Making good on the promises in the preface, the identification of the single principle of morality at *G* 436 says that the principle will be a hylomorphic composite. This enables Kant to claim that the principle is represented in multiple

formulas that each highlight different constitutive features of the composite. Given that the first formula highlighted the form of the principle, we can expect the next one to focus on the matter. The formula includes in its statement the concept of humanity as an end in itself. When the moral law is eventually identified, it will have this material feature.

The examples provided alongside the formulas show both hylomorphic features. After all, matter and form are inseparable. Although Kant discusses contradictions that result from the universality of (a system of) laws, concrete examples would be impossible if they did not also include, at least implicitly, some matter or other. By making the matter the ends of rational beings, Kant types the examples as moral. The examples are about self-love and life, need and communication, comfort and natural talents, aid and sympathy. Each instance of possible moral law centers around a rational will. All are or indicate the matter of the maxims that Kant is exploring. Further evidence is the incorporation of the concepts of maxim and will into the statement of the Formula of Universal Law. The formula that highlights universality still includes references, indirect as they may be, to the matter. The point is more straightforward in the Formula of Humanity, perhaps because when he introduces it, he has already made explicit the universality feature of the law. The form is what tells us *never* to treat a person merely as a means but *always* also as an end in themselves. The matter tells us never to treat *a person* merely as a means but always also as *an end in themselves*. The point is that, although we can make a conceptual distinction between the roles of matter and form, the relation also includes their inseparability in any statement of the moral law, including in the formulas. The matter and form are found together, even if the formulas are used to highlight one or the other as features of the single moral law.

3.3. Separable and Inseparable

The issue of inseparability is informative and foregrounds some upshots of my reading. Kant structures the *Groundwork* argument on the methodological assumption that matter and form can be distinguished in critical philosophy. He separates the matter and form in the first remark and preceding argument. The Formula of Universal Law and Formula of Humanity are discussed one at a time. It is useful to explain how matter and form can be both separable and inseparable. In the theoretical philosophy, the answer relied on the distinction between the theoretical and transcendental. The practical requires a different distinction.

Kant is interested in both the applied domain of moral philosophy and the abstract metaphysics that underlies it. The distinction occurs frequently in the *Groundwork*. He gives a straightforward statement early in *G* II: "Pure philosophy of morals (metaphysics) may be distinguished from the applied (viz. applied to human nature)" (*G* 410, cf. *MM* 6:217). Kant is aware of the connection between the two sides of the project.[13] If ethics is to have any use, what he uncovers in the speculative or metaphysical side will translate to the other. "The object of practical philosophy should be *praxis*" (27:245). Kant knows that his moral theory has bearing on human action (see 4:389). He occasionally signals the *praxis*, even in the thick of metaphysics. But we can still make out the two distinct sides of his practical project.

The dual interests are not merely mentioned but in fact built into the *Groundwork* arc. Kant begins and ends with common knowledge and application but progresses through metaphysics in between. The references to subjective practicality and intuition/feeling before the

[13] Although I will not discuss it, another aspect of practical philosophy is anthropology (see *G* 4:388, 27:244, 29:599). Anthropology cannot be "used as a basis" for a metaphysics of morals (A841/B870). The architectonic approach, however, means appreciating the systematic relations between the two sides of the practical project.

remarks, and his claim about the usefulness of formulas after, are also references to the distinction. At *G* 436, where Kant has fully stepped into the metaphysics of morals, we expect to find him showing the distinctive conceptual roles of matter and form while also reminding the reader that the Categorical Imperative is a principle meant to be applied. The fact that the parts of the *Groundwork* are steps along a progression often makes it difficult to tell on which side Kant is operating. Stating the formula relation requires him to (appear to) pull apart the relevant concepts in the moral law. But understanding the formula relation also means understanding the inseparable combination of the concepts. Kant's presentation is based on the awareness that sometimes one can only see inseparability, and see it in the right way, after taking the parts one at a time in a particular order. These types of considerations are pertinent to system thinking and in the conception of philosophy as both *anabasis* and *katabasis*.

The distinction between the applied and pure sides of ethics enables Kant to use his hylomorphism in metaphysical analysis while retaining the individuality of the moral law. In action, when we are concerned with the application of principles to cases, matter and form are inseparable. In metaphysics, when we are philosophizing about the internal relations among the features of the moral law, they are separable. Both sides together comprise the practical project and explain the two superficially inconsistent claims.

I can extend the point by considering the formulas again. Despite giving a brief statement about their role, until now I have been mainly focusing on the Formula of Universal Law and the Formula of Humanity as representations of the moral law. The *G* II argument is carried out through the sequenced introduction of formulas, each of which highlights a particular constitutive feature and concept. The issue is less about how the formulas relate to each other and more about how they relate to the Categorical Imperative. This point is already a significant

contribution to the formula relation. It shifts the focus away from the formulas and towards the conceptual composition of the single moral law.

However, I should not be interpreted as diminishing the importance of the formulas. They are not a ladder to be kicked away. In the *Groundwork*, the pure/applied distinction is closely related to the formula/concept distinction. The formulas can be seen in two respects, corresponding to the two sides of Kant's practical project. First, as I have been emphasizing, they should be read within the context of the *Groundwork* arc. The discussions of the formulas, and the order in which they are presented, are meant to drive the transition toward the identification of the supreme principle of morality. Speaking loosely, one might say that the formulas are a means to the end of highlighting features of the principle. At *G* 436, Kant reveals that the relation among the formulas themselves is, in one respect, less significant than the hylomorphic relation they express between universality and ends. This is because the formulas are a mechanism for progressing the argument further into the metaphysics of morals. The four examples of duties are the remnants of the starting point of the *G* II transition. With the final formulas Kant has fully abstracted away from concrete cases. What is left to show is the result of the combination of the features highlighted by the first two formulas. This is in part why the examples do not appear a third time. Kant has already illustrated that the formulas help to make sense of moral duties. In the metaphysics of morals, he now needs to consider the result of the combination of matter and form. This is not an issue of the application of a formula to cases and cannot be explained by using a new formula to derive duties. In fact, Kant repeatedly reminds the reader that examples have no place in the metaphysical stretch of the arc (e.g. 4:408, 418, 432).[14]

[14] Deep in the metaphysics of *G* II, Kant appends a footnote to his discussion of the Formula of Kingdom of Ends: "I can be exempted from citing examples to illustrate this principle" (4:432).

Second, although the formulas are a means, they are not *merely* a means. Kant is still engaged in a practical project that includes a concrete applied side. It is difficult to read the *Groundwork* without the distinct impression that Kant believes the formulas to be useful in our lives. As he says, they can be regarded as a compass, helping us navigate what is good and evil (*G* 403-4). Immediately after the two remarks Kant gives the so-called "universal formula": "But one does better if in moral judgment he follows the rigorous method and takes as his basis the universal formula of the categorical imperative: Act according to that maxim which can at the same time make itself a moral law. But if one wants also to secure acceptance for the moral law, it is very useful to bring one and the same action under the three aforementioned concepts" (*G* 437).[15] Kant is promptly returning us to *praxis*. He is aware that the formulas serve a second function. As metaphysics, the formulas are a means to the end of identifying or determining the supreme principle. But as applied moral philosophy, the formulas are, so to speak, ends in themselves. At Kant's behest, we should feel free to use them. At the same time, we must be vigilant not to collapse the two sides of his project. A formula is a single representation of the

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For better or worse, this makes the concept of autonomy irremediably abstract. Examples belong earlier in the arc. See also *MM* 6:355, 372.

[15] There is debate about the universal formula. Should it be read as the Formula of Universal Law, another known formula, or a brand new formula? Timmerman takes the first option (*Kant's Groundwork*, 112). Wood takes the second, arguing that it is the Formula of Autonomy (*Kant's Ethical Thought*, 188; though he is less confident in *Formulas of the Moral Law*, 59-60). Allison takes the third (*Kant's Groundwork*, 251-4). My reading suggests that the debate is misconceived. The particular placement of the universal formula directly following Kant's identification of the Categorical Imperative indicates that the formulas have, in one respect, fulfilled their purpose. The subsequent formulas come to include features from previous formulas more explicitly. The universal formula is a harbinger of something ubiquitous in the synthetic portion of the *Groundwork* and in other of Kant's practical works: formulas that resemble but differ from the more famous pre-*G* 436 formulas. Post-*G* 436, Kant is free to state formulas differently because they are not steps in the analytic *G* II argument. He can be less tied to the pre-*G* 436 formulas because he takes the *G* II argument to be finished. The formulas in the analytic portion are found in a different context from the formulas in the synthetic portion.

moral law that, when read as a piece of practical advice, masks internal structural complexity. And it masks complexity in a strategic way when placed within the context of the *G* II transition. This role of the formula can be forgotten when we are seeking a principle that assists us in a concrete case of moral judgment. But at *G* 436, the role becomes Kant's central focus.

According to Kant, the two points about the role of the formulas are complimentary. The usefulness of the Formula of Universal Law or Formula of Humanity in daily life is owed to the success of the broader *G* II argument. And the application of the formulas to examples (as follows the first two formulas) is meant to illustrate that Kant is highlighting genuine features of the moral law. My view is also consistent with the possibility (which Kant hints at in places) that certain types of situations might lend themselves more to one formula than another, or that people might differ with respect to the formula they find most helpful. At the applied level, the formulas are not meant to be used in a vacuum, divorced from the general understanding of the moral law that Kant believes we all possess.

A strength of my reading is that distinguishing the pure and applied functions of the formulas provides a blueprint for those who wish to defend Kant from objections. It is tempting and common to take the formulas as complete metaphysical statements of the moral law. We might then compare how they apply to cases and use inconsistencies to dispute Kant's metaphysical account. This is probably the most prevalent objection to Kant (other than perhaps his opaque writing). There is a sense in which the formulas *are* full representations of the moral law, but this risks ignoring how the pure/applied distinction should shape one's reading of the formulas. From the perspective of the metaphysical argument that runs through *G* II, the formulas have specific roles that culminate in the determination of the moral law. This is separate from their use in cases of moral judgment. However, although the pure/applied

distinction is crucial for understanding the *Groundwork*, it is also important to appreciate that Kant is often operating on both sides simultaneously. He does not shift back and forth sentence by sentence. One and the same sentence, especially in *G* II, has significance for both sides. Readers cannot hope to make sense of one side without making sense of the other. This is part of why the *Groundwork* is so philosophically rich. Excising the formulas without knowing *what they are being excised from* makes the project of using them in concrete cases less likely to be instructive. The formulas are indeed meant to be excised, but there is a reason Kant does not simply hand them to the reader in a list. They are embedded in an argument, and not an argument *for* the formulas. When the metaphysical account is in place, we can return to the formulas as practical guides. They acquire their usefulness and reliability in virtue of the fact that they represent the moral law. We only fully discover this upon reaching the peak of the *Groundwork* arc, the conclusion of the argument that transitions through various formulas, where Kant explicitly identifies the moral law for the first time in its full complexity. From the higher vantage point, we can look back at the formulas with a more sophisticated understanding of their role.

My reading of the formula relation utilizes several distinctions. Besides the matter/form distinction at the heart of my approach, I distinguished the formulas from the moral law, the formulas from the matter and form of the moral law, and the pure and applied sides of Kant's practical project. The pure/applied distinction enables Kant to separate matter and form in the metaphysics of morals and yet retain the hylomorphic explanation of the individuality of the moral law. It also yields a picture of the formulas according to which they are at the same time 1) steps along the transition to the determination of the moral law and 2) principles to be used in life. In the end, as Kant says when he describes the formula relation at *G* 436, the formulas

represent the single supreme principle of morality. They do so by making explicit several constitutive features of the principle. The first two features, as found in the Formula of Universal Law/Formula of Law of Nature and the Formula of Humanity, stand in hylomorphic relation: the law has universal form and concerns the ends of humanity as matter. This, however, is an incomplete picture of the formula relation. There is more to say about how matter and form combine.

4. Problem Passages

This section is primarily transitional. I start by considering a *Groundwork* passage in which Kant appears to banish matter from the Categorical Imperative and then comparable passages in the second *Critique*. Neither pose a problem for my view. But I aim to do more than forestall objections. The latter passages allow me to frame what is at issue in the next sections. By considering what the matter is, we begin to see why Kant introduces a third formula and third point in the remarks. The next sections will elaborate on the picture of the combination of matter and form that I present in outline here. My goal overall is to uncover Kant's reasons for incorporating hylomorphism into his determination of the principle of morality.

At *G* 416 Kant discusses different types of imperatives. He says,

> There is one imperative that—without presupposing as its condition any other purpose to be attained by a certain course of conduct—commands this conduct immediately. This imperative is **categorical**. It concerns not the matter of the action or what is to result from it, but the form and the principle from which it does itself follow.

The matter Kant has in mind is inclination. Inclination is empirical (cf. *G* 457-8, *KrV* A806/B834). Empirical ends are only able to yield hypothetical imperatives. A categorical imperative is universal. Since Kant often repeats that we cannot determine universality from the empirical, the end of a categorical imperative cannot be empirical.

This reveals a useful connection to the hylomorphic relation in empirical intuition. In the base layer of Kant's hylomorphism of cognition, the matter of empirical intuition is empirical, but the form is a priori. Because the cognition as a whole is empirical, this means that, in general, the status of a cognition as a priori or empirical is set by the matter. The same is true in the case of a categorical imperative. Whatever the matter/form relation ends up being, the matter cannot be empirical. Practical cognition is in the domain of reason (see *G* 452). For Kant, both the form and matter will need to be a priori. This ensures a universal and objective moral law.

Kant is not saying that a categorical imperative will lack a matter *tout court*. Before the claim about inclination, he glosses a categorical imperative as one that "represented an action as objectively necessary by itself, without reference to another end" (*G* 414). Yet in the discussion of the Formula of Humanity, he says that a categorical imperative *does* reference an end, but a certain type of end. At this stage, we are justified in reading the type of end as empirical ends such as health and happiness (cf. A806/B834, *KpV* 92). The intended meaning is evident from *G* 427: "Practical principles are *formal* if they abstract from all subjective ends; they are *material* if they have these, and hence certain incentives, at their foundation." Subjective ends are empirical and thus cannot be the ends of categorical imperatives. Kant's hylomorphism is meant to explain this. But it also expresses that a moral law requires an a priori end of "absolute worth" (428). The end will serve as the matter of the moral law and, because it is a priori, will make the moral law as a whole a priori. Kant then transitions to the Formula of Humanity, where he reveals that the concept of a "rational being in general" is the non-empirical matter of moral law. Other *Groundwork* passages in which Kant mentions matter can be interpreted along the same lines.

There are more interpretative challenges in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, a work drenched in hylomorphic language. The central question of the second *Critique* is whether pure

reason can determine the will. He will show as a corollary that an empirical matter cannot serve this role in the case of dutiful action. As in the pages prior to the Formula of Universal Law in the *Groundwork*, Kant indicates that he is using matter in a restricted sense. Theorem I says, "All practical principles that presuppose an *object* (matter) of the faculty of desire as the determining ground of the will are, without exception, empirical and can furnish no practical laws" (5:21, cf. 5:24, 5:34, 29:598). But here, it should be emphasized, he is talking about the determining ground (*Bestimmungsgrund*) of the will that a moral principle contains (*enhalten*). The difference between the moral law and the determining ground of the will in the law goes a long way toward safeguarding my claims about the *Groundwork*. Nevertheless, it becomes evident early in the second *Critique* that the hylomorphism in the case of a moral law captures a more complex relation than the one described in the previous section. Several passages provide a deeper look at the role of matter in the practical philosophy. We can, so to speak, combine the *Groundwork* and second *Critique* accounts to achieve a better understanding of how Kant uses hylomorphism to make claims about the will, moral law, and the relation between the two. The claims will lead into my discussion of autonomy.

Given the hylomorphic structure of a practical principle, a question emerges: which component determines the will to act? We are assured from Theorem I and II in the second *Critique* that if empirical matter serves as the determining ground, the principle is not a moral law. The dependence of the matter on the natural law of causality is a recurring point for Kant (e.g. 5:29, cf. *G* III). For example, if I have a maxim to increase my wealth, and then someone entrusts me with their money for safekeeping, the basis for my action to steal the money is causal knowledge about money and the pleasure wealth would bring (5:27). Such knowledge cannot be a priori (5:21-2, cf. A534/B562). And what gives the principle motivational determining force is

a subjective preference I happen to have. The principle can be only a hypothetical imperative. If I want the pleasures of wealth, then I ought to steal the money.

With empirical matter aside, several possible answers remain. First, I have marked the distinction between empirical and a priori matter. Might the *a priori matter* of a law serve as the determining ground? Second, is the answer the *form* of the law, namely, the universal form that all moral laws have? Third, is the will determined by the *law as a whole*? While, *prima facie*, the claim that the determining ground is 'contained' in a principle suggests that the determining ground is not the principle as a whole, this is not dispositive and I will return to the possibilities throughout.

Theorem III appears to provide a straightforward answer: "If a rational being is to think of his maxims as practical universal laws, he can think of them only as principles that contain the determining ground of the will not by their matter but only by their form" (5:27). Kant is not claiming that a moral law lacks a matter. He is considering the internal structure of a moral law—the specific hylomorphic component that serves as determining ground of the will. Because the will is a power to act, the question of the will's determining ground asks how the will exercises its power. Kant continues with an argument:

> The matter of a practical principle is the object of the will. This is either the determining ground of the will or it is not. If it is the determining ground of the will, then the rule of the will is subject to an empirical condition (to the relation of the determining representation to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure), and so is not a practical law. Now, all that remains of a law if one separates from it everything material, that is, every object of the will (as its determining ground), is the mere *form* of universal law. Therefore, either a rational being cannot think of *his* subjectively practical principles, that is, his maxims, as being at the same time universal laws or he must assume that their mere form, by which they *are fit for a giving of universal law*, of itself and alone makes them practical laws. (5:27)

The disjunction that frames the argument comes from the first lines of the chapter. Kant begins with a definition: "Practical principles are propositions that contain [*enthalten*] a general

determination of the will" (5:19). There are two types of practical principles: 1) **maxims** are subjective and hold only for the subject who wills the principle;2) practical/moral **laws** are objective and hold for every rational being.[16] The argument utilizes the claim that the distinction between the types of principles is a function of which hylomorphic component of the principle serves as determining ground. Theorems I and II are intended to show that mere maxims, the first type of practical principle, are empirical and unfit for universal legislation because the determining ground is the matter contained in the principle. A maxim to increase my wealth might lead me to steal, but when I universalize the maxim, I find that, in a world governed by such a law, no one would entrust money to others (5:27). The law would leave me without the very opportunity to which my maxim applies. So if I choose to steal from the trusting person, I do it on the basis of my desire for wealth and pleasure, not on the basis of any universal law. In fact, my action can only be successful if there is an assumed moral law that people *ought not* steal money entrusted to them by others. By universalizing my maxim, I discover the contradiction between my maxim and the background law against stealing. My desire to be an exception to a universal law that I acknowledge is what makes my willing incoherent.

The modest conclusion is that the determining ground of a moral law cannot be empirical matter. To justify a stronger conclusion, Kant makes the disjunction exclusive by assuming that eliminating the matter from a universal law leaves only the form.[17] To return to my example, if I find some decency and decide to return the money, my maxim is different. Perhaps I do not want

[16] Kant's phrasing in the definition might suggest that maxims and laws are mutually exclusive types of practical principles, but because it is possible for a law to be a maxim, I typically use the phrase 'mere maxim' to mean a principle that cannot be a moral law.

[17] The distinction between the modest and stronger conclusion corresponds to Kant's distinction between the negative and positive conceptions of freedom (*G* 4:446-7, *M* 6:13-4).

to betray the trust of the person whose money I hold. When I universalize the new maxim, the result is something like 'People ought to return money entrusted to them'. Kant would believe that this law does not contradict itself or any other law that my more commendable maxim assumes. The lack of contradiction, a formal relation, makes the maxim fit for universal legislation. It is possible for me to think of my maxim as a practical law.

Despite what Theorem III itself says, Kant does not end the argument by claiming that the mere form *is* the determining ground. The argument, however, sets the stage for the claim. Making the form of the law the determining ground of the will, we soon discover, connects morality and freedom. The next pages of the chapter illustrate why Kant is concerned to make the mere form the determining ground, not the other alternatives, like a priori matter or the law as whole. In Problem I, Kant says,

> Since the mere form of a law can be represented only by reason and is therefore not an object of the senses and consequently does not belong among appearances, the representation of this form as the determining ground of the will is distinct from all determining grounds of events in nature in accordance with the law of causality, because in their case the determining grounds must themselves be appearances. But if no determining ground of the will other than that universal lawgiving form can serve as a law for it, such a will must be thought as altogether independent of the natural law of appearances in their relations to one another, namely the law of causality. But such independence is called *freedom* in the strictest, that is, in the transcendental, sense. Therefore, a will for which the mere lawgiving form of a maxim can alone serve as a law is a free will. (5:29)

By removing empirical objects as possible matter and thereby removing the will from the phenomenal causal domain, Kant believes he has carved out room for freedom (cf. *G* 457). A free will is a type of cause, but not one external to the will. If it were external, the will would be subject to deterministic natural law. An empirical determining ground is one that makes the will dependent on the vicissitudes of the world. By contrast, the free will has a determining ground, but one produced from reason itself. According to Kant, this safeguards it from natural influence.

With these claims in mind, the motivation for the argument in Theorem III comes more into focus. My maxims, whether about stealing or returning money, are full of empirical matter. They are about a world of sense and appearance (see *G* 4:451). As long as I am determined to act by the matter, I remain locked in the causal chain. I act on hypothetical imperatives that depend on my shifting inclinations. But when I universalize a maxim, I thereby uncover a distinct contribution made by reason. A principle can exhibit features independent of phenomenal nature. The representation of the law requires a form that is not found among the appearances. The law would not be possible without reason giving the law universal form. The universalization test facilitates this pivotal move. Now, once I conceive of a law like 'People ought to return money entrusted to them', I can act on the basis of what reason contributes to the law, not of any desire I happen to have. In doing so, the determining ground of the will is something a priori. I make the law my maxim *because* it is a universal categorical imperative, regardless of my inclinations. And the formal feature of the law supplied through reason makes my will determined by something independent of natural causality. The legislative form of the practical law is *in us*. A maxim might include empirical matter, but it cannot be included *as* the determining ground of the will (see *KpV* 34).[18] In the language of *G* I, I act *from duty*—i.e. from the recognition that the moral law has application to me in virtue of its universality, a formal feature of the law. If I act merely *in accordance with duty*, it is a coincidence that my inclinations align with the requirements of the moral law. A hypothetical and categorical imperative would happen to prescribe the same action.

[18] This can supply a response to those who see *G* I storekeeper cases as *requiring* a person to act contrary to inclination. When I return the money, I might still desire to be trusted by others, but if I do not act out of respect for the law, my action does not have moral worth.

Similar points about the form of law are found in Problem II. But in emphasizing the familiar 'determination' language, the passage indicates what the relevant a priori matter is. Kant says,

> Since the matter of a practical law, that is, an object of maxim, can never be given otherwise than empirically whereas a free will, as independent of empirical conditions (i.e., conditions belonging to the sensible world), must nevertheless be determinable, a free will must find a determining ground in the law but independently of the *matter* of the law. But, besides the matter of the law, nothing further is contained in it than the lawgiving form. The lawgiving form, insofar as this is contained in the maxim, is therefore the only thing that can constitute a determining ground of the will. (emphasis original, 5:29)

A free will is "determinable," a term linked with 'matter'. Since Kant has restricted his use of matter to the empirical, he remains consistent in his language while acknowledging the requirements of his hylomorphism. The form, as we saw in both the theory of theoretical cognition and Theorem III, has the determining role. The phrase "determining ground of the will" suggests that the will is determinable, and here Kant says directly that it is. This much is expected, since the will is a capacity to act in many ways. The result is a combination of form and matter that amounts to a statement of freedom: the will as non-empirical matter determines itself by the legislative form of universal law. The free will is not determined by anything independent of itself. When it is determined to act not by anything empirical but by the form of universality, the will is free. This is because the will itself, qua practical reason, legislates the form. It is caused to act by something internal to itself.[19] As Kant says in the *Lectures*, "If we presuppose, that is, that a being has freedom of the will, or free choice, then this choice, too, must be capable of determination by the mere form of lawfulness of his actions" (27:501).

[19] Kant gives an extended version of the argument in a late lecture (27:542). He also affirms his conclusions at *MM* 6:214.

Both the formal and material components of the moral law are present in this brief sketch of passages from the second *Critique*. The combination is meant to fulfill two desiderata. First, willing the form of universality and being determined to act by the form ensure that the end of the action is not empirical. The "mere form" phrase underlines the lack of anything empirical in the determining ground of the will, not the lack of matter in the moral law or the lack of a matter for cases in which the mere form is determining ground of the will (cf. *G* 462). Second, Kant believes that this matter/form relation at the same time explains how a will is free. In some way, the combination implies a further concept, one foundational to Kant's practical philosophy and, indeed, his entire philosophical project.[20]

5. The Hylomorphic Will

The final task is to explain autonomy in terms of the hylomorphic relation stated in the first remark.[21] The previous section provided a glimpse. But the glimpse left unanswered questions. In stating that the determining ground of the will is the mere form of universal legislation, Kant implies that the will is a matter. The combination of the hylomorphic components is a description of freedom or autonomy. But I have yet to consider directly the place of a priori matter and the moral law as a whole in this account. How are these remaining pieces to be incorporated? More specifically, how might they be used to provide a description of the good will, a person acting out of duty? What does autonomy look like? The answers require

[20] The end of the *Groundwork* second transition (especially *G* 441, 444) are illuminated by my reading.

[21] Kant combines the matter and form to yield both freedom and autonomy. He discusses the relationship between freedom and autonomy at *G* 450-1, *KpV* 33, and "What does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" 8:145. Their precise relation is disputed. Guyer, for instance, argues that the two cannot be equated in "Kant on the Theory and Practice of Autonomy."

examining the structure or constitution of the will further.[22] I will explore how Kant's commitment to transcendental hylomorphism bears on the idea that animates his ethics.

While the second *Critique* focus on the determining ground of the will is different from the *Groundwork* focus on features of the moral law (*KpV* 5:8), there is a close connection. Kant's hylomorphic claims about the determining ground and the will have implications for the moral law. He intends us to see how a will with the capacity for free action is the matter of the moral law. I propose, primarily as a means of exposition, that Kant's hylomorphism in the practical philosophy can be represented in a layered structure similar to the types of cognition considered above:

3. (matter) MORAL LAW (form: universality (*KpV* 5:19-20, *G* 4:421))
↑
2. (matter) FREE WILL (form: universality (determining ground) (KpV 5:21-2))
↑
1. Will (*M* 6:214)

To appreciate the hylomorphic composition of the moral as a whole, we can ascend through the levels. This ascent, Kant believes, is one of discovering how the moral law has application to rational beings. And following Kant, I will use the universalization test as an additional explanatory tool.

With this roadmap, we can retrace the steps outlined in the previous section, looking especially for the role of an a priori matter and its place in the moral law. To move from the first to the second layer, I begin with a maxim, a subjective principle for acting, which identifies me as a will. A will can be determined in many ways—by ends contained in either precepts or laws,

[22] Although I am not taking a position in the dispute over whether Kant's conception of autonomy is, as Anscombe put it, "absurd," my hylomorphic account could be developed further into a contribution. See Wilson "Is Kant's Concept of Autonomy Absurd?"

hypothetical or categorical imperatives (*KpV* 5:20). When I universalize the maxim, I am meant to notice that reason supplies from within itself the form that makes the universalization possible. Representing a law, like 'People ought to return money entrusted to them', requires an a priori contribution from reason. Next, for my will to be a *free* will, I recognize my capacity to act on the basis of what reason alone contributes. When Kant says that the determining ground of the will is "the mere *form* of giving universal law" (KpV 5:27) or "the lawgiving form" (*KpV* 5:29), he is establishing a claim about freedom: reason must determine itself to act. As he says in the Introduction to the *Metaphysics of Morals*,

> The positive concept of freedom is that of the ability of pure reason to be of itself practical. But this is not possible except by the subjection of the maxim of every action to the condition of its qualifying as universal law. For as pure reason applied to choice irrespective of its objects, it does not have within it the matter of the law; so, as a faculty of principle (here practical principles, hence a lawgiving faculty), there is nothing it can make the supreme law and determining ground of choice except the form, the fitness of maxims of choice to be universal law. (*M* 6:214)

On my reading, Kant is less interested in claiming that a universal form alone in fact *does* determine the will (particularly in the case of dutiful action) and more in enabling the discovery that freedom, the cornerstone of morality, means reason alone determining itself. Reason must be practical, as he says.

The hylomorphic language might be useful in a universalization test for partitioning the empirical from the a priori. This is how Kant typically uses the matter/form distinction in the practical philosophy, as seen especially in the first chapter of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. But crucially, the description of a free will that the language enables also smuggles in an a priori matter. The inseparability of matter and form demands this. For the form to be a determining ground, there must be the determinable will. To show that reason can be practical, Kant, as he often does, applies his hylomorphism: the will, qua matter, can determine itself to act on the

basis of an a priori form. As Kant says in the second *Critique*, not only can a rational being represent the form of universality, but in being determined to act from the representation, it determines itself. That is, the will can be an a priori matter. There is no dutiful action without a will taking itself as the end. We accordingly have the two necessary components for the second layer, the hylomorphic free will. The universalization test was the clue for discovering that both are a priori.

The next step in the ascent concerns the status of the hylomorphic will as a matter for a further composite. This is important because the specific type of law that determines the will in the case of moral action is *practical*. Not simply any universal law will do. Formal universality is not enough. So Kant needs a way to find in his claims about the "mere form" of law a distinctive a priori matter that sets the type of law as practical. Dutiful action requires a certain type of end.

This motivation is already familiar. In the *Groundwork*, Kant says that the matter of the law is rational nature or humanity as an end (*G* 436, 428). The will's capacity for taking the form of universality as its determining ground is meant to show the will to be an object of respect (cf. *KpV* 5:87, *MM* 6:463). Kant says, "Nothing other than the *representation of the law* in itself—*which of course can take place only in a rational being*—in so far as it, not the hoped-for effect, is the determining ground of the will, can therefore constitute the pre-eminent good that we call moral" (*G* 401).[23] A categorical imperative has a non-empirical, unconditioned end given by reason alone: "What serves the will as the objective ground of its self-determination is an end; and if this end is given by reason alone, then it must be equally valid for all rational beings" (*G*

[23] How Kant justifies this move is disputed and I do not investigate it here. Korsgaard offers the dominant account (*Creating the Kingdom of Ends* 119-124; cf. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, 124-32). Two dissenters are Alison Hills, "Rational Nature as a Source of Value"; and Sven Nyholm "On Kant's Idea of Humanity as an End in Itself."

427). Importantly, when Kant discusses the mere form of universality, he is not equating it with the matter. The remark does not say that the matter of the law *is* the form.[24] Instead, he is arguing that the capacity for willing the form of universality is what identifies something as the absolute worth that serves as the matter of the moral law (*G* 440). Kant says, "it is just this fittingness of [a rational being's] maxims for universal legislation that marks it out as an end in itself" (*G* 438). The *Groundwork* and second *Critique* accounts complement each other to explain how and why the matter of the law is the will. So the hylomorphic language uncovers the moral status of the will, elevating it, so to speak, into its place as the objective end found in moral law.

As I outlined in the previous section, Kant believes that the inseparability of universality and rational nature implies *autonomy*, the will giving the law to itself (*KpV* 5:33). Kant's language of "self-determination" signals the combination of matter and form. The discussion of humanity as an end in itself surrounding the Formula of Humanity is preliminary and transitional. Kant provides a fuller picture of rational nature by claiming that the good will is a particular type of hylomorphic composite. The form is not only universality, but it is a form that is found internal to the will, through the will's own rational capacity. The will, therefore, can be said to determine itself. Consider a passage from the *Lectures*:

> Now if moral actions are to be grounded in the form of lawfulness, the moral laws must have their basic determination in a law-giving power which (so Kant says) constitutes legislation. Moral legislation is the law-giving of human reason, as which it is the law-giver in regard to all laws, and is so through itself. This is the autonomy of reason, whereby, that is, it determines the laws of free choice through its own law-giving, independently through any influence, and the principle of the autonomy of reason is thus the individual legislation of choice by reason. The opposite would be heteronomy, i.e.,

[24] Such a claim would not be *prima facie* implausible, however. In the Transcendental Aesthetic we find 'an a priori intuition', intuition of the form of intuition (B 160n). The a priori intuition still has a matter, though it is the form or some aspect of it. It could be accurate to say that the determining ground itself has a matter, but the matter would be different from the matter of the moral law. I am focused on the moral law. Best not to muddy the already rough waters.

> legislation that is founded in like fashion on grounds other than the freedom of reason. (27:499)[25]

The law-giving power is the power to will universal moral law (cf. A840/B868). Autonomy is the will giving laws to itself—determining the will with the form of universality that it supplies. The form is a priori in virtue of removing the empirical, which only a rational being is capable of doing. Once the will represents the form, being determined by the form of universality means being the matter of universal legislation (see *G* 441). I cannot will universal law without, in that act of legislation, recognizing that I am the type of entity that the law is about and should respect as an end in itself. This explains why Kant often discusses autonomy in terms of universal law. So when I run a universalization test, I learn not only whether a maxim can be a universal law, but also that the law must respect rational nature. At that point, I act from duty because it is a universal law that concerns rational nature. Autonomous action therefore incorporates both hylomorphic components.

In sum, my reading is as follows: in stating that the determining ground of the will is the mere form, we are meant to discover that the matter of the moral law is the will *as a whole*. By the whole will I mean, as described in the second *Critique*, the structure or constitution of willing that identifies it as free. I have used the term 'hylomorphic will'. The structure is uncovered by abstracting from the empirical to leave only the form of lawgiving that reason contributes. The matter of the law is a will that can act on a universal law not only because the law is universal, but because the universality is owed to the rational faculty. This accommodates the distinctions between the two types of end and between the determining ground and the moral law. The

[25] Oliver Sensen argues that much of Kant's mature conception of autonomy can be found in lectures from the 1770s ("Elements of Autonomy in Kant's *Lectures on Ethics* (1170-1780))"

distinctions allow for the part/whole relations that constitute the will. To restate the position in these terms, the capacity for setting ends as an object of action is found in, and identifies something as, a will. The capacity for being determined to act from the form of universality makes the will the end in itself that serves as the matter of the moral law. The determining ground is accordingly *a part* of the matter. Or more precisely, the internal structure of the matter is a relationship between the determining ground and formal legislative function of the will. The will is capable of acting on the basis of the form of laws that it legislates. Given this constitution, the will is the proper matter of the moral law. After discovering this, I can take the moral law as the end of my action, and thereby act from duty. My will is a good and free will.

The account also explains Kant's odd phrase "being a law to oneself" (*G* 440).[26] Reading it hylomorphically sheds some light. An explanation might be this: the will supplies the universal form, but it also, in that fact, supplies itself as the matter. As he says in the second *Critique*, "[I]t is requisite to reason's lawgiving that it should need to presuppose only *itself*" (5:21). A rational being *qua* practical reason is a will, and a will has an internal structure that enables us to make explicit the matter and form of the moral law. It is a structure in which the will takes itself as the matter of the universal laws that it legislates. "An absolutely good will is that whose maxim can always contain itself, considered as a universal law" (*G* 447). The picture, then, includes two claims: first, the will has the capacity for taking the mere form of law as its determining ground; second, this fact distinguishes the will as a person, humanity with absolute worth, and the matter of the moral law. As expected, these claims about form and matter belong inseparably together.

[26] Kant first uses the phrase in the *Naturrecht Feyerabend* Lecture Notes (27:1321). A discussion of the text is Marcus Willaschek, "How Can Freedom Be a Law to Itself?" A general overview of Kant's texts on autonomy is Andrews Reath, "Kant's Conception of Autonomy of the Will" and Susan Meld Shell, *Kant and the Limits of Autonomy*.

"A free will and a will subject to moral laws are one and the same" (*G* 447). To will a universal law is also to will a law that applies to oneself. Giving the law to oneself is another way of describing the type of autonomy that Kant is developing.

The capacity for self-legislation, or giving the law to oneself, is expressed with hylomorphic terms at numerous junctures in the text. *G* 436 primes the reader to see the hylomorphic structure of the moral law as indicative of a hylomorphic structure of the will. When Kant says that the two reciprocally imply each other (*KpV* 5:29, cf. *G* 4:449), I take this to mean that we can move up the layers, seeing that a free will is one that determines itself by its own laws, or down the layers, seeing that a moral law only has application to the wills that legislate it. We are also reminded of Kant's claim that a third concept or formula contains a combination of the other two. As I have described it, such a combination relation is how Kant proposes to elucidate autonomy in the second *Critique*.

6. The Idea of Autonomy

The hylomorphic picture of autonomy is abstract. This is a feature and not a bug. The *Groundwork* arc makes the abstraction unavoidable and essential. The discussion of autonomy is deep in the metaphysics of morals and, by Kant's repeated warnings, furthest removed from concrete examples. But to explain the picture further, I will end with two further issues. They pertain to the aspects of Kant's hylomorphism listed above that I have yet to relate to my reading. First, does form 'precede' matter in the moral law? Second, what role does the idea of the system play? The questions turn out to be closely linked.

Beginning with the issue of priority, I have refrained from saying that either of the first two concepts of the moral law is more fundamental than the other, at least in a conventional sense of one being derivative of the other. In an attempt to highlight their inseparability, I have

developed the concept of autonomy by moving back and forth between them. But this poses a problem. The inseparability point implies that neither matter nor form have chronological priority, even if the relation is explicated with temporal analogies or one appears before the other in a sequenced introduction of formulas. The claim is that the structure of the matter and form in the moral case shows how both are possible in virtue of the other—and that both together lead to the discovery of a third concept. However, another aspect of Kant's brand of hylomorphism is the priority of form over matter. Does form "precede" matter in the case of the moral law too?

Thus far I have been focusing on the form of universality. Importantly, it appears twice in the above diagram. By analyzing the object of practical cognition, Kant believes he can uncover a special matter/form pair that cannot be subject to the causal relations found in theoretical cognition: willing an action need not (and cannot, in the case of dutiful action) be the result of a series of external causes. Instead, the will must be capable of acting from a different type of cause. If it is not external to the will, it is internal. The will has the capacity for determining itself to act. In such a case, what does its principle look like? If the principle is a moral law, we know the form must be universal and the matter must capture something of absolute worth. Kant's proposal is that, instead of considering the priority of one over the other, we come to see that the moral law is possible in virtue of the hylomorphic structure of the will. This is intended to make the sought after internal causation possible. The will is able to act on universal laws that respect rational nature or humanity as an end in itself. When the will acts in this way, it is autonomous. It is caused to act from a principle internal to and about its own nature. The form and matter of the moral law, in their reciprocal relation, drive towards an examination of the will. And as I stated in the previous section, the will is the ultimate source of the moral law. Despite my tentative diagram, the relation between the concepts of universality and an end in itself is best viewed less

in terms of priority but, as I have been exploring, in terms of the combination of the two in a further concept.[27]

Nevertheless, there is a productive way to talk about the priority of form in practical cognition. One would simply consider a different form.[28] When Kant discusses autonomy, it is in connection with an *idea*. The fact that he does not explain his technical use of 'idea' in the *Groundwork* makes the significance of his careful wording easy to miss. Fortunately he is more explicit in the second *Critique*. There and in *G* III the status of autonomy as an idea is evident from its relationship to freedom, which is routinely called an idea throughout critical philosophy. Freedom is phrased in causal terms.[29] As the so-called dual standpoint argument in *G* III is meant to show, freedom has a corresponding practical idea, phrased in terms of legislated laws.[30] Another outcome of the dual standpoint argument is that the causal power of the will cannot be an object of theoretical cognition. The autonomous will is the will considered as *noumenon*. In that respect, it is fitting to call the concept of autonomy an idea, since the object of an idea cannot be given in experience, or empirical theoretical cognition.

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[27] In *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Kant distinguishes the material and formal principle in practical philosophy. He says the former concerns the end or object of choice. The latter resembles the Universal Principle of Right (*MM* 6:230). He then says that in *Recht* the formal principle precedes the material (8:377).

[28] See Wood, "The Final Form of Kant's Practical Philosophy."

[29] Kant is not always consistent with his phrasing. See Michael Glass, "Kant's Causal Conception of Autonomy." Kant also distinguishes individual freedom and systematic freedom at A316/B372. See also Andrews Reath, "Autonomy and the Idea of Freedom."

[30] At *KpV* 41, Kant distinguishes theoretical and practical significations of an idea (cf. A808/B836, *MM* 6:354, 29:604). It is useful for my purposes to think about freedom as the theoretical and autonomy as the practical signification of a single idea, though this is an interpretive device.

But we should make a distinction. Kant uses the term 'idea' when he discusses autonomy. However, at least in *G* II, he does not directly state that the concept of autonomy is an idea (though it is one). The higher form appears to be something else. In both the *Groundwork* and second *Critique*, he speaks not only of an individual autonomous will, but also, and perhaps more often, about all rational beings willing laws.[31] When he introduces autonomy immediately after the Formula of Humanity, he says that the third formula, which references an *idea*, follows from the previous two:

> For the ground of all practical legislation lies *objectively in the rule* and the form of universality, which (according to the first principle) makes it capable of being a law (or perhaps a law of nature), *subjectively*, however, *in the end*; the subject of all ends, however, is every rational being, as an end in itself (according to the second principle): from this now follows the third practical principle of the will, as the supreme condition of its harmony with universal practical reason, the idea *of the will of every rational being as a universally legislating will*. (*G* 431)

The passage is noteworthy because it closely resembles the remarks in structure and order. What I wish to point out is that the initial statement of the Formula of Autonomy includes the idea of every autonomous will, not the concept of a single will (see also *G* 432). Although the validity of the argument is disputed (assuming there is an argument here at all), Kant appears to incorporate multiple rational beings in the third principle from the fact that the second principle includes multiple rational beings as ends. The idea expressed by the Formula of Autonomy is accordingly about all rational beings. Insofar as they will universal laws, the further result is the idea of the

[31] The distinction corresponds to the distinction between the many moral laws and Moral Law, marked by Kleingeld and Willaschek in "Autonomy Without Paradox," p. 1 note 2. The latter refers to specific laws like 'People ought to return money entrusted to them'. The latter is the general supreme principle. Kant appears to push the distinction together, or at least show their close relation, at *MM* 6:451.

whole of moral laws.[32] Kant soon reveals in his introduction of the Kingdom of Ends that he has in mind a system. He calls the Kingdom of Ends an 'ideal', a term closely related to Kant's usage of 'idea'. Roughly, an ideal is an idea that has been individuated (*KU* 232). The key claim for current purposes is that the Kingdom of Ends is the ideal that corresponds to the idea referenced in the Formula of Autonomy, at least in its earliest formulations. The idea is a systematic whole of laws willed by autonomous beings, and the Kingdom of Ends is an individual adequate to the idea. Kant's first mentions of autonomy include an idea that points towards a system.

As we saw with Kant's brand of hylomorphism, particular matter/form pairs enter into a layered structure in which the idea of a system plays an important role. The will can be specified further as the matter for both the moral law as a systematic whole and a possible kingdom of ends.[33]

3. (matter) KINGDOM (form: system (*G* 4:433))
↑
2. (matter) FREE WILL (form: universality)
↑
1. Will (*M* 6:214)

For Kant, the idea of the systematic whole of laws has both a theoretical and practical construal. He notes the distinction in the footnote following the first remark: "Teleology considers nature as a kingdom of ends, moral science a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature. There the kingdom of ends is a theoretical idea for explaining what exists. Here it is a practical idea for the sake of bringing about—in conformity with precisely this idea—what does

[32] It is possible to see an illicit move here from 'every' to 'whole'. The move is closely related to the transcendental illusion described at *KrV* B 609 and explored throughout the Dialectic. I discuss the issue in Chapter 3.

[33] In Chapter 3, I argue that, for Kant, the supreme moral law is necessarily systematic. So I consider the diagram from the previous section to be included in this one. The matter of the systematic whole of moral law is humanity or rational beings in general.

not exist but can become actual by means of our behavior" (*G* 436 n.). The distinction is elucidated in *G* III and the Analytic of Pure Practical Reason in the second *Critique*. The Kingdom of Ends is suprasensible or noumenal nature. It is "*nature under the autonomy of pure practical reason*" (emphasis original, *KpV* 5:43). The idea of the whole of laws willed by rational beings leads to the further ("fruitful") idea of such a system of laws existing as a system of nature, the object of a complete science. The moral law, or the law of autonomy, states that the Kingdom of Ends ought to exist. Autonomy is the capacity in the individual both to conceive of the Kingdom of Ends and to take part in actualizing it. To be a free will, I need an idea of a whole of moral law that has humanity as its end.

The third salient concept of the moral law in the *G* II argument is uncovered through supplementing my account of autonomy with the idea of a system of rational beings. Since autonomy is understood as a type of matter/form unity, the layered structure of Kant's hylomorphism indicates that the autonomy of an individual will is the matter of a form above it, as I diagram above. We saw that the will is itself a determination. It is a particular hylomorphic composite in virtue of the will's capacity for self-legislation or self-determination. But the will is also *determinable*, not simply with respect to its internal determinations (i.e. actions), but also considered as a unity and one among many. There are (or at least possibly is) a plurality of wills. The Kingdom of Ends, then, is another hylomorphic composite. It occupies the layer above the will and combines the wills as matter under the form of system. The result is a structured whole that determines all the relations among autonomous wills, each willing universal law. A manifold becomes a unity yet again. In Kant's terms, a plurality considered as a unity is a totality.

Ideas have a vital role in practical reason. Kant uses the term frequently in his practical works, the *Groundwork* included. We are driven towards greater unity of principles even in our

thinking about morality. We cannot view our actions as isolated or discrete but parts of larger contexts. Ethics is a system of all practical cognition (*G* 387, *MM* 6:205, *Lectures* 27:243). The conception of a system of laws, and a union of autonomous wills, *precedes* individual laws. Laws, as hylomorphic composites, are the matter that is then ordered and organized by a higher form. They become ethics when their relations to each other are determined in a system. We naturally conceive of laws or duties as parts of a whole. The whole is not one of aggregation. We do not derive duties one by one, building them gradually into a system of moral law. The system does not *arise from* the lower layer. So it is no coincidence that at the peak of the *Groundwork* arc, Kant introduces the idea of the system, the broadest and most abstract form. The third step of the *G* II argument reveals that Kant conceives of the moral law as itself a systematic whole. The determination of the supreme principle of morality that Kant promised in the preface is a further hylomorphic pair in which the form of a system determines the laws willed by rational beings.

The form of the system perpetually guides and orders practical reason. In its status as an idea, it is *regulative*. But it is regulative in a different way from what I describe in §2. An idea is a concept that regulates understanding but cannot be exhibited in theoretical cognition. However, autonomy and the system of moral law are not objects for theoretical cognition. The regulative use of the idea of system or autonomy in practical reason does not imply that the object of the idea cannot be given in practical cognition (see A328/B385).[34] It is certainly possible to act from duty. The moral law does not concern external, causally determined events. It is willed internally. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, after reiterating the regulative role of ideas, Kant says "[I]n reason's practical use the concept of freedom proves its reality by practical principles,

[34] A more perspicuous example of a practical idea is Kant's discussion of the original contract in "On the Common Saying" (8:297). See also *Toward Perpetual Peace* 8:368, the idea of friendship at *MM* 6:470, and the idea of a cosmopolitan society at *Anthropology* 7:331.

which are laws of a causality of pure reason for determining choice independently of any empirical conditions (of sensibility generally) and prove a pure will in us, in which moral concepts and laws have their source" (6:221). The claim animates much of Kant's writings, particularly in the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique*: ideas lead us astray when we treat them as objects for theoretical cognition, but their proper role is in the practical.

Since the moral law regulates action, we preserve Kant's meaning of ideas as maximums or goals (cf. *KpV* 127n). The ideas of an autonomous will and a Kingdom of Ends can be formulated to express what we ought to do: it is our duty to act as parts of a systematic whole of humanity. Since we are prone to heteronomy, sitting at the crossroads of the phenomenal and noumenal worlds, the Kingdom of Ends is not (yet) a Kingdom of Nature. Nevertheless, we can act with it in view. When we conceive of the goal, we do not do so as discrete individual autonomous wills, but necessarily as parts of a whole. The whole has priority over the parts as a regulative idea in reason. Content of the maxim aside, if it cannot be determined as part of a system, something has gone wrong.

My description is meant to show that the moral law is a determination. Following the language of the first remark, we uncover three hylomorphic relations: 1) matter and form as the internal structure of the will, 2) matter and form of a moral law, and 3) in brief outline, the matter and form of the systematic whole of moral law. The final composite is the ultimate determination, given the status of the form of the system. Kant introduces the moral law through concrete examples, one at a time. But when he discusses possible contradictions in the suicide and developing talents examples, he mentions a system (*G* 422-3). Indications of where the argument will lead are there early on. They show up brightly when read through the lens of *G* 436. The full importance of the *Groundwork* arc should be appreciated here: because the

progression peaks specifically with Kant's idea of a system, the resulting picture of the moral law provides a perspective on the preceding formulas and their concepts that is available to us only after reaching the end.

CHAPTER 2

Complete Determination: Theoretical

The third chapter of the Transcendental Dialectic, the Ideal of Pure Reason, can be divided into two parts. The second is Kant's criticism of speculative theology. The first is an attempt to ground concepts in the idea of "all of reality." If scholarly attention is any indication, these earlier sections of the Ideal are among the least popular in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kemp Smith, Strawson, and Bennet offer imprecations in their commentaries.[1] They follow in the tradition of Schopenhauer, who said of the second section that it "brings us right back to the rigid scholasticism of the Middle Ages. You would think you were listening to Anselm of Canterbury himself."[2] More recently, the pessimistic view has been challenged, though a large share of still small literature is about the Ideal only indirectly. Some readers have shown interest in how the 'possibility argument' from *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God* was either abandoned or altered in the early sections of the Ideal.[3]

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[1] Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, pg. 522; P.F. Strawson, *Bounds of Sense*, 228-30; Jonathan Bennett hardly mentions the first part of the Ideal in *Kant's Dialectic*, but his disapproval is implied in ch. 12. Guyer does not discuss the Ideal in *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*.

[2] Schopenhauer, "Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy" in *The World as Will and Representation* vol. 1, 2:602. Pagination is from the *Sämtliche Werke* edited by Hübscher. I use the Cambridge edition translation by Norman, Welchman, and Janaway.

[3] I discuss the literature on the possibility argument below. Notable readings of the Ideal are Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, ch. 1; Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 396-405; Grier, *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*, 230-251; Ferrari, "Das Ideal der Reinen Vernunft (A567/B595–A642/B670)"; Beatrice Longuenesse, "The Transcendental Ideal, and the Unity of the Critical System" in *Kant on the Human Standpoint*; and Willaschek, *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics*, ch. 8. Klimmek, *Kants System der transzendentalen Ideen*, 163-223.

I provide a reading of section two of the Ideal of Pure Reason, "On the Transcendental Ideal," focusing especially on its initial pages. My reading makes two main contributions. First, existing literature tends not to appreciate the significance of Kant's varied uses of the term 'determination' (*Bestimmung*). Distinguishing them reveals Kant's underlying view on the construction of concepts. Second, I consider Kant's claim that the ideal of pure reason is discovered through a process called 'refinement' (*läuterung*). Refinement has gone underemphasized or entirely unnoticed by scholars. To understand the process and its place in the Ideal, I consider the categories of quality and the pre-critical possibility argument.

1. Determinations

'Determination' (*Bestimmung*) is said in many ways by Kant. My reading will require minding distinctions among them. He often uses the term loosely to carry the sense of specifying or designating. In its main technical use, however, Kant links the term to his theory of matter and form. Determining/determination and forming/form, depending on the context, can be used interchangeably. In the Amphiboly he says, "[matter and form] are two concepts that ground all other reflection, so inseparably are they bound up with every use of the understanding. The former signifies the determinable in general, the latter its determination" (A266/B322).[4] His initial statements about matter and form in the Aesthetic also use 'determination' (A20/B34, cf.

[4] He then gives a series of examples of the matter/form relation, the last of which is a reference to thoroughgoing determination: "Also, in respect to things in general, unbounded reality is regarded as the matter of all possibility, but its limitation (negation) as that form through which one thing is distinguished from another in accordance with transcendental concepts. The understanding, namely, demands first that something be given (at least in concept) in order to be able to determine it in a certain way." Kant's extended description of the matter/form relation in *Metaphysics Pölitz*/L_2 28:575 uses the same determination language and includes an allusion to thoroughgoing determination. A detailed discussion of the passage is Pollock, *Kant's Theory of Normativity*, ch. 5.

A51/B75, A723/B751). This is Kant's **hylomorphic** sense of the term. When a matter is formed (by a form of intuition, judgment, inference, system) the result is a determination. For example, a judgment is a determination in the hylomorphic sense: it is concepts, as matter, in a certain form. Following in the hylomorphic tradition, the language signals Kant's explanation of individuality. A cognition is a unity in virtue of a form that determines the complexity or plurality of its matter. The passage also alerts us to an ambiguity: a determination might be a form (and have the determining/forming role) or the in-formed composite.

I am mainly focused on a different, though related sense. A determination can be a predicate.[5] In this sense of determination, a predicate can be either 1) a property found in numerous individual things (**real** sense) or 2) a representation of a property (**logical** sense).[6] The ambiguity between *representation* and *representatum* is common in Kant's writing—and to be expected given his commitment to idealism. Often the two senses are not explicitly distinguished. Kant will utilize both, and the ambiguity, in the Ideal of Pure Reason.[7]

At the level of representation, a determination is a *concept*, a representation that does not represent an individual thing completely. For this reason, Kant calls concepts *partial*

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[5] The same language is found in the pre-critical writings. In the *New Elucidation*, "to determine is to posit [*ponere*] a predicate while excluding its opposite" (1:391, cf. 29:818). In *The Only Possible Argument*, "Existence is not a predicate or a determination of a thing" (2:72). He is following Wolff (*Philosophia Prima* §105-7, 122-3) and Baumgarten (*Metaphysica* §34, 35, 148). A concept, like any cognition, has form and matter. So the sense of determination meaning 'concept' is a specific instance of the general hylomorphic sense. See Pollock, *Kant's Theory of Normativity*, ch. 5; and Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 147-56; Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, 37.

[6] Willaschek, *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics*, 190 n. 4, 219 n. 3. Smit discusses the Aristotelian roots of the distinction ("Kant on Marks and Intuition," 248-9.)

[7] While at times I will utilize the same ambiguity in the term 'predicate', generally I will specify either 'property' or 'concept'.

representations (*JL* 9:95). Insofar as a thing has numerous properties, cognition of the thing will have numerous parts. Kant's term for both the properties and their representations is a *mark* (*Merkmal*), a feature that numerous (cognitions of) things can have in common.[8] He provides a definition in *Jäsche Logic* §8:

> A *mark is that in a thing which constitutes a part of the cognition of it*, or—what is the same—a *partial representation, insofar as it is considered as ground of cognition of the whole representation*. All our *concepts* are marks, accordingly, and all *thought* is nothing other than a representing through marks. (emphasis original, 9:58)

Kant says straightforwardly that all concepts are marks. This does not mean that all marks are concepts, but because my focus is the part/whole relations among concepts, I will restrict my use of the term to *conceptual* marks—i.e. a concept that is or can be the constituent part of another concept.[9] Kant typically uses the term in the same way.

Marks are Kant's mechanism for discussing the parts of cognition. In the case of concepts, this involves ways concepts can be connected. When introducing the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (the first of relatively few uses of 'mark' in the book), Kant says, "I can first cognize the concept of body analytically through the marks of extension, of impenetrability, of shape, etc., which are all thought in this concept. But now I amplify my cognition and, in looking back to the experience from which I had extracted this concept of body, I find that weight is also always connected with the previous

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[8] See *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic*, 725-7; Watkins and Willaschek, "Kant's Account of Cognition," 86.

[9] Houston Smit observes that passages like the gloss in the *Logic*, and the *Stufenleiter* passage in which Kant says a concept "is mediate, by means of a mark, which can be common to several things" (A320/B377, cf. 29:888, 29:972), have led readers to think that all marks are conceptual. But to say that concepts relate to objects through marks does not imply that intuitions *cannot* relate to objects through marks. Even at the level of representation, a mark might not necessarily be a concept. Smit, "Kant on Marks and the Immediacy of Intuition" sec. 3-4.

marks" (A8/B12). In the first sentence, "marks" refers to the predicate concepts that are "contained" in the subject concept. The concept of body[10] is composed of the concept of extension, etc., while, as the second sentence says, the concept of weight is connected to body through experience.[11] In synthesis, the conceptual relation is one of amplification, not containment.

Both cases identified in the first *Critique* are about relations among marks, either as parts within a concept or as concepts that can be linked to form a further concept. Kant provides a more detailed discussion of the distinction between these two relations in the *Jäsche Logic*. Marks compose a series, with marks being higher or lower than others. What relations comprise the series? The marks contained in concepts are more abstract. Extension is more general than body and is represented *by means of* the concept of body. The lower concepts he calls *subordinate* marks (9:59, cf. *Viena Logic* 834). To posit them is to posit higher concepts they contain. Green is subordinate to color. Human is subordinate to animal. The latter concepts apply to more types of things. Eventually the series ends with the highest, most general concept. Kant says the lower concepts are not contained *in* the highest concept, but contained *under* it (*JL* 9:98, cf. A654/B682, *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic*, 754).

Marks may also be *coordinate*. In coordination, marks are aggregated to generate lower,

[10] I underline names of concepts. When mentioning a term, I use single inverted commas. Bold introduces or emphasizes a technical term.

[11] In the Discipline of Pure Reason, Kant employs the term in a discussion of definitions: "Analytical definitions, on the contrary, can err in many ways, either by bringing in marks that really do not lie in the con-cept or by lacking the exhaustiveness that constitutes what is essential in definitions, since one cannot be so entirely certain of the complete-ness of their analysis" (A732/B760). When Kant distinguishes analytic and synthetic marks in the *Logic* (9:59), he mentions a "merely possible complete concept," but there he means the possible completeness of synthesis.

more fine-grained concepts. Kant's emphasis is on how predicates combine to represent fewer types of things. Concepts with more coordinate marks have smaller extensions: "The content and extension of a concept stand in inverse relation. The more a concept contains *under* itself, namely, the less it contains *in* itself" (*JL* 9:95). Virtuous human has a smaller extension than human. Philodendron is lower than plant, which is lower than organism. One might imagine adding circles to a Venn diagram and shrinking the area of overlap in the center.

The two types of marks set up Kant's version of a *scala praedicamentalis*, a transcendental Tree of Porphyry.[12] One can ascend to higher concepts or descend to lower. Kant draws the distinction explicitly in the *Jäsche Logic*:

> Through continued logical abstraction higher and higher concepts arise, just as through continued logical determination, one the other hand, lower and lower concepts arise. The greatest possible abstraction yields the highest or most abstract concept—that from which no determination can be further thought away. The highest, completed determination would yield a *thoroughly determinate* concept (*conceptus omnimode determinatus*), i.e., one to which no further determination might be added in thought. (§15)

For any concept along the vertical scale, one might progress in either direction by treating the concept as either a subordinate or coordinate mark. The implication is two contrasting rational procedures. First, I can take the concept as a whole, crack it open, and find the higher concepts that compose it (*Vienna Logic*, 907-8). Ascent along the *scala* from subordinate marks to the higher concepts they contain is what I call the **abstraction procedure**.

Second, I can attach a concept to others and generate a lower concept. With the sense of 'determination' I am describing, Kant has in mind the construction of concepts by aggregating or

[12] In the Appendix to the Dialectic, Kant alludes to the traditional scale of being by saying that concepts are branches on the same tree (A660/688, cf. *JL* 9:97). Some versions of the Porphyrian tree depict being (*ens*) as the *summum genus*. For Kant, "*Being* is obviously not a real predicate" (2:72, A588/B627). Not all logical predicates are also real predicates.

coordinating marks. To determine a concept is to connect marks to each other, thereby constructing a less general concept and descending the *scala*.[13] A thoroughly (*omnimode*) determined concept would be a concept to which no additional mark can be attached. To avoid ambiguity, I will say **determination procedure** to mean the process of *bestimmen.* 'Determination' alone, at the level of representation, will mean a concept, mark, or logical predicate.

2. Principles

With this background, we now turn to the second section of the Ideal of Pure Reason. It begins with two principles. First, concepts are subject to the "principle of determinability." With respect to what is not analytically contained in a concept, "of every two contradictorily opposed predicates only one can apply to it [*ihm zukommen könne*]" (A571/B599). Unlike the abstraction procedure, which is concerned with the marks already contained in a concept, the principle of determinability is a formal requirement for the determination procedure. It applies to potential coordinate marks. The determination procedure draws on predicate pairs in contradictory opposition. According to the principle, a concept can include the mark green or not green, but not both. Otherwise the concept would be the concept of a logical impossibility.

The subject of the second principle is things, not concepts. Kant says, "Every **thing**, however, as to its possibility, further stands under the principle of **thoroughgoing determination**; according to which, among **all possible** predicates of **things**, insofar as they are

[13] In the passage, one might think that Kant strains his metaphor by calling the thoroughly determinate concept the product of the highest (*höchste*) determination. He is referring to the determination or predicate, not the place of the determinate concept along the scale. He is also not saying that the concept is the result of a determination procedure. More likely, the concept is an idea of reason, which he also discusses in directional or spatial terms.

compared with their opposite, one must apply to it [*eines zukommen muß*]" (A572/B600). He alludes to the comparative use of marks (*JL* 58), specifically a comparison through contradiction, indicating that the principle of determinability still applies. I can compare possible predicates in contradictorily opposed pairs. For every thing, not only will its predicates be free of contradiction, but it will be thoroughgoingly determined: exactly one in each pair applies to the thing. The thoroughgoing determination of a thing at a specific time is what Kant calls its 'state' (28:564).

Kant is making a claim about individuality (28:560, 29:990). Concepts can represent numerous things because they are indeterminate with respect to some predicate pairs. An individual thing, by contrast, cannot be indeterminate. Having a full complement of properties is what distinguishes things from concepts. This is distinct from the claim that the predicates provide a *unique* description that distinguishes things from each other. The principle of thoroughgoing determination is different from, but compatible with, Leibniz's Law. Kant acknowledges the distinction at the end of section two of the Ideal: "all possibility of empirical objects, their difference from one another and their thoroughgoing determination, can rest only on the limitation of this sum total [of predicates]" (A582/B610). But the stretch of the argument I consider does not require a claim about indiscernibility. While the principle of thoroughgoing determination is a type of principle of individuation, Kant is not claiming that the principle is invoked in experience to distinguish different objects. This is evident from the discussion of identity and difference (the two drops of water passage) in the Amphiboly (A264/B319, A272/B328).

By contrasting concepts and things, Kant is also contrasting the logical and real senses of determination. In the first principle, he is making a claim about "the logical form of cognition":

coordinate marks, whatever they are, cannot be contradictory (A571/B599). 'Determination' is meant as representation of a property. The second principle is not a claim about cognition but, as Kant specifies in the *Prolegomena* (4:330n), about ontology: insofar as a thing is individual, it will have a full complement of real properties.

The contrast draws attention to the fact that, for Kant, thoroughgoing determination (*durchgängigen Bestimmung*) and complete determination (*vollständige Bestimmung)* are not the same. The distinction is routinely neglected in the scholarship. It is standard to find 'complete' and 'thoroughgoing' used interchangeably.[14] The terms largely track the thing/concept distinction that frames the beginning of the argument.[15] On the one hand, an individual thing is *thoroughgoingly* determined. In this case, a thing is thoroughgoingly determined *ex ante*, independent of any intellectual constructive act of determination (28:554). An individual is determinate with respect to every predicate pair, understood as possible properties. There is no process through which the thing in the world gradually becomes more determinate. On the other hand, the hypothetical result of a finished determination procedure would be *completely* determined, the complete concept of a thing (*vollständigen Begriff von einem Dinge*). Such a concept, if it were possible, would include exactly one predicate for each contradictorily

[14] Stang suggests that 'complete' is the superior translation of *durchgängigen* ("Kant and Complete Determination," 1118 n. 6). See also Willaschek, 219; Grier, ch. 7; Verbürgt, "How to Account for Reason's Interest in an Ultimate Prototype," 237 n.2.

[15] Due to the real/logical ambiguity, Kant's use of 'thoroughgoing' and 'complete' is not cleanly distinguished in the Ideal. He does not set out explicit definitions. Nevertheless, because he frames the section through the concept/thing distinction and then argues to the concept of an individual thing (A574/B602), my use of the term 'complete determination' respects Kant's framing, highlights the shift from things to concepts in the argument, and acknowledges the different translations that *durchgängigen* and *vollständige* ought to have. Kant is careful with his use of 'thoroughgoing' and 'complete' in the second paragraph of the section (A572-3/B600-1, cf. *Prol*. 4:348).

opposing pair, understood as coordinate marks. Because an individual has a complete and noncontradictory complement of predicates, a completely determined concept would be the concept of an individual thing.

The thoroughgoing/complete distinction is essential because section two of the Ideal is meant to explain how thoroughgoing determination, as expressed in the principle, leads to the idea of a completely determined concept. There are three steps. First, if the principle of determinability, a merely formal requirement on the determination procedure, has application, there must be some predicates. There is no claim here about how many, how detailed a concept can be, or how much content it can contain. The first principle describes the mere logical structure of a procedure. Second, to explain the individuality of things, the principle of thoroughgoing determination is a metaphysical principle that assumes a material component.[16] Alongside the shift from concepts to things is the introduction of the sum total of predicates. The principle "deals with the content and not merely the logical form" (A572/B6001). Third, combining the form of the determination procedure implied in the first principle with the predicates implied in the second leads to the notion of a hypothetical completely determined concept. The form and matter together yield the concept of an individual thing. Kant's thought is that, insofar as cognition of things is possible, the predicates that were properties can be represented. This supplies material for the determination procedure. When constructing a concept *x*, I can attach F or ¬F as coordinate marks, but not both. *x* represents something that is either green or not green, human or not human. I generate a lower, less abstract concept with each step of the procedure. If the procedure were completed for every possible predicate pair,

[16] Consider two passages: "For logic does not ask where concepts come from, but how they can be formed and ordered in accordance with the laws of the understanding" (*Vienna Logic*, 905); "Logic deals with the connections of concepts, metaphysics with their origin" (29:801-2).

because the set of marks were made available through conceiving of an individual thing as thoroughgoingly determined, *x* would be the concept of an individual thing. I would have arrived at the completely determined concept by running out of marks to coordinate. The thoroughgoing determination of a thing provides the goal for the determination procedure: a hypothetical bottom of the *scala praedicamentalis*.

The two principles set up a familiar strategy in transcendental philosophy. Kant begins with an uncontroversial (often analytic) principle and then argues that the principle requires, as grounds for its possibility, a substantive (often synthetic) assumption. The strategy can be hylomorphic in its implementation: formal and material components are presented separately and then combined in a single cognition, proposition, concept, or claim. Among the most important instances of the strategy is section two of the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, which culminates in a single principle of morality that unites a plurality of formulas in itself, the first two of which separately highlight the form and matter of the principle (*G* 4:436).[17] Kant is making the same type of move in the Ideal. He starts with pluralities (real and logical predicate pairs, individual things, principles) and seeks a single transcendental assumption in which the pluralities are united. He believes that the two principles together, along with their subject matter, point toward the set of all possible predicates as the assumption.[18] This is all the more

[17] Other notable examples are the synthetic unity of apperception in the B-Deduction (B132f.); the principles of sameness, variety, and affinity in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic (A657/B685); and the discussion of *sensus communis* in the *Critique of Judgment* (sec. 40, 5:293-5).

[18] Kant does not use language of 'sets', and my phrasing risks anachronism, but in the early pages of the Ideal he references a whole or single totality of predicates. If this means that he believes in a set of all possible predicates, he stands at odds with contemporary set theory. So my mentions of such a set should not be read as an endorsement. At the same time, there might be a more modest reading available. Kant's ultimate interests lie in a smaller set of predicates—ones

apparent in the lines following the principles.

3. Synthesis

A staple of the small literature on the Ideal is the issue of whether and how the principle of thoroughgoing determination is synthetic.[19] Strangely, Kant does not make such a claim directly. With the three-step strategy in mind, it is worth exploring why this is the case.

Immediately after stating the principle, Kant says,

> This does not rest merely on the principle of contradiction, for besides considering every thing in relation to two contradictorily conflicting predicates, it considers every thing further in relation to **the whole of possibility**, as the sum total of all predicates of things in general; and by presupposing that as a condition *a priori*, it represents every thing as deriving its own possibility from the share it has in that whole of possibility. The principle of thoroughgoing determination thus deals with the content and not merely the logical form. It is the principle of the synthesis of all predicates which are to make up the complete concept of a thing, and not merely the analytical representation, through one of two opposed predicates; and it contains a transcendental presupposition, namely that of the material **of all possibility**, which is supposed to contain *a priori* the data for the **particular** possibility of every thing. (A572-3/B600-1)

The "this" at the beginning surely refers to the principle. But just as I distinguished the determination procedure from thoroughgoing determination and its principle, we should recognize two different senses of 'synthesis' mingling in the passage. A concept is indeterminate with regard to what is not analytically contained in it. Kant says, "the determination is a predicate, which goes beyond the subject of the concept and enlarges it." (A598/B626). With the picture sketched above, this makes sense. Determination aggregates marks. If a mark is already

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that survive a refinement process. Language like "the whole of possibility" could be transitional or stipulative.

[19] Stang provides the most detailed discussion in "Kant on Complete Determination and Infinite Judgment". See also Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 294-8; Rohs, "Kants Prinzip der durchgangigen Bestimmung alles Seienden," 170-2; Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, 43-4; Willaschek, *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics*, 221 n. 8.

found in the concept, it cannot be added. The concept would not be any lower on the Tree. As Kant says in *Metaphysik Mrongovius*,

> One can determine only through synthesis, not through analysis, from in view of that which lies within it, it was not undetermined. For I can determine the concept only when I add something. [...] Determination is distinguished from logical predicates. (The logical predicate can be analytic, but determination is always synthetic.) (29:819, cf. 28:552)

To determine a concept, I add a mark that enlarges the concept and correspondingly shrinks its extension. The principle of determinability, by setting aside the marks already contained in a concept, alerted us to this sense of synthesis—namely, the synthesis of mark coordination and concept creation, not the synthetic status of judgments (though the two senses are closely related).

On my reading, Kant's apparent lack of interest, in this context, in the synthetic status of the principle of thoroughgoing determination should be unsurprising. He may take the principle, as a judgment, to be synthetic, but the passage above suggests that Kant's concern is the "the sum total of all predicates of things in general" referenced in the determination procedure. The process of synthesis is being applied primarily to concepts: when Kant says that the principle of thoroughgoing determination is "the principle of the synthesis of all predicates which are to make up the complete concept of a thing," he is acknowledging the implications of the principle for concepts. He directs attention to the set of predicates and their relations to complete determination. The synthesis we should be concerned with takes place in the construction of concepts. The principle and the broader trajectory of the argument in the Ideal leads to the transcendental assumption that enables the construction.

4. Cognition

I have laid out Kant's first moves using the language of his theory of concepts. Much of

his language is inherited from the Leibnizian rationalist tradition in which thorough determination is invoked in metaphysical principles of individuation.[20] I will consider Leibniz shortly. Baumgarten is doing speculative ontology when he says, "The set [*complexus*] of all compossible determinations in a being is its THOROUGH DETERMINATION. Hence a being is either thoroughly determined or less [than completely determined]. The former is SINGULAR (individual), the latter UNIVERSAL."[21] And in Wolff: "whatever exists or is actual is thoroughly determined."[22]

Kant's version is plainly similar, but the principles take on a different status in critical philosophy. So before pressing on in the Ideal, some context is vital. Among the reasons the Ideal is challenging is Kant's incorporation of rationalist terminology, including an ontological principle, almost wholesale into a diagnosis of the errors of rationalist theology. We achieve a better understanding of complete determination by relating it to Kant's broader theory of cognition. I begin with two points, one about intuition, one about concepts.

First, on Kant's theory of discursive understanding, cognition of an individual thing requires **intuition**, singular immediate representation (A275-6/B331-2). The determination

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[20] Kant on individuation is underexamined. Stefano Di Bella, "The Myth of the Complete Concept"; Michael Radner, "Substance and Phenomenal Substance: Kant's Individuation of Things in Themselves and Appearances."

[21] Baumgarten, *Metaphysica* §148. The translation is my own. The German is a translation of 'omnimoda' (see *New Elucidation*, 1:395 (translated by Walford as 'complete') and 1:397 (translated as 'thorough')). Kant will occasionally give the principle in Latin: "Das princip der durchgängigen Bestimmung: *qvodlibet existens est omnimode determinatum, i.e. ens qvodlibet per se non nisi ut omnimode determinatum dari potest, sed per conceptum de ipso multimode potest esse indeterminatum*" (28:138, cf. 28:560).

[22] Wolff, *Gesammelte Werke* (Halle, 1962), p. 187. Quoted in Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, 38.

procedure progresses towards the representation of an individual thing but does not afford any role to intuition. Hence, it is impossible to have cognition of an individual thing through the determination procedure alone. This is the thrust of the anti-rationalist component of the critical project. As one descends to lower concepts, there is a natural hope of determining all the way to conceptual bedrock—for example, the concept of the specific philodendron plant on my desk. The plant is an individual, not a universal. Its concept, if it were to have one, is completely determined. The plant is flourishing, organic, green, not pink, on a desk, and so on. If I take myself to have finished aggregating marks, I might conclude that I thereby have cognition of the plant. I could then use the abstraction procedure to generate judgments. I would treat one of the marks as a grammatical predicate and accordingly judge, "The plant is a philodendron." But without intuition, there is nothing to connect the judgment to the world. Determining a concept is different from showing that there exists an object corresponding to it. Because the determination procedure does not involve intuition, even if we were to find a completely determined concept, the judgments we might produce from it would not reliably be cognition about the world.

What does this point about intuition show? Many passages in the Ideal appear Leibnizian on their face, but embedded in them is a criticism of his tradition. Leibniz says in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* that an individual has a "complete notion": "[T]he nature of an individual substance or of a complete being is to have a notion so complete that it is sufficient to contain and to allow us to deduce from it all the predicates of the subject to which this notion is attributed. An accident, on the other hand, is a being whose notion does not include everything that can be attributed to the subject to which the notion is attributed."[23] He uses the example of

[23] Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, 41.

Alexander the Great. The "quality of being a king" belongs to him, but it does not constitute Alexander fully, since he has many other qualities. God, however, has Alexander's complete notion. The notion contains "the basis and reason for all the predicates which can be said truly of him, for example, that he vanquished Darius and Porius."[24] With the complete notion, God can deduce "*a priori* (and not by experience)" everything that is true about Alexander.

The picture commits Leibniz to the view that all truths about individuals are analytic. In the example above, my judgment 'the plant is a philodendron' is true in virtue of conceptual containment. Leibniz says in another essay from 1686, "A true proposition is one whose predicate is contained in its subject."[25] All predicates of a being can be deduced from its complete notion. Read through Kant's theory of marks, this could mean that, since a completely determined concept is the bottom on the scale, all we or God can do is divide the concept into its constituent marks. Kant calls this the "internal use" of marks (*JL* 58). Deducing predicates from the notion would yield true judgments about the "individual substance" in the world. Not only can a complete notion provide cognition of an object, but it would do so without intuition. For Kant, this is irresponsible metaphysics. His use of complete determination, while an undeniable allusion to Leibniz and his lineage, also falls within the context of a broader critique of rationalist metaphysics.

Second, due to his theory of concepts, Kant thinks the determination procedure cannot be completed. The transcendental Tree of Porphyry has no bottom. He says in the appendix to the

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[24] *Ibid*. The language of predication is mirrored in Kant's early writings. See fn. 5.

[25] "The Nature of Truth," 94. Leibniz's position is more sophisticated, and readings vary (see Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, 38-41, Cover and Hawthorne, *Substance and Individuation in Leibniz*). For finite beings, contingent truths, like whether Alexander was a king, are analytic, but knowledge of them requires experience. See "Necessary and Contingent Truths" 98-9.

Dialectic, "Reason demands in its entire extension that no species be regarded as in itself the lowest; for since each species is always a concept that contains within itself only what is common to different things, this concept cannot be thoroughly determined, hence it cannot be related to an individual" (A655/B683, cf. *JL* 9:59). The phrasing is significant. He says a species cannot be regarded as "*in itself* the lowest." Following the Tree tradition, the position of a concept on the scale is relative to others (see *JL* 9:97, §10). This is owed to the fact that, for Kant, concepts are by definition general representations. It may so happen that a concept applies to one thing, but the concept functions to be general. Even if there were only ever one plant in the world, plant would still apply to any possible plant.[26] And even if a concept is the lowest one I have, lower concepts remain possible. *Jäsche Logic* §15 is followed by the note, "Since only individual things, or individuals, are thoroughly determinate, there can be thoroughly determinate cognitions only *as intuitions*, but not *as concepts*; in regard to the latter, logical determination can never be regarded as complete." An intuition is a singular representation. Thus, in the intuition-free determination procedure, Kant believes that subspecies can always be generated. Two non-logical concepts together have a smaller extension, but the resulting concept approaches immediate reference to a thing asymptotically. Reason strives towards cognition of individual things through the determination of concepts, but believing that the procedure achieves theoretical cognition is of a piece with the wayward metaphysics critiqued in the Transcendental Dialectic.

These two points about Kant's theory of cognition show that, while we can conceive of its hypothetical end point, the determination procedure cannot produce any completely

[26] Schopenhauer articulates the position with his characteristic lucidity in *The World as Will and Representation* §9, particularly 2:49-50.

determined concept. This leads to a natural question: why does Kant choose to give completely determined concepts pride of place in the Ideal?

5. Reason

The answer concerns Kant's strategy in the Transcendental Dialectic. His discussion of reason in the first book of the Dialectic is obscure and widely criticized. To avoid being diverted into tangled disputes, I will sketch the strategy as applied to the Ideal specifically.

The determination procedure references the set of predicates assumed in thoroughgoing determination. The predicates are supposed to represent all the properties objects can have. To use the language of the Dialectic, they are the *conditions* for thinking about objects (A340/B398). Next Kant invokes his theory of reason, according to which we naturally assume an "unconditioned totality" of concepts. The totality, a pure concept of reason and "transcendental presupposition" (A573/B601), is taken to be the ultimate explanation of the set of concepts.[27] It grounds the determination procedure and, as a result, the possibility of thinking about objects. This primes us to see why Kant uses thoroughgoing determination to find a completely determined concept. The completely determined concept will be a single unconditioned totality that grounds the possibility of all thought about objects. The goal of the first part of the Ideal of Pure Reason is the discovery of this totality and an explanation of its grounding role.

Explaining this picture requires some additional terms. The unconditioned totality is a concept of reason or, in Kant's technical sense, an 'idea' (*Idee*). **Ideas**, the topic of the Transcendental Dialectic, are a particular kind of concept. Unlike concepts of the understanding,

[27] For similar phrasing, see Grier, *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*, 131.

an idea is a concept that "goes beyond the possibility of experience" (A320/B377, cf. *Prol* 4:328-9). We have no acquaintance with objects adequate to ideas. Although the objective reality of an idea cannot be proved (with the exception of the idea of freedom (*JL* 9:93; *MM* 6:221)), Kant believes them to be 1) necessary and 2) basic concepts. First, ideas are necessary because, without them, understanding would be unable to produce systematic cognition. In this respect, ideas are characteristic of **regulative** reason: they function to supply rules for the proper operation of the understanding (A666/B694, *Prol*. 349-50). Ideas bear an indirect relation to the objects of experience. They do not represent objects themselves, but by providing a structure that connects and organizes cognitions into a whole, they are representations through which reason leads understanding toward greater unities.

The role of ideas, along with the broader theory of concepts discussed above, supplies a backdrop for the principle of thoroughgoing determination. Kant need not be read as claiming that objects in experience are each constituted through their thoroughgoing determination. No use of the determination procedure alone will produce empirical cognition. Rather, in our thinking about empirical objects and their systematic connections, we assume they are thoroughgoingly determined; all thought about objects is directed by the rational principle according to which things each have their full complement of predicates. Kant says in the Ideal, "Thoroughgoing determination is consequently a concept that we can never exhibit *in concreto* in its totality, and thus it is grounded on an idea which has its seat solely in reason, which prescribes to the understanding the rule of its complete use" (A573/B601). Discursive intellects do not cognize or experience things *as* thoroughgoingly determined. While the predicates can

have application to objects of experience, in the context of the Ideal, the principle is regulative and found in reason.[28]

Second, when Kant calls an idea basic, he means that it "*cannot* be attained *by composition*." (emphasis original, *JL* 9:92). Ideas do have parts, but their unity is not a result of aggregation. They are given first as wholes.[29] Why Kant thinks this is a complex issue, but it is in part due to the systematizing role of ideas. The point can be illustrated with the example of concepts. Reason's drive for unities explains both the abstraction (a highest single concept) and determination procedures (a unified concept of an individual thing). But where do the concepts and their systematic relations come from? The Ideal proceeds from the observation that both procedures require concepts to be given already. The marks were always there. On Kant's view, reason assumes the unconditioned totality of concepts. The idea of this totality is first and foremost a unity that determines the relations among its parts, as seen in the complex inner workings of the *scala praedicamentalis*. It grounds the determination procedure by supplying content, serves the regulative function of enabling systematic connections among concepts, and, in order to do all this, comes as a whole in reason.

Kant also uses the term **ideal**, the concept of an individual thing determined by an idea.

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[28] At issue again is the discussion of identity and difference in the Amphiboly. In telling the difference between two objects in appearance, "the issue is not the comparison of concepts" (A263/B319). On possible non-regulative readings of the principle, see Verburgt, "How to Account for Reason's Interest in an Ultimate Prototype?" 238 n. 7.

[29] Kant's scattered statements about a holism of ideas, and reason generally, indicate that the influence of Plato in this context is more than terminological. (Kant discusses his Platonic heritage starting at A313/B370, cf. 28:196).) In the *Sophist* (but also in themes of the *Parmenides* and *Timaeus*) the Forms are depicted as wholes that are metaphysically prior to their parts and that account for the intelligibility and structure of all thought, including the dissection of Forms. See Nicholas Barber, "Toward an Ontological Holism: Dialectic in Plato's *Sophist* 252e-254b." Callanan briefly notes something similar in "The Ideal of Pure Reason," 251 n.14

The term has both a loose and strict sense.[30] The loose sense is found in a gloss from the *Critique of Judgment*: "*Idea* signifies, strictly speaking, a concept of reason, and *ideal* the representation of an individual being as adequate to an idea" (232, cf. 29:605). We conceive not only of ideas but also of individuals within the extension of the idea, even if they cannot be met in experience. An example is the Stoic sage (A569/B597, cf. *MM* 6:383, 27:250). Pure virtue and wisdom are ideas. The individual who embodies them is an ideal existing only in thought.[31] In the loose sense, there are many ideals. The idea that determines the ideal does not do so *completely*. In other words, an idea need not be completely determined.

The strict sense of 'ideal' is different in this regard. We find in the first *Critique* that an ideal is "an idea not merely *in concreto* but *in individuo*, i.e., as an individual thing which is determinable, or even determined, through the idea alone" (A568/B596). (Note *bestimmen* is being used hylomorphically.) If an individual is determined by an idea *alone*, the idea is completely determined. It cannot be partial, otherwise additional concepts would be required to determine the individual thing. The concepts of virtue and wisdom plainly do not determine the objects they apply to completely. More than one thing can be wise and a thing cannot *only* be wise. Kant will claim that there is only "one single genuine ideal" in the strict sense. It is the titular **ideal of pure reason**, transcendental ideal, or *ens realissimum*—the concept dialectically equated to the concept of God (see 28:876). The ideal is the concept of an individual adequate to the idea he calls '*omnitudo realitiatis*'. I will return to these lofty concepts after the next section.

My consideration of the strategy in the Dialectic brings the stakes and motivation of the

[30] The distinction usually goes unnoticed. Allison mentions it briefly at *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 403.

[31] Kant calls an ideal a "thought-entity" (*Gedankending*) in places (*MM* 6:241, 338). See Kant's discussion of the idea of virtue in the *Lectures* (27:463)

Ideal to the fore. Kant uses two principles to show that the normal use of concepts assumes an idea that supplies their content and explains their systematic connections. The idea will be an ideal, a completely determined concept. What is this ideal like?

6. Refinement

The concept of an individual thing is the unattainable end point of the determination procedure. Kant says the procedure is "grounded on an idea which has its seat solely in reason" (A573/B601). In the *Lectures*, a ground is described as "that by which something else is posited" (28:548).[32] Generally, if a ground is posited, a consequence will follow. If the consequence is posited, the ground must be posited, at least implicitly. The consequence depends on the ground. An "independent thing is that which contains in itself nothing which is a consequence of others things." No part of the independent thing is grounded in something other than the independent thing. Kant continues, "Only God can be an independent thing" (28:549, cf. 28:213). Everything else is ultimately a consequence of God. Kant uses a metaphor in the *Blomberg Logic*, "A tree is connected with its fruit[;] the tree is the ground, the fruit the consequence" (43). The fruit is grounded in the tree, but the Ideal, one could say, investigates the grounds of the Tree. Kant is saying that the determination procedure is a consequence of, and conditioned by, an idea. The argument in the section moves from consequence to ground: we discover through examining determination and the broader theory of concepts that the explanation of determination ultimately demands a grounding idea, an independent thing. The combination of the two principles, the

[32] Kant distinguishes between 1) logical grounds and 2) real or causal grounds. In the former, the ground is analytic: the consequence follows by a principle of identity. In the latter, it is synthetic: the consequence follows by the principle of causation (28:549 cf. 29:807, 29:801, 28:571). The logical/real and analytic/synthetic distinctions have been operative in my discussion. The Ideal is meant to uncover the concept of a real, independent thing that grounds concepts and therefore the possibility of thought. My descriptions of grounds are meant to apply to both the logical and real.

principle of determinability and the principle of thoroughgoing determination, is a step in this direction because, alongside Kant's view that reason naturally seeks unities, the principles point to a completely determined concept as a transcendental presupposition. We are meant to see that the grounding concept was implicit all along.

What, then, grounds the determination procedure? We saw that the procedure references a series of concepts. Without them, there would be no marks to coordinate in new concepts. The grounding idea turns out to be this series considered as a single totality of concepts (A573/B601). This is expected from Kant's theory of reason. We have the idea of an individual thing that grounds the set of concepts and determination procedure. What does the idea look like?

The totality of concepts would include contradictorily opposed predicates: philodendron and non-philodendron are both in the series. So it does not seem like the idea could be completely determined. This presents a problem. Kant wants to ground concepts in an ideal in the strict sense (I will consider why in detail below). If the ideal is completely determined, he needs a way to move from the totality of concepts to a completely determined concept. How could the idea be the concept of an individual thing?

To confront the issue, Kant says that the set of predicates undergoes *läuterung*, refinement or purification:

> Now although this idea of the **sum total of all possibility**, insofar as it grounds every thing as a condition of its thoroughgoing determination in regard to the predicates which may constitute the thing, is itself still indeterminate, and through it we think nothing beyond a sum total of all possible predicates in general, we nevertheless find on closer investigation that this idea, as an original concept, excludes a multiplicity of predicates, which, as derived through others, are already given, or cannot coexist with one another; and that it refines [*läutere*] itself to a concept thoroughly [*durchgängig*] determined *a priori*, and thereby becomes the concept of an individual object that is thoroughly determined merely through the idea, and then must be called an **ideal** of pure reason. (A573-4/B601-2)

What Kant means by refinement needs to be fully appreciated. It is through refinement that Kant

arrives at the relevant ideal and moves from talk of possibility to reality.[33] He says we begin the process with all predicates in general. But some predicates overlap. Some conflict. Some are derivative. He provides no examples, but the motivation is plain. Since the predicates philodendron and non-philodendron cannot both be included in the completely determined idea, Kant requires some process that specifies the constitution of the idea.

It might be initially tempting to view refinement as the same as either determination or abstraction. Thus far, they are the only two available procedures for operating on conceptual relations. Kant says that the idea of the sum total of all possibility is "still indeterminate" and, through refinement, becomes completely determined. The abstraction procedure uncovers more abstract concepts, not the concept of an "individual object." It is therefore unlikely that refinement is abstraction. Since the idea in question is the concept of an individual, perhaps refinement is a type of determination. But there are several reasons to doubt this.

First, Kant depicts refinement as a process that can be completed. Although we conceive of a completely determined concept as a goal, the determination procedure is an infinite task. There is no lowest species (*JL* 9:59, 97). This suggests that any completely determined concept we possess was not produced through the determination procedure (A573/B601). Because only one can be completed, refinement and determination are different.

The second reason is more complex. The idea of the total of all predicates in general is meant to ground the determination procedure. The procedure is a consequence of the ideal. So if refinement is determination, the set of all predicates both grounds and is the consequence of the

[33] There has been no thorough treatment of refinement. Callanan devotes several sentences ("The Ideal of Pure Reason," 252). Grier notices the importance but shows unwarranted optimism by saying that the claim is "rather straightforward." See "Ideal of Pure Reason," in *Cambridge Companion to Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason, 267.

determination procedure. This leaves two unpalatable options. The first is circularity. Reading refinement as determination requires Kant to be claiming that we descend along the *scala praedicamentalis* toward the concept that makes the descent possible in the first place. The idea is the result of the same determination procedure it is meant to ground. Not only would this be a straightforward logical problem, but it would signify a breakdown in the Ideal's argumentative strategy. The determination procedure is introduced, via the principle of determinability, to show the need for a completely determined idea that makes the concepts and procedure possible. It may be tempting to think that, because the idea is completely determined, it is therefore the result of the procedure. But Kant is arguing from consequence to ground. The implication is that, if he wishes to show how the ideal is completely determined, he needs a separate procedure. Otherwise he risks a type of circularity.

The second option is regress. The determination procedure references a set of predicates. We might avoid the circle by claiming that, although refinement *is* determination, the procedure that determines the idea refers to a *separate* set of predicates. The idea that determines the ideal of pure reason is completely determined, and thus the result of a procedure grounded in a set of predicates. If the predicates are not supplied by the idea itself, they must be supplied by another idea. The procedure that generated the idea would itself need to be grounded. The idea would retain its grounding status, but the question of refinement would be pushed off to the new idea. The ground would be another idea that results from another procedure, which again requires a ground. And the regress is afoot. We find only fruit, no tree. Since the animating drive of the Dialectic is the discovery of *unconditioned* totalities, such a reading would be embarrassing for Kant. If the unconditioned totality of the Ideal has a further ground, it is not unconditioned. The refined version of the idea is an "original concept." It is not the consequence of another. If the

ideal of pure reason is an independent thing, it cannot be grounded in anything. Further, the predicates are "the material **of all possibility**" and "the **sum total of all possibility**" (A573/B601). If there are yet more predicates, Kant's language is confusing or inaccurate.

I propose Kant is aware that he needs a distinct process. Nonetheless, the passage and my discussion reveal commonalities between refinement and both determination and abstraction. Two will inform my discussion:

a) Like abstraction but unlike determination, refinement concerns marks contained in the idea.

b) Like determination but unlike abstraction, refinement functions to result in a completely determined concept.

What do these two features look like in the context of the Ideal? Refinement relies on Kant's theories of reality and possibility. I will start with the former to distinguish two components of refinement. The second component will lead us to consider the pre-critical possibility argument.

7. Quality

The determination procedure utilizes pairs of contradictorily-opposed predicates. The sum of predicates includes them both. But if the idea that grounds the procedure is completely determined, it cannot include contradictory predicates. Which belong?

Kant's theory of reality reveals that refinement happens in two ways. They attach to the other categories of quality, negation and limitation.[34] They can also be explained hylomorphically: refinement has both form and matter. First, there are predicates that represent reality, a positive being or property. The contradictorily opposed predicate, or negation,

[34] Because limitation is "reality combined with negation," Kant talks about negation as a type of limitation (B111). See the reference to thoroughgoing determination in the Amphiboly (A266/B322), A576/B603, A578/B606, and 28:1014.

represents a lack of reality.[35] Kant infers, "All concepts of negations are thus derivative, and the realities contain the data, the material, so to speak, or the transcendental content, for the possibility and the thoroughgoing determination of all things" (A575/B603, cf. 28:552, 559). His thought is that the concept of a negation, understood as a lack of reality, involves an implicit reference to a positive reality. It has no matter of its own. There would be no concept not green without the concept green. "For no negation can be thought unless the positive has been thought previously. How could I think of a mere deficiency, of darkness without the concept of light?" (28:1014) Kant's light analogy is meant to illustrate that negations are a lack of reality and, in that respect, derivative.

If negations are derivative of affirmations, the refined idea that grounds complete determination need only contain predicates that represent positive reality. Although Kant begins his investigation with the unrefined idea of all possible predicates, we discover that, at least with regard to negations, this idea is grounded in a more refined idea that contains only positive predicates. The idea represents a "transcendental substratum" of positive being on which negations depend. Hence, one component of refinement is the removal of negations

This picture provides the means to distinguish three exhaustive types of concepts: 1) **no reality**, 2) **some reality**, and 3) **all of reality**. The first is a concept with only negative

[35] Kant draws a distinction between two types of negation. The formal or logical negation (with "the little word 'not'") is based on the more fundamental "transcendental negation," which expresses Kant's theory of reality. He says, "A transcendental negation, on the con-trary, signifies non-being in itself, and is opposed to transcendental affirmation, which is a Something, the concept of which in itself al-ready expresses a being, and hence it is called reality (thinghood), be-cause through it alone, and only so far as it reaches, are objects Something (things)" (A574/B604). He is interested in the transcendental senses. The negation component of refinement is itself hylomorphic: formal negations of concepts (in judgments) are dependent on the matter of reality (the opposition between transcendental negation and transcendental affirmation). See Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, ch. 10.

predicates. In the *Lectures*, Kant calls it a "concept *de ente omni modo negativo*," a being negative in every way. It represents non-being or *no*thing, a full denial of reality (A291/B347, 29:961). This is a concept that contains no positive predicates. However, because each thing is *some*thing, they require positive being (A574/B604). Kant calls the second type the concept of a "*ens partim reale, partim negativum*," a being that is partly real and partly the negation or lack of reality. The concepts that compose the *scala praedicamentalis* are of this type.[36] They include a mix of positive and negative predicates. The third concept would represent all of reality, *omnitudo realitatis*. Kant calls the thing that contains all reality the *ens realissimum*: "[T]he concept of an *ens realissimum* is the concept of an individual being, because of all possible opposed predicates, one, namely, that which belongs absolutely to being, is encountered in its determination" (A576/B604). All of reality, the basis for the possibility of any individual thing, is derived from the *ens realissimum*.

Although it differs from Kant's usage, to keep the concept/thing ambiguity straight, I use '*omnitudo realitatis*' to mean the completely determined concept and '*ens realissimum*' to mean the thoroughgoingly determined thing. The concept supplies the positive predicates for the determination procedure. The being supplies the reality for the thoroughgoing determination of things.

Kant makes the further claim that the *omnitudo realitatis* must be completely determined. He provides a more detailed account in the *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion*. He says, "In this case [of the highest being] alone do I have a thing whose thoroughgoing

[36] In the *Lectures*, Kant calls these concepts incomplete or less complete in two different senses. First, they are not completely determined. Second, they do not represent the completeness of reality but "only some reality" (28:1014). In this second sense, he will also say they are not "pure realities." Cf. 29:990.

determination is bound up with its concept, because it is thoroughly and completely determined with respect to all possible *praedicatorum oppositorum* [opposed predicates]" (28:1014).[37] The concept of an *ens partim reale, partim negativum* will, by definition, not contain all of reality. The concepts will also be indeterminate with respect to some opposed predicates. But the *omnitudo realitatis* will, by definition, be completely determined. With Kant's theory of reality, we are in a position to see why. Any negative predicate is grounded in an opposing positive predicate. If the *omnitudo realitatis* contains a fundamental negative predicate, there are two alternatives. First, it contains the positive predicate as well. It would then be contradictory. I will consider why this is a problem in the next section. Second, it would no longer contain all of reality. For the same reasons, the *omnitudo realitatis* also cannot be indeterminate with respect to any predicates. In that case, there would be some reality whose representation is not included in the concept. Any missing reality leaves a gap in the determination procedure. Nothing would ground its inclusion in the *scala*.

In examining the component of refinement corresponding to negation, we find that Kant's claim is twofold. First, the concept of *omnitudo realitatis* is a necessary and basic completely determined concept that grounds the determination procedure by supplying the positive predicates to which negative predicates are opposed. When Kant describes the role of the concept in the Ideal, he says that it "contains as it were the entire storehouse of material from which all possible predicates of things can be taken" (A575/B603). Denying one of the predicates furnishes a negative predicate. Such a process results in the totality of all possible concepts, the unrefined version of the idea. Now, through the determination procedure, we can

[37] From *Religion and Rational Theology*. In my view, the usefulness of these lectures for understanding refinement and the Ideal generally is widely overlooked.

determine concepts of the other two types: 'nothing' or '*some*things'. Second, *ens realissimum* is the concept of a thoroughgoingly determined thing that supplies the reality for every existing thing. It is the ideal of pure reason named in the refinement passage and the only ideal in the strict sense (A576/B604). This, as we saw, is because its concept is completely determined and yet not the result of the determination procedure. Refinement, as a completable rational process, supplies the only completely determined concept we possess.

Yet there is more to the story. In the refinement passage, Kant says properties that "cannot coexist with one another" are not marks in the idea. It is easy enough to see why philodendron and not philodendron cannot both represent one and the same thing, but we must do more than merely chop the sum total of all predicates in half. Refinement concerns exclusionary relations besides contradiction. If something is a philodendron, it cannot also be a thunderstorm, even though the two predicates do not contradict.[38] The two properties cannot coexist in the same thing. It is also fairly safe to assume that the *ens realissimum* is not a plant. The second type of refinement confronts these issues.

For Kant, negations are limitations of realities, but there are other types of limitations. While negations involve full denial of a reality, one might also deny one part of a concept and affirm another. In other words, there is a distinction between a negative concept (e.g. non-philodendron) and a positive concept that includes negations among its marks. All concepts that

[38] I am attempting to provide an example of a metaphysically impossible thing. The boundaries of the different types of possibility are contentious. Some might dispute my example (the standard example is a thing that is both H_2O and XYZ, a clear odorless liquid with a different atomic structure). The issue is complicated by the fact that examples are sparse in Kant's writings. Debates about particular examples should not distract from the general point that Kant is interested in a type of possibility more restrictive than logical possibility. See *Lectures* 29:811-2.

represent *ens partim reale, partim negativum* are of this latter type. Philodendron may be a logically or formally positive predicate, but Kant thinks that it contains negative marks. A philodendron is not rational, not eternal, not a thunderstorm, etc. As he says, the concept does not represent a "*pure* reality" (28:1021, emphasis original).[39] It contains deficiencies or denials of reality in it. The result is that philodendron, like all common concepts, is a limitation (29:835-6). Since the *omnitudo realitatis* contains all of reality, refinement selects the concepts that only represent reality. It removes the limitations of predicates. I will call this second component of refinement **unlimitation**.

Kant's discussion of unlimitation in the *Lectures* includes concepts of reason and concepts of experience. First, "Every reality is either given me through pure reason independently of any experience, or met with by me in the world of sense. I may ascribe the first kind of reality to God without hesitation, for realities of this kind apply to things in general and determine them through pure understanding. Here no experience is involved and the realities are not even affected by sensibility." God (which Kant will identify with the *ens realissimum* later in the Ideal) is not an object of sense but is still conceived as a thing. Kant concludes that we ascribe "without hesitation" to God "every reality which can be predicated of [God] as a thing" (28:1020). These will be a priori concepts like substance, simplicity, and duration. He appears mostly to have the categories and predicables in mind ("purely transcendental concepts" (A82/B108, *Prol*. 4:324, 29:802)). But, second, Kant thinks there is also material in empirical concepts that can be applied to God. He says, "If we are to ascribe predicates to God *in concreto*, we must take materials for the concept of God from empirical principles and empirical

[39] By 'pure' Kant means unmixed with negations, not fully a priori—though the concepts of pure realities will turn out to be pure in Kant's more typical sense.

information" (28:1020). This enables the concept to be more than the "*concept of a thing* in general." The material will not itself be empirical or a condition for experience, but the content of an empirical concept must be considered as derivative of an idea of reason. What will the material be?

Refinement as unlimitation operates on empirical concepts. It has two steps. Kant calls them the *via negationis* and *via eminentiae*. The first resembles abstraction. The idea, as the storehouse of material, contains the reality found in the limited concepts, including philodendron. How can we preserve the reality in the concepts while rejecting the negations they contain? Through refinement, the marks of a concept are separated into negations and realities. We discard the negations. They cannot be fundamental marks of the *omnitudo realitatis*. Among the realities, we repeat the process. The marks of marks will also be an assortment of negations and realities. Eventually we find the concept of a pure reality, one with no negations or deficiencies in it.[40] In Kant's words, "I must carefully separate out everything sensible inhering in my representation of this or that reality, and leave out everything imperfect and negative" (28:1021). He provides two abstract examples: "after I remove everything negative and sensible from the concept of matter, I retain nothing but the concept of an externally active power. And in the case of the concept of spatial presence, if I leave out of the condition of sense (i.e. space), nothing but pure reality of presence is left over" (28:1022). The leftover concepts are marks that represent pure positive reality. The process would be more protracted but fundamentally the same in the case of philodendron. At some point, we are likely to discover matter and spatial presence as marks. Many other marks, like plant, on a desk, and green, will be discarded along

[40] In some cases, eliminating the negative marks cancels the whole concept. Kant gives extension as an example (28:1021).

the way as limitations.[41]

The second step, *via emintentiae*, introduces degree of reality. When we have removed all negative marks from concepts, we do not immediately include what is left in the *omnitudo realitatis*. This is because, as Kant says, "the reality remaining in my concepts after all the limitations have been left out will be quite insignificant and small in degree" (28:1022). His thought is that philodendron includes the concept of an entity that has *some* active power and presence. These concepts are positive but not *maximally* positive. They are still limitations. Kant proposes that we ascribe realities to the *ens realissimum* "in the highest degree and with infinite significance" (28:1022).[42] Not only is negation derivative of positive reality, but the lesser degree of reality is derivative of the higher, and ultimately the highest. A reality can only be limited if there is an unlimited source of the reality. Predicates that make it to this stage of refinement are limitations of predicates that have an infinite or highest degree. As should be expected, the *ens realissimum*, as the source of all reality, need only include the unlimited predicates. The limited versions are grounded in the highest degree of the predicate. Kant gives two examples. We might discover power and understanding in a thing. Both are positive

[41] One might observe that the *via negationis* resembles abstraction. Both concern coordinate marks. Despite this general similarity, they concern different features of concepts. By distinguishing positive and negative marks, the *via negationis* seeks more fundamental concepts by uncovering limitations of reality contained in logically positive predicates. Higher concepts in refinement express more reality. Abstraction, by contrast, concerns the relative place of coordinate marks on the *scala praedicamentalis*. Higher concepts in abstraction are more general.

[42] What Kant means by infinity is not obvious. In the preceding pages, he criticizes Eberhard's view that God is mathematically infinite and metaphysically infinite. The worry, likely inspired by Hume, is that both risk utilizing limited concepts for measuring God and, relatedly, failing to see that God is the basis for, not the result of, the limited concepts. So it is surprising to see Kant invoke the term again. Although what is infinite here is the "significance," shortly after he references infinite predicates (28:1022).

realities. But we must consider the *ens realissimum* to be infinitely powerful and to have an infinite understanding.

I have described refinement of what Kant calls the totality of all possible predicates as having three steps: 1) the removal of logically negative predicates; 2) the removal of negative marks within logically positive predicates (*via negationis*); 3) the unlimation of the remaining positive predicates (*via eminentiae*). I associated the first step with the category of negation. Kant talks about the second and third steps in terms of limitation, though his label for the second in the *Lectures* might incline us to see it as another iteration of the removal of negations. In addition, the *via eminentiae* captures a more natural sense of unlimitation. How we categorize or divide the steps is less important than the theory of reality they assume.

To show what motivates Kant's picture of refinement, we will need to consider why he thinks the *ens realissimum* is a possible thing. That is, refinement has the function of making the idea that grounds the determination procedure possible. So I move beyond the mechanisms of refinement to the modal metaphysics that motivate them. But before turning to this issue, there are two residual points to make about refinement.

First, the *omnitudo realitatis* contains all of reality, but insofar as it is completely determined, Kant is committed to the view that it also contains many negative predicates, like non-philodendron, non-thunderstorm, non-green. On the surface, this might seem like an inconsistency. Is Kant denying reality to something that should contain all reality? In the next section, I will explain why Kant thinks the *omnitudo realitatis* cannot contain metaphysically incompatible predicates. But Kant already has the means to respond. Although the *ens realissimum* is not a philodendron, refinement shows how all the reality found in philodendrons is derived from the *ens realissimum*. Furthermore, because a philodendron is an *ens partim reale,*

partim negativum, adding the concept philodendron, with its mix of positive and negative concepts, to the *omnitudo realitatis* would, somewhat paradoxically, deny the *omnitudo realitatis* some reality. On Kant's picture, what makes something a philodendron is the particular share of reality it *lacks*. The reality it exhibits is borrowed from the *ens realissimum*. This means that if the *ens realissimum* had the property of being a philodendron, reality would need to be *removed*. The negative marks contained in the concept would become part of a concept that is meant to contain all positive reality. Although it may seem strange, it is a welcome result of refinement, not an incoherence, that the complete determination of the *omnitudo realitatis* has negative marks. Including a negative predicate does not imply a lack of reality. For ease of expression, we might talk of removing negative predicates from the *omnitudo realitatis*, but Kant is more interested in the claim that the concept is the source of reality for all other possible concepts. The predicates that are discarded in the refinement process end up in the *omnitudo realitatis* as negations in a derivative way. It is the fact that the predicates necessarily include negations that makes them ineligible for inclusion in all of reality. Kant noticed early in his career that the most real being does not include all possible positive determinations (*The Only Possible Argument*, 2:85). He says, "In so far as body possesses extension, force, and so on, the possibility of body is grounded in the Supreme Being. But in so far as body lacks the power of thought, this negation inheres in the body itself" (2:87).[43]

Finally, in numerous places Kant talks about degrees of reality. Since scalar notions of reality have fallen out of favor, this is often seen as unfortunate. But whether or how Kant holds

[43] It is an interesting historical question whether Kant's refinement theory is, intentionally or not, influenced by the apophatic theology tradition. The reference to '*via negativa*' in the lectures supplies evidence. In various respects, Kant's theory of reality in the Ideal is not only Platonic but Neoplatonic. It turns out that most (all?) true statements about God deny that a property applies.

this view is not straightforward.[44] Refinement includes two different types of degrees of reality. First, the concepts of 1) nothing, 2) mixed reality, 3) all of reality allow Kant to talk about reality as a spectrum. The spectrum is constituted by the share of reality found in a whole concept. Roughly, the fewer negative marks, the more reality. Second, *via eminentiae* introduces gradable predicates. Kant's claim is that, of the gradable predicates, the *ens realissimum* includes the maximum or highest versions. He considers examples like power, presence, and intelligence.

These two types of gradations are different. The first involves reality as a function of the total amount of positive predicates in a concept. The second concerns the gradation of a particular predicate. We can return to Kant's light analogy to illustrate the point. Lack of reality, like darkness, is a deficiency of light and derivative. But there are two types of deficiency. First, a light might only have the capacity to be fully on or fully off, like a standard light switch. Second, a light might be able to brighten and fade. Kant is not claiming that all positive predicates are gradable. In fact, the details of refinement indicate that he does not hold this view. Not all predicates survive to the *via eminentiae*. There are not various degrees of philodendron. At the same time, philodendron might contain a greater or lesser share of reality than another concept. What we know is that the *ens realissimum* is the most real in both respects: the concept as a whole contains all positive reality and, in order to do this, among the gradable predicates,

[44] Strong evidence that Kant believes in degrees of reality would seem to be the Anticipations of Perception. There he says the real "has intensive magnitude" (A167/B207, *Prol*. 4:306-7, 309, 29:999). He makes similar claims in the Refutation of Mendelssohn in the Paralogisms (B414, cf. 28:211-2, 28:556). But as Charles Powell and Wolfgang Schwarz convincingly show, the *sensation* of the real has degree or magnitude, not reality itself. Kant is interested in the scale of intensity in sensation. See Powell, "Kant, Elanguescence, and Degrees of Reality" and Schwarz, "Kant's Categories of Reality and Existence." Kant talks about reality in the Ideal differently than he does in the Analytic and Anticipations specifically. This is seen in his specification of "reality in appearance" (A579/B607, A581/B609). I focus on the transcendental sense of reality at play in the Ideal.

contains the maximal versions. Whether this distinction makes Kant's theory of reality more tenable would require separate consideration.[45]

8. Possibility

Kant is making a three step argument in the first pages of the Ideal. He starts with the assumption that there are concepts of possible things. They are arrayed in his transcendental Tree of Porphyry. Second, we discover that reason, in its search for a ground of the Tree, has the idea of the totality of concepts. The final step is refinement, the process through which the idea becomes completely determined. Kant's references to the categories of quality explain that the *ens realissimum* contains unnegated and unlimited predicates. But the final step also moves from an idea of all *possibility* to an idea of all of *reality*. This would suggest that possibility is grounded in reality. The move warrants extended attention. Not only will it shed light on refinement, but it supplies some justification for the theory of reality I explicated in the previous section.

The strategy of grounding possibility in reality has precedent in Kant's pre-critical period. Section two of the Ideal is the critical maturation of the so-called **possibility argument**. Its most detailed version is found in the second and third reflections in part one of *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (hereafter *Beweisgrund*). The argument precedes his argument for the existence of God (in the fourth reflection) and makes a number of intriguing claims in modal metaphysics.[46] It aims to show that

[45] For partial defenses, see Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, 28-34 and Powell, "Kant, Elanguescence, and Degrees of Reality."

[46] The possibility argument is meant to establish the existence of something resembling Spinoza's God. See Boehm, *Kant's Critique of Spinoza*, ch. 1 and Chignell, "Kant, Real

for any possible predicate, there must be something real that grounds the predicate; the possibility of any thing depends on a necessarily existing being. Kant ends by addressing the conceptual makeup of the *ens realissimum*. I will not outline the argument in full but instead focus on aspects that elucidate the critical version.[47]

Kant begins with three separate but related distinctions: 1) logical and absolute possibility, 2) the form and matter of possibility, and 3) separate relations between possibility and reality or existence. First, for all intents and purposes, by absolute possibility Kant means what is today called metaphysical possibility.[48] It is his main focus in the *Beweisgrund*. He says early on, "What I shall be discussing here will always be internal or so-called absolute and unconditional possibility" (2:78). When he says it is 'internal' he means it is not constrained by the conditions of experience (see A324/B381). We are to consider only the relations among the coordinate marks of a concept. The relations must be such that it is thinkable for an object to correspond to the concept.

With the distinction, Kant has Leibniz, Wolff, and Baumgarten in his sights. For them, logical possibility and absolute possibility are coextensive. Leibniz, for instance, argues that possibility rests only on the principle of contradictions and thus no two positive realities are

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Possibility, and the Threat of Spinoza". The argument in the fourth reflection of *Beweisgrund* makes Kant less heretical.

[47] There are numerous detailed readings of the argument. See Fisher and Watkins, "Kant on the Material Ground of Possibility"; Stang, "Kant's Possibility Proof"; Chignell, "Kant, Modality, and the Most Real Being" and "Kant, Real Possibility, and the Threat of Spinoza"; Adams, "God, Possibility, and Kant"; Boehm, "The One Possible Basis, the Ideal of Pure Reason, and Kant's Regulative Spinozism" in *Kant's Critique of Spinoza*.

[48] See 29:812. Stang, "Kant's Possibility Proof," 276; Chignell, "Kant, Modality, and the Most Real Being," 159; Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, 46.

incompatible.[49] Consequently, in Leibniz's version of the possibility argument (found in *Monadology* §43-5), God's essence would contain every positive predicate. Kant's innovation is an argument that absolute possibility is a subset of the logically possible, as most today would agree (29:811). The result is a more economical conceptual makeup for the *ens realissimum*.

The second distinction maps onto the first. He uses hylomorphic terms to describe two elements of possibility:

> But even according to [Crusius], the impossible always contains the combination of something posited with something which also cancels it. I call this repugnancy the formal element in inconceivability or impossibility. The material element which is given here as standing in such a conflict is itself something and can be thought. A quadralinear triangle is absolutely impossible. Nonetheless, a triangle is something, and so is a quadrangle. The impossibility is based simply on the logical relations which exist between one thinkable thing and another, where the one cannot be a characteristic mark of the other. Likewise, in every possibility we must first distinguish the something which is thought, and then we must distinguish the agreement of what is thought in it with the law of contradiction. (2:77)

Logical possibility is merely formal. A concept can be deemed impossible by the logical relations that obtain between two of its coordinate marks. If two marks have the form 'F and ¬F', no object can correspond to it. In the Ideal, Kant makes the same point with the principle of determinability, which rests on the principle of contradiction and concerns only the form of the marks.

A contradiction is a relation between two predicates. If the principle of contradiction has any application, concepts are already available. There must first be predicates that can enter into the relation. In an earlier version of the possibility argument from the *New Elucidation*, Kant

[49] *Philosophical Essays*, 21. For a more detailed treatment see Stang, "Kant's Possibility Proof," 276-9. Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, 57.

says, “in every comparison the things which are to be compared must be available for comparison” (1:395). The formal element assumes the material.

As trivial as this point may seem at first, it is the heart of the possibility argument. It also resembles Kant’s strategy with the first two principles of the Ideal. In the *Beweisgrund*, Kant uses the point to argue both that all possibility is grounded in something real and that absolute possibility has a smaller extension than logical possibility. I will consider both in turn. The first aids us in understanding Kant’s move from possibility to reality in the Ideal. The second reveals details about the predicates that comprise the *ens realissimum*.

Kant thinks that when I determine a concept, I am making use of marks that are given and have content. But how does Kant get from this to the conclusion that possibility is grounded in something real? He is aware that it would be absurd to claim that every token possible predicate is grounded in a thing that instantiates the predicate. There can be absolutely possible predicates that are not instantiated anywhere (e.g. unicorn). He begins with the third distinction. He describes two relations between reality and possibility:

> What has to be shown of all possibility in general and of each possibility in particular is that it presupposes something real, whether it be one thing or many. Now, this relation of all possibility to some existence or other can be of two kinds. Either the possible can only be thought in so far as it is itself real, and then the possibility is given as a determination existing within the real; or it is possible because something else is real; in other words, its internal possibility is given as a consequence through another existence. (2:79)

The distinction is between something that is absolutely possible *because it is real* and something that is possible “as a consequence” of something that is real.[50] To illustrate, Kant (reluctantly (2:80)) considers the example fiery body (i.e. a body on fire). He assumes, plausibly, that the

[50] Kant is giving yet another sense of ‘determination’. Boehm, for instance, labels the distinction as between determination and consequence (*Kant’s Critique of Spinoza*, 25). I avoid using ‘determination’ in this sense.

concept is absolutely possible. We notice that it is logically possible, since there is no contradiction between fire and body. He also assumes, plausibly, that the concept would be absolutely possible even if there were no actual fire or bodies. But how so?

Kant's illustration appears to utilize the abstraction procedure. In the *Beweisgrund*, he thinks it can be used to explain the absolute possibility of a concept. As before, we are not concerned with judgments about the world; we are "not permitted to appeal to experience here." The marks, we recall, are the content or parts of the concept. Fiery body has fire and body as marks. The content grounds the absolute possibility of the concept. If a concept is possible, it is possible in virtue of the relations among its coordinate marks. The marks must themselves be possible. We thus divide body into the concepts of extension or impenetrability. The concept body is a consequence of the higher concepts; the lower concept is a result of the aggregation of the higher concepts. To posit the lower concept is to posit constituent higher concepts as its ground. The process is repeated. The content is ultimately found in the marks, and their marks, and so on. Kant is claiming that eventually we arrive at a simple concept, one that is not the consequence of any determination procedure and has no marks. He takes the unanalyzable concept to be extension, for purposes of the illustration.

If the concept does not represent anything real, then, because its possibility cannot be grounded in any other possible concepts, the concept would be impossible.[51] The word 'extension' would signify nothing. But, by assumption, extension is possible, and the plainly

[51] Kant would likely say that we cannot produce an example of such a concept. It would be unanalyzable and not represent anything real. Where would the material for the concept come from? Nowhere. This is the core of Kant's point. In addition, while his example is the concept of an actual thing, the same illustration would work for any metaphysically possible thing, whether it exists or not. Unicorns do not exist, but they are possible creatures. We can understand how by analyzing the marks in the concept of unicorn. The marks represent real things.

possible concept fiery body is a consequence of it. If the concept is truly unanalyzable, there is something real that corresponds to the concept and grounds its possibility. In other words, when abstracting from a possible concept, all the resulting unanalyzable concepts must represent something real. On this account, the possibility of any concept is ultimately grounded in something real. This is meant in two ways, corresponding to the third distinction: 1) unanalyzable concepts are possible in virtue of being real; 2) lower concepts are possible in virtue of having unanalyzable possible concepts as marks.[52]

Kant has yet to show that each of the unanalyzable concepts cohere in a *single* being. He explicitly begins by saying that possibility is grounded in one real thing "or many."[53] It is important to him, even in the *Beweisgrund*, that the ground be an individual. So the argument has a gap: each coordinate mark of the concept fiery body might be possible considered by themselves, but what ensures that the marks are possible together? Concepts are unities with internal relations among marks, not heaps of discrete concepts. Boehm suggests that the relations among the analyzable concepts must be grounded and "only a single being can ground all such relations: had certain grounds of possibility been scattered in two or more beings, the relation(s) between these beings themselves would have to be grounded by yet another being—and so on, regressively, ad infinitum."[54] Kant might be amenable to Boehm's offer, but the problem runs

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[52] Chignell's reading utilizes three conditions of possibility: the formal element and two parts of the material element ("content" and "real harmony"). I have explained the account without reference to real harmony because Kant does not mention it at this phase. (Chignell, "Kant, Modality, and the Most Real Being," 171-7).

[53] On this point, see Fisher and Watkins, "Kant on the Material Ground of Possibility"; Adams, "God, Possibility, and Kant."

[54] Boehm, "The One Possible Basis, the Ideal of Pure Reason, and Kant's Regulative Spinozism," 28. At A579/B607, Kant argues that the *ens realissimum* is not an aggregate or sum total but a whole that grounds its parts and their relations. I take this as evidence that Kant was

deeper. The issue of a single grounding concept is closely connected to the broader issue of the status and role of ideas in critical philosophy. The Kant of the *Beweisgrund* lacks the theory of reason expounded in the Transcendental Dialectic. The ground of possibility is found with unanalyzable concepts at the top of his pre-critical Tree of Porphyry. There is no refinement, only abstraction. Kant does not shift to consider all possible concepts, both unanalyzable and analyzable together, as an unconditioned totality. Regardless of whether the pre-critical Kant can justify a single ground of possibility, the theory of reason in the Dialectic makes the task relatively easier. He notices that even the highest concepts are conditions in a series. The series can be considered as a whole. For Kant, reason seeks to find a unity that grounds possibility. Refinement yields a single idea because there is one series of conditions, a "sum total of all possibility." Kant eventually came to see that abstraction was not suited for the task. Not only must the idea that grounds determination also ground abstraction, but it must be completely determined.

Let us grant for the sake of argument that a single being, the *ens realissimum*, grounds all possibility. The younger Kant certainly believed this, even if his justification leaves something to be desired. Now we can turn to the difference between absolute and logical possibility, as considered earlier. Kant thinks that the *ens realissimum* need not contain every token predicate. The next step is to make the case that it cannot. He explains that some logically possible concepts are absolutely impossible. To do this, he needs an additional element of possibility:

> It is said: reality and reality never contradict each other, for both of them are true affirmations; as a consequence, they do not conflict with each other in the subject either. Now, although I concede that there is no logical contradiction here, the real repugnancy is

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worried that the *Beweisgrund* version of the *ens realissimum* risks being a mere aggregate of unanalyzable predicates. Boehm's charity would extend to this problem, but in line with my suggestion, I think Kant sees his mature theory of reason (and particularly the role of system) as a response to the worries of Fisher and Watkins and Adams.

> not thereby canceled. Such a real repugnancy always occurs when something, as a ground, annihilates by means of real opposition the consequence of something else. (2:85-6)

Kant is claiming that Leibniz and his lineage are guilty of a confusion. There can be a *real repugnance* (*Realrepugnanz*) between two positive predicates. This makes absolute possibility more restrictive than logical possibility (cf. 28:812).

Examples of real repugnance are cases in which there is "real opposition" between consequences of two predicates (see 28:559-60). In "Negative Magnitudes" Kant distinguishes two types. Chignell labels them *predicate-canceling* and *subject-canceling*.[55] First, as an example of the former, if I am tugging on a rope towards the east and you are tugging west with equal force, the rope will stay in place. The rope can have both forces exerted on it at once. The predicates representing the forces are both positive. Hence, there is no logical contradiction between them. The consequence of one is the eastward motion of the rope at a certain speed. The consequence of the other is the westward motion of the rope at the same speed. The two consequences cancel each other out (29:810). It is metaphysically impossible for the consequences to coexist (see 2:171, 175-6, 2:86).

Second, examples of subject-canceling opposition are mentioned less frequently and usually involve annihilation. Instead of a cancellation of the consequences of predicates, the two predicates would cancel the subject itself (2:190). If philodendron is added to the concept of thunderstorm, the result is a concept of an impossible thing (2:191-3). There is real repugnance in a thing with both properties. Generally, subject cancellation occurs when the opposed predicate is a part of the essence of the subject (see *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic*, 727). Kant

[55] Chignell, "Kant, Modality, and the Most Real Being," 172-3. Perhaps more descriptive labels would be 'consequence-canceling' and 'ground-canceling' (see 28:553).

associates essence with the ground of a thing (28:553). So it makes sense for him to hold that cancellation can be found both at the level of consequence and ground.

For Kant, the material condition of absolute possibility is the lack of real repugnance. Said differently, there must be *real harmony* among the predicates of any absolutely possible concept. Not all positive predicates are possible together because we will find real opposition among their consequences.

At this point, we are committed to the supposition that the *ens realissimum* is the reality that grounds all possibility. The reality of all other things is derivative of it. Kant takes this to mean that it possesses reality to the highest degree, in keeping with its title. We are also supposing that the *ens realissimum* is absolutely possible. This is simply because it is real. Thus there is real harmony among its predicates. He says, "in the most real being of all there cannot be any real opposition or positive conflict among its own determinations" (2:86). Kant does not provide a catalog of the predicates, but he does consider the issue explicitly. The *ens realissimum* has all and only 'maximal' and 'fundamental' predicates. Chignell supplies a helpful description of the terms:

> A *maximal* predicate is one that has the highest degree—extensive or intensive—on a continuum of gradable predicates. Thus *being omnipotent* is maximal on the continuum of predicates ascribing power to a subject. A *fundamental* predicate is both *unanalyzable* and *positive*. An unanalyzable predicate cannot be constructed from simpler predicates via logical operations like negation, disjunction, conjunction, etc. [...] A positive predicate has genuine content of its own that is not derivative of or merely a negation of the content of some other predicate.[56]

The *ens realissimum* has maximal predicates because nonmaximal predicates are a consequence of the maximal with a negation or limitation. If the *ens realissimum* had a nonmaximal predicate,

[56] Chignell, "Kant, Modality, and the Most Real Being," 166 n. 19.

the grades between the predicate and its maximal version would be impossible. Kant takes this to be unacceptable. For the same reasons, the *ens realissimum* has only unanalyzable predicates. Otherwise the unanalyzable predicates would be left without a ground or be impossible, thus making all their consequences impossible. The predicates must also be positive because "all negations can only be thought through opposite positings" (2:87). A negative predicate is always analyzable.

The resemblance between the *Beweisgrund* and first *Critique* Ideal of Pure Reason should be unmistakable. We see refinement as motivated by a modal metaphysics in which the ground of possibility is a real, and hence possible, entity. My task now is to use the two stints of the *Beweisgrund* possibility argument to fill out the picture of refinement. The possibility proof is packed inside Kant's use of *läutere* in the Ideal. How should it be unpacked?

9. Refinement Redux

We saw that, for Kant, reality is more basic than the lack of reality. I then moved to Kant's modal metaphysics in the *Beweisgrund*. Refinement connects the two theories. I will describe the picture by retracing the three distinctions from the previous section, placing the *Beweisgrund* and Ideal in parallel. This illuminates Kant's mention of refinement in the Ideal (A573/B601).

First, when Kant talks about possibility in the Ideal, what does he mean? We saw that refinement removes the negations from the idea because otherwise the concept would contain a contradiction. The result is a logically possible idea (A574/B602). But refinement also removes limitations. A philodendron thunderstorm is logically possible but impossible in some other sense. So the process of refinement is connected to a different type of possibility. For Kant, this is 'real possibility' (A596/B624, 28:813, 28:1019). Because the Dialectic concerns concepts of

reason, not understanding, and because of the parallels between the possibility argument and Ideal, it is generally agreed that Kant is talking about absolute real possibility in the Ideal.[57] There is a brief mention of absolute possibility in the Refutation of Idealism: "[A]bsolute possibility (which is valid in every respect) is no mere concept of the understanding, and can in no way be of empirical use, rather it belongs solely to reason, which goes beyond all possible empirical use of the understanding" (A232/B285). The passage, despite saying little about what absolute possibility is, suggests that the possibility of empirically cognized objects is not Kant's concern in the Ideal. The *omnitudo realitatis* is an idea and thus no object in experience corresponds to it. We cannot appeal to intuition in a proof of its possibility. What is needed is a concept of possibility that belongs to reason. Absolute possibility fits the bill.

Second, Kant's version of the formal and material elements of possibility are captured in the Ideal by the principle of thoroughgoing determination. He says it includes the principle of contradiction but also references a material component, the totality of all possible predicates. Every thing derives its possibility from them. To determine a concept, concepts must first be available. But which concepts are available?

At this point, with little fanfare, Kant mentions refinement. He believes that the idea of all possibility (i.e. the Tree) refines itself into the idea of all of reality. Kant's motivation is the

[57] As opposed to the formal conditions of experience, absolute real possibility is associated with causal laws (A218/B265, *Prol*. 307-8, 28:556). See Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, 49-50; Allison follows Wood (*Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 398 n.5); Fisher and Watkins, "Kant on the Material Ground of Possibility"; and Grier, *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*, ch. 7. An outlier is Longuenesse. She argues that the positive predicates in the Ideal agree with the conditions of experience, thus the type of possibility at play is empirical real possibility ("The Transcendental Ideal, and the Unity of the Critical System"). Verburgt discusses Longuenesse's reading in detail ("How to Account for Reason's Interest in an Ultimate Prototype" sec. 3). Grier criticizes Longuenesse in favor of absolute possibility (*Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*, 237-243).

same as in the *Beweisgrund*. He is aware that concepts cannot be constructed out of nothing. Something is presupposed in reason and presupposed as real. Otherwise the determination procedure cannot draw on any concepts. For Kant, possible concepts are ultimately grounded in the idea of something real that supplies their content.

However, in the *Beweisgrund*, the ground for possibility is discovered through the abstraction procedure. It leads to unanalyzable concepts that are then bound together in a single being. Abstraction is all that is needed because we never leave the Tree of Porphyry. The concepts that ground possibility are merely the most general concepts. The critical Kant is unsatisfied with this. It is faulty metaphysics—still Leibnizian at its core. Instead, his mature theory of reason demands that the Tree *as a whole* be grounded, not only the analyzable concepts in the Tree. We cannot merely ascend to higher concepts; we must, Kant believes, consider the concepts as an unconditioned totality. He retains the view that the ground of the possible concepts is something real, but he needs something other than abstraction to accomplish the goal. Refinement is his solution. It is like abstraction in that it concerns the relations among concepts internal to the idea, but it grounds the standard abstraction procedure. While in the *Beweisgrund* he recognized the need for grounding possible concepts, and likely the determination procedure, he had yet to introduce refinement as a rational process that explains the conceptual makeup of the grounding idea.

As I suggested, Kant's theory of reason in the Dialectic makes it easier for him to claim that the ground of possibility is an individual thing. Instead of picking a candidate concept, like fiery body, and inquiring into the grounds of its possibility, Kant postulates a set of all possible concepts. Reason has the idea of all the concepts as a totality. It is important to note that if the

idea is of an individual (i.e. if the idea is an ideal), it is completely determined—and completely determined without being the result of the determination procedure it grounds.

The third distinction is between 1) something possible in virtue of being real and 2) something possible in virtue of being a consequence of something real. If the idea grounds and explains possibility, it represents something real. If it represents something real, it is absolutely possible. Are all concepts possible in virtue of being instantiated in the *ens realissimum*? Now refinement takes over and we import the structure of Kant's grounding claims from the *Beweisgrund*. Each negation is derivative of a positive property. To ground possibility, the *ens realissimum* need only contain the positive properties. And if the ideal is absolutely possible, it cannot contain them both. Hence, because the absolutely possible is a subset of the logically possible, the *ens realissimum* contains only positive predicates.

What about the second component of refinement, unlimitation or the removal of limitations? Some predicates are nominally positive but derived from unlimited predicates combined with negations. The concepts that represent *ens partim reale, partim negativum*, like philodendron, thunderstorm, and human, are all examples. They are analyzable and, as a result, their possibility is derived from elsewhere. To ground possibility, the *ens realissimum* need only contain the unlimited properties. The reality of a limited property is owed to the unlimited property. Then, through negation, all the possible limited grades of the properties can be derived.

To understand Kant's motivations, we can use something of an indirect proof. Consider two scenarios. First, if the *ens realissimum* lacked one of the unlimited properties, then a concept that includes as a mark the unlimited version of the predicate would be impossible. Because the unlimited property grounds the rest, without it, the possibility of the limited properties is, at best, unexplained. We would need to find a source for the reality in the predicate. If the *ens*

realissimum does not contain it, the reality cannot come from anywhere. Or we would be unable to tell that the property is a limitation, since, strictly speaking, it isn't limiting anything. Second, if the ideal contained a limitation of the property, then a thing that includes any less-limited version (i.e. for a gradable property, any grade between the property in ideal and the unlimited property) would be impossible. This case is more modest, but the reasoning is the same. If the *ens realissimum* contains a limited property, then the most that the property could ground is any more-limited property (i.e. a lower grade property). We are also left to analyze the limited property in the *ens realissimum*. If it is limited, it combines negations with a positive source of reality. Where does the reality come from? On our assumption, it cannot come from anywhere.

Kant would count both scenarios as unacceptable. We conclude that, according to Kant, there is reason for including the unlimited predicates in the *ens realissimum*. But why not *all* positive predicates, limited and unlimited?

In the Ideal, Kant does not elaborate when he says that some predicates "cannot coexist with each other." Here we recall Kant's long standing view that absolute possibility is more restrictive than logical possibility (A596/B624, 28:812). Taking refinement as a process of removing real repugnance unlocks the passage. There is no contradiction between the predicates philodendron and thunderstorm, but if the *ens realissimum* is absolutely possible, it cannot contain them both. Further, if it contains an unlimited predicate, it would not contain a limited version of the same predicate. Either the limited predicate would be redundant of the reality contained in the unlimited version, and thus already a mark, or there would be predicate-cancellation. For example, if the *ens realissimum* has the coordinate marks omnipotent and omnipotent-minus 15 (i.e. some limited degree of the predicate), then any positive consequences of the latter would be entailed by the former. However, the latter would also have the

consequence that the *ens realissimum* lacks certain powers. But a consequence of omnipotence is that it possesses them, resulting in opposition.

The exact conceptual makeup of the *ens realissimum* is difficult to specify. Kant never says. He may not need to say, given his purposes. The argument operates at a high level of abstraction. We can see that the ideal contains all and only the unlimited (and therefore unnegated) predicates. The negations and limitations are removed through refinement. The result is a thoroughgoingly determined real thing that grounds the possibility of everything. The predicates in the *ens realissimum* are taken as given in reason. And we derive from the *ens realissimum*, through unrefinement, the set of all possible concepts, logically positive predicates and their opposing negations. Only with those concepts are we able to think about the possibility of things.

10. Conclusion

In sum, all possible concepts of experience, the transcendental Tree of Porphyry, represent *ens partim reale*, *partim negativum*. Because the determination procedure references these concepts, reason considers them as a series of conditions for thinking about objects. The faculty then forms the idea of the series of conditions as a whole, an unconditioned totality that grounds the concepts. Kant believes that this totality, *ens realissimum* or the ideal of pure reason, is completely determined. He introduces refinement to explain how the ideal can be an individual thing that houses the material for all possible concepts. Through various stages, refinement progresses from negations or limitations to the reality on which they depend. In this way, Kant joins the long tradition of thinkers who hold there to be a single, unified ultimate source of reality.

In the next sections of the Ideal, the *ens realissimum* is hypostatized, personified, and posited in proofs for the existence of God. Historically, Kant's criticisms of the proofs overshadow the earlier sections in which the ideal is given a role in regulative reason.[58] My reading, by pulling together Kant's theories of concepts, reality, modality, and reason, uses refinement as a lens through which to consider Kant's integration of the possibility argument into the critical period. The result is a fresh and instructive account of some of the most opaque passages in the first *Critique*.

[58] See Fisher and Watkins, "Kant on the Material Ground of Possibility," 393; Boehm "The One Possible Basis, the Ideal of Pure Reason, and Kant's Regulative Spinozism."

CHAPTER 3

Complete Determination: Practical

> There is often a great deal of difference between the will of all and the general will. The latter considers only the general interest, whereas the former considers private interest and is merely the sum of private wills. But remove from these same wills the pluses and minuses that cancel each other out, and what remains as the sum of the differences is the general will.
>
> Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book II, Ch. 3

At a pivotal moment in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant mentions "a complete determination of all maxims." References to complete determination (*vollständige Bestimmung*) are rare in Kant's practical philosophy. The main critical period discussion is a forbidding section of the Ideal of Pure Reason, the chapter of the first *Critique*'s Transcendental Dialectic that features Kant's criticism of speculative theology. In that section, however, the focus is more on 'thoroughgoing determination' (*durchgängigen Bestimmung*). Since it is far from obvious what relevance complete or thoroughgoing determination has for maxims of the moral law, and there is little text to go on, many would be inclined to view the reference in the *Groundwork* as an instance of Kant's occasional architectonic fixation. Not every connection or allusion to other parts of the system is worth chasing. The complete determination reference might be such a case. Implicitly or explicitly, this has been the prevailing attitude of scholars.[1] We are also inclined away from the reference because 'complete determination' has fallen out of the philosophical lexicon. It is appealing to assume, or perhaps hope, that the core insights of the

[1] When complete determination is mentioned in a practical context, it is often unexplained or used inaccurately. An example of the former is Guyer, "The Form and Matter of the Categorical Imperative," 157, 161-2, 168. An example of the latter is Allison, *Kant's Groundwork*, 237.

Groundwork can be understood and evaluated without reviving each outmoded concept used to express them.

But there are substantive reasons to consider Kant's use of 'complete determination' in the *Groundwork*. The archaic language has prevented readers from recognizing the importance and interpretative utility of the reference and broader passage surrounding it. I begin by showing why the reference should not be set aside. Then, after summarizing Kant's theory of complete determination, I extend the theory into the practical philosophy, particularly to a reading of the Kingdom of Ends.

1. The Remark

We might have an excuse to ignore Kant's claim about complete determination if it were found in a marginal passage, irrelevant to the main goal of the text. But this is far from the case. In the preface, Kant says that his argument identifies a single supreme principle of morality. Yet the argument in the second section of the *Groundwork* features a sequence of formulas of the principle. So a question at the heart of the second section and *Groundwork* as a whole is about how the various formulas relate to each other and to the principle of morality. I call this the question of the **formula relation**. Fortunately, Kant provides an answer at *G* 436. The passage stands as the conclusion of the analytic section of the book. Afterwards, Kant takes himself to have identified the principle of morality, specifically through his explanation of the formula relation. Two interpretive questions converge on a single passage and come to have the same answer: 1) what is Kant's identification of the supreme principle of morality? and 2) what is the formula relation?

It is in this passage, the peak of the *Groundwork*'s methodological arc (*G* 392), that Kant invokes complete determination. He says,

> The above three ways of representing the principle of morality are fundamentally only so many formulas of the selfsame law, one of which of itself unites the other two within it [*deren die eine die anderen zwey von selbst in sich vereinigt*].[2] However, there is yet a dissimilarity among them, which is indeed subjectively rather than objectively practical, namely to bring an idea of reason closer to intuition (according to a certain analogy) and thereby to feeling.
>
> All maxims have, namely,
> 1. A form, which consists in universality; and in this respect the formula of the moral imperative is expressed thus: maxims must be so chosen as if they were to hold as universal laws of nature.
> 2. A matter, viz., an end; and here the formula says that a rational being, inasmuch as he is by his very nature an end, and hence an end in himself, must serve in every maxim as a condition limiting all merely relative and arbitrary ends.
> 3. A complete determination of all maxims by the formula that all maxims proceeding from his own legislation ought to harmonize with a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature. (*G* 436)

I call this Kant's 'remark' on the formula relation.[3] The first line signals Kant's interest in the individuation of the law: the multiple formulas are related to the single moral law as representations. Further, the relation among the formulas involves combination. One of the formulas both represents the single moral law and, as he says, contains a combination of the other two formulas. The next line, in addition to motivating the inclusion of multiple formulas in the preceding argument, mentions an "idea of reason." What Kant means by these lines is

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[2] The translation of this phrase varies, and much depends on it. I discuss some of the implications in the Introduction. An earlier translation by Gregor reads, "any one of them [the ways of representing the principle] of itself unites the other two in it" (In *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge Edition). Timmerman's revised translation is an improvement because it avoids stating or implying that each formula unites the other two. Ellington's translation is informative but less literal: "one of them by itself contains a combination of the other two." *Vereinigt* is better translated as 'united', but I will at times speak of combination. In a sense, I believe Ellington gets closer to the spirit of the text.

[3] There is a second remark (or second part to the remark) that utilizes the categories of quantity. Kant says, "There is a progression here through the categories of the *unity* of the form of the will (its universality), the *plurality* of its matter (its objects, i.e., its ends), and the *totality* or completeness of its system of ends." I postpone my full discussion of this passage, but we should keep the parallels in mind.

disputed. But less attention is paid to the three numbered points that follow. It is natural and productive to read them as explanations of the preceding lines.

The first two points of the remark make use of Kant's pervasive hylomorphic language. While they are not my explicit focus, they provide structure, themes, and vocabulary for the discussion.[4] In my view, complete determination should not be seen as a surprising, superfluous, or anomalous inclusion in the remark. The term falls naturally within the hylomorphic context. To see why, we should begin by considering Kant's theory of matter and form.

A component of the formula relation is the supposed individuality and unity of the supreme moral principle, a proposition that represents the moral law.[5] How does individuality emerge out of the plurality of formulas and concepts?[6] The traditional individuating function of hylomorphism is seen more directly in Kant's theoretical philosophy. He describes cognition, like intuition, concept, or judgment, as a type of hylomorphic composite: following the Aristotelian tradition, matter and form cannot exist in a determinate way on their own but, in their combination, constitute an individual. The remark at *G* 436 shows that Kant takes the moral law to have the same general hylomorphic composition. By itself, the end of rational nature is

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[4] Hylomorphism is found throughout in the *Groundwork*, but in the remark, form and matter are foregrounded and assigned distinct roles in maxims. For more detailed accounts of Kant's hylomorphism see Chapter 1; Pollock, *Kant's Theory of Normativity*, ch. 5; Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 147-63.

[5] There is an instructive ambiguity between the principle of the moral law and the moral law itself. *Representation*/*representatum* ambiguity is common in Kant and can often be used to excavate layers of meaning in his texts. Kant's hylomorphism, it should be noted, is primarily applied to representation.

[6] Kant does not use the term *Individuum* often. When he does use it, it is in the conventional ontological sense, as found in the principle of thoroughgoing determination (A574/B602, A656/B684, 28:560), which I will consider below. An 'ideal' is also defined, in part, as an individual (A568/B596). In my broader usage, because Kant's hylomorphism is primarily transcendental, the individuals in question are representations or cognitions.

not a maxim. By itself, the form of universality has no content. A maxim or moral law, if it is individual, will have both matter and form.

The hylomorphic context also reveals the significance of Kant's 'determination' language. In the description of the methodological arc of the *Groundwork*, Kant says that the peak of the arc will be a "determination" of the supreme principle of morality (*G* 392). *G* 436 and the remark are, as I have suggested, the peak. It is unsurprising that the final point of the remark concerns determination. But there are deeper reasons for Kant's choice of language.

Kant uses 'determination' in a variety of ways. It can be ambiguous between a determining process/factor and the result of the process. In its most prominent use, the term has explicit hylomorphic meaning. A focused discussion of matter and form is the Amphiboly in the first *Critique*. There he says, "[matter and form] are two concepts that ground all other reflection, so inseparably are they bound up with every use of the understanding. The former signifies the determinable in general, the latter its determination" (A266/B322). The form, as the structuring component of a hylomorphic composite, may also be referred to as the 'determination'. Insofar as a thing is individual, it will be determined through or by its form. Kant also adapts the traditional claim that matter and form are inseparable, always united or found in combination. The result can also be referred to as a 'determination'. What it means to arrive at a determination of the moral principle is to show how the hylomorphic components combine in some individual entity. The entity will be a unity: its form will order or organize a plurality.

A natural question emerges: if determination is associated with form and the determinable with matter, why include a third point in the remark? It would seem that the first two formulas are all Kant would need for an identification of the moral principle. Because there is a long tradition among readers to focus only on form and matter as found in the first two

formulas, the question is one of my central motivations. But there is a distinction between, on the one hand, matter and form as constitutive components and, on the other, the individual in which a combination of the components is contained. Kant says explicitly at *G* 436 that the formula relation involves three formulas, not two. In the remark, we learn that the relation should be read as hylomorphic.

The hylomorphic framing sheds yet more light. Kant's picture of theoretical cognition includes layers of correlative types of cognition. Similar to traditional versions of hylomorphism, the layers are linked through matter/form relations. For Kant, a cognition can be an individual and unity that is part of a further plurality united by a higher form.[7] There will be two determinations/forms, with the hylomorphic composite on the lower layer serving as matter for the higher.

2. (matter) INDIVIDUAL_2 (form)
↑
1. (matter) INDIVIDUAL_1 (form)

Kant is utilizing the correlative structure of his hylomorphism in the remark. This explains the inclusion of three formulas, concepts, and points. The first two make up the first layer. The result of the first matter/form combination, while a determinate individual, remains determinable in another way. It can be a matter. There is a higher form that, along with the matter supplied by the lower level, determines a further individual.

How this works in the formula relation is a central task of this paper. But we can already make out what the higher form will be. Considering this point will also bring to the fore methodological commitments that inform my discussion. Kant frequently explains that the

[7] One can think about parallels to first potentiality, first actuality/second potentiality, and second actuality, as Aristotle discusses in *De Anima* 417a20.

ultimate form is *system*. It determines all other cognition, including subsystems. In the Architectonic of Pure Reason, he says, "Under the government of reason our cognitions cannot at all constitute a rhapsody but must constitute a system. [...] I understand by a system, however, the unity of the manifold cognitions under one idea. This is the rational concept of the form of a whole" (A832/B860). Unsurprisingly, the definition evokes both hylomorphism and individuation. All cognition is matter under the form of system. The single system of pure reason is **metaphysics** and includes both speculative and practical subsystems (29:945-6). The latter he calls the "metaphysics of morals," the stated destination of the transition in the second section of the *Groundwork* (*G* 392, A841/B869). Kant also routinely calls the form of system an 'idea', a technical term meaning a concept produced by reason to which no object of experience corresponds. The idea mentioned in the *G* 436 remark is an idea with the form of system, a concept that represents an individual containing all plurality. Before the peak at G 436, Kant is discussing the kingdom of ends and the systematicity of moral law. We can reasonably conclude that the idea of system has an important hylomorphic role in the identification of the principle of morality. There will be a system that is the single moral law in the sense that it orders and contains more granular or specific moral laws and their relations.[8] The kingdom of ends is associated with this system.

The mention of ideas shows that Kant has the regulative use of reason in mind. Ideas do not relate directly to objects but, as he says, regulate the use of the understanding (A509/B537, *Prol*. 4:350). Reason uses ideas to order and unify cognition, ultimately into a system. A complete metaphysics is an ideal of thought: a goal or maximum we approach but never reach.

[8] Some scholars use the distinction between 'Moral Law' and 'moral laws'. See Kleingeld and Willaschek, "Autonomy Without Paradox."

The discussion of the regulative use of reason in the appendix to the Dialectic is notoriously difficult, and I do not intend to settle debates, but some of the preceding features of Kant's hylomorphism aid us in seeing how and why ideas are important. Reason strives to bring about systematicity in cognition. This means that the form of system, as an idea of a whole, determines the relations among individual cognitions. Further, the system itself is a hylomorphic composite. Kant stresses the importance of philosophy as one system of cognition: "the legislation of human reason (philosophy) has two objects, nature and freedom, and thus contains the natural law as well as the moral law, initially in two separate systems but ultimately in a single philosophical system" (A840/B868, cf. Bx). The individuality of the system, for Kant, serves a regulative role. We naturally and essentially conceive of individual cognitions, whether theoretical or practical, as parts of an organized and interconnected whole. While the more granular parts of the system are often the first considered by Kant, he eventually situates the parts within a system, showing how ideas may not directly constitute the parts but are necessary for the conception of the relations among them. In the first *Critique*, this is seen in the transition from intuitions and concepts to ideas in the Transcendental Dialectic.

Kant makes the same transition in practical philosophy. Consider an instructive methodological statement about system in the preface to the *Critique of Practical Reason*:

> When it is a matter of determining a particular faculty of the human soul as to its sources, its contents, and its limits, then, from the nature of human cognition, one can begin only with the *parts*, with an accurate and complete presentation of them (complete as far as is possible in the present situation of such elements as we have already acquired). But there is a second thing to be attended to, which is more philosophic and *architectonic*: namely, to grasp correctly the *idea of the whole* and from this idea to see all those parts in their mutual relation by means of their derivation from the concept of that whole in a pure rational faculty. This examination and guarantee is possible only through the most intimate acquaintance with the system; and those who find the first inquiry too irksome and hence do not think it worth their trouble to attain such an acquaintance cannot reach the second stage, namely the overview, which is a synthetic return to what had previously been given analytically; and it is not wonder that they find inconsistencies everywhere,

> although the gaps they suppose they find are not in the system itself but only in their own incoherent train of thought. (5:10)

An investigation into a type of cognition has two inquiries, the analytic and synthetic. We begin with a presentation of parts. The analysis lists or aggregates lower level individual cognitions. But we also consider the parts of a unified whole, the matter for a higher form (see *Prol*. 4:322). No investigation into cognition is finished without the top-down architectonic approach—a type of overview effect. (Contrary to Kant's claim, it is this holistic inquiry that readers in the dominant tradition of Kant scholarship have found irksome.) The two stages are conspicuous in the *Groundwork*. The text is explicitly constructed around them. In the analytic portion, Kant lists formulas of the moral law. Then, starting in the metaphysics of morals of G II and continuing into G III, Kant is concerned with the necessary contributions of ideas, and their associated regulative functions, for the system of moral philosophy. Any investigation into the single moral law requires the synthetic architectonic inquiry that unifies particular specific laws, like those considered in the examples that follow the Formula of Universal Law and Formula of Humanity. He is confident it will alleviate concerns about apparent inconsistencies. Morality, one might say, has an irreducible complexity.

While my discussion thus far should be seen as orientation and an outline of themes, I take the hylomorphic context of the remark to open interpretative avenues. I will pursue some now. Complete determination concerns both individuation and the idea of system. Far from being an offhand or insignificant inclusion in the remark, it is a concept well suited for explaining the formula relation. It also invites the reader to consider the commitments that underlie the metaphysics of morals. What is needed first is background on Kant's main treatment of complete determination.

2. The Ideal

In the Amphiboly, after linking form and determination, Kant provides a series of examples of the matter/form relation. One is of particular interest:

> Also, in respect to things in general, unbounded reality is regarded as the matter of all possibility, but its limitation (negation) as that form through which one thing is distinguished from another in accordance with transcendental concepts. The understanding, namely, demands first that something be given (at least in concept) in order to be able to determine it in a certain way. Hence in the concept of pure understanding matter precedes form. (A266/B322)[9]

Like the Amphiboly generally, the passage foreshadows the critique of speculative metaphysics in the Transcendental Dialectic. As we see from chapter three of the Dialectic, the Ideal of Pure Reason, the example of the matter/form relation provided in the Amphiboly is a reference to the concept of complete determination. The concept should be understood within a hylomorphic context.

Each of the headline ideas in the Transcendental Dialectic—associated with the soul, world, and God—are central to practical philosophy. In the B preface, Kant says that the Dialectic has both negative and positive utility. On the one hand, because reason has a tendency to overstep its bounds and posit the objective reality of ideas, it is worthwhile to diagnose errors of speculative metaphysics (Bxxv, cf. Aviii, Bxxix-xxx, *Prol*. 4:317). On the other hand, illusions in metaphysics are not nugatory and random. It is true that ideas have a use beyond experience, but instead of taking this fact to extend theoretical or speculative reason, it should be taken to indicate a different use of reason (see *KpV* 5:132-4). Practical philosophy utilizes

[9] See Kant's extended description of the matter/form relation in *Metaphysics Pölitz*/L_2 28:575. It uses the same determination language, includes an allusion to complete determination, and unlike the Amphiboly, suggests that hylomorphism is found in practical cognition. For a discussion, see Pollock, *Kant's Theory of Normativity*, ch. 5.

materials that also lead to insoluble metaphysical disputes. So the negative and positive utilities are complementary. Critique of speculative metaphysics "removes an obstacle" that prevented us from seeing the moral use of ideas. When Kant discusses ideas in his moral writing, including the *Groundwork*, he is carrying out the project prepared by the Transcendental Dialectic. As he says in the *Vienna Logic*, "The whole of morals rests on ideas" (906).

While the practical use of ideas is one of Kant's central motivations for critical philosophy, in the first *Critique* he intends to set the use aside (A329/B386). The Dialectic is primarily concerned with diagnosis of transcendental illusion. But the diagnosis also reveals the importance of regulative reason, a further positive use relevant to both the theoretical and practical sides of the system. Reason works on the products of the faculties to form a unified system of knowledge. A complete system would be one that not only specifies the relations among its parts but shows the parts as derivative of their relations within the more fundamental whole. There is a difference between the mere aggregation (a "rhapsody," as Kant calls it) of cognitions and their unification on the basis of rational principles. In the latter case, regulative reason utilizes the "form of a whole of cognition" to determine the place of each individual cognition. The form, he says, "precedes" the parts in the sense that reason must always already take a cognition to be a part of a system (A645/B673, A267/B324, cf. *Ref*. 5552). The cognitions are constituted as individuals by understanding—a lower hylomorphic layer. But a greater unity in which the manifold of cognitions are parts/matter is another task. This further individual, a complete system of cognition, is "only a **projected** unity" or "mere idea" (A647/B675). We cannot exhibit it in experience. Nevertheless, it is an essential guide for cognition, both theoretical and practical.

On what basis, according to Kant, do ideas unify cognitions into a system? Early in the

Dialectic, he describes the *ascending* function of reason. A cognition has a condition from which it is derived. Reason seeks the condition as an explanation and ground of the cognition. We instinctively seek explanation. Kant's example is the syllogism: a conclusion is conditioned, explained, or justified by its premises. It can be understood more fully in the broader context that supports it. But in his view, we also seek the conditions of premises, treating them as conclusions supported by further premises. And so on with more premises. The result is a chain or series of conditions and a rational drive towards its starting point.[10] Kant says, "if a cognition is regarded as conditioned, reason is necessitated to regard the series of conditions in an ascending line as completed and given in their totality" (A332/B389).[11] In other words, the ascending function of reason operates on an a priori principle according to which there is an ultimate, all-encompassing explanation of cognition. I both seek an explanation and take it to exist. Because it is a totality, it will be unconditioned; if it were grounded in a further condition, the totality would be a member of a series, not the series as a whole. For any cognition, we naturally seek its conditions and assume the full series of conditions as an unconditioned totality. The ideas that Kant considers in

[10] Reason's drive is extensive: "We have not only a faculty but also a drive to cultivate and to complete everything. So if things, stories, comedies, or the like appear to us to be deficient, then without fail we endeavor to bring it to an end; one is annoyed that the thing is not whole. This presupposes a faculty for making an idea of the whole and for comparing objects with the idea of the whole" (*Metaphysik L_1* 28:237).

[11] Kant is referencing two principles he provides at A307-8/B364-5. The literature often follows Grier in labeling them P1 and P2 (*Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*, ch. 4). The first is a subjective logical principle that directs reason to "find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions." It states that reason demands and seeks an unconditioned totality. As is often the case for Kant, a logical principle assumes a synthetic principle. P2 states that if a conditioned cognition is given, the unconditioned totality of cognition is given. More than seeking the unconditioned, reason assumes the unconditioned as an object. The transcendental illusion diagnosed in the Dialectic is the inference that the unconditioned totality exists as an object for theoretical reason (see 29:805).

the Dialectic are examples of these totalities. It becomes evident that ideas are concepts to which no experience is adequate when they are seen as concepts of an "*absolute totality of all possible experience*" (emphasis original, *Prol*. 328).

The three ideas treated in the Dialectic, though wholes of their own, also comprise a system: first, the idea of the soul, the unity of the thinking subject, and second, the idea of the world, the unity of objects in appearance, are unified in the third idea, the unconditioned totality of "**all objects of thought** in general" (A334/B391).[12] The final idea is the ultimate totality, unifying the other two. We have the idea of a subject from which the concepts and reality of all objects, whether subjects themselves or not, are derived. Speculative reason infers from this idea the existence of a personified highest intelligence. God is a central character in Kant's practical philosophy, but the third idea in the Dialectic offers more with regard to the regulative function of the idea.

The Ideal of Pure Reason, the chapter of the Dialectic dedicated to the idea of the possibility of all objects of thought, is best known for the criticism of three arguments for the

[12] In a footnote at A337/B395, Kant distinguishes analytic and synthetic orders of the ideas. He says that the Dialectic, like the first two sections of the *Groundwork*, is analytic. He is describing his method, not the status of judgments (see again *KpV* 5:10). The Dialectic will begin with what is more immediately given and ascend to conditions under which the starting points are possible (see *Prol*. 277n). Accordingly, the order will be 1) soul, 2) world, 3) God. (He says in the *Prolegomena* that the first two ideas start from experience (4:348).) The synthetic order, however, begins with world (connected with freedom) and combines it with God to produce immorality (soul) as a conclusion. He uses the language of combination: morals and theology combine in religion (cf. 29:628). Likewise, the *Groundwork* begins with common moral cognition or popular moral philosophy and finds their conditions ultimately in the idea of a systematic whole of moral law. The synthetic *G* III is a treatment of autonomy and freedom. The full synthetic order of ideas can be found in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, particularly its Dialectic (5:122-7). The *Opus Postumum*, which emphasizes the unity of ideas in a system, appears to combine God and the world in the free being (see What is Transcendental Philosophy? 21:9 ff.).

existence of God in its later sections. But Kant begins with the positive utility of the idea. My focus is section two, called The Transcendental Ideal. There he argues that our conception of the possibility of any thing assumes a particular completely determined concept, which he calls the ideal of pure reason.[13] An ideal, in this context, is an idea *in individuo*, or an individual thing determined only by the idea (A568/B596). This ideal will later be equated with God (A580/B608, A586/B614, cf. *KU* 5:475). The argument is intricate, compressed, and neglected. This in part explains why readers of the *Groundwork* frequently avoid the third point of the *G* 436 remark. I provide a detailed reading of the section in Chapter 2. In what follows, I present the reading in a way that equips me for discussing the kingdom of ends and *G* 436. It is this task that has not been attempted in any extensive or thorough way.

Kant begins the section with two principles. The first he calls the *principle of determinability*: for every **concept**, "with regard to what is not contained in it [...], of every two contradictorily opposed predicates only one can apply to it [*ihm zukommen könne*]" (A571/B599). The second is the *principle of thoroughgoing determination* (*durchgängigen Bestimmung*): for every **thing**, "among **all possible** predicates of **things**, insofar as they are compared with their opposites, one must apply to it [*eines zukommen muß*]" (A571/B599). Kant is using the principles to set up a familiar move: he will combine them to reveal a concept in

[13] A compact statement of Kant's goal for the section is found in *What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?* He says, "Since reason needs to presuppose reality as given for the possibility of all things, and considers the differences between things only as limitations arising through the negations attaching to them, it sees itself necessitated to take as a ground one single possibility, namely that of an unlimited being, to consider it as original and all others derived. Since also the thoroughgoing possibility of every thing must be encountered within existence as a whole—or at least since this is the only way in which the principle of thoroughgoing determination makes it possible for our reason to distinguish between the possible and the actual—we find a subjective ground of necessity, i.e. a need in our reason itself to take the existence of a most real (highest) being as the ground of all possibility" (8:138).

which they are grounded—in this case, a concept of reality that grounds possibility. This makes sense within the broader strategy of the Dialectic. But to see how the move works in this instance, it is best to consider the principles on their own terms.

Kant has a version of the *scala praedicamentalis*, a Transcendental Tree of Porphyry, in which concepts are arranged from most abstract to most specific. For Kant, we can conceive of the *scala* through the contrasting rational processes of dissecting concepts into parts and aggregating them into further wholes (the distinction is found at *JL* §15, 99). The former might be called an **abstraction procedure**. The parts of a concept, called 'marks', are more abstract concepts. For example, the concept philodendron is supposed by Kant to contain concepts like plant and organism. If the abstraction procedure were pursued to its end, we would find a highest concept, one with no parts and *under* which all other concepts are found. Kant calls the contrasting procedure "logical determination." To avoid confusing the rational process with the sense of determination meaning predicate, I use the term **determination procedure**. We determine a concept when we coordinate concepts, generating narrower or more fine-grained concepts. The concept potted philodendron is a lower concept than either potted or philodendron. We can conceive, but never actually reach (*JL* 59, 99), an end of the determination procedure: a concept to which no further marks can be added. This would be the bottom of the *scala*, a lowest species. In the *Logic*, Kant calls such a concept "*conceptus omnimode determinatus*." It is a maximally specific concept: one that functions to represent only a single specific individual thing.

Kant's *scala praedicamentalis* is a series. The ascending function of reason might seem to align with the image of ascending the *scala*. But for Kant, the abstraction procedure does not satisfy reason. The highest, most abstract concept is not the unconditioned totality of concepts.

As he says, the other concepts on the *scala* are contained *under* the highest concept but are not contained *in* it (*JL* 9:98, cf. A654/B682). The highest concept is yet another member of the series. In its ascent, reason considers the series itself as a totality. The idea of this unconditioned totality of concepts is what Kant pursues in the Ideal of Pure Reason.

Now we can detect the motivations behind the two principles. For Kant, the unconditioned totality that grounds the possibility of all concepts is an individual of some sort. In the principle of thoroughgoing determination, Kant says what it means to be a real individual.[14] But the unconditioned totality is represented by an idea. So we should expect Kant to switch back to concepts, or to speak in a way that applies to both. After stating the two principles, this is what he does. He combines the formal claim about concepts in the first principle with the material claim about things in the second to uncover the idea of a completely determined thing, a concept that functions to represent one specific real individual.

The opening move of the section works as follows. Because the principle of determinability is merely formal, its application assumes some predicates. A contradictory opposition between predicates requires there to be predicates in the first place. The principle of thoroughgoing determination says that the possibility of individual things assumes "the sum total of all predicates of things in general" (A572/B600). The thoroughgoing determination of a thing involves the application of predicates to the thing. As a result, the second principle, according to Kant, "represents every thing as deriving its own possibility from the share it has in that whole of possibility," namely, the set of predicates as matter. Importantly, Kant thinks that conceiving of a thing as thoroughgoingly determined also means conceiving of its predicates as possible

[14] Kant is not saying that the principle is constitutive of the experience of individual things or that it is through the principle that we distinguish things in experience. Kant believes, in opposition to Leibniz, that intuition is necessary for discernibility (A264/B319, A272/B328).

representations. The determination procedure is a rational process of which we are plainly capable. And if a thing is thoroughgoingly determined, Kant thinks we can be assured that a representation of all its properties, paired with their contradictory opposites, would amount to all possible predicates. No predicates would be lacking. If the determination procedure exhausted all possible predicate pairs, the result would be the complete concept of an individual thing (*vollständigen Begriff von einem Dinge*). Complete determination, for Kant, describes this special type of concept.[15]

After the opening move of the Ideal, he says that the idea of the sum total of possible predicates "refines itself" into "the concept of an individual object that is thoroughly determined." This concept is the **ideal** of pure reason (A574/B602). For Kant, it is the unconditioned totality that grounds all thought about things. He mentions refinement because if the unconditioned totality is an individual, it is completely or thoroughgoingly determined. Refinement should be understood through Kant's theory of reality. In describing the ideal of pure reason, he also uses the terms *omnitudo realitatis* and *ens realissimum*.[16] The idea of all possibility is grounded in the idea of all reality. At bottom, the idea represents the single source of reality, the "entire storehouse of material," for possible concepts and things. This is taken to

[15] I use a distinction between thoroughgoing determination and complete determination to highlight Kant's awareness and use of the concept/thing distinction. His language is careful. In the context of the Ideal, a 'determination' is a predicate. The principles also reveal that 'predicate' is being used in two senses. First, in saying that a predicate can be applied to a *concept*, Kant means that the predicate is itself a concept. This is the **logical** sense of predicate/determination. Second, insofar as a predicate applies to a *thing*, it is a property (the **real** sense). Predicates are the conditions of all objects of thought: concepts we might use and objects they might represent.

[16] I will not take pains to distinguish these concepts (I discuss them in Chapter 2). Strictly speaking, the *ens realissimum* is the ideal (called both the "ideal of pure reason" (A574/B602) and the "transcendental ideal" (A576/B604)) determined by the idea, the *omnitudo realitatis*.

mean that the *ens realissimum* need not contain every token property, but it must contain the reality from which all properties are derived. Refinement is the process of tracing these derivations back to a source. It is through this process that the ideal, the *ens realissimum*, can be regarded as real.

Refinement happens in two ways. Kant associates them with the categories of negation and limitation. First, negations are a lack of reality and are thereby derivative of the reality they oppose (A574/B602, 28:559-60). Philodendron is more fundamental than non-philodendron. So if the ideal of pure reason is the ground source of things and concepts, it will contain the reality opposite negations. This makes the ideal logically possible. The second component of refinement shows Kant's interest in types of opposition beyond contradiction—namely, absolute real possibility (roughly, what is now called metaphysical possibility). He has in mind 'real repugnance' (*Realrepugnanz*), a brute metaphysical incompatibility in which there is no formal contradiction. For instance, a real thing in nature cannot be both a philodendron and a thunderstorm, even though a concept that includes both predicates need not be logically impossible. There must be *real harmony* among the positive predicates. In places, Kant discusses these relations among predicates in terms of limitation (A576/B604, 28:1014, 28:1021). Full refinement includes **unlimitation**: removing negations contained in logically positive predicates and the selection of maximal versions of gradable predicates. In his lectures on theology, Kant calls these two components of unlimitation *via negationis* and *via eminentiae*, respectively (28:1021-3). In general, refinement traces the content of all predicates to a set of basic, maximal, and fundamental concepts.

Kant ends the section by considering why the ideal is natural and unavoidable. He references his hylomorphic theory of empirical cognition from the Transcendental Analytic. The

experience of objects invokes a priori forms, but the matter, "reality in appearance (corresponding to sensation)," must be given. Both hylomorphic components are necessary for cognition. Then he says,

> [B]ecause that which constitutes the thing itself (in appearance), namely the real, has to be given, without which it could not be thought at all, but that in which the real in all appearances is given is the one all-encompassing experience, the material for the possibility of all objects of sense has to be presupposed as given in one sum total; and all the possibility of empirical objects, their difference from one another and their thoroughgoing determination, can rest only on the limitation of this sum total. (A581-2/B609-10)

In this enigmatic statement, Kant is suggesting that not only does experience require matter given in sensation, but all matter as a sum total is given for the one experience. With his citation of the Analytic, he is likely alluding to the A Deduction: "There is only **one** experience, in which all perceptions are represented as in thoroughgoing and lawlike connection, just as there is only one space and time, in which all forms of appearance and all relation of being and non-being take place. If one speaks of different experiences, they are only so many perceptions insofar as they belong to one and the same universal experience" (A110, cf. *Prol*. 4:349, 21:15).[17] Experiences, as individual cognitions, are the synthesis of perceptions, their unification through forms. I might have the experience of seeing the philodendron on my desk. But Kant is aware that cognition of the world does not consist of discrete, isolated experiences. An experience stands in systematic connection to others under the form of all experience. The space the plant and desk occupy is represented as a part of the whole structure of space. The objects persist through time and relate to other objects in experience. In other words, the experiences are conditioned and regarded as members of a series. For Kant, the totality of relations among experiences and perceptions demands that we conceive of a single complete experience as a type of ideal. The intelligibility

[17] Allison notices the connection in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 406.

of experience requires an account of the interconnection and interdependence of particular experience, ultimately in a single all-encompassing whole. What is typically called an experience, like looking at a plant or listening to a song, is part of this greater unity. The 'one experience' is not an aggregation but a necessary regulative idea that structures the relations among different experiences.

In the Analytic, Kant is principally interested in the forms of experience. The other part of the hylomorphic composite is picked up again in the Ideal. If there is one experience of all objects in synthetic unity, then the matter of all the objects is given in a unity. Moreover, for the experience to be individual and total ("only one"), the matter is given as a "sum total" that supplies all the content for experience. In the Ideal, Kant is identifying the matter as the *ens realissimum*. Objects are represented by the share of the reality they selectively borrow, so to speak, from the *ens realissimum*. This is the ideal source of all possible concepts. The unrefinement and application to objects would consist of the selective negation and limitation of the ideal. Kant is more straightforward in the *Lectures*: "For when I entirely remove some realities from the concept of an *ens realissimum*, there arise negations which give me the concept of an *ens partim reale*, *partim negativum* when I combine them with the remaining realities; hence the concepts of an *ens realissimum* contains simultaneously the ground for every other concept" (28:1014). The individuality of things and their differences from each other are explained through their respective shares of the reality supplied by the single underlying ideal.

We can subject the one experience to a hylomorphic analysis that reveals Kant's two important claims. First, the ultimate form of the regulative idea is system. This is owed to the idea of an unconditioned totality. The form will include numerous other forms, like negations and limitations, but their use is organized within the system. Second, insofar as the idea is of an

all-encompassing experience, the matter will be all of reality given as a whole. When we experience objects or think about their possibility, we presuppose a single source of reality in which they are grounded. Distinction, difference, or variety emerges from limiting the "one sum total."

With this picture, we return to Kant's example of the hylomorphic relation in the Amphiboly. The passage is a useful lens for summarizing his view. We treat "unbounded reality" as the matter of possibility and distinguish things from each other by limiting the matter through various forms. The understanding demands, as a regulative principle, that the matter be given first. This matter, we now know, is the *ens realissimum*. It is not instances of sensation but the systematic source of the reality of all sensation. To serve this regulative function, Kant believes that the concept is completely determined and contains the fundamental predicates that together represent all of reality. He has in mind the unconditioned systematicity of cognition. The idea of system is essential for the full treatment of any subject, even though we begin with the granular, more immediate parts. The system, in both form and matter, was implicit in philosophizing all along. This core lesson from the Transcendental Dialectic can be applied to the practical parts of Kant's system as well.

3. The Kingdom

Kant sees a variety of implications for practical philosophy in his discussion of the *ens realissimum*. The Dialectic, after all, is fundamentally motivated by practical concerns. The idea is not merely equated with the idea of God but also serves as the regulative form of the ultimate system, the practical and theoretical together, and is taken by reason to supply positive content for theoretical cognition. In the *Prolegomena*, Kant says that this form of the idea is essential for morals:

> But although an absolute totality of experience is not possible, nonetheless the idea of a totality of cognition according to principles in general is what alone can provide it with a distinct kind of unity, namely that of a system, without which unity our cognition is nothing but piecework and cannot be used for the highest end (which is always the system of ends); and I mean here not only the practical use of reason, but also the highest end of its speculative use. (349-50)

What might this system of ends be? How is the practical use of reason enabled by the form of system found in the Ideal of Pure Reason? What positive content does the ideal supply in the practical context? The *G* 436 remark, especially its reference to complete determination, aids in appreciating the full significance of ideas and regulative reason in the *Groundwork* and practical philosophy generally.

My aim is a reading of the third point of the remark. It says,

> For all maxims have [... 3.] *a complete determination* of all maxims by that formula, namely: that all maxims from one's own legislation ought to harmonize into a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature.

The hylomorphic context may show that a reference to complete determination is apt, but it does not show how the reference is meant to work. There are a host of issues that require attention. For instance, the complete determination in this case is one of maxims. Yet it is awkward to say that all maxims have a complete determination of all maxims ("*Alle Maximen haben* [...] *eine vollständige Bestimmung aller Maximen*"). What could this mean? Next comes a formula, according to which the maxims are completely determined together. So the individuation theme remains. The formula states that my maxims ought to harmonize with a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature. Four details of this formula are worth flagging. First, it is a formula that I can use in my own legislation. Second, Kant invokes a concept of harmony. Third, the kingdom of ends is said to be possible. Fourth, mirroring the language of the Formula of Universal Law of Nature (*G* 421), the kingdom of ends is treated as a kingdom of nature. The footnote to the third point of the remark says that the idea of nature as a kingdom of ends can be

considered as either theoretical or practical. In the former case, it guides cognition about what exists. In the latter, the idea aids in bringing about what *ought* to exist. That is to say, the idea is practically regulative. He calls it a "*practische Idee*." He specifies in the *Lectures on Ethics*, "A practical idea is a moral perfection whose object can never be adequately given in experience" (29:605). It is worth also recalling that, according to the second remark, there is "the *allness* or totality of the system" of ends (*G* 436). Since these familiar terms correspond to the claims about the kingdom of ends, they are helpful in understanding the first remark. The kingdom is a totality and system of ends. The question is how these parts of the third point of the remark work together.

3.1. Stepping into Metaphysics

The parts are found in the pages leading up the *G* 436. My strategy is to read these pages with an eye towards the remark. If *G* 436 is Kant's explicit statement of the formula relation, we should expect to find details and themes from the remark in the discussion of the kingdom of ends. To support this strategy, we recall that in *G* II, Kant is transitioning into the *metaphysics* of morals. He makes a programmatic comment about what this will entail early in the section. The move is "from a popular philosophy—that goes no further than it can get by groping by means of examples—to metaphysics (which does not let itself be held back any further by anything empirical and, as it must survey the totality of rational cognition of this kind, perhaps goes up to ideas, where even examples desert us" (*G* 412). For the analytic method of *G* II, in which we begin with what is more immediate, even what is given in experience, our more ordinary conception of morality is about relations among human beings in everyday situations. The examples that appear alongside the first two formulas are useful, from the metaphysical point of view, to the extent that they uncover features of the practical faculty and formula relation. But

ultimately, moral philosophy requires a treatment of systematic totality. The further Kant transitions into metaphysics, the more we should expect to encounter concepts associated with his theory of reason. How ideas arise in the *G* II transition will help make sense of a complete determination of maxims. We can then consider how else Kant's conception of complete determination illuminates the moral law.

A fitting place to start is the Formula of Humanity. The phrasing is instructive: "So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (*G* 429). Humanity is the end of absolute worth that grounds the moral law. In the formula, Kant mentions humanity in general. It is something *in* me as a rational being (cf. 27:543, *Frag*. 7199, 19:272). But it is also something that can be found in others. My immediate moral experience consists of interactions among myself and different beings. But Kant wants to evaluate these interactions in terms of a single shared property. This property, "humanity" or "rational nature," is the a priori objective end of absolute worth (*G* 430-1). In the passage preceding the formula, we find that, on my reading, insofar as I represent my rational nature as an end in itself, I would do the same with regard to any other rational being (4:429, cf. *KpV* 5:87, *MM* 6:462). When I interact with someone else, I'm interacting with what is valuable in myself. I must respect you as an end, and vice versa. By doing so, we both respect the same humanity.

In the discussion of the second formula, Kant is interested in the interaction among rational beings. According to the moral law, in conceiving of interactions, the ends of others become 'limiting conditions' on my actions. We might take this phrase in a number of ways. Among them, Kant means that explanations of the maxims I adopt ought to include a recognition of the worth of all other relevant rational beings. Otherwise I am treating them merely as a

means. Included in the details of my maxim is an appreciation of the ends of others, the grounds of which is the same humanity I find in myself. If my maxim is moral, it must respect humanity, wherever it is found.

We can use familiar terms to describe the picture. According to Kant, our conception of humanity includes a series or plurality of conditions. For any action, I seek the conditions that explain its moral worth. The conditions will be others' ends. This language is found explicitly in the second point of the *G* 436 remark. There are numerous rational beings worthy of respect as ends in themselves. The other rational beings are ends in virtue of their capacity for respecting the ends of yet others. The moral world, then, is a series of ends explained by the ends of others, a community of individuals. Reason naturally extends to consider every rational being. A full explanation of the possible moral worth of any individual maxim that I might adopt would include all these conditions. Ignoring any of them would be tantamount to ignoring the dignity of a rational being. And since their rationality and humanity is the same as mine, the result is incoherence. I cannot treat my rational nature as an end in itself but fail to do the same with regard to the rational nature of another.

Besides putting forward the popular exhortation to respect the dignity of others, in the Formula of Humanity we find 1) a distinction between humanity and the instantiation of humanity in numerous possible rational beings and 2) with respect to the latter, a series of every rational being conditioning the actions of others. These are topics for a metaphysics of morals: Kant is interested in 1) a whole in which individual rational beings are parts or in which they participate and 2) an unconditioned condition of the series of rational beings. The unconditioned condition, given Kant's theory of reason, will be a whole in which the series of conditions are parts. It will explain the relations among possible rational beings with a single shared humanity

or rational nature.

The third formula addresses these issues. It is first introduced at *G* 431. Kant says,

> For the ground of all practical legislation lies *objectively in the rule* and the form of universality, which (according to the first principle) makes it capable of being a law (or perhaps a law of nature), *subjectively*, however, *in the end*; the subject of all ends, however, is every rational being, as an end in itself (according to the second principle): from this now follows the third practical principle of the will, as the supreme condition of its harmony with universal practical reason, the idea *of the will of every rational being as a universally legislating will*. (emphasis original, *G* 431)

The idea of system that was implicitly organizing our thinking about examples, particularly their a priori elements, will now receive explicit treatment. Several pages earlier, Kant describes his transition towards the Formula of Humanity as a "step [...] into metaphysics" (*G* 426). The use of examples during his discussion of the formula signals that one foot remains in popular philosophy. Now, with the introduction of an idea, both feet are firmly in metaphysics. No more helpful yet restricting examples. However, we will be able to see how Kant's theory of reason is operating in the *Groundwork*, driving the argument to its conclusion.

The statement of the third formula has two components. First, Kant says he is providing "the supreme condition" of the "harmony" of the will with practical reason. The second is "the idea *of a will of every rational being as a universally legislating will*." Let us begin with the second. By "every rational being" Kant means a series of beings—a plurality with undetermined relations among each other. These relations condition each member of the series. To be a condition, every rational being must legislate universal law and be an end in itself. On Kant's view, when there is such a series, reason naturally drives toward a starting point and posits an ultimate, all-encompassing explanation. It takes there to be a totality that underlies and

determines the relations among all the members of the series.[18] This totality is itself unconditioned. It is not a member of the series but the series considered as a unified whole. Because the whole determines the relations among the parts, it is not an aggregate or rhapsody. We do not begin with a discrete individual and then build outward from its more immediate relations. The relations presuppose a totality. The concept of such a totality is an idea. On this view, it makes sense for Kant to say in the first component of the formula that he is providing a "supreme condition." Ideas serve to represent the unconditioned condition and totality that supplies systematic unity for its parts. At this phase in the metaphysics of morals, he is noting that we have a particular idea. Whatever its specific features, it functions like other ideas in Kant's work. When I conceive of every rational being, I also conceive of the totality of rational beings.

By framing the *G* 431 passage through Kant's theory of reason, we learn how and why he transitions to a metaphysics of morals. The move is broadly similar to what is found in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For a full critique of the rational faculty, the discovery of constitutive features of cognition are eventually situated within a system that has regulative status. In the preface to the *Groundwork*, Kant says that ethics, a system of practical cognition, demands the same approach. After all, "there can be only one and the same reason, which must differ merely in its application" (*G* 391; *KpV* 5:89). Throughout *G* II, Kant takes himself to have uncovered constitutive features of the moral law. He reiterates them in the first two points of the *G* 436 remark. The moral law combines the hylomorphic components (i.e. the form of universality and

[18] In the terms of the Dialectic, I am claiming that P1 and P2 are motivating Kant's transition to the third formula of the moral principle. First, reason seeks an unconditioned totality (P1). Second, reason regards the unconditioned totality as given (P2). Kant mentions P2 in the concluding lines of *G* III (4:463).

the matter of ends in themselves) articulated in the first two formulas. But even in practical philosophy, regulative reason and system are indispensable. When Kant begins discussing ideas, we know, at least in broad terms, what goals and concerns he has in mind.

The *G* 431 passage, therefore, tracks the ascent of reason. The *G* II progression is a sequence of formulas, one following another in a particular order. From the perspective of the *Groundwork* arc, the formula at *G* 431 comes after the other two not because it is a conclusion but because it is the final part in the identification of the supreme principle of morality. It is Kant's preferred method to have the ideas follow other types of concepts. The *Groundwork* arc mirrors the natural arc of reason. The destination is an idea, an unconditioned totality.

3.2. A General Will

We have a sense of why Kant introduces an idea at the outset of the *Groundwork*'s metaphysics of morals. In outline, I can conceive of myself as a rational being. When I conceive of others, I come to see my actions as conditioned by their rational nature. To explain the conditioning relations, reason regards the series of conditions as complete and given in totality. The totality is an idea of the unconditioned or "supreme" condition in which all the parts and their relations are contained and explained. The move is anticipated in Kant's phrasing of the Formula of Humanity: a single humanity grounds the worth of any individual rational being and makes their moral relations or interactions possible. Before turning to the concept of system, I will reposition my account by emphasizing what is distinctive about it.

According to many commentators, at around *G* 431, Kant transitions from morals to politics.[19] It is true that Kant's language in the metaphysics of morals—where he centers the

[19] It is the only view voiced in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on Kant's moral philosophy. As Flikschuh notes, this tendency among readers is likely due to the influence of

concepts of autonomy and kingdom of ends—has political undertones. And judging from the history of moral and political theory, such a transition would be routine. Where two or three autonomous wills gather, there is politics. If one is inclined to read the later portions of the metaphysics of morals in the *Groundwork* as an architectonic bridge between Kant's moral and political theory, a collective in which the ends of the members are deliberated in a process of co-legislation and mutual respect gives rise to a type of collective will. The *Groundwork* can be read as an anticipation of the *Doctrine of Right* passages in which Kant discusses the general will (*MM* 6:313-5). For example, "[O]nly the concurring and united will of all, insofar as each decides the same thing for all and all for each, and so only the general united will of the people, can be legislative" (6:314).[20] On this reading, by sharing ends and reasons with each other, individuals realize autonomy in the community. The sense in which I self-legislate is through my capacity as a part of the body politic. I give the law to myself insofar as my private will aligns

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Rawls (though whether Rawls has a political reading of Kant's metaphysics of morals is difficult to say (see *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, 208-11)). Some examples of the view are Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, 23-4; Andrews Reath, "Legislating for a Realm of Ends" in *Agency and Autonomy*; William Nelson, "Kant's Formula of Humanity"; Thomas Hill, *Dignity and Practical Reason in Kant's Moral Theory*; and Lucas Thorpe, "Kant on the Relationship between Autonomy and Community". A different approach is Barbara Herman, "A Cosmopolitan Kingdom of Ends" in *Moral Literacy*. Nonsocial metaphysical readings are Daniel N. Robinson and Rom Harré, "The Demography of the Kingdom of Ends"; Katrin Flikschuh "Kant's Kingdom of Ends: Metaphysical, not Political"; Wood seems to oppose the political reading at *Kant's Ethical Thought*, 166 n. 12.

[20] I am not claiming that political interpreters find in *G* 431 Kant's endorsement or use of a general will. I introduce the concept as a contrast that highlights features of my reading. Kant's discussions of the will in both the Private Right and Public Right sections of the *Doctrine of Right* reveal his relation to Rousseau and Hobbes. And in *Religion within the Boundaries of Reason Alone*, Kant distinguishes between legislation in a political as opposed to moral community (*Rel*. 6:98-9). See Maus, Zur *Aufklärung der Demokratietheorie*, 148-158; Flikschuh, Katrin: "Elusive Unity: The General Will in Hobbes and Kant"; Macarena Marey, "The Ideal Character of the General Will and Popular Sovereignty in Kant"; and Patrick Riley, "Kant on the General Will."

with the general will. The ideal citizen is one who wills *as* the collective. When your ends are mine and vice versa, distinguishing characteristics or interests fall away and our end ultimately is the end of the general will.

The political reading has the noble motivation of responding to the criticism, nearly as old as the *Groundwork* itself, that Kant is providing nothing more than an 'empty formalism'.[21] The universalizability tests and decision procedures associated with the Formula of Universal Law—often taken to be either *the* Categorical Imperative or its prime formulation—appear unable to supply positive content for laws. Perhaps the political concerns of the metaphysics of morals bring Kant from formal abstractions back to the material ground we all actually stand on.

Yet, instead of solving a problem, the reading presents a dilemma. On the one hand, if Kant supplies a mere formalism that does not account for the positive content of the moral law, this would appear to be an indictment of his argument and position. But on the other, it should be plain that the incorporation of a political theory saddled with empirical assumptions (e.g. the existence of numerous interacting rational human beings whose wills have real content) would be an equally or more serious indictment. In the preface to the *Groundwork*, Kant says he intends to work out "a pure moral philosophy," one that is "completely cleansed of everything that might be in some way empirical and belongs to anthropology" (4:389). The admonishment is a ubiquitous Kantian refrain. In the preceding lines, he carefully distinguishes practical

[21] The objection and phrasing is found most famously in Hegel (*Philosophy of Right*, par. 135.), but a version of it can be found in Christian Garve. See the first part of "On the Common Saying" (8:278-89). See also Ping-cheung Lo, "A Critical Reevaluation of the Alleged 'Empty Formalism' of Kantian Ethics." For a different construal of the objection, see Samuel Kahn, "Can Positive Duties be Derived from Kant's Formula of Universal Law."

anthropology and metaphysics of morals (4:388).[22]

An understanding of the theory of reason assumed in the *Groundwork* is helpful in explaining the status of Kant's political sounding claims later in *G* II. From the perspective of the *Groundwork* arc, a pivot towards what is plausibly an anthropology, politics, or applied ethics after *G* 431 would display a breakdown in Kant's proposed structure for the argument and text. We do better to take the phrase 'metaphysics of morals' seriously. The issue is not the inclusion of an empirical claim *per se* but the reversal of the ground/consequence relation that structures *G* II. On the political reading, the third formula of the moral law and the concept of a Kingdom of Ends risk being grounded on the real existence of multiple rational beings. Kant is moving towards the ground, but this does not mean that the ground will be concrete. The ascent mirrors that of the first *Critique*, where the ideas considered in the Dialectic are not constitutive of experience but are still essential in their regulative grounding functions.

By contrasting Kant's picture with the traditional political one, and by keeping the dilemma in the foreground, we can see in more detail how his theory of reason is in use. I introduce the concept of the general will because it helps illustrate the innovation that the theory is meant to embody. Instead of taking the general will to emerge from a contract among interacting individuals in a historical or hypothetical state of nature, Kant posits the idea of a single universally legislating will as the condition that makes moral interactions among individuals possible and intelligible. In the moral context, instead of reifying the general will as

[22] As Wood says, "Kant conceives of a 'metaphysics of morals' as a system of moral principles, or even of moral *duties*, which would be entirely a priori, and which could be spelled out entirely independently of any empirical knowledge of human nature." "The Final Form of Kant's Practical Philosophy," 2. Katrin Flikschuh notices the dilemma in "Kant's Kingdom of Ends," 120-1.

something over and above the individuals, even as an ideal further will, Kant moves the possibility of willing universal and harmonious laws for humanity as a whole inside the individual will.[23] To legislate universal law, I conceive of myself as what I call an **ideal will**. I necessarily take my will, and the laws I legislate, to be part of a whole and, in that regard, legislate moral laws that any rational being could share. Only from such a standpoint are autonomy and morality possible.

On this view, the absolute worth of humanity in fact *precedes* and explains the relations among individuals. Since the third moral principle is about how I legislate universal law that has as its end humanity in general, Kant, in his search for grounds, leaves behind empirical assumptions about different rational beings and their ends. If I will a maxim that is special to me, one that includes in its end facts about my distinctive nature, it cannot be a universal moral law. The facts could only be known empirically and, as a result, cannot be the basis for universal and necessary moral principles. They would transform the principles into hypothetical imperatives—mere practical precepts, not moral laws. I would have what Kant calls a heteronomous (*G* 4:433, 441) or "pathologically affected" will (*CpR* 5:19). However, if the a priori end of absolute worth that grounds the law is humanity, a characteristic found in all rational beings, it is not important

[23] The internal/external language is drawn from the *Religion*: "Now if the community to be founded is to be a *juridical* one, the mass of people joining in a union must itself be the lawgiver (of constitutional laws) [...], and the universal law thus establishes an external legal constraint. If, however, the community is to be an *ethical* one, the people, as a people, cannot itself be regarded as legislator. For in such a community all the laws are exclusively designed to promote the *morality* of actions (which is something *internal*, and hence cannot be subject to public human laws)" (emphasis original, 6:98-9). On my reading, Kant is repurposing the contentious mereology involved in Rousseau's treatment of the general will. Along the lines of my claim that an ideal will makes moral interaction possible and intelligible, we can see further that it allows Kant to put reason at the center of politics. I take inspiration from O'Neill, "Reason and Politics in the Kantian Enterprise" in *Constructions of Reason*.

that I happen to will one law and you another.[24] To the extent that the maxims are also universal laws, there is nothing to make them distinctively mine. Our inclinations, differences, or perspectives do not enter into the maxims as determining grounds of action. The consistency or harmony of the laws does not require political associations and deliberation. Any law I will is one that you could will. The laws are ideally willed by individual wills that share or are in accord with a content that is always concerned with humanity as a whole. As our wills become better, and eventually **good** (*G* 393), their content becomes more similar, and eventually, ideally, the same. Kant makes the point at the beginning of the second *Critique*: "it is requisite to reason's lawgiving that it should need to presuppose only *itself*, because a rule is objectively and universally valid only when it holds without the contingent, subjective conditions that distinguish one rational being from another" (5:21).[25] Each will, with the same general capacity for practical reason, ideally converges on the same laws. Below I will say more about where the content of the will's maxims come from.

Through the part/whole relations suggested by an idea, Kant moves from a plurality of rational beings to the concept of an ideal will that legislates, in virtue of its rational capacity, for all wills. As I consider in more detail below, the theory of reason enables Kant to avoid an empty

[24] One can talk in this way to test the moral worth of maxims. Kant does so himself in the four examples that follow the Formula of Universal Law and Formula of Humanity. But testing procedures should be distinguished from the metaphysical identification of the moral law and its structure. On this point, see Chapter 1.

[25] I agree with Flikschuh when she says, "a self-legislating will can arrive at the idea of a kingdom of ends independently of (the will of) all other rational beings" ("Kant's Kingdom of Ends," 132). She eventually links the kingdom of ends with the ideal of the highest good (136-9). Allison does the same ("The Form and Matter of the Categorical Imperative," 163-8). In "On the Common Saying," Kant appears to identify the highest good with a practical ideal of pure reason (8:279-80). Though I generally avoid the term 'highest good' and hold off my discussion for another time, below I suggest how the two readings can be consistent.

formalism. The rational beings, whether empirical or an a priori possibility, constitute a series of conditions. An explanation of the consistency and harmony of maxims references the ends of other possible rational beings. Reason, in seeking the conditions, assumes a totality of rational beings as a whole, an unconditioned condition that explains and grounds the relations among its parts. In the metaphysics of morals, this totality serves as the content of maxims to which all wills ideally converge. To will universal laws that have humanity as their end, I cannot will from my distinct, empirically informed perspective. As Kant says, the human is "subject *only to his own*" legislation (4:432). If I am subject to laws that you will, external to me and as conditions on my will, I could not be autonomous. I must be a will that legislates laws for humanity, not for any particular human. Any other rational being would do the same. It is not that this claim leads to the idea of an ideal will, as may be the case in a political theory, but that the idea makes it possible for me to legislate mutually consistent and harmonious laws.[26]

Now we have a grasp on why Kant introduces ideas and what role they serve in the argument. But what does this single unified will do? What law does it legislate?

3.3 The System

After two pages on autonomy, Kant introduces the kingdom:

[26] One can discern parallels to Leibnizian pre-established harmony. After all, the kingdom of ends is an allusion to the kingdom of grace mentioned in the last sections of the *Monadology* (sec. 86-7). Kant is explicit about this in the *Lectures* (29:610-1; see Timmerman, *Kant's Groundwork*, 106; and Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, 166 n. 12). The parallels are worth considering because complete determination is inherited from Leibniz via Wolff. 'Harmony' also appears in important places later in *G* II. Kant recognizes that the purity of the moral law requires a lack of causal interaction among beings who nevertheless each legislate the same universal law internally. When each monad contains all the information in the universe, their actions are harmonious. If every human being willed from the perspective of the ideal will, each would will the same system of moral law internally. In the empirical world, while it would appear that causal interaction determines the harmony of people's maxims, in reality the harmony is established by the ideal will.

> The concept of every rational being that must consider itself as universally legislating through all the maxims of its will, so as to judge itself and its actions from this point of view, leads to a very fruitful concept attached to it, namely that of a kingdom of ends. (4:433)

He is establishing a link between two concepts. The first is the one I have been considering, the concept of a will that legislates universal law. The language emphasizes the regulative status of the concept. As a rational being, a person with humanity in me, I *consider myself* as legislating for humanity as a whole. I can only evaluate my maxims from *the point of view* of an autonomous ideal will. When I conceive of the end of the ideal will's maxims, i.e. humanity, I am led to a second concept: the kingdom of ends. It makes explicit that the single end of universal legislation is a whole with parts.

Kant's direct explication of the kingdom of ends is relatively brief. He continues,

> By a *kingdom*, however, I understand the systematic union of several rational beings through common laws [*durch gemeinschaftliche Gesetz*]. Now, since laws determine ends according to their universal validity, it is possible—if one abstracts from the personal differences among rational beings, and likewise from all content of their private ends—to conceive a whole of all ends (of rational beings as ends in themselves, as well as the ends of its own that each of them may set for itself) in systematic connection, i.e. a kingdom of ends, which is possible according to the above principles.
>
> For all rational beings stand under the *law* that each of them is to treat itself and all others *never merely as a means*, but always *at the same time as an end in itself*. But by this there arises a systematic union of rational beings through common objective laws, i.e. a kingdom, which—because what these laws have as their purpose is precisely the reference of these beings to one another, as ends and means—can be called a kingdom of ends (of course, only an ideal). (4:433)

Several aspects of the passage are straightforward. The kingdom is a system. As a system, it unifies parts. The parts of the kingdom are ends or rational beings. What unifies them is a set of shared laws. A system of laws determines a system of ends. The determination language and *G* 436 remark invite us to see that Kant's hylomorphism animates the passage.

An individual rational being can will maxims with the form of universality. According to

Kant, this capacity identifies the being as an end in itself, the matter of the moral law. Taken together, I can determine myself to act by willing laws that have the form of universality and the matter of rational nature. The autonomous will is a type of hylomorphic composite. However, as we have seen, the matter of the moral law is not my distinctive nature, known through "personal differences." If it were, I could not will universal laws that apply to everyone, since not everyone shares my traits. What is more, I would be determinable by other, external wills and thereby lose autonomy. I did not choose to have my distinctive traits through pure reason. So if they determine my actions, I am not free.

Kant finds a solution in the ascending function of reason and the correlative structure of his hylomorphism. When confronted with the series of rational beings conditioning each other, reason ascends to a whole that contains the members of the series within it. The existence of multiple rational beings remains empirical (like a series of causes or series of empirical concepts, such as plant or philodendron), but the claim is grounded in an essential a priori regulative concept. The concept in this case, an idea, has the form of system, a whole that determines the relations among its parts. The series of ends have "systematic connection." In hylomorphic terms, the parts are individuals, like you and me, but they are also matter for a higher form. A plurality of wills/ends unified under the form of system is the kingdom of ends.

The claim is abstract, but by emphasizing the theory of reason, the motivation for his introduction of the kingdom of ends comes into view. Embedded in the Formula of Humanity is the claim that the matter of the moral law is humanity in general, a single end of absolute worth. However, moral experience is about interaction and relation, whether within oneself (duties to self) or among different people (duties to others). While ultimately the end of the moral law is individuated, it must also permit plurality. The series of rational beings is not illusory. What this

means to Kant is that morality must be systematic (A811/B839). I begin, lower in the ascent, with my particular maxims and the recognition that they are conditioned by the worth of others. I seek to understand these relations. Reason pushes me further outward in search of an unconditioned explanation for the moral worth of a maxim. The drive requires me, as a rational being, to assume that such an unconditioned explanation is given. The parts themselves, as discrete individuals, cannot determine their relations to each other. To discover the moral relations between you and me, I regard the relation and all others as complete and given in totality. This is only possible on the assumption that a system grounds the relations and guides my thinking about them. The form of system *precedes* the parts, as Kant would say, in the sense that reason must always already take a moral maxim to be a part of a system.

Consequently, in introducing the kingdom, Kant specifies that humanity, the matter of the moral law, is not an undifferentiated glob of value, a position that would make the moral law all but useless in the lives of real human beings. The kingdom of ends is Kant's attempt to square the fact that the matter of the law is a totality with the further fact that morality is about interrelations and a series of conditions. The moral law accounts for the possibility of a multitude of rational beings. The conditions remain, though grounded in the regulative idea of a system as an essential guide for practical cognition.

3.3.1. Individuation

Always present in my discussion is the individuation theme. Thus far I have been assuming that the moral law has, in some sense, a single end. Kant believes there to be one moral law ("all rational beings stand under the *law*") and a single supreme principle of morality, the determination of which is the aim of the first two sections of the *Groundwork*. In the *Lectures on Ethics*, he says, "Where there are already many principles in ethics, there are certainly none, for

there can only be one true principle" (27:266). A plurality demands a unity. Why Kant believes this is subject to debate. My interest is more the formula relation, but there are several points to make about individuation of the moral law. They unfold into broader and more salient aspects of the kingdom of ends. I will end with the links between the kingdom of ends and the Ideal of Pure Reason from the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

First, as anticipated, hylomorphism is Kant's chosen mechanism for individuating and 'determining' the moral law (4:392, cf. *Frag*. 7204, 19:283). The long thread of hylomorphism in the *Groundwork* attests to Kant's commitments that 1) we seek system in practical philosophy and 2) there is a single moral law. He reminds us in the *G* 436 remark that the Formula of Universal Law and Formula of Humanity highlight the form and matter of the moral law. In the earlier pages of the *G* II transition, like the examples of duties following the statements of the formulas, the focus is the moral worth of the maxims willed by individual rational beings who happen to find themselves among other rational beings. Kant recognizes in the metaphysics of morals that a series of wills conditioning each other demands unity. In the next phase of the transition, a further form determines the plurality of wills and yields a further individuated entity. The moral law is a unity that contains a plurality in virtue of being a unified system. An individual, even a single moral law, contains a combination of matter and form.

The mechanical first point leads to a more practicable second point. We are now in a position to see what it looks like to legislate for humanity in general. If the matter of the law becomes unified into a whole, what I legislate from the perspective of an ideal will is a *systematic totality of moral law* that respects the ends of all possible rational beings. My particular maxim may concern false promising or charity, as specific examples, but in order to evaluate or understand the maxim as a possible universal law, I regard it as a part of a whole of

law. Of course, Kant is not saying that I in fact *do* legislate the entire system. The scope would make the act of willing impossible for finite human beings. Others have their own choices and ends. Kant's language repeatedly reminds the reader that we are in the domain of regulative reason. Several passages attest to this. When he considers the distinction between a member and head of the kingdom, Kant says, "a rational being must always consider itself as legislating in a kingdom of ends possible through freedom of the will" (4:434). Political readers see in the line a picture of rational beings legislating together. However, when I 'consider myself' as legislating in a kingdom, I see my laws not as my own distinctive contributions to something in which I partake only partially, but as one part of a system of laws that I legislate entirely. In fact, because the whole precedes and determines the parts, I cannot will any particular maxim without regarding it as part of the system.

A more illustrative line comes shortly after: "Morality thus consists in referring [*Beziehung*] all action to the legislation by which alone a kingdom of ends is possible. This legislation must, however, be found in every rational being itself, and be able to arise from its will" (4:434). The first sentence concerns a type of legislation that makes a kingdom of ends possible. I take this to be none other than the legislation done by an ideal will. It is a will of an individual that accommodates the unified ends of humanity under a system of laws. We 'refer' (*beziehen*) action in the sense of checking the possible inclusion of a maxim in an ideal will's legislation. In the second sentence, Kant says that any rational being can and must legislate in this way. The legislation is found in reason *itself*, internally as an act of self-determination, not from political collaboration between it and others (see *MM* 6:220). I refer my action to the legislation of an ideal will—a will that I regard as a model, guide, or yardstick for my own because its content is a single system of law (cf. 4:434, 29:604, 29:629).

Kant's reference to a "certain analogy" furthers the point. In the remark, he uses the phrase "kingdom of ends *as a kingdom of nature*" (*G* 436). The analogy is also found in the Formula of the Law of Nature: "*so act as if the maxim if your action were to become by your will a* **universal law of nature**" (4:421). Since I am reading the *Groundwork* through the lens of the final identification of the moral principle at *G* 436, I can point out one of Kant's motivations for the formula. The phrase "universal law of nature" appears in all four examples of duties (4:421-2). The two duties to self (the suicide and cultivating talents examples) include assessing the harmony less of particular universal laws and more of, as Kant says, "*eine Natur*." For instance, there is the question of whether the principle of self-love in the suicide example could become a universal law of nature. Kant answers, "one soon sees that *a nature* whose law it were to destroy life itself by means of the same sensation the function of which it is to impel towards the advancement of life, would contradict itself and would thus not subsist as a nature" (emphasis added, 4:422). The example of the imperfect duty to cultivate one's talents does not mention a contradiction, but the relevant phrasing is similar: "a nature could indeed subsist according to such a universal law [not to cultivate one's talents]" (4:423).

Kant's treatment of these examples is often seen as perplexing and tortured. A reason for confusion is that he is making use of an idea that only becomes explicit a dozen pages later. Implicit in the examples is the idea of "a nature," by which he means a systematic whole governed by natural laws. To test a maxim, and to will a universal law of nature, I treat the law as a part of a system of laws.[27] The consistency and harmony of the law, in some cases, requires checking for self-contradiction. But on the analogy, there are other types of disharmony and

[27] This receives emphasis in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (5:43, 70).

repugnance. Although Kant is not considering these issues at this stage in the *Groundwork*, he is making an intuitive point about the formal properties of the moral law. For some people, it might be easier to consider laws of nature as a system than laws of morality. But typical of a regulative concept is that, once it is uncovered in its full metaphysical significance, it is seen to have been guiding our thinking all along. Kant's identification of the moral principle makes explicit the role that system has in shaping features of popular moral philosophy, like universalization tests and decision procedures. Setting the fine details of the tests and examples aside, Kant's broader point is that, for the autonomous will to be subject only to its own law, it considers itself to will a system of laws as a (kingdom of) nature. Because consistency or harmony among laws is about relations among them, reason can only evaluate these relations on the assumption that the system of laws is given.

3.3.2. A Possibility Argument

The analogy between a kingdom of nature and a kingdom of ends presents a further issue. Kant's evaluation of maxims utilizes a theory of modality. When discussing examples, he uses terms like 'possibility', 'contradiction', 'conflict', 'subsist', 'consistent', and 'harmony'. In the third point of the remark, the formula says that my maxims "ought to harmonize into a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature" (cf. *KpV* 5:19) He says that the kingdom is "possible according to" principles (4:433). What theory of modality is Kant utilizing and how might it relate to the metaphysics in the first *Critique*?

Modality leads to a third point about the individuation of the moral law. Kant calls the kingdom an 'ideal' (cf. *G* 4:462). While an idea is a concept that "goes beyond the possibility of experience" (A320/B377, cf. *Prol* 4:328), an ideal is a concept of an individual determined by an idea (*KU* 232). He says in the *Lectures on Ethics*, "An ideal is the representation of a single

thing, in which we depict such an Idea to ourselves *in concreto*. [...] In the ideal we turn Ideas into a model" (29:605, cf. *Frag*. 892, 15:390). An ideal, in other words, is by definition a concept that necessarily represents an individual (A568/B596). We recall that, in the Ideal of Pure Reason from the first *Critique*, Kant grounds the possibility of any object in a particular completely determined concept. The concept represents the *ens realissimum*, an ideal that contains all reality. In that section, Kant seeks to uncover the ideal as a regulative concept by beginning with two principles, one about form, the other about matter. When combined, they lead us to consider the series of concepts as an unconditioned totality. Kant then moves to show that a particular completely determined concept, one that has 'refined itself', supplies the positive content for the *scala praedicamentalis*, all the concepts in the series.

It is plain that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the claims in the Ideal of Pure Reason and the *Groundwork* metaphysics of morals. Nevertheless, the shared language of idea/ideal, individuation, hylomorphism, regulative reason, and modality invite us to explore, cautiously and modestly, the interpretive utility of parallels between the passages. Given the importance of the *G* 436 remark, the reference to complete determination should alone be enough to send us to the Ideal. Because the Dialectic is fundamentally practical in orientation, I have already been applying Kant's general theory of reason. Now we can apply the Ideal of Pure Reason specifically.

Kant often uses 'determination' in a hylomorphic sense, even in practical philosophy. The *G* 436 remark reveals that the term can also mean a maxim of the moral law.[28] Above I conceived of maxims as a series of conditions, ends, or determinations. I have already tracked

[28] This is not Kant's typical language in the *Groundwork*, but it makes sense, since we learn in the second *Critique* that a moral maxim would contain "a general determination of the will" (5:19).

reason's ascent to the unconditioned totality. Guided by the Ideal, the question is now the grounds for the possibility of any maxim. The ideal determines relations among members of the series in a way that supplies their content and explains their possibility. That is, the ideal is an a priori concept that allows Kant to avoid an empty formalism.

The principle of determinability and the principle of thoroughgoing determination both display Kant's interest in modality. The former is described as "a merely logical principle" that concerns "nothing but the logical form" (A571/B599). It states that, for a concept to apply to a possible thing, its marks must be free of contradiction. The Formula of Universal Law has a parallel role (though I should not be interpreted as saying that the formula has *only* this role). Through highlighting formal features of the moral principle, we learn how certain maxims are impossible as laws. For example, a maxim of false promising necessarily contradicts itself. Generally, to be possible as a universal moral law, a maxim must not contradict itself. There cannot be a law that both obligates and prohibits the same particular action.

There are several versions of the contradiction relation, all of which Kant is capturing in his claim about the form of the moral law. First, when I attempt to universalize a maxim, I may find a contradiction internal to the law, like a concept with contradictory marks. I need only use the abstraction procedure to find a contradiction in a concept like potted unpotted philodendron. A comparable procedure can be used as a decision procedure for morality. If universalizing a maxim results in a contradiction, it is logically impossible for the maxim to be a universal law. Second, when I universalize a maxim, I may find that it contradicts a law that necessarily accompanies it. When the two laws are united in a single nature, using a type of determination procedure, we discover that the nature is logically impossible. Which Kant means in which

example is another topic.[29] What is straightforward is that if there is a moral law, it must be logically possible. Because this is a formal feature of the law, it makes sense for Kant to explore it during his treatment of the Formula of Universal Law.

A contradictory opposition between or within maxims requires there to be maxims in the

[29] One might map these types of contradiction onto Kant's distinction between perfect and imperfect duties. After the four examples, he says, "Some actions are such that their maxim cannot even be *thought* without contradiction as a universal law of nature; let alone that one could *will* that it *should* become such. In the case of others that inner impossibility is indeed not to be found, but it is still impossible to will that their maxim be elevated to the universality of a law of nature, because such a will would contradict itself" (4:424). It is a challenging passage in many respects. In the case of imperfect duties, the passage mentions a contradiction in willing that does not appear in Kant's preceding examples. The closest he comes is the charity example, in which the will would "conflict with itself [*würde sich selbst widerstreiten*]" (4:423). Not only do the examples, in their reliance on an analogy to nature, hint at a multiple types of possibility, but so does the perfect/imperfect passage. There are cases of maxims that lack 'inner impossibility' but are still impossible *in some other sense*. Nevertheless, Kant curiously goes on to say that the other type of possibility is still formal. When he discusses the perfect/imperfect distinction in other places, he does not say this. Consider a line from the *Lectures*: "Perfect duties are those whose opposite cannot become a universal law; and imperfect duties are those where the opposite is possible, but I cannot will that it become such a law" (29:610, cf. 27:578). The implication is more straightforward here that the former type of possibility is logical while the latter is another type. I have three thoughts on the issue. First, on a strictly textual basis, reading the perfect/imperfect duties passage closely reveals that, although the distinction is exhaustive, Kant says only that *some* maxims result in the contradictions he describes. There may be examples of perfect and imperfect duties that are not amenable to the type of formal/logical analysis he provides at this stage of the *Groundwork*. We need not conclude from the passage that *all* examples sort into the two camps as he describes them. Second, gigantic quantities of time, in both the literature and classrooms, have been spent attempting to find contradictions in all the examples. As a result, many readers feel themselves forced to conclude that Kant's proposed decision procedure is either a failure or irredeemably muddled. In my view, we are likely to find more value in the Formula of Universal Law pages if we pursue the prospect that Kant is interested in more than one type of possibility and, at this stage of the *Groundwork*, is highlighting only one. Finally, in other texts the types of possibility are often described in hylomorphic terms. Logical possibility is formal and contrasted with a material component of possibility. The Ideal of Pure Reason is a paradigm example (A573/B600, cf. 27:578). Given the *Groundwork* arc, Kant is yet to introduce the material component of the moral law, and its implications for modality, explicitly. When we look back at *G* II from the vantage of *G* 436, we see that while the Formula of Universal Law highlights the formal component of the law, the matter is still present.

first place. Yet it would seem that the various formulas of the Categorical Imperative cannot supply them. The source of positive content for the law has long confounded readers. The next principle in the Ideal signals a further, stronger type of possibility—one about the matter of concepts. Following the parallel, Kant has reasons to introduce further formulas of the moral law.

The principle of thoroughgoing determination "deals with the content and not merely the logical form" of predicates (A572/B600). Kant moves from form to matter. He emphasizes the material component of the law in the Formula of Humanity.[30] The paragraphs that preface the formula make the point that the moral law is grounded in rational nature as an end in itself (4:428). My will—i.e. my capacity to act on the basis of universal laws—establishes the existence of an end that has absolute worth. There are two conclusions to draw. First, as in the Ideal, the formal relations are grounded in, or only have application due to, the material that enters into the relations. There would be no moral law without the will; the moral law is *about* rational nature. Second, as in the Ideal, the second principle concerns an individuated entity. The single end in itself serves as the end of the moral law. What makes morality possible is a single shared characteristic in numerous possible beings. By the lights of the third formula, humanity is a whole that contains systematic interconnections and relations.

Once we recognize the two principles and their relation, we are led to several other concepts: 1) the completely determined concept of an individual thing (*vollständigen Begriff von einem Dinge*) (A572/B600); 2) the "material **of all possibility**" or "**sum total of all**

[30] In both the *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant tends to use 'material' or 'matter' in an empirical sense (e.g. *G* 4:427, *KpV* 5:21, *MM* 6:214, the major exception being *G* 436). As I argue in Chapter 1, this should not be taken to mean that the moral law lacks an a priori matter. See also Guyer, "The Form and Matter of the Categorical Imperative," 153.

possibility" referenced in a determination procedure (A573/B601); 3) the **ideal** of pure reason, a special completely determined concept that contains all reality. We saw that Kant moves from 'all possibility' to 'all reality' via refinement (*läuterung*) (A573-4/B601-2). The ideal is meant to ground not only logical possibility but also **absolute real possibility**. The latter concerns the real harmony among predicates. Refinement, then, seeks the real possibility of the ideal.

Because the reference to complete determination is found in a pivotal passage, and also because the unity of reason, the possibility of the moral law, the source of its positive content, and its individuation are enduring and central questions of Kant interpretation, I suggest that it is productive to interpolate a practical possibility argument on Kant's behalf. While we are inevitably forced to take some steps beyond the *Groundwork* text, there is evidence of the necessity for such an argument in other texts. Kant writes in "On the Common Saying," "It is not as if the universal concept of duty first gets 'support and stability' only on the presupposition of both [belief in a moral ruler of the world and in a future life], that is, gets a sure basis and the requisite strength of an *incentive*, but that that only in that ideal of pure reason does it also get an *object*" (8:279). The reference to the ideal of pure reason in a practical context is striking. Kant states that the third idea he considers in the first *Critique* is, like the other two, intimately tied to his moral philosophy. The ideal is also presupposed as the object of moral law.[31] With Kant's aims in the *Groundwork*, it would not make sense for him to divert the text into a possibility

[31] We also take heart from a line in the second *Critique*: "every step one takes with pure reason, even in the practical field where one does not take subtle speculation into consideration, nevertheless fits with all the moments of the *Critique* of theoretical reason [i.e. *Critique of Pure Reason*] as closely, and indeed of itself, as if each step had been thought out with deliberate foresight merely to provide this confirmation" (5:106).

argument in *G* III or at the end of *G* II. But this does not mean that such an argument has no place in his system of practical philosophy. On the contrary, there is compelling textual and philosophical evidence that it does. We are also impelled to consider the argument because it makes contact with numerous perennial questions about Kant's ethics.

There are two ways to read Kant's references to a kingdom of ends. On the one hand, the kingdom would more naturally be any really possible systematic whole of moral laws. We might conceive of it as the hypothetical result of a practical determination procedure: there is a sum total of all possible maxims and the kingdom is one that has a complete determination of them. The concept is an ideal in the sense of being a goal or maximum that can be approached but never reached through the determination procedure. On the other hand, Kant's theory of reason would demand that a sum total of all possible maxims be unified and grounded. The passages also hint at what could tentatively be called an 'ideal of pure practical reason', a practical correlate to the *ens realissimum*.[32] This version of the kingdom is also a completely determined whole of moral laws, but here it grounds the possibility of all maxims by supplying the content from which maxims are derived. On this reading, the ideal is expected to be the result of a refinement process. We would move from the idea of all possible maxims to their source in the completely determined idea. Any other kingdom in the first sense would be grounded in a kingdom in the second sense.

[32] Kant's unity of reason supports the view that, insofar as God is taken to have a will and the *ens realissimum* is, as Kant says, "the one single genuine ideal of which human reason is capable," there is only one ideal—a single concept that represents the ground of both the possibility of objects in theoretical reason and the possibility of maxims in practical reason (A576/B604). Support for this can be found in "On the Common Saying" (8:279-80), the Canon of Pure Reason in the first *Critique*, and an early lecture (27:263). The *Opus Postumum* would likely have supplied more evidence (e.g. 21:19-22). See Guyer, "The Unity of Nature and Freedom: Kant's Conception of the System of Philosophy."

A potential picture is the following. To the extent that I will the moral law, my legislation does not depend on my idiosyncratic perspective or position, but only on reason. When I take the perspective of reason and accordingly abstract from my inclinations or "private ends," I conceive of reason as legislating a whole system of ends. The ends and contents of moral maxims are supplied by reason itself. In thinking about the possibility of moral law, we presuppose the material **of all practical possibility**. The matter is the **sum total of all possible** maxims, any end a rational being might have. The ideal will references this further idea of an entire storehouse of material for legislation.

It is impossible for all possible maxims to become common objective laws together in a kingdom of ends. Maxims will contradict or conflict. A maxim to lie and a maxim never to lie are both possible but cannot be willed together. The preceding formulas (the "above principles") help explain this. They work on maxims from the sum total of all maxims to evaluate their possible inclusion in a kingdom of ends.

Above I considered how the Formula of Universal Law emphasizes the logical possibility of the moral law. Implicit in Kant's discussion, and explicit in the Formula of Humanity, is the claim that there must also be harmony within the moral law. A maxim may not contradict itself or other maxims, but Kant finds it useful to have a formula that emphasizes another type of repugnance. After a single mention of harmony at *G* 422, the term appears in several key places. For instance, in the context of the Formula of Humanity, Kant says, "with regard to contingent (meritorious) duty to oneself it is not enough that the action not conflict with humanity in our person, as an end in itself, it must also *harmonize with it*" (emphasis original, 4:430). In the next lines, Kant distinguishes between negative and positive agreement with humanity. "If that representation [of humanity as an end in itself] is to have its *full* effect in me, the ends of a

subject that is an end in itself must, as much as possible, also be *my* ends" (emphasis original, 4:430). In some cases, it is not enough that I merely allow others to have their ends, and throw up no obstructions or impediments, but when I appreciate them as rational beings, their ends also become mine. I must assist or facilitate the ends of others but also, where possible, share their ends. As we saw previously, this is because if the moral law is possible, it must be regarded as the product of an ideal will that shares content with all rational beings. The only way to adopt some moral ends and ignore others is to make legislation an idiosyncratic affair, premised on an empirical distinction between you and me. Underneath Kant's advice is the metaphysical claim that the product of the ideal will, the system of laws it legislates, is harmonious. The maxims or ends fit together, not simply in the sense of lacking contradiction or conflict, but also in a positive sense. As he says in the third point of the *G* 436 remark, the complete determination of maxims "ought to harmonize into a possible kingdom of ends." For a maxim to be possible as a moral law, it must be a part of a kingdom of ends that can be real or actualized. To make good on this claim, Kant needs more than mere logical possibility. The point was also seen at *G* 431, where autonomy is depicted as the supreme condition of the will's harmony with practical reason. The possibility argument in Ideal of Pure Reason is about the conditions for objects and grounding their real harmony in an regulative ideal. The Formula of Humanity makes reference to the harmony of the moral law, but when autonomy is introduced, deeper in the metaphysics, the need for an argument that justifies the real possibility of the moral law is more pronounced.

3.3.3. Refinement

Thus far, the proposal is that the initial formulas in the *Groundwork*—1) the Formula of Universal Law or Formula of the Law of Nature and 2) the Formula of Humanity—occupy roles in Kant's assumed theory of modality that are broadly comparable to the initial principles in the

Ideal of Pure Reason. They highlight formal and material requirements for the complete determination of maxims. Because they apply to a practical determination procedure, the formulas also reference a presupposed sum total of possible maxims. If we take Kant's theory of reason seriously (alternatively, if we think that Kant took his own theory of reason seriously), the series of possible maxims, and even their complete determination in a possible kingdom of ends, is not the end of the story. First, reason ascends to the series as a unified ideal. Second, to ground the possibility of the maxims, the ideal must be regarded as, in some sense, real. In a line from the *Lectures*, "The concept of what is right, or the rational Idea of obligation, on which the metaphysics of morals must be erected, is founded on reality; for since reason enjoins it unconditionally, it must be possible in itself" (27:481). The systematic use of practical reason and an account of the positive content of the moral law demand a regulative ideal from which possible maxims are derived. To serve this role, the ideal must be conceived as real, not merely possible.

Following the progression of the Ideal in the first *Critique*, what would come next is the refinement of the sum total of all possible maxims. Since the details of refinement are sketchy even in the theoretical philosophy, I can do little more than offer informed speculation about a practical version. It is easier to see *why* Kant needs one than to see *how* it works. It bears remembering, however, that in spite of the challenges, the hope for a Kantian response to the enduring charge of empty formalism rests with an ideal of pure practical reason. At bottom, it is the single real source of content for possible maxims. Kant appears to notice this early in "On the Common Saying," where he responds to Garve's version of the empty formalism criticism. After stating that the object of duty can only be found in "that ideal of pure reason," he continues in a footnote: "the need for a final end assigned by pure reason and comprehending the whole of all

ends under one principle (a world as the highest good and possible through our cooperation) is a need of an unselfish will *extending* itself beyond observance of the formal law to production of an object (the highest good). This is a special kind of determination of the will, namely through the idea of the whole of all ends" (8:280). The will determines itself through a whole of ends. To arrive at the ideal, there would inevitably be refinement.

A practical refinement would happen in two ways. They pertain to the relations among three types of categorical imperatives: 1) obligations that command actions, 2) prohibitions that forbid actions, and 3) permissive laws that allow actions (27:274, 27:513, 2:184). Above I noted that Kant uses the categories of quality in refinement. In the *Lectures*, he describes these types of imperatives as "the quality of the action" (27:522). The first component of refinement considers the relation between obligations and prohibitions. In the introduction to the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant says that the two are opposites (6:221). An action is forbidden when it is contrary to obligation (6:222). If I am obligated to tell the truth, it is forbidden for me to do the opposite of telling the truth. On this view, Kant takes prohibitions to be a type of negation. In stating what a person cannot do, the law assumes a particular positive action as possible content for a maxim. Hence, if refinement traces back to a source of law, we can see obligations as more fundamental than prohibitions. Prohibitions are derived by negating obligations. If the ideal contains all and only obligations, it will be logically possible. It would not contain contradictory laws.

The second component of refinement involves types of opposition beyond contradiction. A world in which all actions are obligatory is impossible. We could not live in that world. Permissibility has an essential place in the moral law. It enables a kingdom of ends to have real harmony. Ultimately, Kant thinks that examining the relation between obligations and permissive laws shows permissive laws to be a type of negation as well. To say that an action is

permitted is to say that it is both *not* forbidden and *not* obligatory. One might call it a *limitation* of an obligation. Kant does not use this language when discussing permission, but I use it to highlight the parallel to possibility argument in the Ideal. A maxim of a permitted action would represent the same action that could be found in an obligation, but it would represent the action as *not* necessary. For example, an action like buying oranges could be formulated into an obligation, but the obligation becomes a permissive law when the necessity is negated. Although a possible kingdom of ends, like *ens partim reale, partim negativum,* is sure to include permissive laws, because such laws are limitations, refinement finds them grounded in a set of more basic unlimited laws.

Kant never says what the basic laws look like. He may not need to say, given his purposes, but he needs them to be obligations that command a small number of general types of actions.[33] The actions are genera that can be divided into species and subspecies. Prohibitions and permissive laws would then pertain to these more specific versions of the broader action. For example, let us suppose for explanatory purposes that there is a general obligation to communicate. It is, suppose further, a fundamental type of action. But communication comes in various kinds: storytelling, philosophizing, emailing, gossiping, lying, flirting, blackmailing. The moral law will not obligate them all. But in determining the moral law completely, with its

[33] A passage at the end of the *Doctrine of Virtue* suggests that the general laws are obligations to love and respect. He says, "All moral relations of rational beings, which involve a principle of the harmony of the will of one with that of another, can be reduced to *love* and *respect"* (*MM* 6:488). There is something appealing about thinking that all good action is some species of love. When Jesus tells the Pharisees the greatest commandment, he adds a line about the law: "'You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind'. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'. On these two commandments hang [κρέμαται] all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40, NRSV; cf. *Negative Magnitudes*, 2:183).

assortment of all three types of imperatives, we are required to make reference to a basic maxim. The possibility of maxims about storytelling or lying presuppose the reality of communication. Whatever the specific content of a moral maxim, Kant is committed to the claim that it is traceable to a source. A maxim of philosophizing takes its reality from a more basic maxim to communicate.

What survives refinement is a set of general maxims. Prohibitions and permissive laws are negations and limitations of them. Reason then finds these general maxims unified in a single kingdom. They can be willed together in a system. We regard the system as an unconditioned totality of laws. The totality is a specific idea, an ideal, that is completely determined.

Although the details of this claim are mysterious, there is one further implication to consider. We can at least understand why Kant needs there to be a single ideal as the natural and unavoidable source of moral maxims. The *G* 436 remark depicts the moral law as a hylomorphic composite. Both matter and form are necessary. Ultimately, the form of system determines the moral law as a single whole. The parts of the system, i.e. specific maxims or laws, are composites themselves, but they are regarded as members of a series. To conceive of the 'only one' moral law as a totality, the matter would need to be given as a 'sum total'. Kant would identify the matter that supplies all the content for the moral law as the elusive ideal I have been describing. Then forms organize and structure the content by limiting and negating it. Maxims are represented by the share of reality they selectively borrow, so to speak, from the general maxims in the ideal. Morality does not consist of discrete, disconnected, isolated maxims. This would amount to the impossibility of the moral law. In Kant's view, an account of the intelligibility of moral actions must include their interconnections, ultimately into a single all-encompassing moral law and kingdom of ends. The single systematic moral law and the

kingdom of ends are not aggregations but a necessary regulative idea that structures the relations among different maxims and rational beings.

My reading emphasizes Kant's commitment to system. It also yields a response to the charge of empty formalism and a new picture of the formula relation. I end by reiterating two claims. First, the ultimate form in the regulative idea is system. It will include numerous others, like negations and limitations, but use of the forms is organized within the system. The formulas in *G* II aid Kant in representing this picture of the moral law. Second, insofar as the idea is of a single moral law, the matter will be the reality of all action, the most general maxims, given as a whole. When I legislate particular moral maxims or think about their possibility, I must presuppose a single source of reality in which they are grounded. Distinction, difference, or variety—as found in the range of prohibitions and permissive laws—emerges when we limit the sum total. Hence, the issue of the positive material of the moral law is the subject of an a priori metaphysics of morals. The structure of the *Groundwork* arc indicates that this is what Kant intended.

4. Remark Redux

This section will pull threads from the previous section together into a reading of the third point of the *G* 436 remark. The point states a formula that unifies the previous two. Above I flagged several issues. For instance, Kant's choice to call maxims 'determinations' is now understandable, but the claim that 'all maxims have a complete determination of all maxims' remains awkward. It is possible that Kant unintentionally strained the grammar of his three point list. But a more constructive reading is available. The full line references a formula about a kingdom of ends: "For all maxims have [...] a complete determination of all maxims by that formula, namely: that all maxims from one's own legislation ought to harmonize into a possible

kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature." Kant's point is that assessing the moral worth of the maxim would require considering it as one determination in a complete determination of maxims. It is impossible, in other words, to legislate a particular discrete moral law without conceiving of it as part of the kingdom. Instead, when I legislate from the perspective of an ideal will, I recognize that the product of the will is a complete determination of all maxims—namely, the full moral law. If I will the moral law, I will the whole. Any particular law is part of this totality. Such a will's maxim, then, is completely determined.

A formula is meant to aid us in seeing the abstract metaphysical picture. Each formula is a different way to bring the full systematic moral law ("an idea of reason") closer to intuition and feeling. In numerous places, Kant appears to show favoritism towards formulas that emphasize universal form. After the remarks, he recommends the so-called 'Universal Formula': "But one does better if in moral judgment he follows the rigorous method and takes as his basis the universal formula of the categorical imperative: Act according to that maxim which can at the same time make itself a moral law." Then he encourages us to use the concepts in all the formulas: "But if one wants also to secure acceptance for the moral law, it is very useful to bring one and the same action under the three aforementioned concepts" (*G* 437). I take these lines to mean that the formulas about universality, when used out in the world, are more likely to produce reliable moral judgment about actions. From the perspective of the *Groundwork* arc, Kant seemingly likes the fact that the formulas blend common moral philosophy with a metaphysical point about a constitutive feature of the moral law. Of all the formulas, the Formula of the Kingdom of Ends is more overtly metaphysical and accordingly furthest removed from common moral philosophy. The concept it includes is an idea. However, after stating the Universal Formula, Kant acknowledges that the form of universality is not enough to "secure

acceptance for the moral law." The full picture requires additional concepts and the relations among them. Because the concept of a kingdom of ends is essential to the moral law, a formula built around it can still be used productively. I must legislate in a way that my maxims can be laws in a kingdom of ends. But day to day, I do better, Kant believes, with other formulas.

Kant indirectly admits that the decision procedure implied by the Formula of the Kingdom of Ends may be challenging to use. As I considered earlier, this helps explain his choice to reintroduce the analogy between the kingdom of ends and a kingdom of nature. When I universalize a maxim, I treat it not merely as an isolated individual law of nature, but also as one part of a systematic whole of natural laws (i.e. "a nature"). The holism or overview effect is key to securing the moral law. Even if we do not explicitly invoke the kingdom of ends in everyday moral judgment about particular cases, the pursuit of systematicity in moral philosophy eventually uncovers regulative concepts. Kant reiterates the claim in his only mention of the kingdom of ends in *G* III: "the idea of a pure world of understanding as a whole of all intelligences, to which we belong as rational beings, [...] remains [...] useful and permitted for producing in us a lively interest in the moral law by means of the noble ideal of a universal kingdom of *ends in themselves* (rational beings) to which we can belong as members only when we carefully conduct ourselves in accordance with maxims of freedom as if they were laws of nature" (4:462-3). The kingdom of ends is regulative in a specific way. It is by means of the ideal that we have a dynamic interest in the moral law. Kant then alludes to the formula and analogy. Having a good will is the same as acting in accordance with the laws of the kingdom. I am most free when I treat the laws as if they were laws of nature.

The analogy to nature pairs with the underlying modal metaphysics. Kant qualifies the kingdom as possible and harmonious. Calling the kingdom possible suggests that the ideal is the

result of a practical determination procedure. Its possibility is therefore grounded in the ideal of pure practical reason. Harmony suggests a positive agreement with humanity, as Kant says in his discussion of the Formula of Humanity (4:430). A lack of conflict between my maxim and the kingdom of ends is not enough. I also accept the ends in the kingdom as my own. To be autonomous, this would amount to willing the kingdom myself, taking the position of the ideal will. And to do this, the kingdom of ends must be possible. When I conceive of the kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature, I notice that the possibility is more than logical. A possible kingdom of nature exhibits a real harmony. Likewise, for the kingdom of ends, maxims must unite in a kingdom that can be actual. According to Kant's possibility argument, a kingdom of ends is grounded in something further—an ideal of pure practical reason. This ideal satisfies reason's natural drive and supplies positive content for the law.

5. Conclusion

My reading of Kant's ethics combines two relatively unpopular parts of his work: the early sections of the Ideal of Pure Reason and the *G* 436 remark. What unites them is a powerful yet contentious theory of reason: Kant's account of ideas and ideals, regulative concepts and principles, ascending and descending rational drives. Some might see the theory—particularly in its tendency toward an obsolete preoccupation with 'the architectonic'—to be unworthy of serious engagement. Nevertheless, just as the significance of the later portions of the *Groundwork* arc are coming to be more appreciated, we would do well to notice that their significance is owed to the theory of reason many prefer to ignore.

I have tried to take Kant's theory of reason, particularly his view of system, as seriously as he did himself. There is an array of strong textual evidence that the theory is central to the kingdom of ends and the determination of the moral law. There are also mentions of a practical

use of the ideal of pure reason. But Kant stops far short of pursuing all the implications of his structure of reason. I have charted several of these implications here. Some of them may make Kant's moral theory seem more nuanced and compelling. Others may make it seem disordered and precarious, reliant on tenuous commitments about totalities and their parts.

When he introduced his theory of reason in the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant considered the influence of Plato's ideas:

> I do not wish to go into any literary investigation here, but in order to make out the sense which the sublime philosopher combined with his word. I note only that when we compare thoughts that an author expressed about a subject, in ordinary speech as well as his writings, it is not at all unusual to find that we understand him even better than he understood himself, since he may not have determined his concept sufficiently. (A313-4/B370)

Here Kant opens up what John Sallis calls a "hermeneutical space."[34] The concepts are inherited from past thinkers, whose projects we take as broadly the same as our own, and therefore also material for future thinkers. Kant is acknowledging that his entire system of critical philosophy is still a part of philosophy as a whole. It can, in the course of history, be unified into something greater. The texts do not take up the whole space of possibility. They continuously remain undetermined and determinable. They are part of a series. Kant's holistic intention and goal was for readers to move past his texts—to understand him even better than he understood himself. This is the hidden ideal that is always already guiding our thinking.

[34] Sallis, *Kant and the Spirit of Critique*, 4. See also Biondi, "Kant's Hermeneutics of Progress."

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