
The Relation between Goodwill and Categorical Imperative from the Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals

DIOGO GONZAGA TORRES NETO
Federal University of Rondônia - UNIR
Rondônia, Brazil
DEODATO FERREIRA DA COSTA
Federal University of Amazonas - UFAM
Amazonas, Brazil

Abstract:

The Goodwill is the highest goods, but not the only one as well. Thus, it is worth saying that there are other goods considered conditional, i.e. those who are different from the absolute good which is unconditional. Goodwill, as absolute good is teleological, i.e. shows a last end. According to the philosopher, the absolute value of goodwill is attributing of pure reason, because this should produce in us the goodwill. In this way, we realize that in Kant's thought the Goodwill hasn't dependence on an external factor; it's a good in itself. It may not be great for some and small for others. It's unconditional and must be regulated in man by reason. The Categorical Imperative is one of the central ideas for the adequate understanding of morality and ethics. In this proposal Kant summed up his thoughts on the issues of morality. Kant emphasized this idea about moral law. For the German philosopher, categorical imperative is the duty of every person to act according to the principles that it wants that all human beings will follow, that it wants to be a law of human nature. In conclusion, it's argued that the concepts of good will and duty are indispensable to construct the intent of a Kant's reason of morality, thus enabling the transformation of goodwill in a categorical imperative.

Key words: Goodwill, Categorical Imperative, Metaphysics of Morals

Introduction

In mid-1724 in the small town of *Königsberg*, East Prussia, a young thinker admired the night sky and fifty years later, it became one of the greatest philosophers of the 18th century, dating back the memories of childhood, that “*the starry sky above me and the moral law within me*” the spirit of admiration and reverence always new and growing as more firm and frequent if shows our reflection (ABBAGNANO, 1990).

Regina Reuter, mother of Immanuel Kant, was a pious woman who although uncultivated, influenced rather his son, throwing them the "seeds of the well" and the stimulating in several ways. The boy grew up, very studied in crankiness Königsberg, and eventually become a philosopher whose philosophy was built on a life of eighty years devoted exclusively to philosophical thought, and until today, more than 270 years later, the same is the target of admiration and reverence.

It is on this moral law inside which will be discussed in this work of completion of course. Taking as a basis his work "Rationale of Metaphysics of Morals", subsequently published his masterpiece "Criticism of Pure Reason"¹² and prior to his second writing critical "Criticism of Practical Reason".³

It is not too much we stretched out the view, even in a summarized form, as in this work, the full importance of philosophical *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*; it is understood in this Article that the simple analysis of his Preface and its First Section, separate from the rest of his work would become too superficial and incomplete.

Also it would be a great error of our party forgets the whole Kantian philosophy in our studies. Understand the practical reason without touched on the question phenomenon /

¹ From this moment the acronym GMM.

² From this moment the acronym PRCs.

³ From this moment the acronym CPrR.

noumenon or the influences that had Kant before the scientific ideas of Leibniz and Newton would leave aside explanations that, although at first sight shun the objective of this research, has fundamental points in understanding the topic.

The formulation of Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals

The reason of a reasoning of the Metaphysics of Morals.

The reasoning of the *Metaphysics of Morals*⁴ is situated in "Critical Stage" of the Kantian philosophy. Its publication was in 1785, four years after the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant in that period was already known as a great philosopher.

The Groundwork (*Ger.Grundlegung*) was written as an introduction to a "Metaphysics of Morals" (1797) and eventually presented the basic rules of the second great Kantian criticism: "Criticism of Practical Reason" (1788)⁵. The reasoning of the Metaphysics of Morals then had this character from introductory, in a less complex language, which, as his work "*Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics (1783)*" serves as the basis for the construction of the transcendental in *Critique of Pure Reason (1781)*⁶, the reasoning built the theoretical basis for the criticism of pure reason practice.

The Critique of Practical Reason was the work more expected by admirers of Kant after the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

⁴ According to the translator of the English version of the referenced work of Kant, Quintela, in a footnote on page 19, defends the translation of "Grundlegung" as "reasoning", instead of "Foundations", as follow the French.

⁵ According to the own Kant: "In order, therefore, to publish a day a Metaphysics of Morals, I precede this reasoning. In truth there is not really anything that can serve as the basis in addition to the Criticism of pure reason practice, as well as for Metaphysics is the Criticism of pure reason speculative already published." KANT, Immanuel. Reasoning of the Metaphysics of Morals", 1the edition . Editions 70, Lisbon, 1997. Pag. 18.

⁶ *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*

We can also observe the views of Kant in this respect within the text of his reasoning: that the

"(...) A Metaphysics of Morals, in spite of the title repulsive, is capable of a high degree of popularity and going attitude to understanding vulgar, I think useful separate her this preparatory work of reasoning, for in the future do not have to join the theories more easy the subtleties inevitable in such matters." (GMM,19).

The reasoning would prepare so the reader through an explanation and analytical logic to a new order of Kantian metaphysical problems. In addition, Kant's transcendental analytic now becomes the theoretical use of reason (study of "knowing" and "thinking") for a practical use like a study of the "act" and the "how to act".

The reasoning is that we view as well inserted between the written critical of Kant. It sees the moral problem not as a problem of empirical character, but as a matter of "a priori" of practical reason, whose possibility and validity assures us a decision valid with universal character based solely on *aprioristic categories* of thought as presented in "Critique of Pure Reason" . ⁷

Kant's Freedom

For Kant the man, "for being a rational being", does not agree with is free. The man isn't simply phenomenon, but *numeno* (be sensitive). The awareness of my freedom is a rational faith, something that is independent of any sensitive experience, that part directly of reason. The man is considered the ability to self-determination from the reason, the reason you orders, or by another angle, I only due obedience to my self-legislation . These orders have the character of a "duty", that we give the

⁷ Kant, I. GMM, p. 09

title of "moral law of practical reason". This is a law "a priori", independent from an empirical proof (Castro Andrade, 1993).⁸

Second we explored Domingos, in his work:

"Be aware of what should I do this or that is to be aware of that I can (I am free to) do this or that. The moral law is what allows me to realize that I am free, being the freedom the foundation that makes intelligible the presence of the moral law in me. The "experience of duty", the recognition of the presence of the moral law in me, lets me be aware of the need to believe that I am free." (DOMINGOS,2004, p. 3)

Then again here we recall that human freedom is limited to empirical work, although subjected to metaphysical laws of practical reason.

2. The Goodwill to Categorical Imperative

The Preface of Groundwork

The Preface of the reasoning of the Metaphysics of Morals is to begin with a bipolar division of rational knowledge: knowledge Material and Formal Knowledge.

As illustrated in the diagram (Fig.1), Kant begins his book showing us that rational knowledge is divided into two: one Material Knowledge (knowledge that can have an empirical character) and a Formal Knowledge (knowledge purely formal, who may not possess empirical). The Knowledge Material per your time is subdivided between the Laws of Nature (physical laws, laws independent of the will of man; they are laws that always occur) and Laws of Freedom (laws ethical-moral, dependent on the human will, constituting a possibility of its investigation or not; they are a set of "duty-be").

⁸ We are faced with the important kantian concept of "autonomy": Autonomy for Kant, second Lalande (pg 115. op. cit.), is "the characteristic of the desire pure while she only if determines in virtue of his own essence, either say, solely by way of the universal moral law, with the exception of whole reason sensitive."

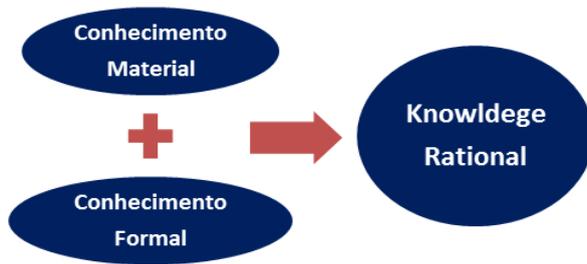


Fig.1. bipolar Division of rational knowledge according to Kant.

More in front Kant again divides the knowledge, according to the following scheme: Empirical and Formal (Based on Experience – *a posteriori*) and Pure (Based solely on rational mechanisms – *a priori*)

Hence Kant concludes that there would be two kinds of Metaphysics: a "Metaphysics of Nature" (the rational part of Physics) and a "Metaphysics of Morals" (the part rational Morality).

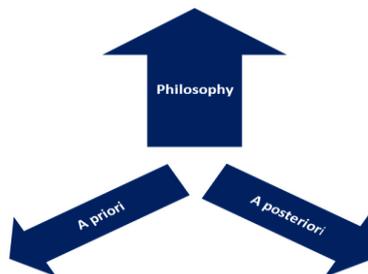


Fig.2. New division of philosophical knowledge in Kant, Diogo Torres, 2014.

More on the front is a passage of extreme importance:

"Everybody has to admit that a law that has to enforce morally, that is, as the foundation of an obligation, has to be in itself an absolute necessity; (...)that, therefore, the principle of obligation not if there is to seek here on the nature of man or the circumstances of the world in which man is made, but a priori solely on concepts of pure reason, and that any other precept based on principles of simple experience, (...

) a minimum that is, perhaps by only one mobil, can draw-if truth a rule practice, but never a moral law. " (CPrR, p.15-16) ⁹

This passage of reasoning summarizes a large part of moral practice present in the work analyzed: Kant thought that the foundation of moral action should solely from reason. Never the foundation of act should reside in empirical data. Throughout his work, Kant, even so verbose, warns us of about empirical work: First speaks to us the idealist German supremacy of rational rule "*a priori*" (an absolute "need" to take as the basis of our acts only to our own reason), which, in the background, relegates the empirical work acts as a regulator of our moral. The empirical work ("circumstances of the world in which man is tour"), along with a Rousseau's human nature (which in essence was "good", as it was thought the French philosopher and the Prussian philosopher) could not characterize never a moral law.

Kant also in his Preface reveals to us another passage of character undoubtedly instructive for understanding his philosophy:

"(...) I demand, for which the Criticism of a pure Reason practice can be finished, that if you can demonstrate both its unity with the ratio speculative a common principle; because in the end it is always one and the same reason, that only in the application if must differentiate." (CPR,p.8)

What Kant wants to tell us? That reason is only one! This difference between the pure reason theoretical (when with respect to knowledge and in this case as the founder of science¹⁰ and pure reason practice (when considered as containing the principle "*a priori*" of reason - the rule of morality) is only of methodological nature in Kantian

⁹ Cf. REALE, op. cit. , p. 919.

¹⁰ LALANDE, p. 919.

philosophy. The pure reason and practical reason are not completely distinct, as indirectly many scholars suggest, but are parts of a ratio greater .

Lastly, what is the purpose-mor of Kant for publishing a "Rationale of Metaphysics of Morals"? He responds to us: "*This reasoning is nothing more, however, than the search and mounting the supreme principle of morality, which is alone in its purpose a task complete and well distinct from any other moral obligation.*" (KANT, CPR, p.19)

That supreme principle is that Kant both search? This supreme principle is based entirely on reason, on the principles "a priori" of thought, independent of any empirical fact.

Transition by the common knowledge until the philosophical knowledge

Kant, in the Preface and in the First Part of its reasoning, we briefly presents the evolution of the idea of duty in practical reason. We can divide this "conceptual evolution" into two parts: the first would be a pure "Knowledge of Common Morality" (duties merged with empirical characters as attachment to the traditions, family values, and finally the knowledge sensitive itself); the second part could be called as a Metaphysics of Morals. The first part originating it initially with a "goodwill", which would become a "duty", and this in its turn would evolve to a "maximum" of reason. This "maximum" we come to the second part: the "maximum" ,through a obligation intrinsic, converted to a "essential" of reason.

Kant in starts the First Section of reasoning with the following sentence: "*In this world, and even also outside it, nothing is possible to think that can be considered as good without limitation to not be only one thing: a goodwill .*" (GMM, 21)

This simple introductory phrase we can draw several conclusions about the Kantian moral philosophy. Firstly: what is a "goodwill"? It would be a good will for me? For the other?

"Goodwill", according to Kant, is a good will without restrictions of any party¹¹. Some things in life can be very good as the "discernment (*verstand*), astuteness of spirit (*witz*), and the ability to judge (*urteilskraft*)"¹². But these characteristics and many other as pointed us Kant, can be used both for the good and for evil. How then will distinguish between a "good" of a desire "bad"?

The value of a "good will" not lie, teaches Kant, in their empirical consequences, but by pure value of itself, by own wanting to¹³.

For Kant, the supreme principle of morality should reside in a law that, due to its capacity of abstraction such, would direct us to a proper action in any circumstance. This law, as we shall see more in front, it will become the categorical imperative.

¹¹ Kemerling give us the way about the good will: "Other good features of human nature and the benefits of the good life, Kant pointed out, elicited value only under appropriate conditions, since they may be used either for good or for evil. But the goodwill is intrinsically good; its value is wholly self-contained and utterly independent of its external relations. Since our practical reason is better suited to the development and guidance of the goodwill than to the achievement of happiness, it follows that the value of the goodwill does not depend on the results it manages to produce the the consequences of human action." KEMERLING, Garth. *Kant: The Moral Order*. Dictionary of Philosophy (online). Access jul 14 . of 2004.

¹² KANT, op. cit. *ibid.*, n.

¹³ Kant reminds us in several passages of his work to the impossibility of reasoning of the metaphysics of morals find in empirical facts. Among them we can mention: "The good will is not good by what promotes or performs for suitability to achieve any purpose proposal as such, but only by wanting to, that is, in itself (...)." KANT, op. cit. p. 23. It is also interesting for slinging the idea of supreme philosopher that reason is intrinsically good. Rousseau believed in "good savage", in the man who was born good and was corrupted by society. Kant took the "noble savage" of Rousseau to recent extremes: the

The idealist German warns us about the possibility of the evolution of the concept of "goodwill", through the concept of duty¹⁴: The "duty" would contain in itself the concept of "good will".¹⁵ But what is this "duty"? The philosopher Lalande thus if expressed about the definition of "duty": "Duty is the moral obligation considered in itself and, in general, regardless of a rule of private action. It is mainly, but not exclusively, of the 'categorical imperative' kantian". According to the French philosopher, "duty" sometimes confuses them with the "categorical imperative", but would not in its wholeness "imperative". So We believe, our second reading, that the action practiced by duty have their value does not in order to which it is intended, but in which the maximum determines, in the ¹⁶*principle of wanting to* whereby the action, apart from all the objects of the faculty of desire, was practiced". This value does not lie in a empirical principle, but only in "principle of desire", a principle "a priori" of reason.¹⁷

This pure formal respect of action becomes a maximum. The maximum ordains the reason obedience to this law, regardless of future injury by this decision. Lalande as well if expressed about the Kantian definition for "maximum": "Rule of conduct deemed by him who adopts as valid for his own will, without reference to or reward".¹⁸

Here Again we have extracted an important passage from the book of the German philosopher, in which he says the

reason of man, expressed by the will, as well as man rousseniano, also would be "good in itself" same.

¹⁴ "If the maxims are not already by its nature necessarily accords with the principle objective of rational beings as legislators universal, the need of action according to that principle is called then practical obligation, I urge you, duty." KANT. Op. Cit. Pp. 169-170. 76-77.

¹⁵ KANT, op. Cit. p. 26.

¹⁶ LALANDE. Op. Cit. p. 253.

¹⁷ KANT, op. Cit. p. 30.

¹⁸ According to KANT (op. cit. p. 31), "Maximum" is the principle of subjective desire. The principle objective would be law practice (a new "evolution") - the categorical imperative.

evolution of the maximum for a "categorical imperative" (even if it does not express itself directly to the imperative, as we understand):

Once that I spoiled the willingness of all the stimuli that it could arise from obedience to any law, nothing more remains of that conformity to a universal law of actions in general that can serve as the single principle will, that is: I must always be in a way that I might want to also that my maximum becomes a universal law.¹⁹

2.3 – The metamorphosis of Kant's concepts

The other chapters of the reasoning of the Metaphysics of Morals mentioned previously, although unrelated to the subject of this work, will be here soon to prioritize effect of supplement to introductory study of the important work of practical reason Kant.

In the second chapter of his work ("Transition from Popular Moral Philosophy to the Metaphysic of Morals"), Kant refers us to the study of "imperatives" and their types. Second Lalande (1996), "Imperative" is all the "proposition that has the form of an order (in particular for an order that the spirit of himself). An imperative is *hypothetical* if the order that sets out is subject, as a means to some end that if you want to achieve, or at least that if you would want to achieve: "Eat soberly if you want keep the health"; is categorical if sorts without condition: "If fair"²⁰.

But as Kant has evolved from "goodwill" until the categorical imperative? Kemmerling shows us how main fact the universalization of "good will" as supreme principle of morality:

"According to Kant, then, the ultimate principle of morality must be the moral law only abstractly conceived that it is capable of guiding us to the right action in application to every

¹⁹ KANT. Op. Cit. Page 33.

²⁰ LALANDE. op. cit. p. 531.

possible set of of. Only the only relevant feature of the moral law is its generality, the fact that it has the formal property of universalizability, by virtue of which it can be applied at all times to every moral agent. From this chain of reasoning about our ordinary moral concepts, Kant derived the the preliminary statement of moral obligation the notion that right actions are those that practical reason would will the universal law" (Kemmerling 2004. p.34).

The hypothetical imperatives, says Kant, does not ensure the true happiness. They should be considered more as "advice" of that as true commandments of reason. Only the categorical imperative would have this possibility, as universal order based only on principles of pure thought, bring us the supreme happiness, regardless of where (space) and when we're (of time).²¹²²

By what Kant called the universalization of the moral law as categorical imperative? The answer: it is an "essential" because it is an order that the reason why the itself and at the same time this type of imperative subordinates-if the categories of thought expressed in *Critique of Pure Reason* (categories, quantitative and qualitative, relating modal²³ characterizing it as "categorical". and what is the content of the categorical imperative? Kant responds that "the content of the categorical imperative has to shut down the principle of the whole duty". The imperative, we concluded, must have their way always fixed (as already expressed) and so should always be above any content that can be inserted (empirical facts), because such acts practical must, in all cases, "shut down the principle of the whole duty".²⁴

The structure of the categorical imperative: "*Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it*

²¹ KANT, Op. Cit. p. 55.

²² KANT, Op. Cit. ibid.

²³ KANT. Eligibility criteria. *Critique of Pure Reason*. p. 109.

²⁴ KANT, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 64.

should become a universal law "; Kant goes to few transforming this proposition in other of similar character. More in front the philosopher says another expression of the categorical imperative: "Act as if the maximum of your action if you should make, by thy desire, in universal law of nature." Truly interesting is the vision, in addition to philosophical, also socio-politics of Kant, when also removes the original formula of the imperative to expression of that man, due to his rationality, should always be treated as an end, never as a means to the arbitrary use of wills. Thus expresses the philosopher: "Act in such a way that costume to humanity, both in thy person as the person of any other, always and at the same time as an end and never simply as a means".²⁵

Kant exposes four examples to demonstrate the validity of the categorical imperative:

- 1) Even if a person desperate wish to commit suicide, destroying their lives cannot constitute a maximum that if you want to apply as universal law of nature, because it goes against every principle of preserving life;
- 2) A person that sees forced, by necessity, to borrow money, but know that you may not return the loan, and thus even promises to do it within a given period. This maximum may not, however, become universal law, post that no one would believe in any promise. Even the debtor would like similar law, which would be impracticable any new loan request;
- 3) A third person, knowing that door talents still not grown, lives the following dilemma: to develop his gifts or continue in life idle, exempting such skills. Opts to laziness, however, she may not want to, on condition of being rational, that this maximum is expected to be universal law of nature, having said that the talents bring to it - the same applies to other people - new possibilities for improvement of life;

²⁵ KANT. Op. Cit. p. 69.

4) Someone who lives in prosperity and at the same time sees others in difficulties might not even want to help them, but can't wanting to which this principle become universal law of nature - he might need aid also;

The autonomy of the will that makes legislating, Kant creates the concept of kingdom of ends, in which the rational being is the legislator universal, exercising his will. The relationship of all the action with the law in the kingdom of purposes constitutes morality. The steps that legislate, to each State and to all in the same measure also belongs the duty, which consists in the need of an action in respect of the law - and it is a duty which obeys a categorical imperative.

2.5 Criticisms of Schopenhauer

Arthur Schopenhauer, contemporary of Kant, is one of the main critics of the creator of the concept of categorical imperative. "Kant called closely the *principle of morality* with its foundation in a manner rather artificial", (SCHOPENHAUER,1995). According to the author, Kant was aware of the difficulty that faced the task of demonstrating that the moral principle must be pure *a priori*, *precluding* any material content and empirical. You must ask yourself how "something comes from nothing, i.e. , how they should implement the laws of material actions of men from pure concepts 'a priori', without any empirical content material - a process that we could assign as a symbol the chemical reaction that makes appear, from three different gases (nitrogen, hydrogen and chlorine), therefore a seemingly empty space, before our eyes, the more solid salt of ammonia" (*op. cit.*: 43).

Schopenhauer still makes harsh criticism at categorical imperative with regard to duty.

"Therefore, the practical reason with its categorical imperative shows in Kantian school increasingly as a fact metaphysical , as a Delpho's temple in human mind, whose obscure words sacred oracular announces if, so infallible,

unfortunately not what will happen , but what should happen " (*op. cit.*: 52).

"Do not steal can be taken as a rational principle and universal because, on the contrary, if all kidnap of all, society would become unviable. Tell the truth is an authentic kant's categorical imperative, because it corresponds to a principle capable of minority". (*op. cit.*: 52)

In the field of bioethics is also common decide-whether by means of the categorical imperative. In contraposition to the chain by which should prevail the autonomy of the individual, to whom - and only he - if the right to choose (in the case of subordinate themselves to experimentation or the decision by abortion or euthanasia, for example), there is a chain that is guided by principles defined *can I do*, becomes mandatory by discernment of another ethical imperative, *as soon as I do?* ". Finally, don't just stick to the first imperative, hypothetical; it is necessary to pass by a categorical imperative (PESSINI *et all*, 1998).

Final Considerations

The reasoning of the Metaphysics of Morals - already has more than two hundred and sixty years. The Kantian ethics would be an anachronism moral or something that still would have a value for the modern man? Exploring the fascinating work of J. Frank Baker's²⁶, we base our response: We believe that the categorical imperatives still today have their value philosophical/moral.²⁷

²⁶ BAKER'S, J. Frank. The Categorical Imperative blog in the Late 20 th Century . *Philosophy: Kant* (online).

²⁷ "Immanuel Kant's ethics are based upon coincides to the human being. To be aware of one's rational powers in the exercise of moral duty is paramount. Awareness of existence is sufficient proof of moral law, is morality is simply a formalized definition of what it means to be a rational being". BAKER'S, *op. Cit.* pg 5.

A primary element in Kantian philosophy is the notion that we are not that we adapted to the reality of the world, but in truth it is the opposite: It is the world that adapts to our reality. As a result, Kant dogmatized the existence of categories of thought as needs of reason "a priori" for the synthesis of reality. It is impossible to capture things as they are in themselves ("things-in-themselves"), but only by the way in which the sensitivity and understanding seize. Only the phenomenological manifestation of things present to our reason. This was the great step taken by Kantian epistemology.

The "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" was a very important work of introduction to the Kantian philosophy practice. Summed up in rare form the main thought of "Critique of Practical Reason" and "Metaphysics of Morals". Here we can say with absolute certainty that without the publication of this short work of introductory character the hermeneutics of written philosophical about the practical reason of Kant would drift.

Its main function was to introduce the question about the categorical imperatives, expressing the freedom as a condition and foundation of the moral law (the issue of the autonomy of reason / self law human).

Studying the thought of Kant, the light of his philosophy practice, even in a short work such as this, is a glimpse of all the magnitude of a thinker who, dedicating his life to philosophy, brought us as nobody wide knowledge about the wonder that is the moral law inside of man.

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