CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF KANT’S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Crisis in society is at an alarming rise today and we are victims of newer issues that tarnish the fabric of humanity. There are conflicting values and value-promoting structures and people are at a crossroad. Uncertainty of every kind has confounded common man and his perplexity rules his decisions leading to wrong choices and actions. An appropriate ethical code in place is an exigency and this research aims to do just that. In this section, we attempt to present the fundamentals and the principles of Kantian ethics which would lay a solid foundation for establishing a moral order in the world particularly in business and trade practices.

As this research attempts to apply the Kantian code of ethics for a free and fair trade policies it becomes an imperative primarily to ensure that the right perspective of the Kant’s ethics is in place. Kant was convinced that a viable ethical system should evolve out of a rational scheme as morality invariably subscribes to reason. He developed his ethical ideas primarily in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (here after *Groundwork*) and then provided a rational base to it in his later works mainly in *The Critiques*. Even in the *Groundwork*, he acknowledges the role of reason in ethics when he writes, “A metaphysics of morals is therefore indispensably necessary, not merely because of a motive to speculation – for investigating the source of the practical basic principles that lie a priori in our reason...”(GW 4:390). Thus Kant’s moral philosophy is closely linked with his epistemology assuring rational foundations for the theory of ethics.

In this chapter we present an overview of Kant’s ethics which would facilitate the process of its application in the forthcoming sections. The major themes of Kant’s philosophy have always been studied with great enthusiasm by ethicists and others. Though the depth and quality of these themes
have inspired many people, their application and relevance to various streams of human life haven’t been adequately done. Therefore in this miniature effort to apply Kant’s ethics for commerce and trade, as a first step we provide a critical summary of Kant’s ethics. Our emphasis here is on the fundamentals of Kant’s philosophy and the major themes which run through his system of philosophy.

2.1 The Fundamentals of Kant’s Moral Philosophy

In this section, we pinpoint the essentials of Kant’s philosophical structure. We explore with some depth the fundamentals of Kant’s philosophy which sets the stage for further investigation into his philosophy and its subsequent application for business and trade. An appropriate grasp of Kant’s philosophical base is inevitable in order to probe into the depth of its application for any stream of human living. Therefore an accurate presentation of his method, objectives and ethical standpoints gets prominence in this section.

2.1.1 Method of his Moral Philosophy

Uniqueness in the pattern of thinking and acting is the hallmark of every true thinker. Kant is no exception to it as he had worked out a unique method untested during his times or earlier. For Kant, a genuine philosopher is one who knows precisely and reflectively what he does. His reflective knowledge of his actions leads him to arrive at the unique method popularly called the critical method. His critical philosophy offered a new paradigm for intellectual activity. Kant’s greatness as a philosopher is known from his works of synthesising the dual approaches of the enlightenment era namely rationalism and empiricism. His ground-breaking synthesis of these approaches opened a third way with the trade mark philosophy of transcendental idealism. His critical approach made him an original thinker whose influence is felt in every field of philosophy to this day. This method is exquisitely devised in the Critique of Pure Reason.

Disclosing his method he writes, “It is a call to reason to undertake anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge, and to institute a tribunal which will assure to reason its lawful claims, and dismiss all groundless pretensions, not by despotic degrees, but in accordance with its own eternal and unalterable laws. This tribunal is no other than the critique of pure reason” (CPR, A xi-xii). Kant continues in a footnote on the same page; “Our age is, in especial degree,
the age of criticism, and to criticism everything must submit” (CPR, A xii). Critical method calls for complete overhauling whereby deleterious and ridiculous inclinations might be mitigated and dismissed in the true spirit of enlightenment. This is also an invite to look beyond metaphysics per se in an effort to carry out inquiries at all possible levels.

His new approach did not attempt to dismantle the existing systems of philosophy rather sought to knit together the contrasting schemes leading to his revolutionary method. This new method takes nothing for granted rather puts everything under scrutiny. It upholds the validity of experience-based knowledge while simultaneously delimiting its scope. This delimitation is clear when he writes; “there can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience... In the order of time, therefore, we have no knowledge antecedent to experience, and with experience all our knowledge begins. But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience” (CPR B 1). In arriving at this conclusion Kant was tremendously inspired by Hume who facilitated him to reflect beyond the dogmatic rationalism.¹

Both dogmatism and empiricism have their pitfalls and a critique of reason is inevitable to arrive at a right method of philosophy. His method does not offer a free-hand to reason as it subjects reason also to criticism. Kant writes, “I do not mean by this a critique of books and systems, but of the faculty of reason in general, and determine its sources, its extent, and its limits—all in accordance with principles” (CPR A xii). Thus though Kant values reason he does not consider it to be unproblematic. On the contrary, he argues that what guides our rational enquiry could also be the locus of error and therefore a genuine critique is essential. Therefore he envisages a new role for reason. He is certain that it is reason which should serve as judge of all realities, though not arbitrarily, but within the purview of certain laws. Thus, though Kant takes human reason to its pinnacle, yet subjects it to an explicit path of criticism which he calls the “Self-examination” (Meiklejohn, CPR xv) of reason. This is where Kant adds a new tone to the rational philosophy making a movement towards a critical philosophy calling it an “examination of reason alone” (Meiklejohn, CPR xiv). Thus critiquing of reason becomes the essence of his method.

¹Kant’s regard for Hume is evident from these words in Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics. Kant recalls: “I openly confess my recollection of David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction” (PAFM 4:260).
Discussing the aspirations of this method Kant speaks of “certainty and clearness” (CPR A xv). He wants that this method to assure some amount of certainty to our reasoning though he expresses the fear regarding the success of his critical method. His preface to the first edition conveys this fear in these words: “Whether I have succeeded in what I have undertaken must be left altogether to the reader’s judgement; the author’s task is solely to adduce grounds, not to speak as to the effect which they should have upon those who are sitting in judgement” (CPR A xv). Kant is though upbeat about his famous method he is modest in his claims about the success of the method which he leaves to the judgement of the reader as he put it at the very outset in his preface. Thus, Kant’s philosophical method is unique and he successfully applied to all aspects of philosophy including ethics. Kant refers to this capacity of reason as one that leads to the specifically transcendent judgments that describe metaphysics.

Therefore Kant’s method is all pervasive which offers no edge to any specific faculty or system but objective in its search for truth. The speciality of Kant’s method was his realization that even what guides our rational scientific inquiries is also the locus of error and needs to be checked. Thus Kant’s philosophical method culminating in the critical philosophy appears to be an appropriate paradigm for evaluating business and trade policies and activities of the world. Kant’s method which does not offer a free hand even to reason is the right method to be adopted to investigate into the current trade practices of the world. Therefore, it is our aim in this research to apply this method which is tested and proved, for the establishment of genuine trade and business practices in the world.

2.1.2 Objectives of Kant’s Ethics

The foremost objective of Kant’s ethics is to put in place a metaphysic of morals. This plan of Kant comes alive in the first two chapters of the Groundwork which clearly depicts his ethical objectives. In the light of Groundwork, an exact statement of the principles where all of our ordinary moral judgments find a base appears to be the primary focus. He writes: “A metaphysics of morals is therefore indispensably necessary, not merely because of a motive to speculation – for investigating the source of the practical basic principles that lie a priori in our reason - but also
because morals themselves remain subject to all sorts of corruption as long as we are without that clue and supreme norm by which to appraise them correctly” (GW 4:389).

This ethical statement entrusts us with an ethical obligation both to undertake a study of the principles of reason and also our moral living. It is in this order that we find Kant’s *Groundwork* invariably leads to *The Metaphysics of Morals* sandwiching the *Critique of Practical Reason* where Kant clarifies his findings from the *Groundwork* as ethical obligations for oneself and others.\(^2\) This is made clear when he writes that, “only a detailed *Critique of Practical Reason* can remove all this misinterpretation and put in a clear light the consistent way of thinking that constitutes its greatest merit” (CPrR 5:7). And the very first lines of his preface to *The Metaphysics of Morals* read: “The critique of practical reason was to be followed by a system, the metaphysics of morals…” (MM 6:205).

This objective of Kant to put in place a metaphysic of morals comes alive with greater force in the *First Critique* with a question that is essential to all philosophising. Our human reason which is also practical is summarised in the form of a question which reads: “What ought I to do?”(CPR A 805/ B833). Thus Kant here reveals that our life demands more than just devising a formula of action meaning a concrete plan of action regarding the practical living remains to be the ultimate objective of Kant.

### 2.1.3 Possibility of Pure Ethics

The humanity has always been striving for a composite unity. There is an ever growing interest among the educated masses to view knowledge as a totality and understand its un-compartmentalised nature. Given this nature of knowledge, can we really talk about the purity of any subject of human seeking in a totally unrelated manner? It is certainly ridicules and not our

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\(^2\) An interesting reason for the transition from *Groundwork* to *The Metaphysics of Morals* is given by Paton which is worth referring to here. He writes, “The *Groundwork* may be regarded as setting forth the core of kernel of a Critique of Practical Reason: it considers only some of the topics peculiar to a critique and ignores others, such as the relation of practical to theoretical reason , a topic not of immediate importance for moral philosophy. Ant believed that practical reason was less in need of a critique than pure reason, and he may have intended to go straight on to a metaphysic of morals. If so, the general failure to understand the *Groundwork* may have led to a change in his plan. In any case he published the *Critique of Practical Reason* three years later (in 1788), while *The Metaphysic of Morals* was not published till 1797, when he was already 73 years old.” Paton H.J. *The Categorical Imperative* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 31.
aim here to establish the independence of ethics as unrelated to other subjects rather to demarcate the uniqueness of ethics and its impact on humanity as envisaged by Kant. Kant’s contribution in this regard is tremendous and this section attempts to highlight this aspect of Kant’s philosophical system.

Paton H.J holds that the question of morality or the Kantian theme of duty belongs to the branch of ethics which may be called as pure and unmixed ethics and considered rational in nature. With his distinction of pure and applied ethics, he makes a categorisation in Kant’s moral philosophy. Therefore applied ethics would mean an application of the theoretical principles to different aspects of human nature and Anthropology and Psychology would be the automatic choices in the process. Thus pure ethics would mean a set of principles which are valid for the rational agents and rationally gratifying as an a priori standard of human thought. And the empirical elements would set foot when pure ethics moves to the realm of the applied and thus the a priori nature remains to be the character trait of pure ethics. Therefore this distinction of pure and applied upholds the possibility of pure ethics in Kant’s moral system.

The question that immediately follows is: what is the relevance of this discussion on the possibility of pure ethics. An establishment of the fact of pure ethics in Kant’s system provides a perfect platform for its adequate application in its practical respect. Only a sound theory can work in practice. Therefore, a pure ethics of high esteem alone can be effective to meet the demands of its practical necessities. The significance of this discussion lies in the fact that we are trying to

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3Ibid., 23. In this context, it could be said that The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals and the Critique of Practical Reason belong to the set of Kant’s works on pure ethics though there could be some overstepping into the terrain of the applied while The Metaphysics of Morals for its most part is a testimony to applied ethics. Ibid. The second Critique of Kant is also sometimes entitled a Critique of Pure Practical Reason, which explains the fact that though the second Critique deals with practical issues, it is essentially pure practical precepts and not applied principles. This again substantiates the classification that the second Critique belongs to the category of Kant’s pure ethics.

4It may be noted that our study Kant’s Ethics for Business and Trade, is a certain example of a study on applied ethics. Here the pure ethical norms of Kant are brought to a new level of philosophical discipline and an effort is made to enhance its relevance.

5Kant has titled one of his short essays as On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice which does not contradict my claim that only a good theory alone works in practice rather it redefines the concept of a good theory. He explains: “For here it is a matter of the canon of reason (in the practical), where the worth of practice rests entirely on its conformity with the theory underlying it, and all is lost if the empirical and hence contingent conditions of carrying out the law are made conditions of the law itself, so that a practice calculated with reference to an outcome probable in accordance with previous experience is given authority to control a self-sufficient theory” (CSCT 8:277).
analyse the soundness of the pure ethical principles of Kant before applying it to the practical field. In *Groundwork* he asks “is it not thought to be of the utmost necessity to work out for once a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything that may be only empirical and that belongs to anthropology?” (GW 4:389). Already in the preface to second *Critique*, he would define the scope of critique of practical reason that it “has only to give a complete account of the principles of its possibility, of its extent, and of its limits, without special reference to human nature” (CPrR 5:8).

Even in *The Metaphysics*\(^6\) of Morals, which is an application of moral *a priori* principles, Kant remembers to start off from first defining the pure nature of ethical concepts. “But this will in no way detract from the purity of these principles or cast doubt on their a priori source. – This is to say, in effect, that metaphysics of morals cannot be based upon anthropology but can still be applied to it” (MM 6:217).

From these discussions it is indeed beyond any contention that Kant is pressing for the need of a pure ethics. Kant all through his philosophical career emphasised a metaphysics of morals which he envisions to be primarily *a priori* and therefore should consist of pure ethical norms. He states, “A Metaphysics of Morals is therefore indispensably necessary, not merely because of a motive to speculation – for investigating the source of the practical basic principles that lie a priori in our reason – but also because morals themselves remain subject to all sort of corruption as long as we are without that clue and supreme norm by which to appraise them correctly” (GW 4:389-390). Kant asserts again that the pure moral principles are indispensable not merely for the purpose of understanding their counterparts at the practical sphere rather also to preserve these very principles untainted. Therefore a constant effort is required both to keep these principles free of blemish and then to apply them correctly.

\(^6\)Kant’s definition of Metaphysics is in itself evidence to *a priori* and the pure nature of ethical principles. He defines: “If, therefore, a system of a priori cognition from concepts alone is called metaphysics, a practical philosophy, which has not nature but freedom of choice for its object, will presuppose and require a metaphysics of morals, that is, it is itself a duty to have such a metaphysics, and every human being also has it within himself, though in general only in an obscure way; for without a priori principles how could he believe that he has a giving of universal law within himself?” (MM 6:216).
Sometimes it is observed that the problem with Kant’s philosophy is to distinguish between the pure principles of ethics and the applied. Though the pure concepts can only be related to supreme principle of morality, Kant sometimes takes the liberty to stretch it to what could be seen as moral laws. The particular moral laws are not related to pure philosophy rather belong to applied ethics having reference to human nature. We need to distinguish between singular moral precepts from the pure moral principles. Moral rules and moral laws belong directly to the category of applied ethics because they provide specifications to the pure principles of morality by having a direct bearing on the human nature. Only those principles may be called pure which are broadly applicable to all rational agents at all situations.

This view could be further authenticated with an example from The Metaphysics of Morals where Kant presents freedom as a pure rational concept which is transcendental and rational and also a proof of rational will in us. Based on this concept of freedom we have other practical laws which are considered moral (MM 6:221). Paton informs us that a morally acceptable action is one which is done not in accordance with duty rather for the sake of duty. The idea presented here is that if we do not understand the nature of duty in its purity our moral imperatives would be misguided. Kant is convinced that everyman has at least in an obscure form some concept of duty though in the case of ordinary men the tendency to evade the pure philosophy of duty is high. Due to the attractions of pleasure he may fail to perceive the call of duty and therefore a pure concept of duty is essential to uphold duty at all times.

Thus, it could be stated that for Kant pure ethics is possible and a necessity in order to set right guidelines for one’s living. Pure ethics alone can reassert our faith in duty and enable us to act from duty and not merely in conformity with duty as Kant would argue. Pure ethical principles provide the framework for an integral ethical life. The possibility of pure ethics as Kant provides ample scope for its expansion and application to the practical sphere of human existence.

2.2 Principal Themes of Kant’s Moral Theory

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8Ibid., 24.
This section exposes the major themes of Kant’s moral theory often called the deontological theory. It is no exaggeration to say that these terms provide the necessary profundity to the ethical position of Kant. Without these terms with their inherent implications, it would not have been easy for Kant to establish and explicate his ethical insights. Typical Kantian themes such as Good will, Imperatives, Duty etc… are rich in meaning and they need to be understood in a true Kantian spirit. Therefore, a brief study of these themes is inevitable as they form the basis for our further analysis and application. This exploration will facilitate the process of application of Kant’s ethics to Business and Trade.

2.2.1 Primacy of Good will

For Kant, there is nothing which can be supposed as absolutely good except the good will and there may be things which might have some elements of goodness in them but they can become very dangerous if the will, which puts them to use is not absolutely good (GW 4:393). Therefore, it is not an overstatement to say that the Kantian morality rests on goodwill and the will is good not for the effect it produces but for its innate quality of being good which is its unique character. Reiterating this Kant writes in *Groundwork*:

For, without the basic principles of a good will they can become extremely evil, and the coolness of a scoundrel makes him not only far more dangerous but also immediately more abominable in our eyes than we would have taken him to be without it. A good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, because of its fitness to attain some proposed end, but only because of its volition, that is, it is good in itself and, regarded for itself, is to be valued incomparably higher than all that could merely be brought about by it in favor of some inclination and indeed, if you will, of the sum of all inclinations (GW 4:394).

In his *Groundwork*, Kant sets off to define his concept of Good Will. According to him, it is impossible to conceive anything as good without any limitation and it is Good Will (GW 4:393). Thus for Kant, Good Will stands as an unconstrained principle with no boundaries. The phrase ‘good without limitation’ definitely needs an immediate explanation. For Kant this would mean that good will is good at all times and in every context. Good Will does not change from one
situation to another. It cannot represent good at one instance and evil at another.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 34.} It is not conditioned by one’s whims and fancies and its goodness does not vary in accordance with different demanding situations. It is absolutely good and always serves as end and does not shuttle between ends and means. Therefore there is no inherent dichotomy which makes it a unified ideology.

However, the question what is good will needs a serious introspection. An appropriate discussion here would be relevant to our context. Some scholars think that Kant has left this term in a mysterious state without specifically defining it though he uses it extensively right through his philosophical-ethical discussions. In the \textit{Groundwork}, it appears right at the beginning of section I, but without a definition (4:393). Kant seems to take for granted that everyone would understand this term \textit{good will} the same way. And every serious reader of Kant would experience the self-manifestation of this good will principle throughout his writings. Kant does not seem to have shown interest in a descriptive presentation of good will rather he lets it to unveil. Thus we can witness a gradual unfolding of it in his moral theory dominating most of his discussions on ethics.

Can \textit{good will} be interpreted as \textit{moral will}? Even this interpretation would not engross this concept in its entirety. The term \textit{morality} itself is too vague with diverse meanings. Again, people might identify morality with conventional morality. Therefore good will would mean a moral will which is bound by conventions and intellectually not free. Such a will would not be genuinely good and Kant is keen on presenting will as genuinely good.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 34-35.} Therefore identifying good will with moral will is not be plausible. What is conventionally considered good is not genuinely good as conventionalities can be conservative and orthodox challenging the modernity.

Thus moral will is not good will though moral will can possess inherent goodness. However, we need to assert the close association that can exist between the moral will and goodwill. Though it is difficult to establish the identity between them, their similarities cannot be overlooked. In GW 4:402 Kant appears to argue vigorously for a solid commitment for moral behaviour of a morally
righteous person. With his famous example of ‘promise making’ Kant affirms the inevitability of conformity between the moral law and the life of a good willed individual. He writes:

   But what kind of law can that be, the representation of which must determine the will, even without regard for the effect expected from it, in order for the will to be called good absolutely and without limitation? Since I have deprived the will of every impulse that could arise for it from obeying some law, nothing is left but the conformity of actions as such with the universal law, which alone is to serve the will as its principle, that is, \textit{I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law} (GW 4:402).

Kant declares that qualities which we usually associate with a good person such as moderation, self-control and calm reflection can facilitate the functioning of goodwill (GW 4:393). He also states that due to the weakness of the character of the person possessing goodwill, it may not be possible for the goodwill to manifest itself and carry out the noble tasks promoting the well-being of everyone around (4:394). Thus, Kant affirms that good moral character can be a trait of presence of goodwill in an individual but not a guarantee that it is true at all times. Robert N. Johnson reflects on this strikingly significant Kantian principle:

   Indeed, a person could apparently lack a good will yet possess the whole panoply of desirable qualities one might naturally associate with being a good person, qualities such as kindness, compassion, courage, moderation, strength of will and so on – the very qualities that Kant himself thinks make one able and suited to pursue the very goals that would be adopted by a good will. Since those are the very qualities of character and temperament that allow one to achieve these noble goals, it is even conceivable that someone might have all of these desirable qualities and achieve all of the noble goals a good will would have, yet still lack a good will and hence still fail to be a morally good person.\textsuperscript{11}

Thus Kant fervently argues for the primacy of good will and his conviction resounds throughout his writings. He has argued out convincingly that all desires for pleasures including happiness are

inferior motives and therefore are impediments to rational process. But goodwill on the contrary has no such inferior motives and therefore a being with goodwill would always act acceptably in accordance with duty. It is for this reason that Kant argues for the primacy of the goodwill.

### 2.2.1.1 Good will as good without qualification

As our above discussion shows, for Kant, goodwill alone is good without any limitation (ohne Einschränkung). It is an unconditioned good which cannot be qualified to subscribe to any inherent limitation. A question that needs immediate discussion here is whether all goods can be considered absolute goods or what Kant calls ‘good without limitation’ is a special kind categorised within the pool of goods. This question arises because in our ordinary usage the word *good* has diverse meanings and interpretations. Even from a philosophical perspective, different schools have interpreted according to their pattern of thought.

Paton addresses this question when he speaks about the *prima facie* goods. If we argue that all the *prima facie* goods are absolute goods or goods without qualification then goodwill as Kant speaks has nothing unique. *Pleasure* is a *prima facie* good which in some context can become absolutely bad such as when one takes pleasure over others’ pain. Even art and knowledge are no good to a starving man. In these cases, the goodness in things is an abstraction and what is real is the goodness of a thing in concrete situation. Thus the goodness varies according to the context. Here, the distinction is made between the usefulness of a thing and the goodness of a thing as such. Again, by stating that goodwill is good without limitation we do not mean that its actual goodness can be traced through abstraction alone rather it belongs to its very nature and inherently present in it.\(^\text{12}\)

Therefore for Kant, goodwill is absolutely good means that it has its full worth in itself and it cannot vary in any situation and the context will have no bearing on it. Kant observes, “There is, however, something so strange in this idea of the absolute worth of a mere will, in the estimation of which no allowance is made for any usefulness, that, despite all the agreement even of common understanding with this idea, a suspicion must yet arise that its covert basis is perhaps mere high-

flown fantasy and that we may have misunderstood the purpose of nature in assigning reason to our will as its governor” (GW 4:394-395).

We observe that most things in life have only limited and conditional value. These have value only in relation to something or only as means to an end. Goodwill is an end in itself and it also enables us to go beyond the infinite regress principle and establish an unconditional and absolute principle rising above the limitation of common experience. We often tell people that someone is ‘good at heart or good natured’, which is a compliment to one’s personhood. It refers to his will because we observe someone to be good because of the life one lives and his/her life is good or bad depending on the choices he/she makes. The decisions give identity to one’s life and the good decisions of life are what make us to call someone ‘good natured’. And the decisions are made by the will and what makes a good person good is the possession of a will which makes the decisions in harmony with the moral law. Thus goodwill is closely associated with someone who is morally worthy and considers moral qualities as conclusive reasons for ones living. Such people are seen with great admiration and we value them without limitation or qualification.

2.2.1.2 Good will as Supreme Good

Kant expresses the greatness of the will in the strongest terms when he states that “it must be the highest good” (GW 4:393). Kant makes it clear that good will is superior to all else and the cause of all goodness. Kant has successfully argued that it is the unconditioned and the absolute good without being conditioned by any particular context or confining situation. For Kant supreme good, highest good and absolute good can mean the same. In comparing it with other types of good he states that it is higher beyond any comparison (GW 4:394).

Goodwill is the supreme good because it remains un tarnished by anything bad or evil. It is unique among all goods because it does not combine with anything which is evil. Therefore for Kant, all other goods are limited in the sense that they combine with evil in some measure which makes it

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13 Though Kant calls good will as the highest good, it could be noted that to a large extend, his theory of good will remains unexplored. Kant appears happy to leave its meaning at an intuitive level and allow the readers’ mind to explicate it. Thus his concept of goodwill offers ample scope for creative exploration within the parameters set by Kant. Kant leaves goodwill un-explicated which does not limit its scope or set boundaries rather provides intellectual viability for applications to different contexts.
to be contaminated. Kant writes, “This will not be, because of this, be the sole and complete good, but it must still be the highest good and the condition of every other, even of all demands for happiness” (GW 4:396).

Kant again makes a distinction here when he states that it is not just the complete good rather the highest good. Thus he makes sure that the emphasis he lays on the supremacy of this type of good is made explicit beyond ambiguities. This is made evident when he writes in the Second Critique that, “The concept of the highest already contains an ambiguity that, if not attended to, can occasion needless disputes. The highest can mean either the supreme or the complete. The first is that condition which is itself unconditioned, that is, not subordinate to any other; the second is that whole which is not part of a still greater whole of the same kind” (CPrR 5:110).

It could be noted here that Kant does not offer any other descriptions about goodwill or use imageries or metaphors to explicate it further for he is convinced that there could be nothing which can sufficiently unravel its meaning. Therefore he prefers to call it as the highest good offering intellectual liberty for everyone to understand it. Kant thinks that it is not a concept which needs to be taught rather it is in everyone’s understanding. He writes, “We have, then, to explicate the concept of a goodwill that is to be esteemed in itself and that is good apart from any further purpose, as it already dwells in natural sound understanding and needs not so much to be taught as only to be clarified – this concept that always takes first place in estimating the total worth of our actions and constitutes the condition of all the rest” (GW 4:397). Thus Kant does not display keen interest on expounding the nuances of goodwill rather he is comfortable to state that it is the highest good.

To say that good will is the highest good does not imply that nothing else possesses goodwill. There are other things which are achieved by goodwill and they will certainly have value. Though Kant argues that goodwill is the highest good he does not subscribe to the view that it is the only good. He is of the view that reason plays a role in the pursuit of different goods such as happiness. Though happiness can be a good through the interference of reason, it is a relative good as it is
subjected to the principle of reason. The unconditioned good is the will which is good in itself and not a will conditioned to satisfy certain desires.¹⁴

Dean adds an exciting twist to the discussion on goodwill. He speaks of goodwill in relation to human beings. According to him, goodwill is not a rarity among the human beings because there is reason to treat everyone with dignity and respect though we don’t find the perfection of goodwill in everyone. Goodwill is not the property of a few moral saints who are committed to a moral world and whose margin of lapse in moral matters is less. But, Kant being aware of the frailties of human nature which he acknowledges repeatedly in his writings, argues for the presence of goodwill in most human beings. Goodwill involves commitment to moral principles which is compatible with certain amount of self-deception and the weakness of the will in a human person.¹⁶

Though goodwill is the supreme good, at times it fails to produce good results and its goodness is not diminished by this failure or the bad results which follow. These bad results are due to the human frailties and unhealthy combinations with the evil. Irrespective of these results, goodwill retains its state of purity and remains as the supreme good for Kant states, “Even if, by a special disfavour of fortune or by the niggardly provision of a step motherly nature, this will should wholly lack the capacity to carry out its purpose – if with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing and only the good will were left – then, like a jewel, it would still shine by itself, as something that has its full worth in itself” (GW 4:394). Therefore it is an inherent good and its goodness is not conditioned by any factors and so goodwill is the supreme good.

### 2.2.2 Duty as Act of Obligation

¹⁴Ibid., 44-45.

¹⁵This Kantian acknowledgment of human frailty is amply clear in his idea of *radical evil* In Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason he writes that, “This insincerity of throwing dust into one's own eyes, which prevents the founding of a genuine moral attitude in us, then also expands outwardly to a falsity and deception of others that, if it is not to be called malice, yet deserves to be named at least worthlessness; and this insincerity resides in human nature's radical evil, which (because it deranges the moral power of judgment in regard to what one ought to consider a human being to be and thus makes imputation inwardly and outwardly entirely uncertain) amounts to the foul stain on our genus, which, as long as we do not get it out, prevents the germ of the good from developing, as it otherwise presumably would” (RN 6:38).

The Kantian morality may begin with goodwill but does not actually proceed from it rather it evolves from the principle of duty. In order to make clear the concept of goodwill Kant introduces the concept of duty. Kant does not equate duty with goodwill for he writes; “we shall set before ourselves the concept of duty, which contains that of a good will though under certain subjective limitations and hindrances, which, however, far from concealing it and making it unrecognizable, rather bring it out by contrast and make it shine forth all the more brightly” (GW 4:397).

A righteous person will be driven to respond positively to the call of duty and it is ones maxim that gets actualized while responding to the duty. Thus duty is the relationship between ones actions and the autonomy of the will. All actions do not qualify to be moral but actions done for the sake of duty alone are morally worthy. The moral worth of an action depends whether one acts from duty or from inclinations. If inclinations dominate, the moral worth of these actions will deteriorate and on the other hand if the role of inclinations is low its moral worth be on the higher side. Kant’s admiration for duty is best expressed in these words from the *Groundwork*:

*Duty!* Thou sublime and mighty name that embraces nothing charming or insinuating, but requires submission, and yet does not seek to move the will by threatening anything that would arouse natural aversion or terror in the mind but only holds forth a law which of itself finds entry into the mind and yet gains reluctant reverence (though not always obedience), a law before which all inclinations are dumb, even though they secretly work against it; what origin is there worthy of you, and where is to be found the root of your noble descent which proudly rejects all kinship with the inclinations, descent from which is the indispensable condition of that worth which human beings alone can give themselves? (CPrR 5:86).

These words summarise the Kantian principle of the primacy of duty. The true moral worth of a human being is revealed when he acts from duty. An action has to be free of all inclinations if it has to be considered dutiful meaning in conformity with the moral law. Kant holds that common moral thought identifies duties towards ourselves and others. He also speaks of perfect and imperfect duties. And these diverse forms of duties are derived from the categorical imperative which is also the fundamental principle of morality.
2.2.2.1 Perfect Duties as Mandatory

The perfect duties are those which offer no exceptions and considered guilty if we don’t attend to them. These are duties which we apply to all cases and followed unswervingly. These duties could be further explicated that the duty towards ones neighbour is not less significant to duty towards ones parents. If one has debts to be paid to someone then he needs to pay it as promised as per contract. And if one says that he needs the money to take care of his/her parents and the debt cannot be paid then it is morally wrong and against the spirit of perfect duty. It is a kind of unqualified duty which cannot be substituted for another or bypassed. Thus perfect duty demands to perform the particular act as promised earlier.\textsuperscript{17} The perfect duties can be further divided into duties towards oneself and others.

2.2.2.1.1 Perfect Duty towards Ourselves

Kant with an example elucidates the perfect duty towards ourselves. He argues if someone has experienced extreme hardships and as an act of frustration decides to take away one’s life, but still in possession of reason may ask, is it not against duty to take away my own very life? Such a person, if he tries to ask whether his maxim of the action can become a universal law of nature then the maxim of his action would be, “From self-love, I make it my principle to shorten my life when its longer duration threatens more trouble than it promises agreeableness” (GW 4:422).

The question here is, whether this principle of ‘self-love’ can become an act for the sake of duty? Any serious reflection would tell us that prolongation of life to the maximum is the purpose of human living and this particular maxim can’t be qualified to be a universal law of nature and so it is against the spirit of the principle of duty. The natural law theory states that the preservation of human life is an absolute priority. The experience of pain and suffering as in this case is not a reason for suicide. The world cannot operate on such principles where everyone experiencing pain opts for suicide. It cannot become a universal norm for the call of duty is prolongation of human life. To borrow the words of Kant; “ It is then seen at once that a nature whose law it would be to

\textsuperscript{17} Paton H.J, \textit{The Categorical Imperative}, 147-148.
destroy life itself by means of the same feeling whose destination is to impel toward the furtherance of life would contradict itself and would therefore not subsist as nature” (GW 4:422).

**2.2.2.1.2 Perfect Duty towards Others**

As in the previous case, here too, Kant opens the discussion with an example of *borrowing money*. In the example of borrowing money, whoever is in need of money would borrow it from someone though he knows that he would not pay it back. With a false promise to pay back and yet has the moral conscience to ask oneself whether it is acceptable to do so. This would lead to the maxim that whenever I need money, though I can’t pay back I would still borrow with an assurance which I intend to violate (GW 4:422).

For Kant, maxim of this type cannot become a universal law. Kant’s view is that it is unreasonable to do an action if that action’s maxim contradicts itself when made into a universal law. Here in this case of *lying promise*, making it a universal law implies that one can lie when he is assured of what he wants from lying. Roger Sullivan deduces a conjunction from the example of a lying promise. “I intend to make lying promises whenever it is advantageous to me to do so, and I also will a world in which everyone else makes lying promises, even to me, whenever it is advantageous for him or her to do.” Its consequent conclusion would be that the convention of promise-making would break down and no one would remain faithful to the promises they make.  

The aim of promise making is to build trust among people in the society and if everyone who borrows money fails to keep the promise made at that time then promise making becomes a meaningless exercise. Thus it would eventually lead to a culture where people do not trust each other and there will be a society without trust giving way to suspicion and deception. Therefore, we cannot act on an immoral maxim like *false promise*. Upkeep of promises is a

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18 We need to take in to account here that the value of human life has no parallel or substitute and so all the medical experiments and advances are in view of this principle. The natural law is the prolongation of human life as long as possible and that is the reason that most Societies have not legalized ‘Euthanasia’ or ‘Mercy Killing’. And it is for the same reason that capital punishment is a moral issue.

duty which needs to be followed perfectly as it involves ones integrity and responsibility to the other.

2.2.2.2 Imperfect Duty as Voluntary

Imperfect duties are those which refer to the procedures and values one need to follow though it is not absolutely necessary to keep them at every instance. The imperfect duties are not binding in the same measure as the perfect duties. It gives the option to reject or hold on to the principles as and when a need arises. It can also be further classified as duty towards oneself and duty towards others.

2.2.2.2.1 Imperfect Duty towards Ourselves

Kant presents the example of a man who is potentially talented and a healthy utilization of his talents would make him a better contributor to the world. But, a particular person does not show any interest in developing his talents and takes a lukewarm approach towards the gift of nature at his disposition. The point in consideration here is whether this approach can be made a universal norm for all to follow (GW 4:423). This would disturb the fabric of the entire human community whose purpose is a constant striving for perfection. Advancement at all levels whether personal or collective is humanity’s ultimate vision. Carelessness to ones capacities and nullifying one’s possibilities do not guide humanity towards its final resolve. Kant writes: “For as a rational being he necessarily wills that all the capacities in him be developed, since they serve him and are given to him for all sorts of possible purposes (GW 4:423).

Kant argues here that the talents to be developed are not meant to serve oneself or others rather the fact that they have been given implies that they need to be developed. The powers that Kant mentions here are those which give specific human identity. They would include the powers of scientific thinking, aesthetic appreciation and an authentic moral living. These are powers which make people to prosper and flower to their full potential. It involves a moral duty and responsibility towards oneself to bring the best out of oneself and contribute positively to the society. It is a contradiction to have talents and at the same time not to put them into use. It may be perfectly logical if one thinks that he wants to live without developing his talents but certainly unacceptable if we view from the perspective of the talents and their
subsequent purpose. It is for this reason that Kant calls it a duty to oneself but having its impact also on others and society.

2.2.2.2 Imperfect Duty towards Others
Kant explicates the imperfect duty towards others through an example. Someone for whom everything seems to be going smoothly sees others struggle hard to make their living. And the person thinks that he/she is not the cause for others’ struggles and so it is not his/her responsibility to alleviate it. Here, the person is not the cause of suffering of others rather does not bother about them. For Kant, this sort of thinking would eliminate social responsibility and cannot become a universal law (GW 4:423). Kant writes:

Now, if such a way of thinking were to become a universal law of nature (then) the human race could admittedly very well subsist, no doubt even better than when everyone prates about sympathy and benevolence and even exerts himself to practice them occasionally, but on the other hand also cheats where he can, sells the right of human beings or otherwise infringes upon it. But although it is possible that a universal law of nature could very well subsist in accordance with such a maxim, it is still impossible to will that such a principle hold everywhere as a law of nature (GW 4:423).

Now, the human society would not cease to exist with such a maxim because there is no infringement of other’s rights or any threat alert to other’s life. But this cannot become a universal norm because one does not offer to the other the kind of assistance he might expect from others when he/she goes through a similar situation. Although we would live our lives without considering others, we fail to live a social life as social beings contributing and affecting the lives of other people in the world. Therefore gestures of this kind are also duties though they are not mandatory duties but necessary for enhancement of human community.

2.2.3 Good-Evil Dichotomy in Kant’s ethics
Good and evil are central themes in the study of ethics and no sincere inquiry into morality can bypass this binary. Philosophers for ages have thought over this question and have come out with diverse opinions which are inspirational and yet inadequate. One of the key questions discussed over the years is whether good and evil are absolute or they are relative to time and context of an event. Wouldn’t they have any existence when taken away from the context? Are good and evil infused into the nature of human persons or are they simply abstractions resulting from the absence of something or the other. This dichotomy is a question of everyday experience which philosophy since its inception has attempted to understand. With the Sept.11 terrorist attack, we are exposed to the stark nature of evil. This and similar paradigmatic cases bring about a stern moral indignation which the term evil alone appears skilled to describe. There is an intuitive experience of evil in day today experience when an innocent suffers and we feel vice is rewarded and virtue goes unmerited. Thus good-evil contrast is a fact today in concrete human experiences and evil at least makes abysmal appearances at different stages of our very lives.

Kant being a philosopher who expressed immense faith in human person’s dignified life and self-worth was genuinely interested in this dichotomy of good and evil in every one of us. We witness an elegant unfolding of this concern not merely in his works on morals but also in his works on religion and throughout his philosophical surge. As no study on ethics can bypass this issue, it is imperative to discuss it as a prelude to the understanding of Kantian ethics and its subsequent application to business and trade.

In Kant we find that evil receives a conceptual independence particularly from its religious connotations and it is basically seen as a moral problem. Unlike Augustine, for whom evil was merely a privation of good and Aristotle who presented it as a deviant character of matter, Kant interpreted it from the perspective of human freedom. In contrast to the medieval tradition which perceived evil as an absence of good, Kant advocated that it stems from one’s nature. When we denote evil in relation to good, we deny its self-standing status. Kant was certain that if evil is to have any moral relevance then it had to stalk from an appropriate use of an individual’s freedom.

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20It’s worth mentioning here that Kant in his works on religion enters into a profound discussion on the propensity to evil which he terms radical evil. Though radical evil has deep significance in Kant’s philosophy, we limit our discussion to moral evil because our prime consideration in ethics is moral evil. And whenever it is referred to evil in this section it means moral evil unless otherwise mentioned.
where good and evil present themselves as different options for us to choose. Kant reflects these sentiments when he asserts that, “when we enquire into the origin of evil, at the beginning we still do not take into account the propensity to it (as peccatum in potentia) but only consider the actual evil of given actions according to the evil’s inner possibility, and according to all that must conspire within the power of choice for such actions to be performed” (RN 6:40-41).

Kant describes evil as powers of choice\(^{21}\) that an individual possesses over his actions. Kant would not see evil as a property of things themselves rather he locates it in the maxim one chooses. Kant states; “we call a human being evil, however, not because he performs actions that are evil (contrary to law), but because these are so constituted that they allow the inference of evil maxims in him” (RN 6:20). Kant does not hold that moral evil is a violation of the moral law rather he sees it as one’s immoral disposition. The inflexion of the will is revealed through the actions and the evil actions depict the invisible will acting in a particular manner. Thus for Kant, evil is not a transgression of practical law rather a wrong decision of the will.

Evil therefore is an act of freedom which reveals the value an agent holds and the reason one applies in the process of deliberation. Impulses and inclinations may incite an agent but they cannot infringe upon the individual unless allowed to do so (GW 4:458). This is an act for which the person is completely responsible and it is not the effect of another cause or forced upon someone rather ones choice.

Though Kant’s discussion on evil is pretty extensive, generally in relation to human nature, the same cannot be said about his treatment of good. Whatever discussion he engages regarding good is always in correspondence with his elaboration of goodwill. However, in this section, it is our aim to pool together his thoughts on good which is essential for further study and analysis in this

\(^{21}\)Kant is a moral rigorist who does not hold for a neutral between good and evil. For him the human person can choose from good or evil and nothing is between both. Therefore the power of choice would mean to choose between good and evil. The provision for a moral indifference is not available in Kant’s scheme of philosophy because the moral law is the incentive of the power of choice (RN 6:23). This description power of choice could be meaningful when we understand the Kantian distinction of Wille and Willkür. These are the two qualities of the will by which the dual functions of legislation and execution are carried out. Our power of choice lies in their effective functioning and it is in this that we experience the force of moral law. Wille is legislative and the author of law while Willkür is executive and the source of maxims (MM 6:226). See Saju Chackalackal, *Unity of Knowing and Acting in Kant: A Paradigmatic Integration of the theoretical and the practical* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002), 220.
research. Kant did not subscribe to the view that any outcome was inherently good rather goodwill alone is intrinsically good without qualification. He would state that goodwill is good in itself and not for what it produces. The goal of reason is not to produce happiness but to produce a will that is good in itself.

It is interesting to note that in the *Second Critique*, Chapter II on the analytic of practical reason, Kant speaks about the concept of an object of pure practical reason. He calls good and evil as only objects of a practical reason. According to his classification the former flows from the faculty of desire and the latter from the faculty of aversion and in both of these cases they are in agreement with a principle of reason. But he states that it cannot be the case always as it is impossible to determine what brings pleasure and what brings pain without relying on experience (CPrR 5:58). He would add that well-being or ill-being always signifies only a reference to our state of agreeableness or disagreeableness, of fulfilment or pain. But what is agreeable is not necessarily good and what is disagreeable is not always evil. Kant writes:

> This is opposed even to the use of language, which distinguishes the agreeable from the good and the disagreeable from the evil and requires that good and evil always be appraised by reason and hence through concepts, which can be universally communicated, not through mere feeling, which is restricted to individual subjects and their receptivity; and since, nevertheless, pleasure or displeasure cannot of themselves be connected a priori with any representation of an object, a philosopher who believed that he had to put a feeling of pleasure at the basis of his practical appraisal would have to call *good* that which is a *means* to the agreeable, and *evil* that which is a cause of disagreeableness and of pain; for, appraisal of the relation of means to ends certainly belongs to reason (CPrR 5:58).

Thus Kant appears to hold that there is nothing good or evil in itself rather the decisive grounds of good depends on our pathological feeling towards the object. This is not a *good* but a *well-being*, not a concept of reason but merely a pragmatic concept of feeling. This cannot belong to pure practical law and therefore it cannot be the case for morality (CPrR 5:62). Well-being or ill-being
refers to the agreeableness or disagreeableness which is essentially gratification or pain but good or evil always has a reference point in the will determined by the law of reason (CPrR 5:60).

Thus it could be summarised that what is morally good is what is in accordance with the moral law. The moral law is formal having no content but only a form and it could be concluded that goodness is prescribed to rational agents who responsibly will their actions in conformity to the law. We call those actions evil where content is given before form and will decides arbitrarily making exceptions for itself. Evil is brought into existence when one acts on a maxim other than the pure practical reason. So the goodness depends on acting on one’s duty without adhering to feelings and sentiments. Thus if the will is good then the subsequent actions are good and if will is evil then the actions flowing from it are evil. This therefore leads to the famous Kantian conclusion which reads, “it is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a goodwill” (GW 4:393).

This also reinstates my previous supposition that Kant talks about good always in relation to goodwill as he does not find anything else good. Thus Kant argues in the Groundwork that the human reason has a greater pursuit than happiness with a higher purpose to accomplish what Kant terms as highest good. He calls it as a vocation of reason when he writes; “the true vocation of reason must be to produce a will that is good…” (GW 4:396). It is therefore the reason’s call and commitment to bring about a will which is good in conformity with the moral law. Thus for Kant evil is not something which subsists in a thing rather it is to be located in one’s maxim and good is conceived always in relation to a will which is good.

2.2.4 Principles of Moral Obligation

The preface to the Groundwork outlines Kant’s aim for his moral philosophy. He intends to present a supreme principle\(^\text{22}\) of morality when he states, “the present Groundwork is, however, nothing
more than the search for and establishment of the *supreme principle of morality*\(^{23}\), which constitutes by itself a business that in its purpose is complete and to be kept apart from every other moral investigation” (GW 4:392).

At the very outset, it is our task to provide some description of this supreme principle of morality as it is not self-revelatory. For some people, this principle is not as evident as it was for Kant while some others question the very existence of such a principle. It is possible that the common man wonders over its role on moral reasoning and moral theorising. Kant does not directly present an argument for it rather offers multiple articulations for the principle. For instance, Kant argues that reason should be the decisive force on moral matters and seeks unity under certain principles; unity in a minimum possible number of principles or a single supreme principle\(^{24}\). In the *First Critique* we read, “In the first part of our transcendental logic we treated the understanding as being the faculty of rules; reason we shall here distinguish from understanding by entitling it the *faculty of principles*” (CPR A 299/ B 356).

In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, he argues that, given the nature of the empirical data there could be plurality of principles but because the moral principles are to be decided by reason we can narrow down to one objective principle. He writes; “considered objectively, there can be only one human reason, there cannot be many philosophies; in other words, there can be only one true system of philosophy from principles, in however many different and even conflicting ways one has philosophised about the one and the same proposition” (MM 6:207). Again in his *Lectures on Ethics*, Kant emphasizes this idea while discussing morality. He conceives morality as conformity

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\(^{23}\)Kant assumes that there is a supreme principle of morality which he vows to establish. Kant is confident that it is a unique principle different from every other principle of moral obligation and he sets of to locate it in our daily moral life. For Kant, this is an assumption of a special kind where first having assumed, he attempts to explore its content. The *Groundwork* is a journey in this direction. Having reflected upon it in the first section, Kant concludes; “Thus, then, we have arrived, within the moral cognition of common human reason, at its principle, which it admittedly does not think so abstractly in a universal form but which it actually has always before its eyes and uses as the norm for its appraisals” (GW 4:403-404).

to a single universal principle. In our daily living we call something moral because it corresponds with this universal principle. The essence of morality is that our actions are motivated by this single principle (LE 27:1426-1427).

In Kant’s reasoning, the human will\(^{25}\) whether good or otherwise is steered by reason. And reason moves human will in two diverse ways either in agreement with the law or contrary to the law and when *human will* acts in respect for the law, this is called the autonomy of the will or when it is driven by inclination, it is the heteronomy of the will.\(^{26}\) In the *Second Critique* Kant speaks about two natures in every rational agent explicating the heteronomy and autonomy of human will. Kant observes that, “Autonomy of the will is the sole principle of all moral laws and of duties in keeping with them; heteronomy of choice, on the other hand, not only does not ground any obligation at all but is instead opposed to the principle of obligation and to the morality of the will. That is to say, the sole principle of morality consists in independence from all matter of the law and at the same time in the determination of choice through the mere form of giving universal law that a maxim must be capable of” (CPrR 5:33).

Thus, there is a sensible nature and a super sensible nature in every human person. The rational agent expresses the sensible nature when conditioned by empirical factors leading to heteronomy and expresses the super sensible nature when existing in accordance with the moral law leading to the autonomy of the will. Thus, though there can be only one supreme principle of morality, the search for this principle leads to two alternatives which he calls autonomy of the will and heteronomy of the will.

### 2.2.4.1 Autonomy of the Will

The focal point of Kant’s moral philosophy is that the rational will is autonomous. For Kant, this is the key to justify the authority that the moral judgements have over us. In Kant’s view, free will is not one which is unbound by laws rather it is bound by them which are one’s own making. It

\(^{25}\) According to Kant, “*Will* is a kind of causality of living beings insofar as they are rational, and *freedom* would be that property of such causality that it can be efficient independently of alien causes *determining* it, just as *natural necessity* is the property of the causality of all nonrational beings to be determined to activity by the influence of alien causes” (GW 4:447).

\(^{26}\) Hans Reiner, *Duty and Inclination: The fundamentals of morality discussed and refined with special regard to Kant and Schiller* (Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff publications, 1983), 18.
means not lawlessness rather have laws over which one can have decisive authority. *Autonomy* is the nature of the will by which it is a law to itself. The principle of autonomy reads, “to choose only in such a way that the maxims of your choice are also included as universal law in the same volition” (GW 4:440). It is through this principle of autonomy Kant counters the human tendency to make exceptions for oneself due to personal inclinations. It offers the non-contingent character that the moral principles necessarily have.

Autonomy thus includes freedom which contains in it the idea of laws which are one’s own making over which one has absolute authority. An individual is considered free when bound only by the decisions of his will and this will is internal and sets the concerned person free. Thus the individual’s reason becomes both legislator and executer of the moral law. Kant was assertive in stating that will should necessary act on the authority of reason and not be moved by impulses. He writes, “Reason must regard itself as the author of its principles independently of alien influences; consequently, as practical reason or as the will of a rational being it must be regarded of itself as free, that is, the will of such a being cannot be a will of his own except under the idea of freedom, and such a will must in a practical respect thus be attributed to every rational being” (GW 4:448). Thus the autonomous will operates by responding to reason and it is free, for reason is physically or psychologically unaffected and functions unforced. And once the autonomous free will establishes this set of prescriptions then it is bound by these directives.

Kant connects autonomy with moral law and the autonomous will and moral will are the same. The will is autonomous when it is bound by the demands of the universal application of one’s maxim. Only a good will can be moral and autonomous and vice versa. Everyone has the capability to ascend to this level where his will becomes a good will. It could well be the triumph of an individual where one perfectly submits oneself to the moral will and at the same time preserving its nature of universality. An autonomous person is at the same time both self-legislative and universally legislative. Reath suggests that Kantian concept of autonomy is a sovereign principle and a legislative power. Autonomy is not a psychological aptitude or ability that motivates an individual rather the rational agent’s power over himself. Thus autonomous beings are sovereign

27Chackalackal , *Unity of Knowing and Acting in Kant: A Paradigmatic Integration of the theoretical and the practical*, 265.
entities with immense capacity to legislate laws of their choice unrestrained by any exterior force. This approach to the autonomy principle evolves from a companion reading of the categorical imperative which is perceived as a legislative procedure\textsuperscript{28}.

In conclusion we can state that autonomy is a quality of the will and primarily a law to itself. It is one’s maxim which becomes a universal law for all and in the case of autonomy the reason moves the will to act and it is free of reason itself. It is also not affected by the empirical factors and autonomy implies freedom and specifically the freedom of the will. It is in autonomy lies the very dignity of humanity where the autonomous being acts purely from duty. It motivates every rational agent to be a legislator of universal laws free of the non-moral motives we might possess. Autonomy assures that we confirm our behaviour to principles which is the essential quality of a moral-rational will.

2.2.4.2 Heteronomy of the Will

Autonomy of the will is the identity of an ethically righteous individual while its opposite the heteronomy represents an individual whose will is not free and confined to empirical factors. Kant’s practical philosophy rigorously distinguished the heteronomy of happiness and the autonomy of freedom. He identifies heteronomy as pleasure principle while autonomy is the responsible behaviour of the will acting on reason.

His terminologies of pathological pleasure and moral pleasure make this distinction more explicit. Pleasure is pathological when one attains at least some measure of happiness out of an action and it is moral when one acts purely from obligation without considering its consequences. Happiness is not a consideration in moral pleasure as the individual is ought to fulfil his/her duty and for Kant any emphasis on happiness\textsuperscript{29} would bring about a derailment of moral system. Kant warns us of such an impending danger when he writes; “If this distinction is not observed, if eudaemonism (the principle of happiness) is set up as the basic principle instead of eleutheronomy (the principle of


\textsuperscript{29} Kant holds that happiness cannot individually bring forth the highest good. In the First Critique he argues for a worthiness required of happiness. “Happiness taken by itself, is, for our reason, far from being the complete good. Reason does not approve happiness (however inclination may desire it) except in so far as it is united with worthiness to be happy, that is, with moral conduct” (CPR A 813/ B 841).
freedom of internal law giving), the result is the *euthanasia* (easy death) of all morals” (MM 6:378). This is the kind of distinction that Kant’s practical philosophy brings to explicate the moral principle of duty.

Heteronomy of the will is thus the source of all unauthentic principles of morality. The heteronomous will does not directly give the law but always in consensus with the object that presents the law. Kant writes, “If the will seeks the law that is to determine it *anywhere else than* in the fitness of its maxims for its own giving of universal law – consequently if, in going beyond itself, it seeks this law in a property of any of its objects--*heteronomy* always results” (GW 4:441). Thus a heteronomous will acts out of obedience to rules of action which are legislated externally. It always submits itself to some other end acting in such a way to obtain pleasure seeking personal satisfaction. The moral obligations it recommends cannot be regarded as completely mandatory to any agent since the maxim of one’s action comes from external sources.

In Kant’s opinion most traditional normative moral theories (Utilitarian) are based on heteronomous moral principles and their legitimacy depends on personal interests rather than being imposed by reason. This leads to hypothetical imperatives but Kant's own on the contrary is the principle of autonomy which leads to the categorical imperative. A will is heteronomous if it follows the guidance of desire which is in opposition to reason and this relation of the will to its object can only bring about hypothetical imperatives and only autonomy of the will alone can bring about categorical imperatives. This discussion takes us to the famous Kantian theory of imperatives as hypothetical and Categorical.

### 2.2.5 Imperatives as Kant’s Commands Steering Ethics

Human life constantly shuttles between competing interests and often we lack the clarity of definite moral actions. However, as rational agents we have the capacity to reason out and discern moral demands enforced by reason. For Kant these are *a priori* principles imposed by reason which can reset our priorities in the wake of competing options. He envisaged a moral dynamism which can set in motion the human choices in a precise and worthy way. He thought it possible to have an ultimate moral norm which can earnestly command human actions. In the preface to his work *Groundwork* he makes this explicit: “The present groundwork is, however, nothing more than the
search for and establishment of the supreme principle of morality, which constitutes by itself a
business that in its purpose is complete and to be kept apart from every other moral investigation”
(GW 4:392). He defends that this ultimate norm of morality can obligate us unconditionally.

However, the human beings retain the freedom to align their free will in a way favourable to them.
They can either opt for the objective laws of reason or move with the subjective interests. Paton
captures it in *The Categorical Imperative*: “It is a plain fact that men do not always do what would
necessarily be done by a rational agent if reason had full control over passion. This fact makes all
the objective principles of practical reason, which are always principles of some kind of goodness,
appear to us as principles of obligation, and so as commands or imperatives.”

The demands of reason whether subjective or objective are called *imperatives* leading to two
diverse types. Kant expounds the nature of moral commands through his distinction of categorical
and hypothetical imperatives. Kant explains this division as follows: “Now, all imperatives
command either hypothetically or categorically. The former represent the practical necessity of a
possible action as a means to achieving something else that one wills (or that it is at least possible
for one to will). The categorical imperative would be that which represented an action as
objectively necessary of itself, without reference to another end” (GW 4:414).

In the Second *Critique* Kant again makes this distinction clear: “Imperatives, therefore, hold
objectively and are quite distinct from maxims, which are subjective principles. But the former
either determine the conditions of the causality of a rational being as an efficient cause merely
with respect to the effect and its adequacy to it or they determine only the will, whether or not it is
sufficient for the effect. The first would be hypothetical imperatives and would contain mere
precepts of skill; the second, on the contrary, would be categorical and would alone be practical
laws” (CPrR 5:20).

Hypothetical imperatives command an action as a means to attain certain purpose while the
categorical imperative commands necessarily. For Kant the categorical imperative is neither

conditional nor hypothetical rather completely binding regardless of one’s desires. Thus Kant calls an objective principle made necessary by the will Command, and the formula of this command imperative. This imperative is something that one is obliged to do and which is expressed by ought (GW 413- 414). Thus it is ought judgement which oblige us to perform an action bringing rational constraints for we cannot morally avoid doing it. In the next couple of sections we explore these two diverse approaches of moral obligation.

2.2.5.1 Hypothetical Imperatives

There are several occasions and occurrences when one’s actions may be conditioned by an end leading to hypothetical imperative. It is thus a moral command which is based on a personal motive or desire and so don’t necessarily have a normative force in line with unconditional moral obligation. A hypothetical imperative is not universally valid and not something which is absolutely certain, but includes exceptions. Kant defines it as; “if the action would be good merely as a means to something else the imperative is hypothetical” (GW 4:414). In the case of a hypothetical imperative I have no assurance of what it contains until the condition is disclosed to me (GW 4:420). For Kant the hypothetical imperatives are subjected to certain relative ends (GW 4:428).

Kant further classifies the hypothetical imperatives as problematic and assertoric imperatives. When hypothetical imperative holds that an action is good for some possible purpose it is a problematically practical principle while if it is good for actual purpose it is an assertorically practical principle. Here one concerns about the attainment of an end irrespective of relation to a moral norm and that’s why they are also called imperatives of skill (GW 4:415)³¹. Thus a hypothetical imperative which represents the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to something else is assertoric. An assertoric hypothetical imperative implies that an action is good for some actual aim. It considers the necessity of an action as a means of furthering happiness.

³¹ Paton clarifies the different terms that Kant introduces to distinguish between the variants in hypothetical imperatives. He observes: “Kant's terminology is not wholly satisfactory, and it is not unreasonable to say that he may have been unduly influenced by a supposed parallel with problematic, assertoric, and apodeictic judgements. Elsewhere he himself suggests that a problematic imperative is a contradiction in terms, and that the proper expression is ‘technical imperative’ or ‘imperative of skill’”. Ibid., 115.
These are also called prudential imperatives as they are not universally valid principles which make Kant to call them as counsels or advice and not laws (GW 4:415-416).

Paton makes a further clarification on this as he differentiates between command and Law. “The word 'command' serves to show that moral obligation does not depend on our inclinations and may even be opposed to them: there is no question here of cajolery or persuasion. The word 'law', it must be remembered, does not necessarily carry with it the idea of ‘command’; it expresses here, as Kant says, an unconditioned necessity (not necessitation) valid for every rational agent as such.”

Therefore prudential imperatives are only counsels or advices which we need not always abide by. Though we might consider the assertoric imperatives in particular situations but we must be willing to discard them when required. There is one imperative that necessitates purpose for human life is the categorical imperative.

2.2.5.2 The Categorical Imperative

For Kant the fundamental principle of morality is law of an autonomous will and the conception of reason which is the categorical imperative. This self-governing reason in its supreme norm of morality provides the decisive grounds to regard every other as deserving respect and worth. This is an unconditional command contrary to the hypothetical commands derived a priori. Kant in the *Groundwork* defines the categorical imperative as that, “which declares the action to be of itself objectively necessary without reference to some purpose, that is, even apart from any other end, holds as an apodictically practical principle” (GW 4:415). He reiterates it again: “finally, there is one imperative that, without being based upon and having as its condition any other purpose to be attained by certain conduct, commands this conduct immediately” (GW 4:416).

As an ultimate norm of morality the categorical imperative functions as the distinguishing principle between permissible and impermissible deeds. Kant writes: “By categorical imperatives certain actions are permitted or forbidden, that is, morally possible or impossible, while some of them or their opposites are morally necessary, that is, obligatory” (MM 6: 221). It is by this very principle

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32 Ibid., 116.
that certain actions are commanded to be done or forbidden (MM 6:223) and the ground of its possibility is freedom (MM 6:222): it is also the highest good (CPrR 5:134).

Thus the categorical imperative commands everyone to perform or refuse to perform an action. It demands an unconditional obedience and it is a law in its fullest description and objective. The moral law cannot depend on the ends that one holds in view for Kant the ends emerge from ones inclinations.\textsuperscript{33} Thus the major feature of the categorical imperative is that it is an imperative with universal and intrinsic validity and it offers no room for circumstantial considerations, rather holds that actions must conform to an objective moral norm.

Though Kant asserts that the categorical imperative is one\textsuperscript{34} and everyone is obliged to follow; he gives no less than three formulations\textsuperscript{35} of the same. And the first formulation reads: “act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (GW 4:421). Its variant reads: “So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means” (GW 4:429). The third form of the categorical imperative states: “So act that your will can regard itself at the same time as making universal law through its maxim” (GW 4:434). Kant offers these different formulations in order to expose the different aspects of the categorical imperative which he considers as essential for the metaphysics of morals. These different formulations should not divert us from focusing on the moral significance of the imperative rather it should explore its multiple implications.

\textsuperscript{33} Reiner, Duty and Inclination: The fundamentals of morality discussed and refined with special regard to Kant and Schiller, 17-18. Kant had taken rather a hard approach towards inclinations. He writes; “Inclination is blind and servile, whether it is kindly or not; and when morality is in question, reason must not play the part of mere guardian to inclination but, disregarding it altogether, must attend solely to its own interest as pure practical reason (CPrR 5:118).

\textsuperscript{34} We at times find Kant referring to categorical imperatives instead of taking it in its usual singular form. The intention here is to refer to non-optional imperatives which flow from the categorical imperative. It does not imply that Kant is using it to refer to these different formulations in their totality for the categorical imperative is just one. These are some examples of the plural form in Kant’s writings: CSCT 8:285; MM 6: 221; MM 6:222; GW 4:425; GW 4:454; CPrR 5:41.

\textsuperscript{35} There is difference of opinions among the Kant scholars regarding the number of formulations. Some of them say that Kant gives three formulations of the same imperative while Paton states that there are at least five different variants of the same. See H.J. Paton, The Categorical Imperative, 129.
Paton links these formulations and holds them as a harmonious unity which is a right approach to understand their full meaning. He states that each of these formulations have an important role to perform in the larger picture of the Kantian metaphysics of morals. Though they may appear disconnected from each other, it is on this that the principles of his moral philosophy will reside.\textsuperscript{36} As this research progresses, we would be realising this fact better and these different formulations will run throughout the work. In our forthcoming chapters we will apply these formulations alongside other Kantian themes in business and trade and see the relevance and application of Kant for fair and moral business and trade practices.

\textsuperscript{36} See Ibid., 130.