

The Canon of Pure Reason

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See [Translator's Technical Notes](#)

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The Canon of Pure Reason

- 1.1 It is humiliating for human reason that it can provide nothing in its pure usage, and indeed even has need of a discipline in order to restrain its excesses and to prevent the illusions which arise from that pure usage.
- 1.2 But on the other hand it is elevated in turn and given a confidence by being able to practice this discipline itself, and indeed having to do so and without permitting another censor over itself, and likewise by securing against all attacks the limits, which it is necessitated to place on its speculative use--while at the same time restraining the engineered presumptions of every opponent--and thus securing in this wise everything which might still remain from its previously exaggerated demands.
- 1.3 Therefore the greatest and perhaps only utility of all philosophy of pure reason is surely only negative. For it does not serve as an organon for expansion, but rather as a discipline for the determination of boundaries. And instead of uncovering truth, it has merely the quiet merit of preventing errors.
- 2.1 Nonetheless somewhere there must still be a source of positive recognitions which belong to the jurisdiction of pure reason, and which perhaps give occasion to error only through some misunderstanding, but in fact make up the goal of the endeavor of reason.
- 2.2 For otherwise indeed to what cause were we to attribute the irresistible appetite for taking sure footage somewhere entirely out beyond the limits of experience?
- 2.3 It is suspicious of objects which entail a great interest for it.
- 2.4 It sets out on the way of mere speculation, in order to approach them. But these flee before it.
- 2.5 Supposedly on the single way which is yet left to it, namely that of the practical usage, there will be hope for better fortune in this its endeavor.

- 3.1 With a canon I understand the summary of foundational propositions a priori for the proper use of certain recognitional capacities in general.
- 3.2 Thus the universal logic in its analytical portion is a canon for understanding and reason in general, but only with respect to form, for it abstracts from all content.
- 3.3 Thus the transcendental analytic was the canon of pure understanding; for it alone is competent of true synthetic recognitions a priori.
- 3.4 But where no proper use of a recognitional capacity is possible, there is no canon.
- 3.5 Now according to all proofs conducted thus far every synthetic recognition by pure reason in its speculative use is entirely impossible.
- 3.6 Therefore there is no canon at all of the speculative use of reason (for this is thoroughly dialectic). Indeed all transcendental logic in this intention is nothing except discipline.
- 3.7 Accordingly if there is a proper use of pure reason anywhere, and in which case there must also be a canon of that, this will not deal with the speculative, but rather with the practical use of reason, and which for that reason we now want to investigate.

The Ultimate Purpose of the Pure Use of Our Reason

- 1.1 Reason is driven through a bent of its nature to go out beyond the experiential use, to venture about in a pure employment and, by means of mere Ideas, out to the extreme limits of all recognitions, and not to find peace except in the completion of its course in a systematic whole existing of itself.
- 1.2 Now is this striving based merely upon its speculative, or much more solely and alone upon its practical, interest?
 - 2.1 I will now set aside the fortune which pure reason attains in the speculative intention, and ask only about the attainability of those tasks, the solution of which makes up its ultimate purpose, and with respect to which all other tasks have merely the value of means.
 - 2.2 These highest purposes, according to the nature of reason, will in turn have to have unity in order to promote in a unified way that interest of humanity which is subordinate to none higher.
- 3.1 The final intention, to which the speculation of reason finally arrives in the transcendental usage, concerns three objects: freedom of will, immortality of soul and the existence of God.
- 3.2 With respect to all three the merely speculative interest of reason is only very paltry. And in that regard such a tiring work of transcendental investigation, wrenching in unceasing obstacles, would hardly be undertaken, because despite all discoveries which might be made with that, we still can make no usage which might prove its utility in *concreto*, i.e., in the investigation of nature.
- 3.3 The will may indeed be free, but this still can only concern the intelligible cause of our willing.
- 3.4 For concerning the phenomena of the expression of that willing, i.e., the actions, and in accordance with an inviolable, foundational maxim, without which we can exercise no reasoning in the empirical use, we must never ex-

plain these phenomena otherwise than as all remaining appearances of nature, namely in accordance with invariable laws of that nature.¹

- 3.5 Secondly we may even be able to comprehend the spiritual nature of the soul (and with that also its immortality). Nevertheless no reckoning can be made on either with respect to the appearances as an explanatory basis nor on the particular constitution of the future state. The reason for this is that our concept of an incorporeal nature is merely negative and does not expand our recognition in the least, nor does it offer any suitable material for conclusions, except per chance for such which can hold only for fictions, but which cannot be permitted of philosophy.²
- 3.6 Thirdly, even if the existence of a highest intelligence were proven, while we would indeed in that way make the purposefulness in the layout and order of the world comprehensible in general, we would in no way be authorized to derive or, where it is not perceived, to conclude boldly any sort of a particular institution and order from that. For it is a necessary rule of the speculative use of reason not to ignore natural causes and relinquish that, by means of which we can be instructed through experience, in order to derive that, with which we are familiar, from that which exceeds all our familiarity entirely.³
- 3.7 In short, these three propositions remain always transcendent for speculative reason and have no immanent use at all, i.e., are not permissible for objects of experience, thus are not usable in any manner for us. Rather, considered on their own, they are entirely idle and even so still require an exceedingly difficult exertion of reason.
- 4.1 If, accordingly, these three cardinal propositions are not at all necessary for our knowledge, and nonetheless are urgently commended through our reason, their importance will most assuredly have to concern the practical alone.

¹ As made clear in the [Third Antinomy](#) of the *CPR*, it is easy enough to dream up something like transcendental freedom, but there is never any occasion or need to utilize such a notion in any experience. So in that regard it is essentially useless and meaningless.

² It is also easy to conceive of a soul which is not material and which endures after life, but there is no possible way of using such a negative notion in the scientific investigation of the individual. It is essentially useless and sterile. This was presented in the Paralogisms of the *CPR*.

³ Knowledge of a God would not be helpful at all in the examination of the world as experienced, for we would be trying to conclude from something beyond our ken, i.e., God, to something that we are already familiar with via experience.

- 5.1 Everything which is possible through freedom is practical.
- 5.2 But if the conditions of the execution of our free choice are empirical, then in that way reason can have no other use except regulative and can serve only to effect the unity of empirical laws, e.g., in the instruction of prudence reason can effect the unification of goals which are proposed to us by our inclinations into a single one, namely happiness, and a like agreement of the means for achieving to that. And this unification makes up the entire occupation of reason, which accordingly can supply no other laws than pragmatic ones of free behavior for the achievement of the purposes commended to us through the senses. Therefore here reason can supply no pure laws which are fully determined a priori.⁴
- 5.3 On the other hand pure practical laws whose purpose is given completely a priori through reason and which are not empirically conditioned, but rather are utterly commanding, would be the product of pure reason.
- 5.4 But such are the moral laws. Hence these alone belong to the practical use of pure reason, and permit a canon.
- 6.1 Therefore the entire mission of reason in the treatment, which we can term pure philosophy, is in fact directed only to the three mentioned problems.
- 6.2 But these themselves have in turn their more remote intentions, namely: what is to be done if the will is free, if there is a God and a future world?
- 6.3 Now since this concerns our conduct in reference to the highest purpose, the final intention of nature, wisely maintaining us with the institution of our reason, is actually furnished only for the moral.
- 7.1 But since we now turn our attention to an object which is foreign* to the transcendental philosophy, caution is necessary in order not to digress into fragmented episodes and to injure the unity of the system nor also, from an-

⁴ We can expect reason to aid us in coordinating our inclinations to a single one of happiness, and then also determining the means to that happiness. This would be the most to be expected from an empirical application of practical reason.

other side, to let it lack in distinctiveness or conviction by saying too little of our new material.

- 7.2 I hope to achieve both by holding myself as closely as possible to the transcendental, and by putting entirely to the side that which might per chance be psychological, i.e., empirical.

* Kant's annotation.

- 1.1 All practical conceptions are aimed at objects of pleasure or displeasure, i.e., desire and repulsion, thus, at least indirectly, at objects of our feeling.
 - 1.2 But since feeling is not a power of representation, but rather lies apart from the entire power of recognitions, the elements of our judgments, to the extent they refer to desire or repulsion, thus the elements of the practical judgments, do not belong in the summary of the transcendental philosophy which has to do solely with pure recognitions a priori.
- 8.1 And here then I note first of all that I will temporarily make use of the concept of freedom only in the practical understanding. And unlike what I did above, I will set aside understanding in the transcendental meaning which cannot be empirically presupposed as an explanatory basis of the appearances.
- 8.2 Now a discretionary choice [Willkür], which cannot be determined otherwise than through sensitive drives, e.g., pathologically, is merely animal (*arbitrium brutum*).
- 8.3 But that which can be determined independently of sensitive drives, hence through an inducement which can only be represented by reason, is called free choice (*arbitrium liberum*), and everything, which coheres together with this, be it as foundation or consequence, is termed practical.
- 8.4 Practical freedom can be proven through experience.
- 8.5 For not merely that which excites, i.e., immediately affects the senses, determines human choice. Rather we have a capacity for overcoming the impressions on our sensitive desire capacity through representations of what is itself useful or injurious in a more remote manner. But these deliberations of

what is desirable, i.e., good and useful with respect to our entire state, depend on reason.⁵

8.6 Accordingly this also renders the laws which are imperatives, i.e., objective laws of freedom, and which say what is supposed to happen, even if perhaps it never does happen. And in that regard these laws are distinguished from natural laws which deal only with what happens. It is then also for this reason that they are called practical laws.

9.1 But it could be that reason itself in these actions, through which it prescribes laws, is in turn determined through other further influences, and what is called freedom with respect to sensitive drives might in turn be nature through higher and more remotely effecting causes. But then that does not concern us regarding the practical, since at this point we only ask reason about the precepts of conduct. Besides that notion of other further influences is a merely speculative question which, as long as our intention is directed to doing and refraining, we can set aside.⁶

9.2 Through experience, therefore, we recognize practical freedom as one of the natural causes, namely a causality of reason in the determination of the will.⁷ Transcendental freedom, on the other hand, requires an independence of this reasoning itself (with respect to its causality in starting a series of appearances) from all determining causes of the sense world. And to this extent it seems to be contrary to the natural law, hence to all possible experience, and therefore remains a problem.⁸

⁵ If we were merely animals, then when hungry we could not resist available food. But the human has the capacity of thinking about things in general and using his reason. And even though hungry, he could reason, for example, that he ought to wait before eating in order to accomplish some other purpose, e.g., conveying the impression that he is under self control and is polite, or perhaps knows the food is tainted.

⁶ Here we are concerned with the consciousness of actually determining laws for conduct, and so where it does not matter as to hidden and unconscious causes.

⁷ Accordingly the practical usage of our reason finds effect in the sense world by means of the actions which ensue from the precepts we rationally devise.

⁸ Whereas practical reason means a capacity for acting independently of the sensitive desires and finding a choice where the animals cannot, transcendental freedom denotes an action which is entirely independent from all conditions of the sense world and thus is absolute spontaneity. We find expression of this absolute spontaneity in the categorical imperative of the moral law.

- 9.3 For reason in the practical use, however, this problem is not pertinent.⁹ In a canon of pure reason, therefore, we have to do with only two questions, both of which concern the practical interest of pure reason, and with respect to which a canon of its use must be possible, namely: is there a God, and is there a future life?¹⁰
- 9.4 The question about transcendental freedom concerns merely the speculative knowledge, which here we can set to the side as entirely extraneous, if it has to do with the practical and which a sufficient exposition is already to be found in the antinomy of pure reason.¹¹

⁹ We are concerned here only with reason's capacity to determine conduct, and are not interested in the speculative question of independence not only from prior causes but even from all circumstances.

¹⁰ We specified three problems, freedom, God and immortality and have concluded that there is no "pertinent" question regarding freedom, and so this leaves only the latter two to be considered.

¹¹ In the [Third Antinomy](#) we saw the compatibility of two causalities, freedom and nature, with regard to one and the same effect.

The Ideal of the Highest Good as a Determination Basis of the Ultimate Purpose of Pure Reason

- 1.1 Reason in its speculative usage led us through the field of experience and, because there complete satisfaction can never be encountered for it, continued on to speculative Ideas, but which finally led us in turn back to experience and, therefore, fulfilled its intention and indeed in a very productive manner, but not at all commensurate with our expectation.
- 1.2 There still remains an attempt to determine whether pure reason also be encountered in the practical employment, i.e., whether in that way it leads to the Ideas which reach the highest purposes of pure reason (which we have just cited¹²) and, therefore, whether this, from the standpoint of its practical interest, not be able to impart what it entirely refuses to us with respect to the speculative.
- 2.1 Every interest of my reason (speaking of the speculative as well as the practical) is united in the following three questions:
 1. What can I know?
 2. What should I do?
 3. What may I hope?
- 3.1 The first question is merely speculative.
- 3.2 We (as I flatter myself) have exhausted all possible replies to this question and have finally discovered that with which reason must indeed be content, and, as long as it does not look to the practical, also has cause to be content. But we still remained just as far removed from the two great purposes toward which this entire endeavor of pure reason was actually directed, as though for the sake of convenience we had refrained from this work at the very outset.

¹² Kant is speaking specifically of God and immortality.

- 3.3 With respect to knowledge, therefore, at least this much is safe and determined, i.e., regarding those two tasks such knowledge can never be imparted to us.¹³
- 4.1 The second question is merely practical.
- 4.2 As such it can indeed belong to pure reason. But since it is not transcendental, but rather moral, it cannot be dealt with in our critique as such.¹⁴
- 5.1 The third question, namely: “if I now do what I am supposed to do, then what may I hope?” is simultaneously both practical and theoretical, such that the practical precedes only as a clue for the reply to the theoretical and, if this goes well, to the speculative question.
- 5.2 For every hope aims at happiness and, with intention to the practical and the moral law, it is just the same as is knowledge and the law of nature with respect to the theoretical recognition of things.¹⁵
- 5.3 The former finally culminates with the conclusion that something be (which determines the ultimate possible purpose) because something is supposed to happen; the latter, that something be (which is effectual as supreme cause) because something does happen.
- 6.1 Happiness is the satisfaction of all our inclinations (extensively according to their manifold, intensively with respect to degree, and expansively with respect to duration).

¹³ Essentially from the speculative use of reason we end up as agnostics regarding God and immortality.

¹⁴ For this we must await the [Critique of Practical Reason](#).

¹⁵ This may mean that a person living with a hope will lead a life as affected by that hope just as one's living will be affected by knowledge of the world of experience.

- 6.2 The practical law from the motivational basis of happiness I term pragmatic (rules of prudence). But that which has no other motivational basis than the *worthiness* to be happy, I call moral (law of morality).¹⁶
- 6.3 The first advises as to what is to be done if we want to partake of happiness. The second commands how we are to conduct ourselves in order just to become worthy of happiness.
- 6.4 The first is based on empirical principles. For it is only by means of experience that I can know which inclinations exist which want to be satisfied, or also what the natural causes are which can effect their satisfaction.
- 6.5 The second abstracts from inclinations and the natural means of satisfying them, and instead considers only the freedom of a rational being in general and the necessary conditions under which alone that freedom accords with the distribution of happiness according to principles, and can, therefore, at least be based, and a priori recognized, on mere Ideas of pure reason.
- 7.1 I assume that there actually are pure moral laws which (without regard to empirical motivational bases, i.e., happiness) completely and a priori determine the doing and refraining, i.e., the use of the freedom of a rational being in general. I assume further that these laws command utterly (not merely hypothetically under the presupposition of other empirical purposes) and hence are necessary in every intention.¹⁷
- 7.2 This proposition I can properly presuppose not only by appealing to the proofs of the most enlightened moralists, but even to the moral judgment of every human if he will distinctly think such a law to himself.
- 8.1 Pure reason, therefore, though not in its speculative employment, but still in a certain practical employment, i.e., the moral, contains principles of the possibility of experience, namely of such actions, conformable to the moral precepts, which could be met with in the history of humans.

¹⁶ In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant does not want to use “law” with regard to any principles in pursuit of happiness, for the principles of prudence are always hypothetical and depend upon a person’s inclinations and expectations.

¹⁷ While Kant assumes these presently, he will present a proof of them later in the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

- 8.2 For since it commands that such actions are supposed to happen, they must also be able to happen, and therefore a particular manner of systematic unity, namely the moral, must be possible. The systematic *natural* unity according to speculative principles, on the other hand, could not be proven, because reason has causality indeed with respect to freedom, but not with respect to the whole of nature. And moral rational principles can produce free actions, but not natural laws.
- 8.3 Accordingly the principles of pure reason have objective reality in their practical, and especially in their moral, employment.
- 9.1 The world, to the extent it were conformable to all moral laws (as it can be with respect to the freedom of rational beings, and is supposed to be according to the necessary laws of morality), I term a moral world.
- 9.2 Thus far it is thought merely as an intelligible world because in it we have abstracted from all conditions (purposes) and even from all obstacles to morality (weakness or sordidness of human nature).
- 9.3 To this extent, therefore, it is a mere Idea, albeit a practical Idea which can have and is supposed to have an influence on the sense world in order to make it conform as much as possible to this Idea.
- 9.4 Hence the Idea of a moral world has objective reality, but not as though it went to an object of an intelligible viewing (*Anschauung*) (which we cannot conceive of at all). Rather it applies to the sense world, but then as to an object of pure reason in its practical employment, and to a *corpus mysticum*¹⁸ of rational beings within it, to the extent their free choice has on its own thoroughly systematic unity not only with itself under moral laws, but also with the freedom of every other rational being.
- 10.1 That was the reply to the first of those two questions of pure reason which touched on practical interests, i.e., “do what makes you worthy of happiness.”

¹⁸ Mystical body.

- 10.2 The second questions now arises: “if I conduct myself so as not to be unworthy of happiness, how may I hope to participate in that happiness?”
- 10.3 The reply to *this* questions depends on whether the principles of pure reason, which a priori prescribe the laws, also connect this hope necessarily with these laws.
- 11.1 I say, accordingly, that just as the moral principles are necessary according to reason in their practical employment, it is also just as necessary according to reason in its theoretical employment to assume that everyone has cause to hope for happiness in the same measure as he has made himself worthy of it in his conduct and, therefore, that the system of morality is inseparably connected with that of happiness, but only in the Idea of pure reason.
- 12.1 Now in an intelligible, i.e., a moral, world, in whose concept we abstract from all obstacles to morality (of inclination), such a system can even be thought as necessary with the morality of connected, proportionate happiness because freedom itself, partly moved and partly restrained by moral laws, would be the cause of universal happiness. Accordingly the rational beings themselves, under the guidance of such principles, would be originators of their own enduring welfare and simultaneously that of others.
- 12.2 But this system of morality rewarding itself is only an Idea whose execution rests on the condition of each person doing as he is supposed to do, i.e., all actions of rational entities occurring as though they sprang from a supreme will which encompasses every personal choice within, or under, itself.
- 12.3 But since the obligation arising from the moral law remains valid for each particular employment of freedom, even if others did not comport themselves according to this law, it follows that neither from the nature of things of the world nor from the causality of actions itself and their relationship to morality is it determined how their consequences will relate to happiness. And if we position nothing else than nature as a foundation, the indicated necessary connection of the hope to be happy with the incessant striving to make ourselves worthy of happiness cannot be recognized through reason. Instead this connection may only be hoped for if, as its foundation, a supreme reason, commanding according to moral laws, is simultaneously positioned as the cause of nature.

- 13.1 The Idea of such an intelligence, in which the morally most perfect will, connected with the highest blessedness, is the cause of all happiness in the world, to the extent that happiness stands in precise relationship with morality (as the worthiness to be happy), I term the Ideal of the highest good.
- 13.2 Only in the Ideal of the highest original good, therefore, can pure reason encounter the basis of the practically necessary connection of both elements of the highest derived good, namely of an intelligible, i.e., moral, world.
- 13.3 Since we must necessarily represent ourselves through reason as belonging to such a world, even though the senses present nothing to us except a world of appearances, we will have to assume this world of morality and happiness to be a consequence of our conduct in the sense world, and since this sense world does not offer us such a connection, as a future world for us.
- 13.4 God, therefore, and a future life are two presuppositions which are not to be separated from the obligation¹⁹ which pure reason lays upon us according to principles of that very same reason.
- 14.1 Morality on its own makes up a system, but not happiness, except to the extent it is distributed in precise proportion to morality.
- 14.2 But this is only possible in the intelligible world under a wise originator and governor.
- 14.3 Such a governor, together with life in such a world (which we must consider to be a future one), reason sees itself necessitated to assume in order to avoid considering the moral laws as empty make-believe. The reason for this is that the necessary success²⁰ of those laws, which the selfsame reason connects

¹⁹ This would be the categorical imperative of the moral law, to universalize our maxims of action.

²⁰ The "success" would be the happiness that should attend those who have proven themselves to be morally worthy of happiness.

with them, would have to cease without the assumption of that presupposition.²¹

- 14.4 Accordingly everyone understands the moral laws as commands, but which they could not be if they did not a priori connect commensurate consequences with their rule and therefore entail promises and threats.²²
- 14.5 But this they also cannot do where they do not lie in a necessary being as the highest good which alone can make such a purposeful unity possible.²³
- 15.1 The world, to the extent we attend only to the rational beings in it and their cohesion according to moral laws and the government of the highest good, Leibniz termed the realm of grace. He then distinguished that from the realm of nature, where these beings also stand under moral laws, but expect no other consequence of their conduct except according to the course of nature of our sense world.
- 15.2 Therefore, to see ourselves in the realm of grace, where all happiness waits on us except to the extent we ourselves restrict our portion of it through the unworthiness of being happy, is a practically necessary Idea of reason.²⁴
- 16.1 Practical laws, to the extent they simultaneously become subjective bases of action, i.e., subjective foundational propositions, are called maxims.
- 16.2 The evaluation of morality, with respect to its purity and consequences, happens according to Ideas. The compliance with its laws happens according to maxims.

²¹ According to this, without God and immortality for the highest good, the moral law would be considered as inane and a vanity. And so it seems that we must either posit such a governor and a future life or else give up the moral law as meaningless for us.

²² The effect of the highest good would be that of meaningfulness, i.e., that there is a consequence to moral conduct and that it is not a phantasy. Hence it makes a difference, i.e., something is accomplished, as to whether we are moral or not.

²³ It is only in the context of the highest good that the moral law is provided with a connection of performance and commensurate recompense. For it is in this highest good that we find the necessity of a God.

²⁴ Accordingly happiness is ours by virtue of being rational beings and then to the extent we do not prove ourselves as unworthy through violations of our moral duty.

- 17.1 It is necessary that our entire life course be subject to moral maxims. But at the same time it is impossible for this to happen if reason does not connect with the moral law, which is a mere Idea, an effecting cause which, with respect to conduct, determines to that life a culmination corresponding precisely to our highest purposes, be it in this life or in subsequent one.
- 17.2 Therefore, without a God and a world not visible for us now, but hoped for, the splendid Ideas of morality are indeed objects of acclaim and amazement, but not motives for resolution and execution, because they do not fulfill the entire purpose which naturally, and through just this same pure reason, is a priori determined and necessary for every rational being.
- 18.1 Happiness alone is by far not the most complete good for our reason.
- 18.2 Reason does not sanction such (even as much as inclination may wish that) where it is not united with the worthiness to be happy, i.e., with the morally proper conduct.
- 18.3 But morality alone, and with it the mere worthiness to be happy, is also not by far the highest good.²⁵
- 18.4 In order to complete this he who has conducted himself as not unworthy of happiness, must be able to hope to become participant with it.
- 18.5 Even if reason, freed of all private intention and without drawing a personal interest into consideration, places itself in the position of a being which had to distribute all happiness to others, cannot judge otherwise.²⁶ For in the practical Idea both pieces are joined essentially, although in this order: that the moral disposition, as condition, first makes possible the participation in happiness, and not vice-verse, i.e., where the prospect of happiness would fashion the moral disposition.²⁷

²⁵ Morality alone would be similar to the Stoic's conception of happiness, consciousness of virtue and of no self recrimination.

²⁶ In Par. 8 of the "Preface" to Kant's *Religion*, Kant touches on this again, showing how a morally inclined person would naturally want the highest good to be the arbiter between virtue and happiness.

²⁷ And this latter is similar to the position of the Epicurean, where knowledge of true happiness would result in moral maxims.

- 18.6 For in the latter case it would not be moral and, therefore, also not worthy of the entire happiness, for reason recognizes no other reservation except that which comes from our immoral conduct.²⁸
- 19.1 Happiness, therefore, in precise proportion to the morality of rational beings, by means of which they are worthy of that happiness, makes up alone the highest good of a world in which we must thoroughly place ourselves according to the precepts of pure, albeit practical, reason. This, of course, is only an intelligible world, since the sense world does not promise us the same systematic unity of purposes from the nature of things, whose reality also can be based on nothing else than on the presupposition of a highest original good. For independent reason, armed with all sufficiency of a supreme cause, enables, preserves and completes the universal order of things according to the most perfect purposefulness, though very concealed from us in the sense world.
- 20.1 Now this moral theology has the peculiar superiority over the speculative by leading unavoidably to the concept of a single, all perfect and rational being, which speculative theology does not at all indicate to us out of objective bases, much less being able to convince us of that.
- 20.2 For neither in the transcendental nor in natural theology, as far as reason may also lead us in them, do we find a unifying and meaningful basis for even assuming a single being which we position before all natural causes, and upon which we simultaneously had sufficient cause to make these dependent in all respects.
- 20.3 On the other hand, if from the standpoint of moral unity as a necessary world law, we ponder the cause which alone can give this the appropriate effect, hence also binding force for us, it must be a single supreme will which encompasses all these laws within itself.
- 20.4 For how did we want to find perfect unity of purposes among diverse wills?

²⁸ And so pure reason would grant happiness to all people except solely to the extent they prove themselves unworthy in their actions. And in [IX](#) of the Dialectic we see that such an arrangement (happiness determining morality) would result in the death of morality and duty and even of freedom.

- 20.5 This will must be all powerful so that all nature and its referral to morality in the world be subjected to it; all knowing so that it recognizes the most inner of the dispositions and their moral worth; omnipresent so that it be immediately adjacent to every need which the supreme world best requires; eternal so that in no time is there a lack of this agreement of nature and freedom, etc.
- 21.1 But this systematic unity of purposes in this world of intelligences, which as mere nature can only be termed a sense world, but as system of freedom, can be termed an intelligible, i.e., a moral, world (*regum gratise*²⁹), also leads unavoidably to the purposeful unity of all things which make up this grand whole according to laws of nature just as the former does according to universal and necessary moral laws, and unites practical reason with the speculative.
- 21.2 The world must be represented as having arisen from an Idea, if it is supposed to cohere together with that rational use, without which we would hold ourselves even unworthy of reason, namely the moral, as thoroughly resting on the Idea of the highest good.
- 21.3 In this way every investigation of nature obtains a direction with respect to the form of a system of purposes, and in it the highest expansion becomes physico-theology.
- 21.4 But this, since it still arose from the moral order as a unity established in the being of freedom and not contingently founded through external laws, brings the purposefulness of nature to foundations which must be a priori and inseparably connected with the inner possibility of things, and in that way to a transcendental theology which takes the Idea of the highest ontological perfection as a principle of the systematical unity, which connects all things according to universal and necessary laws of nature because they all have their origin in the absolute necessity of single, original being.
- 22.1 What kind of use can we make of our reason even with respect to experience, if we did not propose purposes to ourselves?³⁰

²⁹ Kingdom of grace.

³⁰ Practical reason is a means of attaining to purposes and thus is able to implement actions in pursuit of these purposes.

- 22.2 But the highest purposes are those of morality, and only pure reason can give these to us to be recognized.
- 22.3 Furnished now with these and with their guidance for us, we can make no purposeful use of the familiarity with nature itself with respect to the recognition, where nature has not itself laid down purposeful unity. For without this we would not even have reason itself, because we would have no school for it, and no cultivation through objects, which offered the material for such concepts.
- 22.4 But that purposeful unity is necessary. And based in the being of choice itself, this, which contains the condition of the application of that in concreto, must also, therefore, be it. Thus the transcendental ascension of our rational knowledge would not be the cause, but rather the effect of the practical purposefulness which pure reason imposes upon us.
- 23.1 Accordingly we also find in the history of human reason that before the moral concepts were sufficiently cleansed and determined and before the systematic unity of the purposes according to them was penetrated from necessary principles, the familiarity with nature and even an appreciable degree of the cultivation of reason in many other sciences could produce partly only rough and slippery concepts of divinity, and partly left an amazing and general indifference with respect to those questions.
- 23.2 A greater treatment of moral Ideas, which was made necessary through the most extreme pure moral law of our religion, sharpened reason on this object via the interest which it necessitated reason to take in that, and, without contributing to it either expanded recognitions of nature nor proper and reliable transcendental insights (for these have been lacking at all times), they brought forth a concept of the divine being which we now hold to be the proper one, not because speculative reason convinces us of its accuracy, but rather because it agrees perfectly with the moral rational principles.
- 23.3 And so still at the end, only pure reason, but only in its practical usage, has the merit of tying a recognition, which the mere speculation only fancies but cannot make valid, to our highest interest and in that way making not at all a demonstrated dogma, but still an absolutely necessary presupposition with its most essential purposes.

- 24.1 But now if practical reason has reached this pinnacle, namely the concept of a single original being as the highest good, it is not at all allowed to venture forth as though it had elevated itself above all empirical conditions of its application and had conjured up immediate information concerning new objects, and had soared forth from this concept to derive the moral law itself from that.
- 24.2 For those were precisely that whose inner practical necessity led us to the presupposition of a self-supporting cause or a wise world governor in order to give effect to those laws. Accordingly we cannot consider them with respect to this in turn as contingent and derived from the mere will, in particular from such a will, of which we would have no concept at all if we had not fashioned it conformable to those laws.³¹
- 24.3 To the extent practical reason leads us, we will hold actions as binding not because they are commands of God, but rather treat them as commands of God because we are obligated to those actions inwardly.
- 24.4 We will study freedom under the purposeful unity according to principles of reason and believe ourselves to be conformable to the divine will only to the extent we hold the moral law, which reason teaches us out of the nature of actions themselves, as holy, and believe ourselves to serve it only by promoting the world best in us and in others.³²
- 24.5 Therefore the moral theology is only of immanent use, namely to fulfill our determination here in the world by adapting to all purposes in the system, and not by leaving the clue of the morally legislating reason fancifully or indeed even frivolously in the good course of life, in order to tie it immediately to the Idea of the highest being, which would provide a transcendental use, but just like that of sheer speculation, must pervert and frustrate the ultimate purpose of reason.³³

³¹ To make the moral law meaningful we need the connection with happiness and that called for God. And now we can not turn around and declare the moral law simply a willful law of this same God and so where the authority of the moral law would arise from the will of this God.

³² We have to consider ourselves as pleasing to God only by virtue of our compliance with the moral law.

³³ We come to God through the moral law and not to the moral law through God.

Concerning Opinion, Knowledge and Belief

- 1.1 The avowal is an occurrence in our understanding which may rest upon objective foundations, but which also requires subjective causes in the mind of the person so judging.
- 1.2 If it is valid for everyone, to the extent that person has reason, the foundation of that is objectively sufficient and the avowal is then called conviction.
- 1.3 If it has its foundation only in the particular constitution of the subject, it is termed persuasion.

- 2.1 Persuasion is mere semblance, because the basis of the judgment, which lies solely in the subject, is held as objective.
- 2.2 Hence such a judgment also has only private validity and the avowal cannot be communicated to others.³⁴
- 2.3 But truth depends upon agreement with the object, with respect to which, consequently, the judgment of every understanding must be of one accord (*consentientia uni tertio, consentiunt inter se*).
- 2.4 The touchstone, therefore, of whether the avowal is conviction or merely persuasion is externally the possibility of communicating it and of finding the avowal valid for every human's reason. For in that case there is at least a supposition that the foundation of the accord of all judgments (disregarding the diversity of the subjects among one another) will rest on the communal foundation, namely the object, with which they all will agree together, and by means of which the truth of the judgment will be proven.

- 3.1 Accordingly indeed persuasion cannot be subjectively distinguished from conviction if the subject has the avowal before his eyes merely as the appearance of his own mind. But still the attempt we make with the foundations of that, which are valid for us, on the reason of another to ascertain whether they have just the same effect on a foreign reason as on ours, is one means (though only subjective), indeed not to effect conviction, but still to

³⁴ This might then include the alleged Wesleyan experience of making progress in one's ability to love others.

uncover the merely private validity of the judgment, i.e., something in it which is merely persuasion.

- 4.1 If beyond that we can develop the subjective causes of the judgment which we take for objective foundations of that, and hence explain the deceptive avowal as an occurrence in our minds without needing the constitution of the object for that, we expose the semblance and so are no longer fooled by it, although still tempted to a certain degree if the subjective cause of the semblance adheres to our nature.
- 5.1 I can assert nothing, i.e., pronounce judgment necessarily valid for everyone, except what effects conviction.
- 5.2 Persuasion I can keep for myself if I find myself comfortable with that, but cannot, and am not supposed to want to, make it valid apart from myself.
- 6.1 The avowal, or the subjective validity of the judgment in reference to the conviction (which simultaneously holds objectively), has the following three levels: opinion, belief and knowledge.
- 6.2 Opinion is an avowal consciously insufficient subjectively as well as objectively.
- 6.3 If the latter is only subjectively sufficient and is held simultaneously as objectively insufficient, it is called belief.
- 6.4 Finally the avowal sufficing both subjectively and objectively is called knowledge.
- 6.5 The subjective sufficiency is called conviction (for myself), the objective, certitude (for everyone).
- 6.6 I will not detain myself with any exposition of such easily grasped concepts.
- 7.1 I must never venture to make an opinion without at least knowing something by means of which the judgment, merely problematic on its own, obtains an

connection with truth which, even though not complete, is still more than willful fiction.³⁵

- 7.2 Moreover, the law of such an connection must be certain.
- 7.3 For if I also have nothing except opinion with respect to something, then everything is only a play of imagination, without the least referral to truth.
- 7.4 In judgments from pure reason, opinion is not allowed at all.
- 7.5 For since they are not supported by foundations of experience, but rather everything is supposed to be recognized a priori (where everything is necessary), the principle of connection requires universality and necessity, hence complete certitude, and in the contrary case no conduit to truth is encountered at all.
- 7.6 Hence opinion in pure mathematics is absurd. Here we must know or refrain from all judgments.
- 7.7 It is also the case with the foundational propositions of morality. For we may not dare an action on the mere opinion that something is allowed, but rather must know this.³⁶

- 8.1 In the transcendental use of reason, on the other hand, opinion is of course too little, but knowledge also too much.
- 8.2 In the merely speculative intention, therefore, we cannot judge of this at all. Indeed the subjective foundations of the avowal, like those which can effect belief, deserve no acclaim with speculative questions, since they do not keep themselves free from all empirical assistance, nor allow of communication to others in a like fashion.

- 9.1 But nowhere except solely in the practical referral can the theoretically insufficient avowal be termed belief.

³⁵ It would then be one thing to assert the reality of God, and quite another to assert that of an invisible unicorn.

³⁶ In *Religion* in the section concerning [conscience](#), Kant takes the Inquisitor to task for this very reason.

- 9.2 Now this practical intention is either that of skill or of morality, the first for arbitrary and contingent purposes, but the second for utterly necessary purposes.
- 10.1 Once a purpose is presupposed, the conditions for the achievement of that are hypothetically necessary.
- 10.2 This necessity is subjective, but still only comparatively sufficient if I do not know any other conditions under which the purpose were attainable. But it is sufficient utterly and for everyone if I know with certainty that no one can be acquainted with other conditions which lead to the presupposed purpose.
- 10.3 In the first case my presupposition and the avowal of certain conditions is merely a contingent belief. In the second case, however, we are dealing with a necessary belief.
- 10.4 Regarding a sick person who is in danger, the physician must do something, but is not familiar with the sickness.
- 10.5 He looks to the appearances and, because he knows nothing better, judges it to be consumption.
- 10.6 His belief is merely contingent even in his own judgment. Another might come closer to the mark.
- 10.7 I term such as this contingent beliefs. But that which lies as a foundation for the actual use of the means to certain actions, I call pragmatic belief.
- 11.1 The usual touchstone of whether something which someone asserts is merely persuasion, or at least subjective conviction, i.e., firm belief, is the wager.
- 11.2 Often times someone expresses his propositions with such confident and intractable defiance that he seems to have entirely discarded all concern for error.
- 11.3 A wager catches him off balance.

- 11.4 Occasionally it indicates that indeed he possesses persuasion enough which can be estimated at one dollar in value, but not ten.
- 11.5 The first he will quite easily dare. But with the ten he first becomes aware of what he previously did not note, namely that it is quite possible for him to have erred.
- 11.6 If we represent to ourselves in thought that we are supposed to stake on that the fortune of our entire life, our triumphant judgment dwindles very much indeed, so that we become quite timid and in this way first discover that our belief does not reach so far.
- 11.7 So the practical belief has only a degree which, according to the diversity of the interest which is in play, can be great or also small.
- 12.1 But even if we can undertake nothing at all with reference to an object (the avowal, therefore, being merely theoretical), nevertheless since we can in many cases grasp an undertaking in thought and imagine it to ourselves, to which we think to have an adequate basis, if there were a means of ascertaining the certainty for the matter, then in mere theoretical judgments there is an analogy of the practical, to whose avowals the word "belief" is suited, and which we can term the doctrinal belief.
- 12.2 If it were possible to be ascertained through some sort of an experience, I might well stake all that I have on there being inhabitants on at least one of the planets which we see.
- 12.3 Hence, I say, it is not merely opinion but a strong belief (on whose correctness I would dare many advantages of life), that there are inhabitants on other worlds.
- 13.1 Now we must insist that the teaching of the existence of God belongs to doctrinal belief.
- 13.2 For even though with respect to the theoretical world recognition I have nothing to account for which necessarily presupposes this belief as a condition of my explanation of the appearances of the world, but rather much more am bound to so utilize my reason as though everything were mere na-

ture, nevertheless since a purposeful unity is such a great condition of the application of reason to nature, and moreover since experience is rich with examples of such unity, I cannot at all ignore them.

- 13.3 But with regard to this unity I am aware of no other condition which would make it the guide of investigations of nature for me unless I presuppose that a highest intelligence has so ordered everything according to the wisest purposes.³⁷
- 13.4 Consequently it is a condition of an intention, contingent indeed, but still not insignificant, namely to presuppose a wise world originator in order to have a guide into the investigation of nature.
- 13.5 Also the result of my attempts so often certifies the utility of this presupposition—and nothing can be decisively taught against it—that I say much too little if I wanted merely to term my avowal an opinion, but rather even in this theoretical relation it can be said that I believe firmly in a God. But then this belief in a rigorous meaning is not practical, but rather must be termed a doctrinal belief, which the theology of nature (physico-theology) must necessarily produce in every case.
- 13.6 With respect to just the same wisdom and in regard to the superb make up of human nature and the shortness of life which is so badly suited to that nature, an adequate basis for a doctrinal belief in a future for the human soul can be encountered just as well.
- 14.1 The expression of belief in such cases is an expression of modesty in an objective intention, and yet at the same time also an expression of firmness of confidence in a subjective intention.
- 14.2 Even if I wanted here to term the merely theoretical avowal an hypothesis, I would already be professing to have more concept of the constitution of a world cause and another world than I actually can demonstrate. For concerning that which I also assume only as hypothesis, I must at least be familiar enough with respect to its properties that I may not fabricate its concept, but only its existence.

³⁷ Kant might then be surprised by the theory of evolution which holds the make up of the world to be a function of a mindless aberration which occasionally results in a better fitness for survival. Now the Roman Catholics accept evolution, although they do not count it as random, but rather as directed.

- 14.3 But the word “belief” goes only to the route which gives me an Idea and to the subjective influence upon the promotion of my rational actions which hold me firmly to that, even though I am not in position to account for that in a speculative intention.
- 15.1 There is something unstable, however, in the sheer doctrinal belief. We are often moved away from that doctrinal belief through difficulties which arise in speculation. However we always and unavoidably return back to it again.
- 16.1 It is entirely different with the moral belief.
- 16.2 For there it is utterly necessary that something must happen, namely that I comply with the moral law in all particulars.
- 16.3 Here the purpose is unavoidably established, and according to all my insight there is only a single condition possible under which this purpose coheres with all purposes together and in that way has practical validity,³⁸ namely that there be a God and a future world.³⁹ I also know with complete certitude that no one is familiar with other conditions which lead to the same unity of purposes under the moral law.
- 16.4 But since, therefore, the moral precept is simultaneously my maxim (as also reason commands it to be), I will invariably believe in the existence of the God and a future life. And I am confident that nothing is able to shake this belief because otherwise my moral foundational propositions themselves would topple. And these I cannot renounce without being worthy of abhorrence in my own eyes.
- 17.1 In such way, after the frustration of all ambitious intentions of a reason roaming about beyond the limits of all experience, enough yet remains for us to have cause to be satisfied with that in the practical intention.

³⁸ Here the Idea of the highest good reconciles the purposes of prudence with those of morality.

³⁹ The highest good is the purpose of the moral law and the conditions for the possibility of that highest good is God and immortality.

- 17.2 Of course no one indeed will be able to laud himself about knowing if there is a God and a future life, for, if he knows that, he is the very man whom I have long sought.
- 17.3 All knowledge (if it concerns an object of sheer reason) we can communicate, and therefore I would also be able to hope to see my knowledge expanded to such a marvelous degree through that man's instruction.
- 17.4 No! The conviction is not logical certitude, but moral, and since it rests upon subjective bases (of the moral disposition), I must not even say, "it is morally certain that there be a God, etc.," but rather "I am morally certain, etc."
- 17.5 This means that the belief in God and another world is so intertwined with my moral disposition that I am just as little in danger of forfeiting the former two, as I am concerned that someone might ever be able to tear the latter from me.
- 18.1 The only reservation to be found here is that this rational belief is based upon the presupposition of a moral disposition.
- 18.2 If we deviate from this and take a belief which were entirely indifferent with respect to moral laws, then the question which reason raises becomes merely a task for speculation. Then indeed it can be supported with strong foundations from analogy, but not with such that would force the most stubborn skepticism to yield.*
- 18.3 But with these questions no man is free of all interest.
- 18.4 For even though he might be separated from the moral via a lack of a good disposition, still even in this case enough remains to insure his fear of a divine being and a future life.
- 18.5 For nothing more is required for that except that he at least can plead no certainty that there be no such being and no future life. And the reason is that because it would have to be proven through mere reason, thus as apodictic, he would have to establish the impossibility of both, which certainly no rational being can undertake to do.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The rational thinker can at most be an agnostic, but certainly not an atheist.

18.6 So such belief would be a negative belief, which indeed could not effect morality or a good disposition, but still the analogy of that, namely it would powerfully restrain the outbreak of an evil disposition.

* Kant's annotation.

1.1 The human mind (as I believe occurs necessarily with every rational being) takes a natural interest in morality, even if it is not undivided or practically paramount.

1.2 Strengthen and enlarge this interest and you will find reason very teachable and even enlightened in order to unify the practical and speculative interest.

1.3 But if you do not first take care to make people good, at least halfway, then you will also never make sincere believers out of them.

19.1 But is that all, someone will ask, that pure reason furnishes by opening prospects out beyond the limits of experience: nothing more than two articles of belief? That much even the common understanding could have furnished without turning to philosophers for advice!

20.1 I will not praise here the merit, which philosophy has through the tedious strivings of its critique on behalf of human reason, even granted that ultimately it was deemed to be merely negative. We will see in the following undertaking that something more will come yet from that.⁴¹

20.2 But do you then demand that a recognition, which concerns all human beings, is supposed to rise above the common understanding and be revealed to you only through philosophy?

20.3 Precisely that which you fault is the best certificate of the correctness of the assertions thus far, for it uncovers what we could not have predicted at the beginning, namely that nature, in that which is invested to humans without distinction, is guiltless of any partisan distribution of its talents, and with respect to the essential purposes of human nature the highest philosophy is unable to bring matters further than the guidance which it has bestowed to even the most common understanding.

⁴¹ This is a reference to [The Critique of Practical Reason](#).