

HEGEL AND THE MORAL WORLD-VIEW

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By

DAVID WAYNE CAMPBELL, B.A.

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AUTHOR: David W. Campbell, B.A. (University of
Prince Edward Island)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Samuel Ajsenstat

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate Hegel's conception of morality. For Hegel, morality refers mainly to Kantian ethics, or to the "moral world-view." Hegelian morality is therefore primarily concerned with Kantian ethics and what Hegel considers to be the problems inherent within Kant's ethical system. Hegel's position on morality, as defined by the moral world-view, is that it is inadequate and must be sublimated into the societal norms of ethical life.

Hegel's dialectical movement to ethical life is based upon his criticisms of Kantian ethics. However, if a credible Kantian reply can be found to answer Hegel's criticisms, Hegel's moral dialectic becomes problematic. In this thesis I will clarify Hegel's position on morality and will conclude by providing a Kantian reply to Hegel's criticisms.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. In Chapter One, I introduce Hegel's critique of Kantian ethics within The Phenomenology of Spirit. In Chapter Two I explore Hegel's definition of morality within the Philosophy of Right. In the third and final chapter I analyze Hegel's critique of the moral world-view and provide a Kantian reply to Hegel's criticisms. I conclude by arguing that Kantian ethics can be defended against Hegel's criticisms, therefore Hegel's attempt to sublimate morality into ethical life is problematic.

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Chapter 1

The Moral World-View in the Phenomenology of Spirit

Any investigation of Hegel's ethical system must begin with his critique of Kantian ethics. Hegel's criticisms of Kant's ethical system provide the foundation of Hegel's ethical thought. The relationship between morality (Moralitat) and ethical life (Sittlichkeit) can only be understood in the context of Hegel's criticisms of Kantian ethics.

While it is in the Philosophy of Right that Hegel fully develops his unique moral philosophy, it is in the Phenomenology of Spirit that Hegel first provides an in-depth criticism of Kant's ethical system. Although the Phenomenology of Spirit is not primarily concerned with moral philosophy, the section on morality provides a strong criticism of Kantian ethics and sets the framework of a Hegelian ethics which is later developed in the Philosophy of Right.

In the chapter I shall introduce Hegel's critique of Kantian ethics in the section on morality in the Phenomenology of Spirit. First I shall explore Kant's position and give an exposition of Hegel's critique in "The Moral View of the

World." I shall then provide a short exposition of Hegel's critique of conscience and Romanticism in "The Beautiful Soul."

The Moral View of the World

Within the section of the Phenomenology of Spirit on morality, Spirit attempts to attain self-certainty through morality. The moral view of the world can be seen as a higher form of spirit than culture as it mediates between objective spirit (the social/cultural/historical realm) and absolute spirit (the religious/philosophical realm). Within morality substance becomes subject as the world becomes the moral object or substance for consciousness. (Flay, p. 211) Therefore the moral standpoint unites the particular subject with the objective world of society or culture through moral action.

Hegel considers Kantian ethics to be the epitome of the moral view of the world. Any other moral view is either a form of spirit similar to the subject-object relationship of culture (Bildung) or custom (Sittlichkeit). (Flay, p. 209) The only thing which is truly good or moral within this moral world-view is a good will which acts in accordance with a

duty; the ultimate duty being the categorical imperative.
(Kant, GMM, p. 17)

Hegel considers Kant's moral view to be based on the relationship between the absoluteness of morality and the absoluteness of nature.

This relation is based, on one hand, on the complete indifference and independence of Nature towards moral purposes and activity, and, on the other hand, on the consciousness of duty alone as the essential fact, and of Nature as completely devoid of independence and essential being. The moral view of the world contains the development of the moments which are present in this relation of such completely conflicting presuppositions. (Hegel, PhS, par. 600)

David Lamb, in "Teleology and Hegel's Dialectic of History," argues that Kant was attempting to save human freedom from the "blind necessity" of the scientific world-view of the mechanistic materialists of the seventeenth century. Lamb argues that while Kant wants to base morality in human freedom and save it from the necessity of causal relations, he still "reiterates their assumption of an unbridgeable gulf between causality and teleology. On the one hand Kant presented a natural world, purposeless and subject to blind causality. On the other hand he presented a moral agent, purposive, free and responsible." (Lamb, p. 3)

The basis of Kantian ethics is human freedom, which is the foundation of morality. For Kant, morality presupposes free will; one can only be moral if one is free to resist desire. Morality equates to responsibility, as one must be

free from external causes in order to be held responsible for one's actions. Moral praise and blame become meaningless without the concept of freedom.

Kant considered moral freedom to have both positive and negative elements. Freedom is negative in that morality is free from empirical causal relations. To be free humans must be free from the external determinants of the sensible world. Morality is also positive as one is free to act in accordance with the dictates of the will. Positive freedom equates to following the moral law; the ultimate moral law being the categorical imperative. "This is precisely the formula of the categorical imperative and the principle of morality. Thus a free will and a will under moral laws are one and the same." (Kant, GMM, p. 97)

Kant considered everything in nature to be bound by causal relations. Everything, therefore, has an empirical origin or cause, which in turn is the effect of another cause. While man has an empirical nature which is determined by physical causal relations, he also has a side to his nature which is not determined: his reason or his intelligible character. The intelligible side of man is free from the causal relations of nature.

The empirical character is a link in the chain of things, circumscribed in its treatment by natural laws; the intelligible character, on the contrary, is uncircumscribed, is free from all change, free from becoming or perishing, and is therefore wholly free.

This intelligible character is present in all deeds of man; and it is determined. (Adams, p. 26)

A human, therefore, is a combination of the empirical and the intelligible. For Kant the divisions of the disciplines correspond to the divisions of the empirical and intelligible. The natural sciences deal with the empirical realm of necessity, while ethics deal with the intelligible realm of freedom. This division also corresponds to Kant's noumenal/phenomenal distinction, as "freedom comes to man as noumenon, necessity as phenomenon." (Adams, p. 26)

The conflict between freedom and physical determinism has been an ongoing debate within the history of moral philosophy. Kantian ethics, with its emphasis on human freedom as the foundation of morality, can be seen as a reaction against the deterministic ethical systems of the seventeenth century. The orderly, mechanistic universe of Newton left little room for human freedom. Spinoza's ethical system, for example, was influenced by the presuppositions of Newtonian physics. Spinoza concluded that causal relations of the "new science" were incompatible with free will.

Spinoza's conatus principle, the basis of his ethical system, can be seen as a result of the mechanistic, deterministic view of seventeenth-century physics. The conatus principle states that all things follow their nature and will continue to follow their nature unless they are acted

upon by an external force. The nature of all things is to preserve their being and to avoid destruction. Spinoza's conatus principle is akin to Newton's law of inertia which states that a body at rest will stay at rest until acted upon by an external force and a body in motion will stay in motion unless it is affected by an external force.

Freedom for Spinoza is acting in accordance to one's being or nature; to be free from external forces. A "free" man is one whose reason guides him to do what his nature dictates. To be ethical is to follow one's nature, which is to pursue actions which are useful in preserving one's being. (Spinoza, p. 346)

Since reason demands nothing which is contrary to nature, it demands that everyone love himself, seek what is really useful to him, desire everything which really leads man to greater perfection, and absolutely that everyone strive, insofar as he can to preserve his own being. Indeed this is necessarily true...virtue is nothing but acting according to the laws of one's own nature, and one only endeavors to conserve his being. (Spinoza, p. 366)

Spinoza's emphasis on the physical and psychological determinants of human behavior results in a moral theory which leaves little room for what is commonly understood as "freedom." For Kant to preserve human freedom as the basis of morality, he had to make a distinction between the realm of necessity and freedom. In order to avoid the deterministic, egoistic moral theories of the seventeenth-century philosophers, Kant had to divorce inclination from duty. If

morality is to be "free," it must be based on a free, rational choice, not on inclination or desire. The only moral action for Kant is one which is derived from an autonomous will which is free from inclination and necessity. Therefore, Kant concluded that "it is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a good will." (Kant, GMM, p. 61)

Hegel argues that a central problem within Kantian morality is the tension between nature and morality; between our inclination and our duty. Hegel defines Kantian duty as the "essence of consciousness." (Hegel, PhS, par. 601) Kant's moral consciousness is based on the complete moral freedom of a rational autonomous agent. While moral consciousness experiences its own freedom, it is faced with the "presupposed" freedom of nature. (Ibid., par. 601) It learns that nature is not concerned with providing the moral consciousness with a sense of unity with the reality of nature, and "hence that Nature perhaps may let it become happy, or perhaps not." (Ibid., par. 601)

In the Critique of Practical Reason, Kant acknowledges that obeying the absolute law may not be in accordance with the fulfilment of human happiness. Reason dictates that the good will is in itself the highest good. The ends the will seeks are of its own purposes, as determined by the dictates of reason.

Under these circumstances, there is nothing inconsistent with the wisdom of nature in the fact that the cultivation of the reason, which is requisite for the first and unconditional purpose, does in many ways interfere, at least in this life, with the attainment of the second, which is always conditional, namely, happiness. Nay, it may even reduce it to nothing, without nature thereby failing her purpose. (Kant, CPR, p. 35)

The good will is good in itself, regardless of the consequences brought about by the good will. Even if the good will cannot be realized through action, it is still good. The results of the good will are irrelevant; it is only the good will itself which is morally pertinent. While the good will should be realized through action, the realization of the good will is not necessary as it does not affect the purity of the will. Therefore Kant concludes that the consequences of an action do not dictate the morality of an action. It is the intention of an action, not its fulfilment or its consequences, which determines the morality of an action. The only unqualified good action is one which stems from a good will. As Kant concluded, the will's "usefulness or fruitlessness can neither add to nor take away anything from its value." (Kant, CPR, p. 10)

Hegel takes this element of Kant's position to task, as it defeats what Hegel argues to be the purpose of moral action: human happiness and fulfilment. The non-moral consciousness can, by chance, find its realization through action, but the moral consciousness sees only an occasion for

action (following the absolute duty of the categorical imperative), but does not find happiness or a sense of achievement in performing this action, as one must follow the absolute law out of a sense of duty only, not out of inclination or self-satisfaction.

To help others where one can is a duty, and besides this there are many spirits of so sympathetic a temper that, without any further motive of vanity or self-interest, they find an inner pleasure in spreading happiness around them and take delight in the contentment of others as their own work. Yet I maintain that in any such case an action of this kind, however right and however amiable it might be, has still no genuinely moral worth. It stands on the same footing as other inclinations.... (Kant, GMM, p. 66)

Hegel argues that the moral consciousness can therefore derive no pleasure from being moral, as pleasure is perceived to be self-interest. Nature, which dictates inclination, is in contradiction with morality, which dictates duty. The moral consciousness, therefore, finds itself dichotomized between two conflicting dictates. Instead of finding happiness, "it finds rather cause for complaint about such a state of incompatibility between itself and existence, and about the injustice which restricts it to having its objects merely as a pure duty, but refuses to let it see the objects and itself realized." (Hegel, PhS, par. 601) Hegel argues that within the Kantian ethical system there is a tension between nature and morality and between happiness and moral duty. For Hegel, moral consciousness must go beyond

this contradiction where pure reason and impure inclination are perpetually at war. Kant's dichotomies must be overcome as "the moral consciousness cannot forego happiness and leave this element out of its absolute purpose." (Ibid, par. 602)

Hegel's conclusion is that moral consciousness must be actualized. "This, however, means that enjoyment is also implied in morality as disposition for this does not remain disposition in contrast to action, but proceeds to realize itself." (Ibid., par. 602)

Hegel is arguing, contrary to Kant, that disposition is a necessary component of morality and that happiness must be in harmony with duty so that consciousness can find absoluteness in moral action. Duty must be fulfilled; it must have content as well as form.

Hegel develops the conflict between duty and nature as "Reason and sensuousness" and identifies the need for reason to resolve this conflict, for "only such a unity is actual morality." (Hegel, PhS, par. 603)

Within the moral view of the world, it first seems that unity can only be achieved by eliminating sensuousness, however, sensuousness is an essential moment in the dialectical process of producing unity; the actuality of moral action. Sensuousness, therefore, must be in conformity with morality.

However, Hegel reveals another contradiction between absolute duty and the actualization of this duty; abstract form versus concrete content. Hegel argues that Kant cannot achieve unity between duty and sensuousness. The consummation of absolute duty must be postponed into the remote future.

The consummation, therefore, cannot be attained, but is simply to be thought of merely as an absolute task, i.e. one which simply remains a task. Yet at the same time its content has to be thought of something which simply must be, and must not remain a task; whether we imagine the (moral) consciousness to be altogether done away with in this goal or not. (Ibid., par. 603)

Hegel identifies a major contradiction within Kantian ethics: the ought/is distinction. Robert Brandom, in "Freedom and Constraint by Norms," identifies Kant's is/ought distinction with Kant's distinction between the Realm of Nature and the Realm of Freedom. The Realm of Nature is governed by causal relations, while the Realm of Freedom is governed by duty. The Realm of Nature is concerned with facts and descriptive claims -- the is -- while the Realm of Freedom is concerned with normative claims -- the ought. (Brandom, p. 187)

A moral duty must not be a descriptive rule about an already existing state of affairs (a fact), but must be a prescriptive rule about a potential state of affairs which does not yet exist. Our moral obligation is, therefore, not to what exists (the is), but to a possible future state of affairs (the ought).

Brandom argues that Hegel's central criticism of Kantian ethics was of Kant's conception of reason and duty. Kant's definition of reason and the norms, principles and duties derived from reason, are purely formal features of conduct. "Hegel regarded any account of freedom defined in terms of constraint by duty to be doomed to an empty abstraction in that it ignored the content of the duties involved, reducing freedom to merely acting in accordance to a universal law: the categorical imperative." (Brandom, p. 193)

Consciousness regards many specific duties, but the moral consciousness only heeds the pure duty, or pure form, in them. However, these many moral duties, or the content, "must be regarded as possessing an intrinsic being of their own," because the Notion of action implies a relationship between pure duty -- "complex actuality" -- and specific duties. (Hegel, PhS, par. 605)

In moral action, consciousness behaves as a particular self, as a complete individual.

Action is purposeful as it is directed at the world in order to achieve something. Duty in general thus falls outside of it into another being, which is consciousness and the sacred law giver of pure duty...this pure duty is thus the content of another consciousness, and is sacred for the consciousness that acts only mediately viz., through the agency of this other consciousness. (Ibid., par. 607)

Hegel argues that the moral world-view of Kant is, therefore, postulatory, for although it prescribes moral action, its moral value remains in the realm of thought. (Lauer, p. 217) Moral consciousness is, therefore, imperfect in actuality. It seeks perfection through the idea of pure will and the supreme good (God), "but the absolute Being is just this being that is thought, a being that is postulated beyond reality...." (Hegel, PhS, par. 609)

The absolute being is the thought in which duty (perfection) and action (imperfection) are realized and united. Happiness for the imperfect moral consciousness is posited within the absolute Being, and is not necessary but contingent upon a "gift of Grace" from this absolute Being. (Ibid., par. 608)

The moral view of the world is completed, but results in a contradiction. As Hegel scholar Quentin Lauer argues, "pure duty" and its "actualization" become moments of a being (absolute Being or God) which consciousness presents to itself. (Lauer, p. 216) Consciousness reifies this idea of a perfect harmonious super-consciousness into an object or thing, giving it ontic status. This perfect being, however, is not "moral" in that it does not experience the trials and tribulations which are essential to morality. The absolute Being does not face moral dilemmas, moral problems, and moral choices. The absolute Being cannot produce moral actions and

struggle with the consequences of these actions, as the morality of the absolute Being is perfect and untainted by human imperfections.

The moral world-view, then, does not in fact get beyond the concept of a self-consciousness in which morality resides, since the object of this moral consciousness is not an 'actual reality,' only a thought, its being is only 'represented.' (Lauer, p. 216)

Morality becomes diverted from self-consciousness and is posited into an object, God, which is external to consciousness. The being of morality is therefore confined to the realm of thought and is not actualized through action. Morality becomes pure thought or pure imagination. Moral completion and totality now exists outside the individual.

This self-consciousness which, qua self-consciousness, is other than the object, is thus left with a lack of harmony between the consciousness of duty and reality, and that, too, its own reality. (Hegel, PhS, par. 613)

Hegel identifies the logical conclusions of the Kantian moral view of the world as "there is no moral, perfect, actual self-consciousness" and that "duty is the pure unadulterated intrinsic being or in-itself of morality and morality is the conformity of this pure in-itself." If pushed to its logical extreme, one must admit that "there is no moral existence in Reality." (Ibid., par. 613)

Charles Taylor defines the dichotomy of the Kantian world-view as follows: "morality -- as defined by Kant --

cannot be actual (put into practice) and at the same time it must be actual." (Taylor, p. 211)

Flay identifies the problematic conclusions of the moral view of the world, where morality and moral self-consciousness is reduced to appearance or representation which exists in thought only. (Flay, p. 214)

...either moral perfection is not taken seriously, since it is to reside in actuality only in God, or it is taken seriously, in which case we are led back to the original paradox of the simple truth that such a perfection in the actual world of spirit would only destroy morality itself. (Ibid., p. 214)

Hegel concludes that for Kant moral action must contradict itself. Individual moral actions performed by individual consciousnesses cannot possibly hope to attain the absolute of pure duty. "Because the universal best ought to be carried out, nothing good is done." (Hegel, PhS, par. 619)

Hegel questions the purity of the pure sense of duty and reveals it as dissemblance, in that "sensuous purpose" (inclination or impulse) acts as the mediating element between pure consciousness and actual existence so that inclination is instrumental in actualizing moral duty. "Moral self-consciousness is not, therefore, in earnest with the elimination of inclination and impulse, for it is just these that are the self-realizing self-consciousness." (Hegel, PhS, par. 602)

Conscience and the Beautiful Soul

After exposing the contradictions inherent within the Kantian moral world-view, Hegel rejects the moral view of the world and places conscience as the foundation of morality. Self-consciousness rejects the idea of an external supreme good or law-giver (the absolute Being) and accepts the contradiction of morality; the conflict of duty versus action. Duty is brought from the external other and internalized through conscience.

It is a pure conscience which rejects with scorn such a moral idea of the world: it is in its own self the simple spirit that, certain of itself, acts conscientiously regardless of such ideas, and in this immediacy possesses the truth. (Hegel, PhS, par. 631)

Within conscience, self-consciousness becomes its own foundation for moral certainty. It overcomes the nature/duty distinction by accepting the given (the "is") and acting to reform the given in accordance with the dictates of duty. Conscience emphasizes action and duty with specific content, not an abstract idealized duty, form empty of content. Kant's dichotomies are overcome within conscience as moral completion becomes actualized within the individual.

The 'moral view of the world' as the idea that only a beyond can mysteriously synthesize or resolve the paradox is abandoned for the moral stance of conscience: the center and ground of warranted certainty is the praxis of the individual himself. (Flay, p. 215)

Hegel defines conscience as the "third self" which goes beyond the self of the legal person whose existence is defined by acknowledgement of others, and the self of the world of culture with its claim to absolute freedom. Both of these selves are incomplete and without content. Conscience, however, has both form and content, self-certainty and immediacy. (Hegel, PhS, par. 633)

Conscience is absolute self, which does away with these various moral substances; it is simple action in accordance with duty, which fulfills not this or that duty, but knows and does what is concretely right. (Ibid., par. 636)

Within consciousness the self becomes the absolute universal whose self-certainty, defined as conviction, becomes duty. (Ibid., par. 639) Duty now exists for consciousness, not consciousness for duty, as was the case for Kant. Duty, for consciousness, is "actual effective duty," not pure duty. This duty is to particular, immediate situations and circumstances. As Flay argues, "the very nature of conscience explicitly denies any separation of theory from practice: I do what is right, period." (Flay, p. 217)

Hegel defines the essence of duty as being conscience's conviction about it -- the implicitly universal self-consciousness which is both recognized and actualized. (Hegel, PhS, par. 640) Duty must, therefore, become realized in reality. Its foundation is the self-certainty of consciousness, which is conviction. When making a moral

decision, conscience must choose between a multiplicity of duties.

Self-certain spirit in which the in-itself has attained the significance of the self-conscious 'I,' knows that the content of the duty is the immediate certainty of itself. This, as a determination and content, is the natural consciousness, i.e. impulses and inclinations...It determines from its own self; but the sphere of the self into which falls the determinateness as such is the so-called sense-nature; to have a content taken from the immediate certainty of itself means that it has nothing to draw on but sense-nature. (Ibid., par. 643)

The problem with conscience is that it results in moral solipsism. Duty for consciousness is based on pure conviction, but as Lauer argues, "a pure conviction is ultimately as empty as pure duty." (Lauer, p. 223) As previously stated, this conviction is reduced to inclination, which is essentially subjective. Taylor argues that individual inclination is not compatible with the universal nature of conscience, and that actions derived from one will conflict with the other. (Taylor, p. 193)

Conscience, which is its own foundation for morality, realizes that it is but one of many individual consciences which have an equal sense of self-certainty or conviction. Within the universality of conscience, there is a relativity of conscience, as every individual conscience is absolute and there is a multiplicity of consciences. (Flay, pp. 217-218)

Because of the absolute freedom of conscience, the relationship between individual consciences is one of

"complete disparity, as a result of which the consciousness which is completely aware of the action finds itself in a state of complete uncertainty about the spirit which does the action and is certain of itself." (Hegel, PhS, par. 648)

Consciences are in conflict in both their basis of judgement and their claim for universality. (Flay, p. 219) The conflicting conscience will either ignore the other conscience or automatically declare that its actions are evil because they conflict with its own actions. As Lauer argues, moral judgement becomes reduced to personal preference. Action X is bad because I dislike it; action Y is good because I like it. (Lauer, p. 224)

While Hegel identifies the contradictions within conscience, it is a higher form of moral spirit than the moral spirit of the Kantian moral-view. Yet the problem of pure duty devoid of content and specific moral action continues to plague Hegel as it resurfaces in the dialectic between pure conscience and the "beautiful soul."

When faced with the dichotomy of pure duty and specific action, individual conscience retreats into itself to seek expression in its inner convictions through language and literature. Conscience retreats from action and loses its content and becomes pure duty. (Hegel, PhS, par. 656)

Taylor identifies this movement wherein conscience can "never act, out of fear of losing this sense of purity and

universality. This is the figure of the beautiful soul."
(Taylor, p. 194)

Hegel's criticism of the beautiful soul is a critique of the Romantic movement which emphasized emotion, subjectivity, and the irrational and tragic nature of existence. The beautiful soul retreats into itself and refuses to act as action distorts pure conviction. Yet this purity is, in actuality, empty form which lacks any real moral content.

Refined into this purity, consciousness exists in its poorest form, and the poverty which constitutes its sole possession is itself vanishing. The absolute certainty into which substance has resolved itself is the absolute untruth which collapses internally; it is the absolute self-consciousness in which consciousness is submerged. (Hegel, PhS, par. 657)

Consciousness in the form of the beautiful soul retreats into moral solipsism and flees contact with the external world. Yet, "the attempt to hold the universal free of the particular in order to maintain its purity, as the beautiful soul does, is to condemn it to non-existence."
(Taylor, p. 192)

The beautiful soul, therefore, "vanishes like a shapeless vapor that dissolves into thin air." (Hegel, PhS, par. 658)

The beautiful soul, like the moral consciousness of the Kantian moral world-view, could not accept the contradictions of absolute duty, or pure form, and specific

moral action, or content. Through the example of the beautiful soul, Hegel once again exposes the problems inherent in Kant's formal ethical system. In the Phenomenology of Spirit this system is later sublimated through Hegel's dialectic and sets the foundation of the religious form of spirit and eventual movement to Sittlichkeit.

Hegel's criticisms of Kantian morality and Hegel's own conception of morality, moral responsibility, and evil, will be investigated in the following chapter. In the next chapter I shall provide a thorough exposition of Hegel's thoughts on morality and his criticisms of Kantian ethics within The Philosophy of Right.

Chapter 2

Morality in the Philosophy of Right

The Philosophy of Right, Hegel's major work on law, rights, ethics and politics, is divided into three sections: Abstract Right, Morality, and Ethical Life. It is the section on morality which will be the focus of this chapter. I shall provide an in-depth exposition of the second section of the Philosophy of Right which develops Hegel's ethical thought on the moral standpoint. Hegel's development of the moral will, the critique of Kantian ethics, and the movement to ethical life, are further developed within this section. These themes which were introduced in my first chapter will be continued in this chapter and shall be analyzed/criticized in my third and final chapter.

The section of the Philosophy of Right on morality is a moment in the dialectical process towards ethical life. Hegel defines morality as "the standpoint of the will which is infinite not merely in itself, but for itself." (Hegel, PR, par. 105) The will is infinite in that it simultaneously embodies the universal or general will and the individual or particular will. The will therefore embodies the universal and makes the universal its own. It is the freedom of the will where the individual (individuated spirit) finds its moral identity. Morality can be seen as "the reflection of

the will into itself," which "makes the person into the subject." (PR, par. 105)

It is within the subjectivity of the will where the concept of freedom becomes concrete. Through morality the individual's will, or the subjective will, is made aware of itself; its own particularity is the basis of its freedom. The freedom of the will's subjectivity and the will's awareness of its subjectivity makes freedom an actuality through morality. Morality is the embodiment of the will's freedom through concrete moral action. "In this way a higher ground has been assigned to freedom; the Idea's existential aspect, or its moment of reality, is now the subject of the will." (PR, par. 106)

Hegel describes the movement of the will's freedom within morality as follows:

The will, which at the start is aware of its independence which before it is mediated is only implicitly identical with the universal will or the principle of will, is raised beyond its (explicit) difference from the universal will, beyond this situation in which it sinks deeper and deeper into itself, and is established as explicitly identical with the principle of the will...subjectivity, which is abstract from the start, i.e. distinct from the concept, becomes likened to it, and thereby the Idea acquires its genuine realization. The result is that the subjective will determines itself as objective too and truly concrete. (PR, par. 106)

Hegel identifies the moral standpoint as "the right of the subjective will." (PR, par. 107) The subjective will identifies its own objects of attention and ends of action.

The subjective will makes itself its own foundation and sees no reason to go beyond itself to find purpose and definition. The subjective will is its own object; it is simultaneously both subject and object. It is therefore both particular and universal at the same time. Therefore, as the subjective will becomes its own object, it becomes the will's "own true concept," and "becomes objective as the expression of the will's own universality." (PR, par. 107)

For Hegel the subjective self-reflection of the will through the moral standpoint is a higher form of freedom than the legalistic standpoint of abstract right, which is developed in the section "Abstract Right" within the Philosophy of Right. By being its "own true concept," the will achieves a synthesis between particularity and universality. The categories of form and content, and the universal and particular, which stand in opposition to each other within the understanding, become united through the concept.

Hegel's translator T.M. Knox explains that the concept (Begriff) for Hegel is "concrete thought." (Knox, PR, p. vii) When the categories of form and content, and universal and particular are not synthesized into an organic whole, they become abstractions which are fundamentally opposed to each other. This is one of the central criticisms Hegel has against Kantian ethics; it fails to become concrete and

not overcome the oppositions of form and content, and the universal and the particular. When the subjective will first becomes aware of itself as subjectivity, it is not yet identical with the "concept of the will," as the subjective will has yet to overcome its negation and is still "abstract, restricted and formal," therefore, "the moral point of view is that of relation, of ought-to-be, or demand." (Hegel, PR, par. 108)

Implied within Hegel's description of the first formulation of the subjective will is the moral world-view of Kantian ethics which Hegel criticizes in the Phenomenology of Spirit. The "ought-to-be" or "demand" of the moral point of view can be interpreted as Kant's deontological ethical system which is based on obeying the dictates of the will. The moral law, as embodied by Kant's categorical imperative, is an absolute dictate or command. The categorical imperative is a moral "ought-to-be" which is to be willed to create a further state of affairs. For Kant "ought implies can," therefore, the moral duty must be a categorical demand vs. a hypothetical demand.

Hegel argues that the concept of the will, or the synthesis between subjectivity and objectivity, must be attained through moral action. For Hegel, all willing involves the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity,

and the process of overcoming this opposition by "establishing them as identical." (PR, par. 109)

This totality is momentarily achieved through the standpoint of morality wherein the will is aware of its freedom and its self-awareness provides content (self-identity) for the form of subjectivity. (PR, par. 109)¹

The content as 'mine' has for me this character: by virtue of its identity in subject and object it enshrines for me my subjectivity, not merely as my inner purpose, but also in as much as it has acquired outward existence. (PR, par. 110)

The synthesis achieved within the moral standpoint, however, is not total as it is not necessary. The self-aware subjective will is still formal and the content it provides is "only something demanded," therefore "this entails the possibility that the content may not be adequate to the concept." (PR, par. 111) The moral standpoint is therefore still an imperative to be willed, not something actualized.

Through moral action the subjective will objectifies its aims (specific content) and superseded its particularity. The subjective will therefore finds "external subjectivity" wherein the subjective will becomes identical, or identifies, with the will of others. "The achievement of my aim,

¹ This totality, however, is not actually achieved through morality, as Hegel considers any attempt at unity within the moral standpoint is doomed to failure. For Hegel moral unity and completion can only be achieved within ethical life where a synthesis is found through the internalization of external societal institutions and practices.

therefore, implies this identity of my will with the will of others, it has a positive bearing on the will of others." (PR, par. 112)

Hegel identifies the externalization of the subjective (or moral) will as action. Moral action has three elements: it must be identified as being self-motivated, it must be a moral imperative, and it must affect or bear upon the will of others. (PR, par. 113)

After defining the essential characteristics of moral action, Hegel divides his section into "Purpose and Responsibility," "Intention and Welfare," and "Good and Conscience." These subsections refer to the three elements of "the right of the moral will." (PR, par. 114)

Purpose and Responsibility

For Hegel moral action must be purposeful. Moral action presupposes an external state of affairs which confronts the subjective will and can be affected through purposeful action. The moral will must be responsible for its actions, as the actions stem from its attempt to create an external state of affairs.

In performing an action, the moral will is responsible for the intended consequences of the action. The problem of moral responsibility arises when unforeseen consequences arise

out of action. Because of the finite nature of the moral will, the moral will cannot foresee all the possible consequences of its actions. The moral will's action can be altered by external factors which can change, distort, or corrupt the action's intended purpose. (PR, par. 117)

The will's right, however, is to recognize as its action, and to accept responsibility for, only those presuppositions of the deed which it was conscious in its aim and those aspects of the deed which were contained in its purpose. The deed can be imputed to me only if my will is responsible for it -- this is the right to know. (PR, par. 117)

Hegel claims that the moral will cannot be held responsible for actions which it is unaware of.² In order to act upon a state of affairs, the subjective will must first have knowledge about this state of affairs. The subjective will must also have knowledge about the consequences of its action upon the external state of affairs. The moral will can only be responsible for what it intends. Hegel defines his position as follows: "I am nothing except in relation to my freedom, and my will is responsible for the deed only insofar as I know what I am doing." (PR, par. 250) Hegel claims that Oedipus, for example, is not guilty of parricide because he did not know that he killed his father. (PR, par. 250)

² Within the section on morality, Hegel both describes and criticizes Kantian ethics and develops his own theory of morality. In paragraphs like this one the distinction between the two is unclear,

The reason why the moral will cannot be held responsible for all the possible ramifications of its action is because of the essential nature of the action itself. While the essence of the subjective moral will is its freedom, the essence of the external world is the necessity of causal relations. When the moral will goes beyond its own subjectivity and exercises its freedom through action, it is confronted by external forces which affect and alter the consequences of the action. Action, by its very nature, is public. It takes on a life of its own and is affected by endless external circumstances. These external forces can produce unforeseen and unintended results which were not the original intention of the action. "Thus the will has the right to repudiate the imputation of all consequences except the first, since it alone was purposed." (PR, par. 118)

Intention and Welfare

Moral action for Hegel has many complex elements which can be subdivided "ad infinitum." (PR, par. 122) The unity of these elements is the intention, or the "universal side of the action." (PR, par. 119) It is this universal element of action, the totality or essence of an action, on which Hegel places his primary emphasis. For Hegel moral action must be understood in its organic totality.

In a living thing, the single part is there in its immediacy not a mere part, but as an organ in which the universal is really present as the universal; hence in murder, it is not the piece of flesh, as something isolated, which is injured, but life itself which is injured in that piece of flesh. (PR, par. 119)

The subjective moral will, conscious of its freedom, realizes its particularity through its moral action. This action defines and creates the moral will's subjectivity concretely as "the right of the subject to find his satisfaction in the action." (PR, par. 121)

Moral action must be purposeful and must have some ultimate end. It is the end of the action which has specific purpose or worth for the moral will. In relation to the specific content of the action, or the subjective end, the action itself becomes a means to the end or intention of the subjective will. The action's end (which is subjective to the moral will), however, is finite and can become a means to other intentions and ends ad infinitum. Hegel uses the example of murder to explain this point. Murder is not committed for murder's sake, it is committed for some specific reason or end. The motives of an action, which Hegel identifies as "the moral factor" (PR, p. 251), are determined by the subjective will's freedom. Murder implies the twofold aspect of action: the purpose and the intent. The purpose is the universal element, as the purpose of the murder is to kill someone and negate their existence. The intention is the

particular element, as an individual murders someone in order to gain a fortune, or for revenge, etc. (PR, p. 251)

The intention or end of action is subjective as it is determined by the moral will's freedom. The ends may be natural, as they may be to satisfy a desire or passion, but they are never wholly constituted by natural impulses and desires. The content of action is based upon the moral will's freedom or rationality. This freedom is ultimately its own end. "To make my freedom the content of what I will is a plain goal of my freedom itself." (PR, p. 251)

While Hegel does not want to forfeit or diminish the role of rationality and the freedom involved in rationally creating and choosing ends, he does want to acknowledge the existence and important role of "natural" or biological and emotional drives which contribute to the formation of ends and intentions. (PR, par. 123)

At a primitive moment of the moral dialectic, Hegel identifies two forms of content for the ends of moral action: the activity itself and natural inclination. The first content is the activity of pursuing an end for its own sake in order to achieve the intended end. The second content is the "natural subjective embodiment" element of the moral will which defines the ends of the will; "needs, inclinations, passions, opinions, fancies, etc." Hegel identifies the

satisfaction of these natural desires as "welfare or happiness." (PR, par. 123)

Here Hegel acknowledges the role of happiness or welfare in moral action. Contrary to Kant, Hegel argues that the quest and attainment of happiness is an essential component of morality. Inclination is an essential element if performing moral actions; we perform moral actions because we want to, or because we desire some specific end. Just as concrete and particular ends must be acknowledged for the completion of moral action, inclination must be acknowledged as a necessary element of morality.

Hegel acknowledges, contra Kant, that "subjective satisfaction of the individual" is "part and parcel of the achievement of ends of absolute worth." (PR, par. 124) Hegel argues that personal gratification is always involved in moral action and that recognition of performing moral acts, such as "honor and fame," are often by-products of moral action. (PR, par. 124) Personal gratification, or happiness, can be seen as the subjective or particular end of moral action, while the intended end of moral action (altering an external state of affairs) can be seen as the objective or universal end. While personal satisfaction is a result of moral action, Hegel calls it "empty dogmatism" to assert that the subjective end --

personal gratification or happiness -- is the only end of moral action. (PR, par. 124)³

...this dogmatism is more than empty, it is pernicious if it passes into the assertion that because subjective satisfaction is present, as it always is when any task is brought into completion, it is what the agent intended in essence to secure and that the objective end was in his eyes only a means to that. (PR, par. 124)

While Kant claims that the only thing which is truly good in itself is a good will, Hegel argues that it is an individual's actions which determine the moral character of his will. Hegel defines a subject as "the series of his actions." If these actions are "worthless productions," then the subject's will will also be worthless. If the subject's actions are "of a substantial nature," it follows that his inner will is also of a substantial nature. (PR, par. 124)

For Hegel, the subjective moral will must go beyond itself through action in order to be "moral." Contrary to Kant, Hegel does not consider a good will to be good in itself if it cannot produce good results through moral action. While Hegel thinks it is important to will great things, merely willing the good is not enough. Hegel claims that one must achieve good results or else willing becomes futile, as "the

³ Hegel does not specify who is guilty of this "empty dogmatism," but his description sounds like Bentham's utilitarianism, which Hegel criticizes in the section on Culture within the Phenomenology of Spirit.

laurels of mere willing are dry leaves that never were green."
(PR, p. 252)

Hegel identifies the "right of the subject's particularity," or its right to be satisfied through moral actions as a central difference between antiquity and modernity. Hegel identifies Christianity as the basis of this modern attitude towards the right of the subject to seek happiness through its moral actions. (PR, par. 124)

Amongst the primary shapes which this right assumes are love, romanticism, the quest for the external salvation of the individual, etc.; next come moral convictions and conscience, and, finally, the other forms, some of which come into prominence in what follows as the principle of civil society.... (PR, par. 124)⁴

Hegel's assertion that the individual moral will has a right to seek subjective satisfaction or personal happiness through moral action is fundamentally opposed to Kant's moral position. As previously argued in Chapter one, Kant juxtaposes inclination and desire with duty. Hegel argues that for Kant, the individual does not have a right to obtain happiness through morality. In order for duty to be pure and universal, it must be devoid of any subjective desires. Hegel considers this dichotomy between inclination and duty to be an empty abstraction. Hegel acknowledges that the subjective end

⁴ Here Hegel is alluding to the movement from morality to ethical life wherein the moral dialectic is completed through the sublimation of subjective moral intuitions into objective societal norms and mores.

of moral action, happiness or welfare, is a necessary moment of the moral dialectic. Hegel claims that it is an abstraction for Kant to ignore this subjective element of the totality of moral action, as the subjective element is "just as much identical with the universal as distinct from it." (PR, par. 124)

Abstract reflection, however, fixes this moment in its distinction from and opposition to the universal and so produces a view of morality as nothing but a bitter, unending struggle against self-satisfaction, as the command: 'Do with abhorrence what duty enjoins.' (PR, par. 124)

When the content of the subjective element of the will (welfare) is related to the universal element of the will, a "moment of universality" is achieved. The content of this moment is the welfare of others. Therefore, "the welfare of many other unspecified particulars is thus also an essential end and right of subjectivity." (PR, par. 125)

Once again, Hegel grounds particularity within freedom. "My particularity, however, like that of others, is only a right at all in so far as I am a free entity." (PR, par. 126) A particularity cannot perform actions which deny its freedom and contradict itself. Therefore, the subjective will cannot justify a wrong or immoral action in the name of morality. (PR, par. 126) Hegel argues that a subjective will cannot conduct immoral acts and crimes for the welfare of itself or others. He uses the example of St. Crispin who

stole leather to make shoes for the poor. St. Crispin's intentions might have been "moral," but his action was still wrong and therefore unacceptable. (PR, p. 252)

It is one of the most prominent of the corrupt maxims of our time to enter a plea for the so-called 'moral' intention behind wrong actions and to imagine bad men with well-meaning hearts, i.e. hearts willing their own welfare and perhaps that of others also... The result is that crime and the thoughts that lead to it, be they fancies however trite and empty, or opinions however wild, are to be regarded as right, rational, and excellent, simply because they issue from men's hearts and enthusiasms. (PR, par. 126)

This quotation proves that Hegel is by no means a moral relativist. While Hegel has definite definitions of moral and immoral conduct, he is not a moral absolutist either. Hegel acknowledges that in certain extreme cases abstract or property rights may be overrun if an individual's life is threatened. (PR, par. 127) Stealing, or denying someone's abstract right to property, is wrong, but it can be justified in order to save a life. For Hegel the right to exist takes precedence over the right to property.

Hence it is only the necessity of the immediate present which can justify a wrong action, because not to do the action would in turn be to commit an offence, namely the complete destruction of the embodiment of freedom. (PR, p. 253)

The dialectic of morality now arrives at the stage of good and conscience where the subjective will attempts to attain both the particular in its subjectivity and the universal in its "infinite" relation to itself. Hegel

identifies these two moments within moral subjectivity as the good and conscience. (PR, par. 128)

Good and Conscience

Hegel defines the good as "the idea as the unity of the concept of the will and the particularity of the will." (PR, par. 129) Within the good, abstract right or welfare are sublimated into an organic totality. "The good is thus freedom realized, the absolute end and aim of the world." (PR, par. 129)

Within the Idea of the good, particular welfare is valid only as universal welfare. At the same time, the good must be actualized through the subjective will, which reflects the mutual universality and particularity of the good. The good has "absolute right" over the abstract right of property and the particular ends of welfare. (PR, par. 130) "If either of these moments becomes distinguished from the good, it has validity only in so far as it accords with the good and is subordinated to it." (PR, par. 130)

Hegel identifies the good as the "essential" of the subjective will. (PR, par. 130) Yet within the moral standpoint, the good is still an "abstract idea," as the subjective will has not identified itself as the good and made the good its own content. Therefore, the subjective will

stands in relation to the good as a hypothetical ought; "it ought to make the good its aim and realize it completely." (PR, par. 131) The good is related to the subjective will as an abstract "to be" which is dependent upon the subjective will to make it an actuality through moral action. (PR, par. 131)

While the subjective will has the "right of insight," wherein the subjective will is entitled to "good reasons" or personal conviction for conducting actions, Hegel argues that this right does not negate the "right of subjectivity." (PR, par. 132) The right of subjectivity is the subjective will's right to know action as being good or evil, legal or illegal, etc. This right takes precedence as the good is externalized through moral action.

Hegel describes the right of objectivity as follows:

...since action is an alteration which is to take place in an actual world and so will have recognition in it, it must in general accord with what has validity there. Whoever wills to act in this world of actuality has eo ipso submitted himself to its laws and recognized the right of subjectivity. (PR, par. 132)

Hegel argues that the right of insight can be used to reveal the moral responsibility of the subjective will. This right of insight can also be used to ascertain the lack of moral responsibility of certain groups, such as "children, imbeciles and lunatics." (PR, par. 132) However, Hegel does not accept arguments denying moral responsibility because of

uncontrollable rages or passions. Hegel argues that excuses of this kind deny man's essential universal and rational nature and devalue man to the level of the beasts.

...for the nature of man consists precisely in the fact that he is essentially something universal, not a being whose knowledge is an abstract momentary and piecemeal affair...as subject, he is neither the single existent of this moment of time nor this isolated hot feeling of revenge. If he were, he would be an animal which would have to be knocked on the head as dangerous and unsafe because of its liability to fits of madness. (PR, par. 132)

Within this moment of the moral dialectic, the good is the "universal abstract essentiality" of the will which Hegel defines as "duty." (PR, par. 133) Here Hegel refers directly to Kant's moral philosophy, as duty is both "universal and abstract" and "should be done for duty's sake." (PR, par. 133)

The problem with this level of the dialectic is that particularity and subjectivity are considered to be distinct from the good. The good, as the abstract universal (duty), does not have subjective particularity (specific content), and is therefore not complete. Hegel argues that every action must have a concrete content and particular end. The ethical question for the moral subject is "what is my duty?" yet because the universal duty is devoid of specific content, no answer can be given. Hegel proposes that one should "do the right" and "strive after welfare," both subjective and objective, but acknowledges that even these specific duties are not entailed by the Kantian motto of following "duty for

duty's sake." The problem lies in the failure of the (Kantian) abstract duty to achieve particularity. (PR, par. 135)

Duty itself in the moral self-consciousness is the essence or the universality of that consciousness, the way in which it is inwardly related to itself alone; all that is left to it, therefore, is abstract universality, and for its determinate character it has identity without content, or the abstractly positive, the indeterminate. (PR, par. 135)

While Hegel is critical of Kant, he does acknowledge the importance of Kant in emphasizing the priority of the will as the foundation of morality. Kant's emphasis on rationality, freedom, and the role of the will as the basis of duty, are all essential elements in Hegel's moral dialectic. Hegel's central argument with Kant is that Kant does not complete the moral dialectic and achieve the synthesis of ethical life. Kant stops at the antithesis of morality where the absolute and particular are not yet united in the concept of morality and stand in opposition to each other. Hegel argues that Kant fails to overcome the opposition of the universal and the particular, and abstract form (duty) and content (specific end). Hegel considers this failure to be responsible for reducing Kant's historical accomplishment, the role of the free unconditional will, to an "empty formalism" and reducing the "science of morals" to the "preaching of duty for duty's sake." (PR, par. 135)

Hegel argues that within Kant's ethical system, no specific doctrine of particular duties is possible. The only criterion for Kant is his conception of duty as logical consistency and the absence of contradiction which Hegel defines as "formal correspondence with itself -- which is nothing but abstract indeterminacy stabilized." (PR, par. 135) Hegel argues that Kant provides no criterion for determining between good and evil duties. "On the contrary, by this means any wrong or immoral line of conduct may be justified." (PR, par. 135)

For Hegel, Kant's absolute duty could be useful if it had a concrete content and specific moral principles of action, but because Kant's absolute duty is devoid of specific content, it is meaningless. Kant's criterion of non-contradiction is also useless for specific moral dilemmas; since there is no specific content, there will be no contradiction. (PR, p. 245) Kantian morality cannot get beyond the moral "ought-to-be" and is never actualized through concrete moral action through performing particular duties with specific ends. Kantian morality, which Hegel defines as one of "relation," never gets beyond the "ought-to-be" and remains an abstraction without content for moral action. (PR, par. 135)

Conscience and Evil

At this moment of the dialectic, Hegel moves from the abstract good of Kantian duty to the subjectivity of conscience. Hegel describes conscience as "subjectivity in its universality reflected into itself." This subjectivity is the subjective will's "absolute inward certainty of himself." (PR, par. 136) Conscience acts as the subjective will's inner conviction.

While conscience is subjective, it is still abstract. While the good as duty was abstract outwardness, conscience is "abstract inwardness" which stands in relation to the universal or "objective content" of the good. The good has not been internalized as it is later in ethical life. (PR, p. 234) Hegel contrasts conscience (formal conscience) with true conscience (the conscience of the ethical life) which internalizes the good and embodies the universal through "objective determinants and duties." At the "abstract stand of morality," however, conscience has no objective content (the good). (PR, par. 137)

Formal conscience is sure of its inner convictions and its subjective knowledge of the good. Yet Hegel argues that conscience and its conviction can be judged through the ends of its moral action. For Hegel the good is a universal element of the will and is not particular to any individual

will as subjective or private feelings. Hegel therefore rejects subjective emotivism as the basis of morality. The good is embodied by objective universal forms of moral reasoning; "the form of laws and principles." (PR, par. 137) Because of the private nature of conscience, Hegel argues that society cannot acknowledge inner conviction as a valid form of moral and legal reasoning, "any more than science can grant validity to subjective opinion and dogmatism." (PR, par. 137)

For Hegel, morality cannot be a private internal matter. Morality must be public, shared and objective. Formal conscience, however, wants its convictions to be acknowledged as the good, yet at the same time holds on to its claim of absolute subjectivity.

The ambiguity in connexion with conscience lies therefore in this: it is presupposed to mean the identity of subjective knowing and willing with the true good, and so is claimed and recognized to be something sacrosanct; and yet at the same time, as the mere subjective reflection of self-consciousness into itself, it still claims for itself the title due, solely on the strength of its absolutely valid rational content, to that identity alone. (PR, par. 137)

Through the subjective self-certainty of conscience, the subjective will "readily evaporates" into itself the universal character of duty and right, and makes itself the absolute judge of its concept; I determine what is right for me. (PR, par. 138) The subjective will therefore retreats into itself, content with the correctness of its private

existence and inner convictions. Hegel states that when the subjective will has "reduced all otherwise valid duties to emptiness" and reduced itself to "the sheer inwardness of the will," the subjective can potentially become evil." (PR, par. 139)

Hegel defines evil as the failure of the subjective will to attain the universal and the objectivity of the good. Evil is the subjective will's opposition to the universal good through the subjective will's extreme inwardness. The will which retreats into itself finds no objective content, only the subjective content of the "natural will." (PR, par. 139) The relative content of the natural will is identified by natural impulses, inclinations and passions. While Hegel acknowledges that these drives are not evil in themselves, as the natural will is morally neutral, the failure of the subjective will to acknowledge the universal and its freedom is evil.

"When man wills the natural, it is no longer merely natural, but the negative opposed to the good, i.e. to the concept of the will." (PR, p. 256) Here Hegel implies that following one's natural whims, passions and desires, without the balance of reason, is to deny one's freedom. Therefore denying one's essential character and being a slave to one's passions is evil. Yet Hegel argues that the will is still responsible for its actions, as the essence of will is

freedom. The subjective will freely chooses to deny its freedom and perform evil actions. Hegel describes evil as being "the individual's own," it is his "subjectivity establishing itself purely and simply for itself." (PR, par. 140)

It is this opposition that this inwardness of the will is evil. Man is therefore evil by a conjunction between his natural or undeveloped character and his reflection into himself; and therefore evil belongs neither to nature as such by itself -- unless nature were supposed to be the natural character of the will which rests in its particular content -- nor to introverted reflection by itself, i.e. cognition in general, unless this were to maintain itself in that opposition to the universal. (PR, par. 139)

Hegel calls the subjective will's attempt to pass off its inward convictions to others as the good as "Hypocrisy." (PR, par. 140) Hypocrisy is the attempt to disguise evil as good by convincing others of the purity of the subjective will's intentions. Hegel rejects this form of subjectivism which attempts to mislead others and cloud the distinction between good and evil.

Hegel identifies a modern variant of hypocrisy called Probabilism, which attempts to justify actions through arbitrary reasons and appeals to authority. Within Probabilism, any reason or authority is useful in justifying an action. An evil action can therefore be argued as being good because of an appeal to authority. Yet within Probabilism, there exists a plurality of reasons and

authority, which are at the same time "numerous and contradictory." (PR, par. 140) Morality is therefore not determined by the concrete content of moral action, but by "bare opinion." (PR, p. 257) Hegel argues that the appeal to reasons and authority within Probabilism leads to moral relativism, as there is no absolute method of deciding between these competing reasons and appeals to authority. Probabilism results in radical moral subjectivity where "caprice and self-will are made the arbiters of good and evil." (PR, par. 140)

When the appeals to external authority collapse into contradictions, the will retreats into its own subjectivity and uses its subjective intentions as the basis of morality. Within this level of subjectivism, the goodness of the will is determined by "willing the abstract good." (PR, par. 140) Here Hegel criticizes the Romanticists who assert that intentions alone determine the morality of an action. The problem with this form of subjectivism is that good intentions can produce evil results. Hegel identifies circumstances where "theft, cowardice, and murder" could be justified because they were performed with good intentions. (PR, par. 140) Evil men are forever arguing for their good intentions, which under this form of subjectivism, would have to be accepted.

Hegel argues that in morality actions should be judged as being good or bad, as one's actions are external, objective

and open to evaluation. Intentions, however, are inherently private and subjective and cannot be judged. Here moral subjectivism moves into the realm of conviction where private subjective conviction determines the goodness of an action. Hegel rejects private convictions as the basis of moral action because of its radical subjectivity. Evil actions can be claimed to be good if the subjective will is convinced of the goodness of its inner convictions. The objectivity of actions is rejected for subjective feelings, intentions and convictions; "my good intention in my action and my conviction of its goodness make it good." (PR, par. 140)

Hegel argues that the relativism inherent within "the principle of justification by conviction" devalues morality and justice by leading to illogical conclusions. If others consider one's actions to be evil, one must agree with their judgement as they are equally convinced of their convictions as you are of your own. Therefore justice is reduced to "foreign subjective conviction" which acts as an "external force" upon the subjective will. (PR, par. 140)

Hegel identifies the most advanced form of subjectivism as "irony" wherein the subjective will once again retreats into itself and rejects the external conviction of others and makes itself the sole "arbiter and judge of truth, right and duty." (PR, par. 140) This inherently solipsistic attitude rejects external laws and duties for internal desires

and conviction. This is the form of the "beautiful soul" which Hegel describes in the Phenomenology of Spirit.

Conclusion

Hegel concludes the chapter on morality in the Philosophy of Right in a similar manner as his section on morality in the Phenomenology of Spirit. In both works, spirit, or the subjective will, attempts to find completion through morality. While morality is a higher form of spirit than culture (Bildung) and abstract right, morality is not the final stage of the dialectic. Hegel identifies morality and the moral view of the world, as embodied by Kantian ethics, as being the antithesis of culture and abstract right. While morality seems to be the culmination of the moral will (or ethical spirit), Hegel's critique of Kant exposes the contradictions within morality. Instead of attaining completion, the subjective will retreats into itself (through conscience and the beautiful soul) when confronted by the subjectivity of others.

The subjective will attempts to find moral certainty through duty, but duty in the form of (Kantian) morality stands outside the subject as a form of relation to the subjective will; the subjective will does not internalize duty and make duty its own. Instead of finding moral completion,

the subjective will experiences alienation within morality in the contradictions between particularity and universality, form and content, and inclination and duty.

In order to find moral certainty and completeness, the subjective will must complete the dialectic and arrive at the final synthesis of ethical life (Sittlichkeit). Within this synthesis, moral substance becomes subject as absolute (society) and the particular (the individual) becomes united in ethical life.

When looking at the larger dialectic of spirit's movement to moral certainty, Hegel's definition of morality and subsequent criticisms of Kant can be seen as an attempt at sublimating morality into ethical life, as Kantian ethics and morality become a necessary step in the movement to ethical life. This attempt at sublimation will be explored in the next chapter. If Kant can defend his position against Hegel's criticisms, the move to ethical life might not be as smooth and necessary as Hegel would like. Even if Hegel's criticisms are convincing, does he have a viable alternative to Kant? Could the charges of "empty formalism" and pragmatic uselessness be levelled at Hegel's moral alternative? I shall address these concerns and attempt to answer these questions in my third and final chapter.

Chapter 3

Analysis of Hegel's Critique

Hegel's conclusion within morality is that the moral standpoint is inadequate as it fails to unite the particularity of the subjective will and the objectivity of moral obligation. Within morality the subjective will or individuated spirit is alienated from itself as it experiences the contradictions of inclination and duty, and absolute duty and specific duties.

Hegel's critique of the moral standpoint reveals the tensions within Kantian ethics, which Hegel feels cannot be overcome within the abstract moment of morality. Hegel's critique of the moral standpoint, however, is not a complete rejection of Kantian ethics. The moral standpoint is a necessary moment in the development of spirit. This moment is the antithesis of the abstract right of culture (*Bildung*) which must be sublimated within the synthesis of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). Taylor argues that Hegel's main criticism of Kant is that Kant defined the highest form of morality as being *Moralitat* and did not move beyond *Moralitat* to *Sittlichkeit*. (Taylor, Hegel, p. 376) Flay agrees with Taylor that in the Kantian critique and subsequent movement to ethical life, Hegel is attempting to achieve the "concreteness

of ethical life without destroying the focus on the individual and freedom which Kant introduced." (Flay, p. 377)

Before we can accept Hegel's move to ethical life and his rejection of the moral standpoint of Kantian ethics, we must ask whether his assessment of morality in general, and Kantian morality in particular, is convincing. If Hegel is guilty of misreading Kant and developing a straw man argument out of Kant's position, Hegel's moral dialectic becomes problematic and unconvincing. The move to ethical life becomes difficult, and possibly unnecessary, if Kant's moral standpoint can overcome contradictions which Hegel attributes to Kantian morality. In this chapter I shall analyze Hegel's critique of Kantian ethics and provide a defence of Kant's ethical system by attempting to answer Hegel's criticisms of Kant's moral standpoint. I shall conclude that Hegel is guilty of misinterpreting Kant, and that Hegel's position is as problematic as Kant's position.

Analysis of Hegel's Critique

Hegel offers many criticisms of the moral standpoint as embodied by Kantian morality. However, Hegel's most substantial criticism of Kant's morality within both the Phenomenology of Spirit and the Philosophy of Right is the claim that Kantian morality is a rigid empty formalism devoid

of content. Hegel's charge of empty formalism is either explicit or implied within all of his criticisms of Kantian ethics. This charge underlies Hegel's criticisms of the Kantian dichotomies and contradictions of form versus content, duty versus inclination, absolute duty versus particular duties, subjective intentions versus objective consequences, and the moral ought versus the concrete is. All of these criticisms are variations of the emptiness charge which Hegel levels against Kantian duty-based ethics.

Although the charge of empty formalism is arguably Hegel's central criticism of Kantian morality, there are different formulations of this criticism which relate to different elements of Kant's moral philosophy. I shall divide the emptiness charge into two main criticisms: the purity of the good will and the emptiness of duty. The first argument is Hegel's criticism of the purity of the good will and Kant's conception of moral agency. The second argument is Hegel's criticism of Kant's categorical imperative which Hegel claims cannot provide content for moral action.

A. The Purity of the Moral Will

Perhaps the most original and influential criticism Hegel levels against Kantian ethics is against Kant's definition of the moral agent and the purity of the good will.

Kant's moral agent must abstract its duty without any reference to the sensible world and social institutions. In order to be truly free, the Kantian moral will must determine its duty a priori, independently of natural inclinations. (Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 186) Kant's moral agent must have a will that is "pure" in that it is devoid of the impulses of subjective desire and the determinants of the sensible world. The Kantian moral agent must derive its moral duty from the principles of pure reason, not from natural inclinations or specific social obligations.

It cannot begin with the ends that a man may set for himself and in accordance with them prescribe the maxims he is to adopt, that is, his duty; for that would be to adopt maxims on empirical grounds, and such grounds yield no concept of duty, since this concept (the categorical ought) has its root in pure reason alone. Consequently, if maxims were to be adopted on the basis of those ends (all of which are self-seeking), one could not really speak of the concept of duty. Hence in ethics the concepts of duty will lead to ends and will have to establish maxims with respect to ends we ought to set ourselves, grounding them in accordance with moral principles. (Kant, *ibid.*, p. 188)

Hegel is critical of Kant's formalistic approach to the determination of one's duty. Hegel considers Kant's moral agent to be an unrealistic ideal which can never be achieved. Even if this agent could be realized, Hegel argues that it would be undesirable. Hegel claims that in Kant's quest for purity and freedom, Kant denies the moral agent any concrete identity. Kant's moral agent is an abstract moral will devoid

of any specific content: age, sex, background, nationality, habits, desires, etc. Hegel charges Kant's moral agent with being an empty abstraction, as "moral autonomy has been purchased at the price of vacuity." (Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, p. 77)

The Kantian moral agent must ignore space, time, and sensation to become the "embodiment of impersonal law." (White, p. 223) In order to be moral, the Kantian moral agent must ignore the phenomenal world and the empirical self of nature. Kant's dualism between the absolute necessity of nature and the absolute freedom of reason is the basis of the dichotomies of Kantian ethics. These dichotomies include the form/content distinction, the duty/inclination distinction, and the ought/is distinction.

Hegel is critical of Kant's ahistorical approach which ignores concrete social relationships and institutions at the expense of universal reason. Kant's moral philosophy, with its primacy of freedom, universalism, and rationalism, is arguably the pinnacle of the Enlightenment's quest for a rational universal ethical system which is independent of subjective individual desires and culturally bound social mores and norms. Hegel is critical of this approach as it denies adequate moral importance to social institutions such as the family, the community and the state. Hegel identifies these three social institutions as ethical communities which

unite the particular (the individual) and the universal (society) into a synthesis wherein specific content for formal duty is provided through social praxis and norms of conduct.

Hegel's historicism, which is embodied by his conception of ethical life and its relationship to morality, is directly at odds with Kant's universal, ahistorical approach. Hegel claims that Kant's moral agent is a pure will devoid of specific content. Without content supplied by personal desires and social obligations, Hegel concludes that Kant's moral agent must remain as an empty abstraction (Hegel, PR, par. 135)

This abstract moral self is supposed to activate pre-established principles for the sake of indeterminate 'others' -- of which he himself is actually an instance...the 'paradox' of Kant's moral philosophy is that for him the individual can only achieve moral sovereignty through the denial of everything that is peculiar to himself (White, p. 223)

Hegel's historicist critique of the Kantian moral agent and its emphasis on the purity of the will has been influenced by the work of many recent moral philosophers. Alasdair MacIntyre, in After Virtue, uses a historicist argument against the Kantian definition of the moral agent which borrows from the Hegelian tradition. MacIntyre agrees with Hegel that the Kantian moral agent is an abstract self devoid of any content. This moral agent is without a history, nationality, gender, and tradition. Kant's moral agent is timeless, situationless, and without a social identity.

MacIntyre argues that this definition of a moral agent ignores and rejects our particularity and the societal roles which constitute our identities. These societal roles are familial, fraternal, political, tribal, and national roles which define us. (MacIntyre, p. 205)

When making moral decisions, we must choose not as abstract, independent moral agents, but as situated spatio-temporal selves who have intentions, obligations and commitments. Choices cannot be made by abstract moral agents devoid of any content. Choices are made by selves situated in roles and traditions. When one makes a moral decision, one not only chooses for oneself, as one must ensure that "what is good for me has to be good for one who inhabits these roles." (Ibid., p. 205)

MacIntyre defines an agent as both an actor and an author. An agent is an actor in that he portrays and embodies roles that have been made for him; his gender, background, class, race, nationality, and historical setting. An agent, however, is not determined as he partially creates his roles and actively perpetuates his roles and traditions. Our narratives which define us are never created independently; they are created "intertextually." (MacIntyre, p. 213)

We are never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives...we enter upon a stage which we did not design and we find ourselves part of an action that was not of our own making. Each of us

being a main character is his own drama plays subordinate parts in the dramas of others. (Ibid., p. 213)

MacIntyre argues that moral actions, like moral agents, cannot be taken out of their spatio-temporal context. The idea of history cannot be divorced from action as "one action is a moment in a possible or actual history or in a number of such histories." (MacIntyre, p. 214)

MacIntyre agrees with Hegel that the Kantian conception of the moral agent is a misinterpretation of our actual moral experience. There is no such thing as an abstract moral agent wholly devoid of any attachments, desires, and history. A moral agent free of past commitments and future intentions is not the moral agent of common everyday experience who makes moral decisions based on past experience, future expectations, and pre-established moral traditions.

MacIntyre's historicist critique of the Kantian moral agent is particularly indebted to Hegel. Both consider the Kantian conception of morality, with its emphasis on a totally autonomous abstract moral agent who follows the dictates of its pure will, to be an inadequate account of morality. Kant's definition of the moral agent ignores the roles of traditions and social roles within moral development. MacIntyre, like Hegel, sees the necessity of sublimating Kantian rule-based ethics into societal praxis.

Inherent within Hegel's criticism of Kant's definition of the moral agent is the conflict between inclination and duty. Kant's emphasis on the purity of the will, devoid of any sensuous content or influence, is at odds with Hegel's assertion that morality can only become an actuality when abstract duty becomes concrete through moral action. Moral action must have specific content and ends, which Hegel identifies as welfare. (Hegel, PR, par. 123) Hegel wants to claim that it is the moral agent's inclinations and desires which provide the content for duty. The problem within morality is that duty based solely upon these natural inclinations leads to radical subjectivity or moral inaction and hypocrisy. The universal Kantian moral perspective falls into the radical moral solipsism of conscience and the beautiful soul, because the demands of pure practical reason leave the moral agent alienated and empty. This emptiness is the result of the purely formal demands of duty (duty for duty's sake) which is perpetually at war with concrete inclinations and desires. Therefore, Hegel claims that Kantian morality results in a contradiction; moral inaction (in the form of the beautiful soul) and moral relativism and subjectivism (in the form of conscience and hypocrisy) are the logical conclusions of Kant's demand of the absolute purity of the moral will.

B. The Emptiness of the Moral Law

Hegel's charge of "empty formalism" against Kantian ethics relates primarily to Kant's conception of duty and Kant's criterion of devising and judging specific duties: the categorical imperative. Hegel claims that Kant's conception of duty is an empty formalism which is devoid of any specific content. Kant's insistence that one follow one's duty without consideration of subjective inclination and personal happiness results in the "preaching of duty for duty's sake." (Hegel, PR, par. 135)

Hegel's empty formalism charge against the Kantian conception of duty involves several elements, the primary ones being Kant's conflict between the universal and the particular, the dichotomy between duty and inclination, and the impracticality of the categorical imperative. All of these elements are interrelated and reinforce each other via Hegel's dialectical method.

In Hegel, Kant, and the Structure of the Object, Robert Stern argues that Kant does not try to resolve the dichotomy between the universal (the absolute duty of the categorical imperative) and the particular (particular duties with specific content). Stern argues that Kant cannot overcome this opposition, as the individual stands outside the

universal and opposed to embodying the universal within ethical life.

Within morality, the individual attempts to find unity through following the absolute duty, while simultaneously hoping to find in that duty a "proper expression of his own individuality." (Stern, p. 52) The problem arises in moral action where the individual's actions are determined by specific individual aims; these aims are subjective and conflict with the "purely universal" emphasis of duty. Therefore, duty cannot be carried out through specific actions and must remain as a postulate or an ought-to-be. (Ibid., p. 52).

Stern's conclusion is that the basic argument Hegel has against Kant is the problem of the universal and the particular.

This clash between individual motives and the universal standpoint results in a clash between two types of moral outlook, one that insists on the validity of acting from one's own desires and conscience, and another that insists that the only good deed is the deed done from purely abstract universal motives. However, this latter consciousness is in fact hypocritical, as it is afraid to act, and pretends its cowardice is really high morality. (Stern, p. 53)

Kant's dichotomy between duty and inclination runs throughout Hegel's critique of the moral standpoint. Hegel argues that Kant cannot achieve unity between duty and inclination and between duty and happiness. Hegel spends a

considerable amount of time criticizing this element of Kantian moral philosophy in both the Phenomenology of Spirit and the Philosophy of Right. Hegel considers the conflict between inclination and duty within Kantian ethics to be particularly problematic, as Hegel considers attainment of personal satisfaction (welfare or happiness) to be one of the primary ends of morality. This criticism against Kant shall be answered later in this chapter.

Hegel scholar Philip Moran identifies Kant's dichotomy between duty and inclination as being the opposition between virtue and prudence. Moran considers Hegelian ethics to be superior to Kantian ethics because Hegel attempts to overcome the distinction between virtue and prudence. For Kant there can be no synthesis between the two opposing categories, as prudence and virtue stand outside each other and do not interrelate. Therefore, Moran concludes that this results in an "ambivalence" within Kantian morality. (Moran, p. 10)

Moran argues that Hegel's central criticism of Kantian morality is Kant's failure to overcome contradictions within morality. These contradictions can be seen in the opposition between abstract or universal duty and concrete or particular duties. Moral consciousness is confronted by a variety of specific duties, but must follow the absolute duty of the categorical imperative. These two conflicting duties cannot be united through moral action, as the universal abstract duty

of the categorical imperative must take precedence over specific duties. For Kant there is no way of determining which duty one should obey in a given situation. Kant attempts to solve the problem by creating a "holy moral legislator" or deity who determines which duties are to be performed and creates a synthesis between abstract duty and concrete duties.

In the attempt to recognize opposing sides of an antimony, mutually exclusive ideas, Kant is said to introduce some third force, external to history, which decides the side of the antimony to be upheld or applied to a given case. The shifting consists in the alternating from affirming one side of the antimony to the other. This resolution is a false one, according to Hegel, because Kant fails to reveal how the opposing sides can be true and merely resorts to some ahistorical mediator who knows when to uphold the thesis and when to uphold the antithesis. (Moran, p. 35)

Hegel rejects Kant's solution, as Hegel considers the synthesis between abstract duty and concrete duties to be found in society itself, through the concrete rational social system of ethical life. Hegel rejects Kant's ahistorical moral legislator, or "absolute being" as being a fiction. (Hegel, PhS, par. 608) Hegel argues that the dichotomies of abstract duty and specific duties must be resolved through the rational society of ethical life.

Hegel's charge that Kantian ethics is an empty formalism is most relevant when applied to the categorical imperative itself. Hegel's main criticism of Kant's

categorical imperative is that it is too abstract and does not provide specific moral duties for one to perform. Hegel concludes that the categorical imperative is an empty formalism which is devoid of content and is therefore useless.

Hegel also has a problem with the formulation of the categorical imperative and its criterion of universalizability. Moran identifies two versions of the categorical imperative's universalizability test. The first is the "psychological version" wherein the lawmaker must make a maxim which the lawmaker himself is subject to. By making the categorical imperative universal and reciprocal, a lawmaker could not will an evil or unfair maxim, lest the lawmaker be treated unfairly because he is on the receiving end of the maxim. Moran uses the example of an anti-semite who wills that Jews be persecuted. This evil maxim could not be universalized, as the anti-semite could not consistently will that Jews be persecuted if he himself was Jewish. (Moran, p. 91)

Moran identifies the second formulation of the universalizability criterion as the "logical version." This is Kant's test of avoiding logical contradictions when willing a maxim. When formulating a maxim, the rule-maker must ask whether universalizing the maxim would result in an illogical state of affairs which would contradict one of the premises or purposes of the maxim. Kant uses the example of a maxim

justifying stealing to illustrate how an immoral maxim is ultimately contradictory and self-defeating. A maxim which justifies stealing presupposes the existence of private property. The purpose of stealing and formulating a maxim justifying stealing is therefore contradictory and self-defeating. For Kant, immoral maxims cannot be universalized because they are self-defeating and contradictory.

Moran claims that Hegel's main criticism of the categorical imperative is of the logical version of the principle of universalizability. Hegel argues, contra Kant, that immoral actions can be willed without contradiction. In Kant's example of stealing, Hegel argues that what is at issue is not the existence of private property, but the value or desirability of private property. "One must assume that private property deserves to exist before one can say that stealing results in an unacceptable contradiction." (Moran, p. 92)

The absence of property contains in itself just as little contradiction as the non-existence of this or that nation, family, etc., or the death of the whole human race. But if it is already established on other grounds and presupposed that property and human life are to exist and be respected, then indeed it is a contradiction to commit theft or murder; a contradiction must be a contradiction of something, i.e. of some content presupposed from the start as a fixed principle. It is to a principle of that kind alone, therefore, that an action can be related either by correspondence or contradiction. (Hegel, PR, par. 135)

Hegel's argument is that it is not the existence of private property or life that is implied within Kant's criterion of non-contradiction, it is the value placed upon property and life that is relevant. A thief may not care whether his actions, if universalized, would result in the negation of private property. Moran uses the example of a thief who is a marxist and steals for the purpose of eradicating private property. Therefore a marxist thief could universalize stealing without contradiction. (Moran, p. 93)

In Hegel's Ethical Thought, Allen Wood identifies two central claims within Hegel's charge that the categorical imperative is an empty formalism. The first criticism is a weak claim in which Hegel argues that the categorical imperative cannot provide concrete content in the form of specific duties for moral agents to follow. The second criticism is a strong claim in which Hegel argues that the categorical imperative cannot provide adequate criteria for determining between moral and immoral maxims. The conclusion of both claims is that the categorical imperative is useless. (Wood, p. 154)

Wood argues that it is Hegel's weak claim which is the more serious criticism, as his strong claim can be refuted by appealing to the second and third formulations of the categorical imperative where Kant provides specific criteria for formulating and judging maxims. Hegel's strong claim can

also be refuted by the fact that certain maxims could obviously not become universalized without resulting in contradiction. Hegel's weak claim against the categorical imperative, however, cannot be easily refuted, as the categorical imperative cannot instruct the moral agent in deciding which maxim he must follow. The categorical imperative cannot distinguish between competing maxims and duties and provides no method of deciding which factors are morally relevant in a particular moral dilemma. Wood concludes that "not every maxim may pass the universal law test, but the test might turn out to be too vague and flexible to provide determinate results in many actual cases of moral reasoning." (Wood, p. 161)

Kant Revisited

Of the criticisms Hegel levels against Kant, it is the claim that Kantian morality is incompatible with the attainment of happiness and that the categorical imperative is an empty formalism which are the most important to investigate. If Hegel is correct, Kantian morality is at best problematic, and at worst worthless. However, if Kant can answer these criticisms, Hegel is guilty of having problematic premises and a hasty conclusion. Hegel's project, which is to undermine the moral standpoint and sublimate it into ethical

life, becomes fraught with difficulties if the moral standpoint of Kantian ethics can be defended against his claims.

A. The Dichotomy of Duty and Inclination

Hegel's claim that Kantian morality is caught within the contradiction between inclination and duty wherein personal happiness becomes improbable or impossible within morality is by no means an original criticism. Within Kant's lifetime, Kant had many critics who claimed that his concept of duty left no room for personal happiness and condemned the moral man to a life of misery. One of Kant's harshest critics was Christian Garve who preceded Hegel's criticisms of Kant by claiming that Kant's duty-based ethics was unapplicable within concrete moral dilemmas and that Kant's tensions between duty and inclination denied human happiness as a moral norm within morality.

The best reply to Hegel's and Garve's criticisms against Kantian morality is provided by Kant himself. Kant replies to Garve's criticisms directly within his popular work On the Old Saw: That May Be Right In Practice But It Won't Work In Theory. This book is Kant's reply to critics who claim that his theory is impractical and cannot reconcile personal happiness with duty.

Implied within both Garve's and Hegel's critique of Kantian ethics is the premise that human happiness and fulfilment is an integral element of morality. Hegel identifies happiness or welfare as a necessary element of moral action, as personal satisfaction through the recognition of performing good deeds is "part and parcel of the achievement of ends of absolute worth." (Hegel, PR, par. 124)

Kant's reply to Garve can be used to respond to Hegel's criticism of the incompatibility of subjective happiness and moral obligation within Kantian ethics. Kant clarifies that his definition of ethics is of a "science that teaches, not how we are to achieve happiness, but how we are to become worthy of happiness." (Kant, Old Saw, p. 278) Kant argues that the goal of ethics must not simply be the attainment of personal happiness and subjective satisfaction. This hedonistic attitude is not befitting morality, as it fails to acknowledge the intricate nature of morality which often involves struggle and sacrifice. Following one's duty does not always equate to happiness, as duties often conflict with subjective desires and inclinations.

Kant makes the distinction between achieving happiness and being worthy of happiness, a distinction which both Garve and Hegel fail to make. For Kant, being worthy of happiness is a "personal quality" based upon the will. (Ibid., p. 278) It is a quality of the will which is shared with legislating

and following the moral law. The personal quality which enables an individual to be worthy of happiness is therefore harmonious with morality. It is, however, not the same thing as the skill involved in seeking personal satisfaction and happiness. Kant goes as far as to say that seeking personal satisfaction is "not worthy even of this skill" of pursuing happiness if his will does not follow or conform to the "universal legislation of reason," or morality. (Ibid., p. 278)

Kant argues that his definition of ethics does not mean that individuals should renounce their "natural goal of happiness," as this is an impossibility for humans. (Ibid., p. 278) Kant describes his position on the relationship between the consideration of seeking happiness and following duty as follows:

...when duty calls, he must completely abstract from this consideration. Under no circumstances must he turn it into a condition of obeying the law prescribed to him by reason; indeed, he must seek as best he can to be conscious that no motive derived from it has imperceptibly mingled with his definition of his duty, as will happen because we tend to conceive duty as linked with sacrifices exacted by its observance (by virtue) rather than with the benefit it confers. The point is to bring the call of duty to mind in its totality, as demanding unconditional obedience, as self-sufficient, and as requiring no further influence. (Kant, Old Saw, p. 279)

Kant argues that his conception of duty is not dependent upon any specific end, such as happiness. For Kant the morality of following duty cannot be determined by any

particular end or content. If the morality of the action were determined by a specific content or end, morality would become dependent upon subjective desire and inclination. For Kant the "universal moral standpoint" of following duty for duty's sake must always take precedence over any particular end. (Ibid., p. 280)

Morality must be objective and pure, for if morality is tainted by subjective inclination (such as personal happiness), it is no longer "moral" in any recognizable sense. Kant argues that particular ends and contents are not always moral, and that the quest for happiness can often conflict with morality. It is too easy to reduce the quest for happiness to the selfish quest for pleasure. It must be noted, however, that Kant acknowledges that happiness may be a content or end of duty, but duty is not dependent upon happiness or any other particular end. Happiness, like any other end, must be in accordance with the dictates of duty in order to be moral. (Ibid., p. 280)

Kant considers his critics to be guilty of placing too much emphasis on the attainment of happiness within morality. Kant argues that morality is its own end, independent of any specific content such as happiness. For Kant a virtuous man who acts in accordance to the dictates of a good will (by following the absolute duty) will be worthy of happiness.

However, the virtuous man must not actively seek happiness if happiness is not in accordance with duty. (Ibid., p. 281)

Kant also rejects the claim that his demand of the purity of duty will lead to moral inaction. Kant refutes criticisms about the impracticality of his duty-based ethics by pointing out that doing one's duty is usually immediately understood while following one's inclination is often fraught with long deliberations and counter arguments. Kant uses the example of a trust to prove this point.

Suppose, for instance, that someone is holding another's property in trust (a deposit) whose owner is dead, and that the owner's heirs do not know and can never hear about it. Present this case to even a child of eight or nine, and add that, through no fault of his, the trustee's fortunes are at a lowest ebb, that he sees a sad family around him, a wife and children disheartened by want. From all of this he would be instantly delivered by appropriating the deposit. Add further that the man is kind and charitable, while those heirs are rich, loveless, extravagant spendthrifts, so that this addition to their wealth might as well be thrown into the sea. (Ibid., p. 286)

Kant asks whether these circumstances would allow one to use the trust for one's own purposes. Kant's answer is a resounding "NO!" because it would conflict with duty and is therefore immoral. In this example one's duty is clear and simple, as contrasted to following one's inclinations.

Kant presses his claim by arguing that the trustee would not be seeking his own happiness if he helped his poor family. If his own happiness were the determining end of his

action, the trustee would be faced with many competing possibilities. If he spent the money on himself all at once, he might raise the suspicion of others because of his newly found wealth. He could slowly and discretely spend his money, but it might not be enough to offset his dire financial situation. Or the trustee could deliver the money to the rightful heirs in hope of a substantial reward and a good reputation for honesty. All of these options conflict with each other, and none of them are moral. (Ibid., p. 288)

Kant is arguing, contra Garve and Hegel, that following one's inclinations and desires is often more difficult than following one's duty. Kant argues against Garve's claim that following one's duty is easy in theory yet difficult in practice. Kant also rejects Hegel's argument that within Kantian duty-based ethics, the moral will cannot decide which specific duty it must follow, as its duties often conflict. Implied within both Hegel's and Garve's arguments is the premise that following one's inclinations and desires is somehow easier to determine and more practical than following one's duty. Kant rejects this premise, as calculating and following one's desires to make one happy is often more problematic than following one's duty. "The will thus pursuant to the maxim of happiness vacillates between motivations, wondering what it should resolve upon." (Ibid., p. 287) Indeed, Kant argues that following one's inclinations

is easier in theory than in practice, "for it considers the outcome, and that is most uncertain; one must have a good head on his shoulders to disentangle himself from the jumble of arguments and counterarguments and not to deceive himself in the tally." (Ibid., p. 287)

Kant therefore dismisses criticisms that his ethical theory is impractical and that subjective inclinations are part and parcel of morality. Following one's desires is often more difficult than following one's duty, as the egoistic calculations necessary to decide what one wants to do can be infinite and immeasurable. Within Kant's ethics of duty, however, the moral agent is "instantly certain of what he must do." (Ibid., p. 287) This certainty is to follow one's duty.

B. The Empty Formalism of Duty

Hegel's charge of empty formalism against Kant's conception of duty is based primarily upon Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative. Hegel considers the categorical imperative to have inadequate criteria for determining specific moral duties. As previously argued, Hegel also considers the categorical imperative to be a useless formalism which cannot even distinguish between moral and immoral maxims.

Although these criticisms seem to have substantial merit, upon closer reflection Hegel's charge of "empty formalism" is guilty of confusing Kant's position. A careful reading of Kant's moral philosophy shows that Kant is indeed concerned about providing concrete moral duties for his formal ethical system.

A unique defense of Kantian morality is provided by Ping-Cheung Lo in his paper "A Critical Reevaluation of the Alleged 'Empty Formalism' of Kantian Ethics." Lo argues that Hegel's criticisms of Kantian ethics being an empty formalism can be refuted by appealing to the second formulation of the categorical imperative. Lo argues that Hegel's criticisms of the categorical imperative is limited to the first formulation, which is purely formal. However, it is the second formulation of the categorical imperative which provides specific content for moral action and therefore avoids the emptiness charge.

Kant defines the second formulation of the categorical imperative as follows: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means but always at the same time as the end."

Lo acknowledges that the second formulation of the categorical imperative is "teleological in the literal sense." (Lo, p. 183) Lo defends his teleological interpretation of

Kant by appealing to the section in the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals where Kant distinguishes between subjective and objective ends.

This distinction between subjective and objective ends allows Kant to provide content for his formalistic categorical duties. Subjective ends are those ends which individuals pursue in their every day lives. These ends are subjective and are based upon inclination or desire; "they are the ends of those who desire them only." (Ibid., p. 185) Subjective ends are brought about as an effect of a certain action; they are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Objective ends, as contrasted to subjective ends, are universal, objective and based upon reason. Objective ends are pre-existing ends which exist in nature independently of human interests; they are ends in themselves and are valuable in themselves by their very nature. (Ibid., p. 185)

Lo argues that both categorical and hypothetical imperatives have "ends;" categorical ends have objective ends and hypothetical imperatives have subjective ends. The distinction between the two is the "binding force" behind the imperatives. Categorical imperatives are unconditional, as they seek objective pre-existing ends. Hypothetical imperatives are conditional, as they seek subjective, producible ends. Objective ends are ends in themselves or self-existent ends which do not have to be brought into

existence through action, but must be respected as ends existing independently of subjective human interests. Subjective ends are ends that are the product of human desire and are dependent upon subjective human intentions. They are not self-existent ends as they do not exist in nature independently of subjective human interests. (Lo, p. 186)

Lo argues that Hegel's charge of empty formalism against Kantian ethics is based upon a misinterpretation of Kant's definition of "formal."

For Kant formal is not equivalent to empty. A formal moral law is only empty of subjective ends, but not of objective ends. The idea of formal by no means excludes any content at all...the crucial point is the distinction between a subjective, producible end and an objective, self-existent end. (Ibid., p. 187)

By appealing to the second formulation of the categorical imperative, Lo attempts to give content and an end to Kant's ethical theory. The objective end of the second formulation of the categorical imperative is to respect the autonomy and intrinsic value of persons. This categorical imperative will, therefore, promote actions and duties which promote these ends and will act as a guide for concrete ethical conduct.

The empty formalism charge may be a legitimate claim against the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, however, Kant translator Mary Gregor argues that it is not Kant's primary goal to provide a list of moral duties within the

Groundwork. Gregor argues that Kant's purpose within this work is to lay the foundation of an ethical system by investigating the difference between willing actions that are moral versus actions that are merely lawful. It is in Kant's later work, the Metaphysics of Morals, where Kant attempts to provide specific content to his formal ethical system.

By referring to the section on "The Doctrine of Virtue," within the Metaphysics of Morals, one can refute Hegel's claim that Kant provides no specific duties for his moral philosophy. Kant argues that some ends can at the same time be duties. He identifies an end which is also a duty as a "duty of virtue." (Kant, Metaphysics, p. 197) Kant acknowledges that all actions must have ends, but moral actions must be ends in themselves. Therefore ends of moral actions are also duties in that moral duties are ends in themselves.

Kant identifies one's own perfection and the happiness of others as two ends which are also duties. The duty to one's own perfection is a duty to cultivate one's will or "moral cast of mind" and one's capacities or "natural dispositions" to a level of near perfection. (Kant, Metaphysics, p. 191) One's highest capacity is understanding, or the capacity to recognize concepts, particularly moral concepts of duty. The highly developed will is one which fulfils these concepts of duty. The duty to develop one's

moral perfection, therefore, involves the twofold requirement of striving to raise oneself from the "crude state of his nature" toward humanity, and developing moral dispositions wherein the will internalizes duty and makes duty the will's own end. (Ibid., p. 191) Seeking the happiness of others features the positive duty of benevolence and the negative duty of protecting others' moral well-being by refraining from tempting others into immoral behavior. Kant describes how actively seeking the happiness of others can be both an end and a duty:

Since our self-love cannot be separated from our need to be loved (helped in case of need) by others as well, we therefore make ourselves an end for others; and the only way this maxim can be binding is through its qualifications as a universal law, hence through our will to make others our ends as well. The happiness of others is therefore an end that is also a duty. (Kant, *Metaphysics*, p. 197)

By defining basic duties to oneself and others, Kant is able to give specific content to his formal ethical framework. Kant divides one's duties of virtue to oneself into perfect or "limiting" duties and imperfect or "widening" duties. (Ibid., p. 215) Limiting or negative duties relate to man's "moral self-preservation" and command man to avoid ends that are contrary to his nature. Widening or positive duties relate to man's "moral perfection" and command man to seek ends which cultivate and perfect man's moral nature. Kant defines negative duties to oneself as relating to the "moral

health" of man as a moral creature. Positive duties to oneself are related to man's "moral prosperity," or his ability to cultivate moral dispositions. (Ibid., p. 216)

Kant subdivides man's perfect duties to himself into duties to his animal or natural being and to his moral being. Man's duties to himself as an animal being are to self-preservation, preservation of the species, and "the preservation of his capacity to enjoy life." (Ibid., p. 216) The vices which are contrary to these specific duties are suicide, excessive or unnatural sexual drives, and excessive consumption of food and alcohol. (Ibid., p. 216) Man's perfect duties to himself as a moral being relate to the purely formal element of willing maxims, which are consistent with man's intrinsic freedom and dignity. These duties are to avoid actions which may deny man's intrinsic worth as a moral being. Kant identifies the virtue of this negative duty as the "love of honor," while the vices which oppose this duty are lying, avarice, and excessive humility. (Ibid., p. 216)

These (vices) adopt principles that are directly contrary to man's character as a moral being (in terms of its very form), that is, to inner freedom, the innate dignity of man, which is tantamount to saying that they make it one's basic principle to have no basic principles, and hence no particular character, that is, to throw oneself away and make oneself an object of contempt. (Ibid., pp. 216-217)

Kant also subdivides man's imperfect duties to himself into duties to develop man's natural perfection and duties to

develop man's moral perfection. Duties to increase man's natural perfection involve the cultivation of the spirit, mind and body. The ends of these duties are pragmatic purposes which are arrived at through developing one's reason, taste, and physical endurance. The imperfect duties to increase man's moral perfection relate to moral purposes and the "purity of one's disposition to purity." (Ibid., p. 241) This duty involves both acting in accordance with duty from a sense of duty, and fulfilling one's duties and attaining one's moral end of action. Kant identifies the two commands of these duties to moral perfection as "be holy" and "be perfect." (Ibid., p. 241)

Kant's duties of virtue to others primarily fall under the specific duties of love and respect. Kant clarifies the duty to love humanity as the duty of benevolence which Kant defines as "practical love." (Ibid., p. 241) This is not to be confused with the emotion of love or subjective feelings which accompany close personal relations, as "others cannot put one under obligation to have feelings." (Ibid., p. 214) Duties of love are divided into the duties of beneficence, gratitude and sympathy. All of these actions must arise out of a sense of duty, not prudence or inclination, in order to be moral actions. The vices which are opposed to the duties of love to others are the vices of hatred: envy, ingratitude, and malice.

Kant identifies the duties to respect others as arising out of a recognition of the intrinsic dignity of humanity. These duties of respect for others are duties of modesty and honor. They are duties in that "every man has a legitimate claim to respect from his fellow men and is in turn bound to respect every other." (Ibid., p. 255) Duties to respect others are primarily negative duties as they involve avoiding the vices which oppose duties of respect. These vices are arrogance, defamation, and ridicule. (Ibid., p. 257)

Kant distinguishes between failure to fulfil one's duties of love to others and duties to respect others. Failure to fulfil one's duties of love is a lack of moral virtue, while a failure to fulfil one's duties of respect is a vice. Kant describes the distinction as follows:

For no one is wronged if duties of love are neglected; but a failure in the duty of respect infringes upon a man's lawful claim. The first violation is opposed to duty as its contrary. But what not only adds nothing moral but even abolishes the worth of what would otherwise be the subject's good is vice. (Ibid., p. 256)

Conclusion

By referring to the Metaphysics of Morals, and the second formulation of the categorical imperative, Kantian ethics can be defended against Hegel's charge of empty formalism. The Metaphysics of Morals provides a thorough

investigation of concrete moral duties both to oneself and others. It is both useful and instructive, as it develops an ethical theory which places primacy on individual rights and autonomy. Hegel's ethics, however, does not provide a strong defence of the intrinsic worth of the individual, as the individual can easily become swallowed in the organic totality of ethical life.

Kant's distinction between seeking happiness and being worthy of happiness can also deflect Hegel's claim that Kantian morality ignores human happiness and is incompatible with subjective satisfaction. Kant's distinction allows room for personal happiness within morality without devaluing morality or limiting the moral imperative of following one's duty. Hegel is guilty of placing too much emphasis on the pursuit of personal pleasure within morality and at times sounds like a utilitarian in his depiction of the role of welfare or happiness within morality.

Although Kant's moral framework is not without its flaws and difficulties, Hegel fails to refute the Kantian position. If the moral standpoint is not deeply flawed or fraught with contradictions, it can provide an adequate framework for moral action. Hegel's move to ethical life no longer becomes obviously "necessary" if his criticisms of the moral standpoint are unconvincing. If the moral standpoint of Kantian ethics is not inherently flawed, a stronger Hegelian

argument will have to be provided in order to explain why ethical life is a higher form of ethical development than morality. Until then, the moral standpoint of Kantian ethics is the closest form of moral certainty we can achieve.

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