

Third Section

TRANSITION

FROM THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS

TO THE CRITIQUE OF PURE PRACTICAL REASON

The concept of freedom

is the key to the definition¹ of autonomy of the will.

The *will* is a species of causality of living beings, insofar as they are rational, and *freedom* would be that quality of this causality by which it can be effective independently of alien causes *determining* it; just as *natural necessity* is the quality of the causality of all beings lacking reason, of being determined to activity through the influence of alien causes.

The proposed definition² of freedom is *negative*, and hence unfruitful in affording insight into its essence; yet from it flows a *positive* concept of freedom, which is all the more rich in content and more fruitful. Since the concept of a causality carries with it that of *laws* in accordance with which must be posited, through that which we call a cause, something else, namely its result; therefore freedom, even though it is not a quality of the will in accordance with natural laws, is not for this reason lawless, but rather it has to be a causality in accordance with unchangeable laws, but of a particular kind; for otherwise a free will would be an impossibility.³ Natural necessity was a heteronomy of efficient causes; for every effect was possible only in accordance with the law that something else determined the efficient cause to causality; what else, then, could the freedom of the will be, except autonomy, i.e., the quality of the will of being a law to itself? But the proposition ‘The will is in all actions a law to itself’ designates only the principle of acting in accordance with no other maxim than that which can also have itself as a universal law as its object. But this is just the formula of the categorical imperative and the principle of morality: thus a free will and a will under moral laws are the same.

[Ak 4:447]

Thus if freedom of the will is presupposed, then morality follows together with its principle from mere analysis of its concept. Nonetheless, the

1. *Erklärung*

2. *Erklärung*

3. *Unding*