

# “Ethics: Created or Discovered?”

By Tiffany Cooper



A Senior Essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the Integral Curriculum of Liberal Arts.

---

David Bird, Advisor

Saint Mary's College of California

April 12th, 2019

Questions concerning the fundamental nature of being, and all it encompasses belong to the philosophical study of metaphysics. This study aims to question whether the ability to ground claims made about the world around us can exist as something concrete and unchanging.

Through the evolution of the western tradition, the metaphysical theory has varied from one philosopher to the next, and for the most part each claim made about the world has varied with it. Considering the accepted nature of being itself has not been wholly agreed upon, nor has any one theory found itself the concrete unchanging system to refer to when asking what it means to be, it seemingly becomes impossible to identify any given theory as that which we know to be the one correct one. The implications of a system in which one is unable to ground their thoughts about being itself can only lead to continuous assertions that can never be said to be True. If metaphysically we find no stability, that unreliable foundation will only extend itself into other fields of study that are grounded in metaphysics, in the present case, focusing on metaethics. Metaethics seeks the foundation for what morality is itself, and with its foundation in metaphysical theories that have evolved over the years from one end of a spectrum to another, so too has what we have deemed moral. What has been considered right or wrong, just or unjust, good or bad, and any other diametrically opposed implications of human action has been altered in proportion to each rendition of the fundamental nature of being. The problem at hand can be put concisely as such: if the the metaphysical theories that promulgate answers to the questions of what it means to be change from one era to the next, and so too do the morals governing human action, does it matter which *modus operandi*<sup>1</sup> one chooses to live in reference to? Are the ethics we ground morality in anything more than practical compliance with the times, merely a

---

<sup>1</sup> A particular way or method of doing something

necessary construction in order to universally implement what each individual should believe to be either right or wrong? Or is it possible we are making objective metaethical discoveries about what kind of existing thing ethical rules are?

In order to see the relation from metaphysics to metaethics and how it has governed what is deemed to be the morally correct or incorrect actions of man, it is vital to trace the evolution of the metaphysical, ipso facto the metaethical, through the theories of some of the greatest thinkers among differing eras. The analysis will begin with the pre-Socratics, focusing on Homer and Heraclitus, continue to the Socratics, investigating a range of Plato's works, and will end with the moderns, zooming in on select texts from Immanuel Kant. The goal at hand is to describe three different metaethical theories founded in three different metaphysical theories and show how any adoption of an ethical system is one of practicality, a means to ground all people in unity, and not one of a metaethical discovery, what kind of existing thing ethical rules are.

Beginning with the *Iliad*, the story holds the underlying implication that Justice exists, but only as something in a continuous flux and always in favor of whomever be the stronger. As the poem begins the reader learns that the Trojans and the Achaeans are in the midst of a war that is in its tenth year; a war caused by Paris, a Trojan prince, exerting his strength and kidnapping Helen, the wife of Menelaus. Menelaus happens to be the Greek king Agamemnon's brother, and Hector, the head of Trojan forces, happens to be Paris's brother. This ultimately prompts the war between the Trojans and the Greeks. In a system where Justice is the advantage of the stronger, the initial act of Paris stealing Menelaus' wife would very well be justified so long as he finds himself stronger than the retaliation against his action, which was not the case overall. The Greeks do well in their battle against Troy until Agamemnon has to return one of the two

females he and Achilles had obtained, and in turn takes the remaining girl from Achilles. Here we see again, should Agamemnon's strength supercede that of Achilles in the face of retaliation, he would be justified, however ultimately it did not and he is not. Achilles responds to Agamemnon's tomfoolery by withdrawing himself, and his army from the battle against Troy; the withdrawal causes the Greek army to weaken, and the number of deaths to rise, pushing the Trojans towards victory.

As the Trojans continue toward what appears to be an inevitable victory, Paris challenges the Greeks to a one on one battle, claiming this final battle will decide who gets to keep Helen and will resolve the war. Menelaus steps forward accepting the challenge which intimidates Paris, after being chastised by his brother Hector he casts his hesitation aside and prepares for battle. During their battle the Goddess Aphrodite, an ally of Troy, creates many disturbances for Menelaus and even removes Paris from the battlefield just as he is about to be killed. The Gods Hera and Zeus agree they want a total destruction of Troy and continue to add fuel to the war even though the Greeks could have been deemed the victors following the removal of Paris just before his defeat. As the war continues to advance and Achilles continues to be absent, the Greeks continue to be on the losing end. Patroclus convinces Achilles to let him use his armor to go assist the Greeks; upon his arrival, along with the few other soldiers Achilles sent, Hector meets Patroclus and kills him. Once Achilles hears the news he responds by bringing the remains of his army to the battlefield. The match represents itself as obviously incomparable, it is without doubt that Hector is no match for Achilles; Aphrodite and other Gods give their power to Hector but Zeus gives his power to Achilles, so there was never a question who would win. Hector runs from Achilles which does nothing but prolong his fated defeat.

Throughout the poem, the idea that justice is the advantage of the stronger is ever present. Paris kidnaps Helen because he has the physical means to do so, and should he have maintained the means to protect himself from retaliation his actions would have been justified. Both Menelaus and Paris use their brothers, as leaders of opposing armies, as a means to exert a superior strength on their behalf. The battle went on for a decade and once Menelaus and Paris finally battle one on one, the Gods interfere and remove Paris just before his death, ipso facto the Greeks' victory. Though when the battle came to an end the Trojans ultimately fall at the hands of the Greeks thus finding Paris not justified in stealing Helen. Further Agamemnon is not justified in stealing Achilles' leman for the repercussion was Achilles withdrawing his portion of men from the Greek army; Achilles has the stronger men and thus Agamemnon finds himself losing the war, in this instance though Achilles is the one wronged, his justice is in the fact his withdrawal from the army caused a major loss for he who wronged him. But take note that had Agamemnon not suffered from Achilles' removal, it is he who would find himself justified and without any notable consequences.

The idea that justice exists but only as something that is constantly changing to favor whomever be stronger at any given time, is to say that it does in fact exist. It just so happens to always only exist in a state of flux, therefore never 'pinpointable', one thing at a given time, and another at another given time. This same idea is embodied by the early pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus who makes the metaphysical claim that matter is always in flux. This idea can be seen through a quote from the collection of his few remaining fragments of work, "on those who enter the same rivers, ever different waters flow" (DK22B12) if every time you know something, you fail to know it the very next second, how do you know anything at all? This way of reasoning

allows for the notion that perception is knowledge, due to the innumerable available perceptions of any given thing. If matter is always in flux and perception is knowledge, truth fails to exist as anything other than a momentary perception. According to Heraclitus, at any moment that a claim is made about a river's water, it will be just as correct as any other former claims made about the water, so long as each claim differs from one another, for things in flux are never what they once were claimed to be. In a world where the frame of reference to gauge the truth is ever changing and based on perception, and justice is likewise ever changing and based on the stronger, everyone would have the ability to strive toward their own truth and their own justice; but what are things that should be governing our knowledge, and our actions if they differ from person to person? Do they even exist at all? And if not, why would anyone care to be anything aside from stronger than the man next to him and a self proclaimed knower of all things?

The pre-Socratic idea presented by both Homer and Heraclitus is that to be, is to constantly be in flux, that nothing is ever knowable, and if you are stronger than someone you are justified in doing anything you do, that actions themselves cannot be just or unjust. This is a metaphysical theory that guarantees nothing other than a world of confusion and chaos, which was clear to succeeding thinkers. Rising Socratic philosopher Plato believed that to be, was to be constant, that there was a Form<sup>2</sup> of everything that constantly existed one way, not a multitude of differing ways. Following the flux, the Forms provide stability to both metaphysics and metaethics which progress to find themselves grounded in the very form of Knowledge, Justice, and Goodness itself.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Ancient Greek, εἶδος to mean the essence of a thing.

*Form* moving forward will be capitalized to ensure it is known the essence of a thing is being referred to, and in the same manner all things representing a Form will be capitalized, i.e. Truth, Justice, Goodness, Knowledge and things of the like.

The importance of a Truth that holds a value of reliance as the one Truth and not one's truth, can be seen in the poem of Parmenides, "It is proper that you should learn all things, both the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth, and the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true reliance. But nonetheless you shall learn these things too, how what is believed would have to be assuredly, pervading all things throughout" (25-30). The poem made a clear distinction between that of Truth and that of opinion, to which Parmenides in the Platonic dialogue, *Parmenides* extends, "If someone... .. won't allow that there are forms for things and won't mark off a form for each one, he won't have anywhere to turn his thought, since he doesn't allow that for each thing there is a character that is always the same" (135c). The Forms exist in each moment in exactly the same way, they do not change; being is to be constantly the same, and likewise ethics exists as they are and Justice is not in relation to the stronger. In order to highlight the need to be able to refer to one Truth as opposed to many truths we will investigate the use of names in the Platonic dialogue *Cratylus*. Needing a name that represents what a thing naturally is, becomes obvious when trying to refer to things that cannot be immediately pointed to, in trying to differentiate things from one another, and further in trying to assimilate things with one another. Hermogenes recounts what Cratylus had to say about the correctness of names, namely, that there is a natural correctness which is the same for everyone and independent of individual perception. That "a thing's name isn't whatever people agree to call it," (383a) is an answer he continuously finds himself displeased with; for Hermogenes many people could name one thing many different names, and each of them would be just as correct as the other. This line of reasoning though is analogous to the idea that perception is knowledge, to which Socrates disregards as a viable system by suggesting the idea that perception being knowledge eliminates

the ideas of a wise man or a foolish man for, “if what each person believes to be true is true for him, no one can truly be wiser than anyone else” (386d). Further the two agree that all things cannot hold the same attributes simultaneously: to say a man cannot be both at the same time just as wise as foolish, for if that were the case a wiser man still could not exist.

If each man cannot measure everything for themselves, and things cannot partake of the same attributes simultaneously, Socrates contends,

“then if neither all things belong equally to all men at the same time and perpetually nor each thing to each man individually, it is clear that things have some fixed reality of their own, not in relation to us nor caused by us; they do not vary, swaying one way and another in accordance with our fancy, but exist of themselves in relation to their own reality imposed by nature” (386e).

The examples of cutting and burning are given, to which the two continue in agreement, one cuts using tools that cut in accordance with nature, and one burns things with tools that burn the natural way for burning. This is all to say, one would not use a flower to cut or to burn, and not simply because they choose not to but because they could not, for a flower is incapable of cutting, or burning; it is not in its nature to do so, nor is it the natural way of cutting or burning to be done via a flower.

Since actions are performed in ways that are in accordance with their nature, Socrates wonders if speaking is similar to actions, in that speaking too must be in accordance with its nature. He and Hermogenes continue to converse agreeing that both true and false speech exist, and further that if each part of the whole is true then the whole is true, and likewise for that which is false; to say the parts of speech are in accordance with their whole. Socrates then asks if

the smallest part of speech is a name, and points out if it is, and true and false statements are possible, true and false names would also have to be possible. “Didn't we see that actions are not in relation to us but have a special nature of their own?”(387d) with that, Hermogenes and Socrates come to agree that names must be in accordance with their nature and cannot be subject to each individual. Now with the posited notion that things must be named with names that are in accordance with their nature, the questions arise, what is done when things are named and who gives things their names?

When naming things it seems that “we instruct each other, that is to say, divide things according to their names” (388b), so just as one uses the correct tools to cut, to burn or to perform any other type of action, when naming one must use the correct tool as well. The next inquiry is concerned with who names the things that have been named with the correct tool in accordance with their nature? Again an analogy is made to other actions, and Socrates and Hermogenes must first come to agree that any action is done by someone who is skilled in the craft of that action, to say someone who cuts will know what tool to cut with and someone who burns will know the correct tool to use in order to burn. When they come to that agreement, Socrates contends, “It follows that it isn't every man who can give names, Hermogenes, but only a namemaker, and he, it seems, is a rule-setter- the kind of craftsman most rarely found among human beings” (389a). In order to solidify the point that things must have a Form independent of one's perception, Socrates asks if a craftsman breaks something while making it, “will he make another looking to the broken one? Or will he look to the very form to which he looked in making the one he broke?” (389b) Hermogenes responds, reiterating again, the craftsman would look to the Form of the thing.

Craftsmen discover the type of tools naturally suitable for their work, in order to make things the natural way, and in the same way a rule-setter, or a namemaker, must also naturally name things based upon their forms. How though, would a craftsman or a namemaker know when they have discovered the natural tool for their intended work? This is an easy agreement for Socrates and Hermogenes, the person who uses what is produced by the craftsmen or namemakers; a dialectician supervises the namemaker because he who uses the craft is the best judge of its correctness. With a namemaker to name things, and a dialectician to judge the correctness of the name given to its object, the ability for each man to name things as he chooses to, disappears, or rather his ability to do so and be correct, or without error becomes impossible. The name of an object now has to be in compliance with the Form of that object.

With the theory of the Forms established as seen through the discovery of the correct names for objects existing in the world, it is important to note, that the Forms are not entities that exist in any physical space whatsoever. The Forms and our process of knowing them is something we can never have tangible access to. In book six of Plato's *Republic* we are presented with the divided line, the process by which we access the Forms and correct Knowledge about them, "It is like a line divided into two unequal sections. Then divide each section - namely, that of the visible and that of the intelligible - in the same ratio as the line" (509d) The visible section being comprised of the imagination and belief and the intelligible section of the thought and understanding. The line as a whole representing the proportion: likeness is to the thing its like as the opinable is to the knowable. The things we see, are like the things they are themselves, just as the opinions we hold of those things is like the Knowledge of those things.

“In one subsection, the soul, using as images the things that were imitated before, is forced to investigate from hypotheses, proceeding not to a first principle but to a conclusion. In the other subsection, however, it makes its way to a first principle that is not a hypothesis, proceeding from a hypothesis but without the images used in the previous subsection, using forms themselves and making its investigation through them” (510b)

The likeness we see, is like the thing as it is, i.e. its Form. From the Form of the thing we are able to come to thoughts that are like the understanding which allow for the assertion of first principles that are not hypotheses. This process provides a concrete metaphysical frame of reference when contemplating whether or not you have come to the Truth or to Knowledge and we find ourselves able to make claims holding only one truth that we know to be true.

In order to see the moral implications of a metaethical theory grounded in an unchanging frame of reference, the Forms, we will begin with Plato’s “The Myth of Protagoras”, a representation of the creation of mankind. Two Titans, Prometheus and Epimetheus, are ordered to equip the new mortals with their proper qualities, and Prometheus “...stole the mechanical arts of Hephaestus and Athene, and fire... and gave them to man” (321b). As a result of this, man now had the potential to be skilled in many particular crafts, known as the Greek word *techne*, and was quickly able to invent things like speech and names, to construct houses, clothing and beds; man was able to draw sustenance from the earth through his *techne*. However, knowledge of particular crafts, *techne*, falls short to that of political wisdom, or wisdom of the architectonic, the Greek word for the whole, which man lacked in his initial coming to be. Without political wisdom mankind lived dispersed, for a city does not exist without a government which is

founded on political wisdom, on the architectonic whole. Zeus took note of the implications of man should they only hold particular knowledge as opposed to knowledge of the whole and sent Hermes to mankind. Hermes is sent “bearing reverence and justice to be the ordering principles of cities and the bonds of friendship and conciliation” (321c) in other words, to give man the ability to order their cities and relationships correctly, to give man political wisdom, knowledge of the architectonic.

Zeus proclaims that the virtues should be dispersed evenly amongst man and not individually, “for cities cannot exist, if a few only share in the virtues, as in the arts” i.e. the virtues would become a *techne* as opposed to the architectonic. Zeus further states that anyone who has no part in reverence or justice “shall be put to death, for he is a plague of the state”(322e). This created the necessity for all man to claim they knew the virtues, even if they did not, or that they should fear death. Man from the beginning was endowed with the ability to master different crafts, or *technes*, in order to advance towards self preservation; the initial problem presented itself as the limitations of individuals only holding knowledge of particular *technes* and holding no knowledge of the whole, or the architectonic, needed for man to live in a community. The secondary problem presents itself as man’s requirement to disregard the need for true knowledge in order to maintain that he truly does “know” what the virtues are after being endowed with political wisdom. For man knows not what justice is, rather he knows what he must say of justice; and to avoid being put to death for being a plague to the state, man will always claim he knows that which he really does not.

The need for individuals to refer to the same system when making claims about knowledge or what is moral is a necessary advancement from the Pre-Socratics. For even if it

based on a lie, the possession of a common referent among the many is pertinent when negating the idea that perception is knowledge and justice is the advantage of the stronger. However, the lie is not where the Socratic metaethical theory rests, it rather pushes it into fruition. Socrates in Plato's *Apology* maintains that one must hold knowledge of the architectonic and not just of techne; however he does not maintain that knowledge of the whole can simply be a common lie. For this, Socrates is put on trial, more specifically for making the weaker argument appear the stronger and for corrupting the youth. The stronger argument is what everyone lies to themselves about, that they have knowledge of the virtues, and the weaker argument is Socrates' claim that these people actually know nothing. It only makes sense that an uproar is created when Socrates asks about the weaker argument. He claims they do not know anything at all because people are then forced to admit they do not know why what they believe to be the "stronger" argument is in fact the stronger argument. This innate belief, the lie, comes from what man is told in his youth and what continues to be accepted by the many, "...so persuasively did they speak. And yet, hardly any of what they said is true." (17b). Persuasion then, has no relation to wisdom or to truth, but rather to the necessity of everyone pretending they know the same thing. Persuasion should be regarded as a techne<sup>3</sup>, the skill to pretend to know the virtues. It is important moving forward to note that the problem is when one claims they have knowledge of the whole when they really do not.

Having a true concern for the virtues, the architectonic, would take a wise man, and Socrates is told by the oracle that he is the wisest man in Athens to which he responds, "I am very conscious that I am not wise at all" (21b). To investigate the claim made by the oracle

---

<sup>3</sup> The art of persuasion belongs to Plato's sophist. The sophist has the skill to make false speech appear true.

Socrates explores people he would suppose to be wiser than he. He concludes after looking into a man of politics, “I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know” (21e). Socrates finds the same problem with poets, stating that they say many fine things without understanding anything of what they say. Moving on to craftsmen, in being wise about their craft they presumed themselves wise in all other respects as well and there Socrates finds himself again the wiser man, for not claiming he knows that which he does not. In presenting his findings to the court, the people still are not happy with Socrates and they condemn him to death for trying to make the weaker argument, true knowledge of the architectonic, the stronger.

The importance of what Socrates is doing, namely, seeking Knowledge of the whole can be seen through the example made in Plato’s *Ion*, divine power moves poets as a magnetic stone moves iron rings, “this stone not only pulls those rings, if they are iron, it also puts power in the rings, so that they in turn can do just what the stone does - pull other rings...” (533d) and is furthered, “In the same way, the muse makes some people inspired herself, and then through those who are inspired a chain of other enthusiasts are suspended.” (533e) In each case there is a force acting upon something and in turn, the thing being acted upon, acts upon something else. If even one aspect is out of place a cohesive system of reciprocity fails to exist. In other words, each particular *techne*, if you will, should be superseded by the architectonic or the whole. The whole cannot work if what the whole is, is not actually known. This example is also seen in the metaethical being grounded in the metaphysical, for to know what to be is, you can assimilate a claim as what it means to be Just.

This idea of different forces acting upon one another to create a cohesive system needing to be founded in true knowledge of the whole is echoed in Plato's *Republic*. In book 4 we see a city divided into three classes: the rulers, or the philosopher kings, the guardians, and the craftsmen; a class designed to create the rules, a class designed to be ruled, and a class designed for the benefit of the self. To relate this back to *The Myth of Protagoras* and the *Apology*, Socrates would be the philosopher king, said to have true architectonic knowledge in mind, the guardians would be the people holding the false idea of the whole, and the craftsmen would be man before he has political wisdom, having only *technes*. When each class does the work designed for it to do, the guardians, those unconcerned with truth, are ruled by the philosopher kings, the architectonic whole, and not their self interested craft, a *techne*, a Just city exists; if a class acts outside of its design, an unjust city exists. After the agreement is made regarding the qualities a Just city must hold, an assimilation is made between a Just city and a Just soul, "Then a just man won't differ at all from a just city in respect to the form of justice; rather he'll be like the city" (428b). The soul, now supposed to be cut into the three class system, holds the respected relationship using *logos*, *thymos*, and *eros*, namely logic, the desire for recognition, and erotic desires. One's *thymos*, their desire to be regarded as having knowledge of the whole, should be ruled by their *logos*, the logical truth of the whole, and not by their particular erotic desires; where this is the case, we find also, a Just man.

The idea that everything has a Form in itself and that Form can somehow be Known and even further can be the correct guide to Just actions, raises the question, how can you Know the Form? How can you Know that you are in fact performing the Just action? The array of seemingly unanswerable questions ignited the fire for Kant to explore the idea of the Form, what

relation it held to man and if man could actually access the Forms through any process at all. This line of inquiry is important for if we cannot access the Form of a thing at all, how can we ever, once again, say we ever Know anything, including the right actions? Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* sets out to take, rearrange, throw out and add to, parts of his predecessors' theories on both metaphysics and metaethics in order to ground them instead in the Existing but unknowable. In order to understand Kant's metaphysical theory it is necessary to begin by understanding his theory of cognition, the mutual action, or process of acquiring knowledge through the senses. In sensing an object, one is endowed with intuition, a representation that is given prior to all thinking. What is intuited through the senses of an object is similarly the understanding of said object; to understand something is to apply it to thought which then acts as a means to the directed end, a concept. Again cognition is the process of acquiring information through the senses. Concepts are grounded on the spontaneity of thinking, as sensible intuitions are grounded on the receptivity of impressions (sensation of the object). Kant claims, "the understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything" (B 75) similarly "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (B 75). A clear delineation between an empirical and a pure intuition is needed in order to understand how the latter is the means to a concept completing cognition and not the former. Empirical is defined as "intuition which related to the object through sensation" (A20), and pure as "nothing is to be encountered that belongs to sensation" (A20). Empirical intuition exists strictly a posteriori, that is to say, after experience, after the presence of thinking, and pure intuition exists a priori, existing before experience, prior to all thinking.

Now that the means by which we come to cognition has been established it next becomes vital to understand the way by which we will come to understand things using our cognition by distinguishing between different types of judgments, namely analytic and synthetic judgments. Beginning with former, “a great part, perhaps the greatest part, of the business of our reason consists in analyses of the concepts that we already have of objects. This affords us a multitude of cognitions...” (A6. 140) what we say about the information we already have. When analytic is used, it is meant, “... the predicate B belongs to the subject A as something that is (covertly) contained in this concept A” (A7. 141) thus analytic judgments, or affirmative ones, are those in which the connection of the predicate is thought through identity, acting as judgments of clarification. Through the predicate an analysis does not add anything to the concept of the subject, but rather breaks it up into its component concepts, which were already thought in it. Analysis does not require one to go beyond the already known concept at all in order to formulate a judgment.

Differently, when *synthetic* is used, “B lies entirely outside the concept A, though to be sure it stands in connection with it”, (A7. 141) what we add to the information we already have. Those in which this connection is thought without identity are to be called synthetic judgments, judgments of amplification. Synthesis adds to the concept of the subject, a predicate that is not thought in it at all, and could not have been extracted from it through analysis, acting as a precursor to a concept. “In every judgment there is a concept that holds of many, and that among this many also comprehends a given representation, which is then related immediately to the object” (B93. 205) this is the unity of multiplicity. Many synthetic experiences unite together to induce a universal notion, one analyzes the universal notion to further make deductions relating

the universal notion immediately to the object. In synthesis, “we can represent nothing as combined in the object without having previously combined it ourselves, and that among all representations combination is the only one that is not given through objects but can be executed only by the subject itself...” (B130. 245) whereas, analysis, “... seems to be its opposite, in fact always presupposes it”. (B130. 246) The relation of given cognitions in every judgment, namely synthetic or analytic, is something that belongs to the understanding, making a judgment nothing more than a way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception. “If, however, I investigate more closely the relation of given cognitions in every judgment, and distinguish that relation, as something belonging to the understanding, from the relation in accordance with laws of reproduction imagination (which has only subjective validity), then I find that a judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception” (141. Pg 251). Apperception defined as an act of spontaneity, is that spontaneous self-consciousness which, because it produces the representation ‘I think,’ must be able to accompany all others in all consciousness as one and the same, and cannot be accompanied by any further representation.

The distinction between synthetic and analytic, and the addition of the apperception, universal thought among all consciousnesses, is vital to the exact end by which you must come, in order to accept Kant’s claim. The inability to delineate between things as they are, and things as a possible object of experience, is the problem with past metaphysical theories, for it acts as an illusion. “Accordingly, the antinomy of pure reason in its cosmological ideas is removed by showing that it is merely dialectical and a conflict due to an illusion arising from the fact that one has applied the idea of absolute totality, which is valid only as a condition of things in themselves, to appearances that exist only in representation, and that, if they constitute a series,

exist in successive regress but otherwise do not exist at all” (A506/B534. Pg 518) to say, that we know nothing as it is and only as it is in relation to us through a multitude of united judgments, through the apperception.

Within the modern metaphysical theory expressed by Kant we know nothing as it is, and only as a possible object of experience, and yet we still know that what has a relation to man through experience does in fact exist as a thing in itself even if we cannot know it. This frame of reference extends itself into Kant’s *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* and once a moral law has been established, the inability to know a thing as it is, becomes the very proof for why man would abide by the moral law at all. Kant was an absolute moralist, believing morals had to exist as constants in themselves and not be based on perception, for if based on perception then everyone’s moral codes would be different. In order to understand the way the absolute moral system works it is important to distinguish between the demands one should do, and commands one ought to do. The former are demands one should follow if they desire something, which Kant dubs the hypothetical imperative, and the latter are commands one must follow, regardless of what they desire, dubbed the categorical imperative. The hypothetical imperative can govern particular instrumental situations where personal desires are present, what train should one take to get home? After looking at a map, that answer is easily found, and should one desire to go home, one should take the correct train. More important to Kant, the categorical imperative, on the other hand can never govern actions done for one’s own desire and only what actions ought to be performed by everyone all of the time regardless of one’s desires.

What one ought to do, is what one is morally obligated to do and these obligations are universally imposed on us all. This negates the ability for differing perceptions because under

this system, what is right or wrong becomes knowable simply by universalizing, namely, “act only according to that maxim which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law without contradiction” (421). Opposition implies a condition, therefore the contradiction, if one were to be present, would be false, and that action would be an immoral one. A maxim is the general rule that stands behind a particular action that one considers, and the universal law is something that must always be done in the same situations. Any action one performs, in performing said action, they tacitly approve the maxim of that action, henceforth implying that everyone should also always perform that same action under the same circumstances. In this ethical system it becomes clear why lying, cheating stealing, and things of the like would be inherently immoral, for they would be a contradiction as surely not everyone should lie, cheat, or steal all of the time. Once your maxim is universalized, if it is contradictory to your end goal, then it is immoral. It is a logical contradiction, and moral obligations belonging to the categorical imperative come from pure reason, which does not contradict itself. Moral rules apply to everyone at anytime equally, regardless of if one wants them to or not; and no one is ever authorized to violate the moral law, even if at the moment it appears to be for a good cause. One must “act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end” (439) if one is used as a means to an end their interest or benefit is not being considered.

People are rational and autonomous beings, having the ability to set their own goals and make the decisions necessary to work towards them. The idea that people are in fact actually able to make their own decisions is contingent on the fact people have free will. Kant is justified in allowing for the assumption that man does in fact have free will simply because it cannot be

proven that man does not. Looking back to Kant's *Metaphysics*, we can never know a thing as it is, only our relation to the thing via a multitude of synthetic judgements through the apperception; yet we still know the thing we have a relation to, exists as a thing in itself, though it remains unknown to us. Apperception is similar to causation in so far as apperception is the knowledge obtained from the uniting of judgments, while causation is the uniting of preceding actions to see what necessitated the current action. One may think it is a valid argument to say man does not have free will simply because once an action is performed an analysis of the events leading up to the performed action can be executed, and as a result a clear evolution to the final action presents itself. However, just because you can find a cause to the effect after the effect has taken place, does not necessitate that all actions are predetermined and that man lacks free will, just like being able to say something after apperception does not necessitate that the claim made has anything to do with the thing in itself. Our inability to know an object in itself necessarily means that any claim made either could or could not be also true about the thing in itself. We cannot say we know all actions are pre determined therefore we can claim that they may not be and maintain that assumption without contradiction.

Understanding that each human has goals and desires and the means to decide their actions themselves, is the way we are able to see beings as ends in themselves; this pervades us with an absolute morality, the reason why we would strive toward the moral law. For since we have free will, we can easily admit no one should ever be manipulated, as manipulation exists for one's own benefit and if someone is being manipulated, they no longer have the free will to make an autonomous decision about how to act because their decision is based off of false information. Under the categorical imperative since any action done must be one that can be

willed a universal law and hold no contradiction with itself, everyone would act in a way that allows them to remain autonomous beings. Therefore proper rational application of the categorical imperative will lead us to a moral truth that is fixed and applicable to all situations.

Kant set out to provide a system that could, for all intents and purposes, be referred to, namely that everything has a relation to experience and also a relation to itself, and those things need not be the same and further the latter need not even be knowable. For even with a thing as itself remaining unknown, Kant claims we can still make True universal judgments about the world around us and the morals that govern our actions. However, he, like to those before him, found himself acknowledging a problem, only to create a new one in its solution. Kant provides a safe haven for the idea “if I do not know, it very well could be” which does not provide for any more certainty of claims to Knowledge than had been previously presented. Recounting the other renditions claiming a correct ethical theory to refer to, that in fact fell short in the eyes of certainty; the Heraclitean doctrine gives way to a governing system that allows for justice to be defined not by the action itself but rather by if the stronger performed the action. Justice existing in this way creates the idea that to be moral is to be stronger than the man next to you, while doing whatever you want. This cannot be said to be an objective discovery about the kind of thing justice is as a thing itself and the way it exists in the universe, for one’s own volition when accompanied by a greater strength cannot be the means to govern human beings. As a result, it rightly did not find itself the unchanged moral theory for all to adopt. The Platonic idea of the Forms supplanted that of the flux and Justice became a constant, existing as the Form of Justice; an action itself either Just or unjust regardless of the strength of the performer. Justice became one’s soul being ruled in the proper way, namely ones logos ruling their thymos, and one’s

thymos suppressing their eros. A valiant effort to claim objective discovery about the way Justice exists, but, beyond asking how one can access the Forms and how one would know when one had, it also remains a mystery how one is supposed to know their thymos is in fact being ruled by their logos and suppressing their eros. On account of these unanswered questions, the moral theory did not stop with the Forms. Kant attempting to eliminate the chaos under the idea of flux, and the inaccessibility of the Forms, finds himself just another one among many metaphysically incomplete moral theories.

Should the existence of one ethical system be a thing out in the universe waiting to be discovered, surely it has not been discovered yet. Should this claim come as a surprise, one should think how they would answer the questions, “which ethical theory should I ground my morals in that will dictate my thoughts on what is right and wrong?”, and “what is right and wrong outside of any religion, outside of a community?” The fact there is even one among many moral theories one can choose to live in accordance with is where the claim is rightly made, if one ethical system exists to be discovered, it is still waiting to be. However, to take the claim further, the evolution of metaphysics and its effects on morals governing human action, was vital to show that the *modus operandi* one chooses to live under only matters in so far as it ought to be the one in compliance with the times, with the one existing to universally implement what each individual should believe to be either right or wrong. The Heraclitean storm that is caused by each individual having the ability to be just on his own design was the means needed to see that there had to be a way for everyone to be able to refer to one thing for each thing. Therefore it is not a question of which metaethical theory is the objective singular existent one, but rather in whatever system is being followed, does the frame of reference allow for a singular correctness

among the many? For Plato this was through the Forms, and placing value of the architectonic over that of the techne. For Kant it was through recognizing everything has a relation to experience and also a relation to itself and that the latter is unknowable, still though, placing categorical imperative above the hypothetical. For the ethics we ground morality in is nothing more than a means to universally implement what each individual should believe to be either moral or immoral, specifically through the recognition of the hierarchy between the technes one desires and the whole which ought to reign over them.