

The Problems of Moral Philosophy, by T. Adorno

a. People / Organizations:

[http://www.edarcipelago.com/classici/AdornoTheodor/Adorno,%20T%20-%20Problems%20of%20Moral%20Philosophy%20\(Stanford,%202000\).pdf](http://www.edarcipelago.com/classici/AdornoTheodor/Adorno,%20T%20-%20Problems%20of%20Moral%20Philosophy%20(Stanford,%202000).pdf)

b. Quotes:

- **"...what I would describe as the central problem of moral philosophy...is the relationship of the particular, the particular interests, the behaviour of the individual, particular human being and the universal that stands opposed to it"** - Author (pg. 18)
- "...the word morality simply gets on my nerves..." - Author (pg. 19)
- "...people who attend my lectures find they are unable to take notes as they can in other lectures and hence have nothing in black and white to take home with them" - Author (pg. 22)
 - "What I am trying to do instead is to lead you undaunted over the rough ground in pursuit of the ideas and reflections which in my view represent the actual movement of philosophical thought." - Author (pg. 23)
 - "...[my] advice would be not to come to these lectures with those expectations, or indeed with any fixed expectations of the kind you may have acquired from elsewhere in your philosophical studies. Instead you should try merely to give your attention to the matter in hand, and to what I shall try to tell you about it as well or as badly as I am able. You should try and follow the argument and spontaneously think along with it, instead of being constantly on the lookout for nuggets that can be conveniently picked up. If you do that, I think I can promise you that there will be enough to satisfy you by way of subject-matter, for I have no wish to underestimate, or to disparage, the hunger for information" - Author (pg. 24-25)
- "...people suffer from their knowledge because they discover that no direct path leads from knowledge to practice. Instead they stand in need of a third thing, namely that injection of irrationality..." - Author (pg. 112-113)
- **"I believe, and every human being who is reasonably alive to such matters and who has some self-knowledge will discover through experience, that morality is by no means self-evident.** It is rather the case that within the complexities of modern life – and in this sense Kant's situation was not a whit less complex than our own – there are countless situations in which it is far from self-evident how we should act, and that we constantly find ourselves in situations where we need to think as hard as we are able, not, I must say, in order to satisfy the requirements of the categorical imperative – far be it from me to venture to aspire to such heights – but where you need all your wits about you simply to behave like a reasonably decent human being." - Author (pg. 116)
- **"Ignorance is not the medium of freedom"** - Author (pg. 124)
- "Criticism of a philosophy is only ever possible as a criticism of its truth" - Author (pg. 152)

c. General Notes:

- Lecture 1 (pg. 1)
 - "And that you will be able to learn something from these lectures that will be of direct benefit to you in your own lives, whether in private, or in public, in other words, in your existence as political beings. The question of the moral life is one that will be put, or so I hope, in the course of these lectures. The form it will take will be to enquire whether the good life is a genuine possibility in the present, or whether we shall have to make do with the claim I made in that book that 'there can be no good life within the bad one.'" (pg. 1)
 - **"Moral philosophy is a theoretical discipline** and as such must always be distinguished from the burning questions of the moral life" (pg. 1)
 - "The problems I shall be discussing here and which belong in the general horizon of your philosophical education are quite definitely those of moral philosophy as a theoretical discipline" (pg. 2)
 - "even though I am quite clear in my mind that a course of lectures on moral philosophy can be of no direct assistance in your lives, I am no less convinced that you are justified in your desire to learn about the good life" (pg. 2)
 - **"According to Kant, who is, God knows, not the worst guide to the conceptualization of such problems, this question 'What shall we do?' is the crucial question of moral philosophy"** (pg. 3)
 - "For in Kant practical reason takes an unambiguous priority over theoretical reason..." (pg. 3)
 - **"This reproach about the uselessness of theory, this impatient need to hurl oneself into action without delay spells the end of any kind of theoretical work and contains within itself, teleologically, as if it had been assumed from the outset, a relationship to a false, in other words, an oppressive, blind and violent form of practice"** (pg. 3-4)
 - "I urge you therefore to exercise a certain patience with respect to the relations between theory and practice" (pg. 4)
 - "I would even say that this ruthlessness, the power of resistance that is inherent in the idea itself and that prevents it from letting itself be directly manipulated for any instrumental purposes whatsoever, this theoretical ruthlessness contains – if you will allow me this paradox – a practical element within itself" (pg. 4)
 - **"...thinking is itself a form of behaviour. In its origins thinking is no more than the form in which we have attempted to master our environment and come to terms with it** – testing reality is the name given by analytical psychology to this function of the ego and of thought – and it is perfectly possible that in certain situations practice will be referred back to theory far more frequently than at other times and in other situations" (pg. 4)
 - "It is no accident that the celebrated unity of theory and practice implied by Marxian theory and then developed above all by Lenin should have finally degenerated in [Stalinist] dialectical materialism to a kind of blind dogma whose sole function is to eliminate theoretical thinking altogether. This provides an object lesson in the transformation of practicism into irrationalism, and hence, too, for the transformation of this practicism into a repressive and oppressive practice. That alone might well be a sufficient reason to give us pause and not to be in such haste to rely on the famous unity of theory and practice in the belief that it is guaranteed and that it holds good for every time and place." (pg. 4)
 - **"...Fichte's famous assertion that 'morality is self-evident' cannot be upheld, at least not in the way that Fichte intended at the time, even though the statement undoubtedly contains a grain of truth"** (pg. 5)
 - "in these lectures what is at issue is that we should reflect on the problems of moral philosophy – and not that I should present you with any specific norms or values or whatever other ghastly terms may offer themselves. To put it in another way, **the subject of moral philosophy today requires that we do not naively respond to such questions about how to lay down absolute rules about behaviour, about the relation between the general and the particular in reference to behaviour, and about the immediate creation of a moral good.** Such questions cannot simply be accepted at face value, or as they appear to so-called feeling, which often may turn out to be a poor guide. Instead they must be raised to the level of conscious reflection, so far as that is possible. Moral philosophy in this sense means making a sustained effort – without anxieties or reservations – to achieve a true, conscious understanding of the categories of morality and of the questions that relate to the good life and practice in that higher sense, instead of continuing to imagine that this entire complex of issues must be excluded from the realm of theory on the grounds that it is practical" (pg. 5)
 - "Such a formulation of the task of reflecting on moral philosophy of the kind I have just given you, however fragmentary, would moreover be in

tune with the present stage of advanced psychological knowledge – that is to say, of psychoanalysis. For the essence of the latter is that ‘where the id is’, in other words, where the unconscious, where darkness rules, there ‘ego shall be’, in other words, there shall be consciousness. Put differently, **something like a true practice is only possible when you have passed through theory.**” (pg. 6)

- "On the other hand, it is no less true – and I believe that this must be asserted no less bluntly than the need for theory – that **theory and practice do not slot into each other neatly, that they are not simply one and the same thing, but that** – if you will forgive the hackneyed image – **a kind of tension obtains between the two.** Theory that bears no relation to any conceivable practice either degenerates into an empty, complacent and irrelevant game, or, what is even worse, it becomes a mere component of culture, in other words, a piece of dead scholarship, a matter of complete indifference to us as living minds and active, living human beings. This even holds good for art for, however mediated, however indirect or concealed it may be, such a link must nevertheless exist. Conversely – as I have already pointed out – a practice that simply frees itself from the shackles of theory and rejects thought as such on the grounds of its own supposed superiority will sink to the level of activity for its own sake. Such a practice remains stuck fast within the given reality. It leads to the production of people who like organizing things and who imagine that once you have organized something, once you have arranged for some rally or other, you have achieved something of importance, without pondering for a moment whether such activities have any chance at all of effectively impinging on reality" (pg. 6)
- "one task of the theory of the moral is to set limits to the scope of theory itself, in other words, to show that the sphere of moral action includes something that cannot fully be described in intellectual terms, but also that should not be turned into an absolute" (pg. 7)
- "To that extent we might even say that because the moral involves action it is always more than thought, and that moral philosophy, the reflection on moral questions, stands in something of a contradiction to the object of its own reflections" (pg. 9)
 - "where we find contradictions, where we find ourselves unable to eliminate contradictions through the stratagems of theory or conceptual devices, what we have to do is to become conscious of them, to generate the strength to look them in the face, instead of arguing them out of existence by more or less logical procedures" (pg. 9)
- "Morality derives from the Latin word ‘mores’ and ‘mores’ means, as I hope you all know, ‘custom’ [Sitt]e" (pg. 9)
- "...to reduce the problem of morality to ethics is to perform a sort of conjuring trick by means of which the decisive problem of moral philosophy, namely the relation of the individual to the general, is made to disappear. What is implied in all this is the idea that **if I live in accordance with my own ethos, my own nature, or if, to use the fine phrase of our own time, I realize myself, then this will be enough to bring about the good life. And this is nothing but pure illusion and ideology.** An ideology, moreover, that goes hand in hand with a second ideology, namely the illusion that culture and the adaptation of the individual to culture brings about the refinement and self-cultivation of the individual, whereas culture stands opposed to moral philosophy and is actually open to criticism from that quarter. For all these reasons I **believe it is better to retain the concept of morality, albeit critically, than to soften up and obscure its problematic nature from the outset by replacing it with the sentimental concept of ethics**" (pg. 10-11)
- Lecture 2 (pg. 12)
 - "You will recollect that the concept of morality is problematic above all because it has its origin in ‘mores’, in other words, because it postulates a harmony between the public customs in a country and the moral, ethically correct behaviour, the moral life of the individual" (pg. 12)
 - "A philosophical concept like morality – and it is important that you should understand this – is not simply identical with its pure meaning. Over and above that it has an aura, a layer of connotations which are not necessarily reducible to that meaning. And the concept of morality is in fact bound up with a particular notion of moral rigour, of conventional narrowness and conformity with a whole series of given ideas that have now become problematic" (pg. 12-13)
 - "This unwillingness to equate the moral with a restricted, narrow and superseded ascetic ideal is what has given rise to the attempts to replace the term ‘morality’ with that of ‘ethics’. I have already indicated to you that this concept of ethics contains the idea that people should live in accordance with their own nature, and that accordingly such a concept of ethics appears to offer something of an antidote to a morality that is forcibly imposed from outside" (pg. 13)
 - "**At its simplest, this entire concept of ethics contains something that only emerged fully into the light of day with the theory of Existentialism – which essentially regards itself as an ethical, moral movement, albeit in a negative sense.** For here the idea of the good life, of right action, is reduced to the notion that one should act in accordance with the way one is anyway. Hence by acting in accordance with one’s ethos, one’s nature, mere existence, the fact that one is ‘constituted’ [geartet] one way rather than another, becomes the yardstick of behaviour. The roots of this belief can be traced, strangely enough, back to Kant, for whom the concept of personality – which however does have a rather different meaning in his writing, one we shall need to discuss in detail – appears for the first time as a crucial ethical category." (pg. 13-14)
 - "...in Kant personality means something like the abstract, general conceptual unity of everything that makes up a person. Or we might say, personality refers to all the determinants of the acting human being that do not refer to the person as a merely empirical, a merely existing, natural being, but, following Kantian theory, everything that goes beyond that. Hence personality is everything about the person that is supra-empirical and at the same time expresses the universality that should be binding on every person, or, as Kant himself says, every rational being" (pg. 14)
 - ◆ "It is from this point, in the course of a process that would be interesting to reconstruct, that we find the emergence of the personality as the strong human being, identical with himself, complete in himself, that then displaces the concept of the ethical and puts itself in the place of ethical norms. So here, then, we have a realm which is concerned from the outset with tensions and contradictions, namely with the question of how to bring individual interests and claims to happiness into harmony with some sort of objective norms binding on mankind as a whole. **What is problematic about this concept of personality is that these tensions are swept aside, spirited away, and that it looks as if all you really need to lead the good life is to be yourself and to be identical with yourself.** As I have already indicated, since this identity, this mere identity of the individual human being does not suffice, the concept of culture is introduced in an analogous fashion as a correlative, quite uncritically, as something simply given. Then, in line with this idea of ethics, ‘man’ – I intentionally use this cliché since we find ourselves in the realm of cliché here – ‘man’ turns out to realize some cultural values or other on the basis of his identity with himself, his harmony with his own being. **This conception of ethics contrives to undercut the question that should form the basis of every deeper reflection on moral or ethical questions, namely the question whether culture, and whatever culture has become, permits something like the good life, or whether it is a network of institutions that actually tends more and more to thwart the emergence of such righteous living.**" (pg. 14)
 - "...ethics is the bad conscience of conscience." (pg. 15)
 - "I have been saying that **in order to deal with moral problems, the problem of morality, that is to say, the relation between freedom and law, in a serious way, we must at all costs avoid smoothing over the difficulties. We must instead confront the contradictions that emerge at the point where cosy attempts to smooth over the problems cease**" (pg. 16)
 - "**...what I would describe as the central problem of moral philosophy...is the relationship of the particular, the particular interests, the behaviour of the individual, particular human being and the universal that stands opposed to it**" (pg. 18)
 - "...the universal always contains an implicit claim to represent a moral society in which force and compulsion have ceased to play any role.

- And on the other hand, we shall see that the very same mechanisms of repression and force are at work in the claims of the individual, in the self-assertion of the individual, that the individual is wont to encounter in his relation to society" (pg. 18)
- **"At all events, the problem of how the general interest and the particular interests relate to each other in the course of human interaction is the fundamental problem of ethics**, and, in a disguised form, it is also the fundamental problem of Kantian ethics, although Kant does not express it in the form that I have just used in my explanations to you" (pg. 18-19)
 - "In Kant, moral problems always circle round the question of the relations between the natural, empirical individual human being and the intelligible human being, who is determined simply and solely by his own reason of which freedom is an essential characteristic" (pg. 19)
 - **"Ethical conduct or moral and immoral conduct is always a social phenomenon – in other words, it makes absolutely no sense to talk about ethical and moral conduct separately from relations of human beings to each other, and an individual who exists purely for himself is an empty abstraction**. Given that this is the case, it follows that the social problem of the divergence between the universal interest and the particular interest, the interests of the particular individuals, is what goes to make up the problem of morality" (pg. 19)
 - "In thinking about ethics, the spontaneous understanding of the particular within the universal is that it is the accidental, the contingent, the psychological and as such it has the tendency to soften up and dissolve [ethical] norms simply because of its focus on the particular human being as a natural being. Conversely, where the universal does not simply agree with the particular, it presents itself as an abstraction that fails to include the particular and hence – ignoring its rights – appears as something violent and extraneous that has no substantial reality for human beings. We find ourselves, therefore, confronted by two impossibilities. On the one hand, we see the accidental nature of the psychologically isolated human being who is so conditioned by his inner life that he scarcely achieves anything like freedom. On the other hand, we find the abstract norm that has assumed such an objective reality vis-à-vis living human beings that they find themselves unable to appropriate it for themselves in a living way. And how we are to get to grips with these two impossibilities in their specificity; how we are to think about them and what solutions we might possibly discover – this is what defines the scope of thinking about ethics or morality as a theoretical discipline" (pg. 19)
 - "...it does Plato no injustice if we say that his philosophy was conservative in tendency, that is, up to a point at least, it represents the attempt to recreate in thought those codes of conduct and those ideals – if we may call them that – that had once been the traditional virtues of Attic society." (pg. 16)
 - "Strange though it may seem, young people today have a greater need for organization, for a certain kind of systematic thought than, for example, I do. For I belong to a generation that grew up in violent rebellion against the very concept of philosophical systems, and whose entire way of thinking was defined by that rebellion. You find the belief in any order and security to be altogether problematic, whereas we had to break free from too much order and too much security. If I am not deceived, you have in general a much greater need for order than I do – perhaps it is only a need for security, I do not know. But at all events, I would wish to pay you the compliment of not pretending that this need does not exist" (pg. 20)
 - Lecture 3 (pg. 22)
 - "It is an essential feature of philosophy that form and content cannot be separated from each other..." (pg. 23)
 - "I am using Kant in a similar fashion, namely as a vehicle, in order, on the one hand, to introduce you to the problems of moral philosophy by telling you about his problems and his way of tackling them, and, on the other hand, to lead you to go beyond Kant through my critical and other reflections on him. At all events, that is my intention in the first part of this course" (pg. 25)
 - "...the factor that unifies Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy lies in the concept of reason itself." (pg. 26)
 - "Reason as the capacity for right, correct thought, the ability to form concepts correctly, the ability to make correct judgements and precise deductions, as it is called in traditional logic – all this is constitutive of both theory and practice in his philosophy." (pg. 26)
 - "Within the realm of practical reason that we are concerned with here it enjoys a particular position of supremacy because practical actions, in so far as they are the object of moral reflection, are precisely the actions that arise solely from reason, and that are constituted entirely on the basis of the pure laws of reason – independently of any perceptions, of any empirical material, of anything that impinges on this reason from outside. Moral conduct in this sense is conduct that is literally pure. The word 'pure' has a very profound double meaning in Kant. On the one hand, pure means in accordance with reason, undistorted by any matter in any way connected with the senses. But also, because it is nothing but action purely in accordance with the laws of reason, it necessarily has the character of the formal and the abstract that – as you are all aware – has been the reproach that has constantly been levelled at Kantian ethics. This may enable you to understand why **Kant**, in whose thought the primacy of reason is as predominant as in any Enlightenment thinker, nevertheless **insists on the primacy of practical philosophy**. For practical philosophy is the philosophy that exists in pure conformity with reason, without the need for its laws to pay heed to any material that impinges on the knowing and acting subject from outside" (pg. 26-27)
 - "...[Kant's] starting-point, particularly in moral philosophy, is the consciousness of necessary and unavoidable contradictions, namely the so-called antinomies." (pg. 27)
 - **"the problem of moral philosophy in Kant generally**, and this is the first point you must grasp, **is the problem of freedom, the freedom of the will**. What this means in the first instance...is no more than a form of behaviour that is not ruled by the causality of nature." (pg. 27)
 - "For if I simply act in conformity with causality, I shall not actually be present as the agent that somehow has to make decisions about an action" (pg. 28)
 - "it will be obvious to you that all ideas of morality or ethical behaviour must relate to an 'I' that acts" (pg. 28)
 - "The essence of [Kant's] doctrine of the antinomies is that it represents a conflict between that Enlightenment spirit of critical rationalism which I have already mentioned and, on the other hand, the intention of salvaging metaphysics" (pg. 28)
 - "Now, you can easily convince yourself of this by reflecting that if your thinking is still at a pre-philosophical, pre-critical stage, you will conceive of causality not as a function of our reason, but as a tendency that actually belongs objectively to external objects. Hence you will find that you will trace the cause of a condition, and the cause of its cause, back to what might be regarded as the primary cause. This process goes on to infinity. **This infinite regress leads then to the contradictions that Kant treats of in the theory of the antinomies**." (pg. 29)
 - "...for Kant the term dialectic – that is, the doctrine of necessary contradictions, or the doctrine of the contradictory nature of theorems in general – is a negative term, a word of abuse. For Kant dialectic is always, necessarily, something false. This is why elsewhere he refers to dialectic as 'the logic of illusion' [Schein], and embarks on the elimination of the antinomies. Of course, this entire line of thinking only gains its profundity from the necessity of the contradictions in which we become involved" (pg. 30)
 - "this motif of the necessary nature of contradictions that Kant derives from reason and nature, but that he then fails to carry through rigorously in his treatment of contradictions, is one of the motifs, and I would say by no means the least trivial one, that forms the starting-point for the concept of a philosophical dialectic. That is to say, the idea of a dialectic as a medium of thought and a way of discovering objective truth acquires a sufficient impetus only when reason necessarily falls into contradiction, and only when it makes advances in the course of resolving contradictions, instead of dismissing them once and for all as errors of logic. And this is why I would like to place such great emphasis on this point" (pg. 30)
 - "you can see from this approach to moral philosophy that **the entire point of view of Kantian philosophy is objective**, and that the idea that

- Transcendental Philosophy is subjective is oversimplified. This is because, on the contrary, **Kant's philosophy represents the attempt to salvage the objective validity of the highest and most important propositions by a *reductio ad subjectum*, by reduction to the subject.** This fits in precisely with the general thrust of Kantian moral philosophy, since what that amounts to is the reduction to the purely subjective principle of reason in order simultaneously to salvage the absolute, unimpeachable objectivity of the moral law. This makes it possible to say that **the supreme principle of morality, namely the categorical imperative, is in fact nothing other than subjective reason as an absolutely objectively valid thing.** The extreme opposite of this is the sceptical approach, which denies the existence of any such objectively valid principle." (pg. 31)
- "...his concern with the subject and human beings is not a strategy to enable him to dispute the universal necessity and binding nature of moral laws, but precisely to reinstate them. His task, therefore, is to demonstrate that the explanation for the misunderstanding lies in a false use of reason. And when this explanation has been found, we then see something that really does remind us of the workings of a dialectical philosophy. For by demonstrating the negativity of thesis and antithesis, by discovering the nature of the misunderstanding, to put it in Kantian terms, by eliminating this misunderstanding, we gain access to the positive side, to the higher truth. In this case we gain access to the explanation for the contradiction in reason itself, This creates the possibility of eliminating that contradiction through the action of reason itself. You can see from this that **although Kant declares himself to be no friend of dialectic in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in reality he makes a much more positive use of it,** thanks to this sceptical method, than might have been expected from his own views on the matter" (pg. 31-32)
- Lecture 4 (pg. 33)
 - "Let me start by saying something about the method adopted by Kant in the doctrine of the antinomies in general. This method is that of the *argumentatio e contrario*, as the traditional rhetorical figure was called. What he does is to start with a thesis and antithesis that contradict each other and both of which are equally obvious or not, as the case may be, and to prove them by demonstrating the nonsense that their antitheses lead to. Thus **both are proved negatively**, by their opposites, by their contradictories. This procedure, that may appear to you at first to be rather perverse, this procedure is – like all so-called formal features of respectable philosophy – motivated by its content" (pg. 33)
 - "I regard it as the prime task of philosophical understanding – and every such course of lectures must work towards philosophical understanding – **to show you that, beneath the seemingly plausible and coherent propositions, lies a parallelogram of forces that can be thought of as standing in the same relation to any given teachings as the parallelogram of forces in physics stands to its product.** This is why I should like to draw your attention here to the concept of a causality through freedom that Kant introduces as early as the doctrine of the antinomies. This concept, which stands on one side of the antinomy, really contradicts the principle of criticism, the general principle of rational critique, according to which causality is a category, that is to say, it is not an attribute of things in themselves, the sphere of the intelligible. Instead, this causality through freedom is conceived as a concept of causality that stands outside the realm of phenomena to which the concept of causality is generally assigned. To understand this, in other words, to understand how we arrive at this highly curious syncopation, this interweaving of the motifs of lawfulness and freedom, and to grasp what impels Kant in this direction, is not just the key to an understanding of the Kantian ethic, but also of the structure of Kantian philosophy as a whole. In all probability it is also the key to what we think of as ethical problems in general. For **this interweaving of freedom and necessity and the resolution of the contradictions implicit in it is not just a problem of cognition, but the very real problem that confronts every philosophical account of so-called morality**" (pg. 35)
 - "...when introducing the concept of freedom the word 'necessary' has been smuggled in, a term borrowed from the realm of causality" (pg. 36)
 - "...[Kant's] concept of causality is, as you will have noticed, extraordinarily broad, so broad that it is capable of the most divergent interpretations" (pg. 37)
 - "...the content of Kantian philosophy, in so far as it has a negative content, lies precisely in the limits it sets to the absolute claims of the subject; these limits also imply a limit to what can be deduced from this philosophy, even though, on the other hand, it presents itself as a deductive system." (pg. 36)
 - "...**Kant's thinking is quite simply this:** the categories, that is to say, the fundamental concepts, the basic furniture of my mind which I need if I am to be able to bring order at all into my experience, are nothing but the conditions that **enable me to organize the world** in accordance with laws and hence experience the world as governed by laws. Now if freedom – and this is the *nervus probandi* – is turned into a category, to a transcendental principle, a fundamental precondition of my knowledge of objects in general, this would mean that the opposite of conformity to law would itself be made into one of the categories, that it would therefore form the foundation of lawfulness as such and that freedom would become the epitome of conformity to law, an evident nonsense. This is his basic thought" (pg. 41)
 - "This means that if I were to accept the idea of freedom in its transcendental sense, freedom as category, then, Kant continues, this will lead to 'causality itself having an absolute beginning; there will be no antecedent through which this act, in taking place, is determined in accordance with fixed laws'. **This would mean accepting a principle that would have nothing to do either with a knowledge in conformity with law or with any laws operating in nature.**" (pg. 41)
 - "**What he has in mind here is obviously the old idea of an ultimate, original creative principle as handed down by Aristotle and the Scholastics.** The ultimate root of this idea is the Aristotelian doctrine of the *κίνητην πάντα κινῶν*, the unmoved mover of all things..." (pg. 42)
 - "...Kant speaks as the consistent and rigorous man of the Enlightenment whose whole striving is to eradicate the last vestiges of Scholastic, and ultimately Aristotelian and ontological, ideas from philosophy." (pg. 42)
 - Lecture 5 (pg. 44)
 - "let us return to the treatment of the third antinomy, and I should like to try to pick up the thread where we left off in the last lecture. The main idea of this chapter is very plausible and I would even say relatively simple. If we assume an ultimate, absolute cause, we offend against the postulate implicit in the principle of causality, namely its universal applicability. In other words, if we arbitrarily break the series of causes to be sought we violate the principle of causality itself. According to this everything that exists [including any cause one might discover] must itself have a further cause, because something falls within a lawlike context of experience only by virtue of the universality of the causal principle. If that is not the case, if anything is excluded from this universal framework of laws, this represents a failure of the lawful order that Kant has proclaimed to be a quasi-divine or rather human world-order, and basically does away with the idea of ordered experience as such." (pg. 44)
 - "What I have in mind is what might be called 'the fear of chaos', a motif of great importance for the entire grounding of moral philosophy in Kant. So nothing should remain outside there should be nothing that disrupts the total framework of laws. Conversely, however, if such an ultimate cause is not presupposed, then there is no complete causality, but only what Kant called a 'relative', in other words a secondary, causality – I expect you will recall the passage. In that event we offend against the rule that nothing may happen without sufficient reason; in a sense, we break off prematurely, by failing to look for such an ultimate cause. In both cases the error is a failure to satisfy the logic of the principle of causality. In the first instance because the principle claims universal applicability: we are unable to discover an ultimate, absolute cause simply because this would mean suspending the desire for universality itself. The alternative is to decline to assume the existence of such a cause, and act as if there is no such thing as an ultimately accessible cause, but only a secondary cause, so that the concept of causality remains forever unfulfilled" (pg. 44-45)
 - "...on both occasions his method makes him confront the meaning inherent in causality itself, and in both cases he shows that you end up violating the meaning of the concept. It is a matter of indifference whether you take your search for causes to the point of infinity, thereby renouncing the search for an ultimate, conclusive cause, or whether you decline to do this and hence break off the search

- arbitrarily: it is the hypostasis of an absolute cause or an absolute process of causation that leads to such contradictions" (pg. 45)
- "Now Kant believed – and this is the crucial point – that in reality we are simply confronted here by a mistaken usage, that we are applying the concept of causality beyond the limits of possible experience, and that if we were to moderate our demands, and refrain from making such excessive claims, we would not land up in these antinomies. The habit of thinking Kant displays here is one that later on was to become characteristic of Positivism as a whole" (pg. 45-46)
 - "Kant came very close there to an understanding of the problem that I am talking about today, but failed to draw out its full logical implications because of what we might call his architectonic need to keep **the two spheres of pure reason and practical reason neatly segregated in different compartments**. Instead of reflecting on this contradiction and using it as his starting-point, he left it in place and accepted the existence of two different spheres that were independent of each other in principle. Thus we have two approaches, one in which contradictions are distributed, as it were, in a compartmentalizing spirit, in which they are assigned to two different spheres, and one which confronts the contradictions squarely and attempts through this confrontation to penetrate to the heart of the matter. **The difference between them is precisely the contradiction between traditional thinking – or what Hegel calls 'reflexive' thinking [Reflexionsdenken] – and dialectical thinking.**" (pg. 46)
 - "...within the Kantian system there lies hidden a dominant factor that later on comes to the surface in Fichte in a rather crass fashion. This is the idea that practical reason, that is, action, is accorded an absolute priority over theoretical knowledge. Kant finds himself, therefore – like Hegel, incidentally – in a precarious situation. On the one hand, thanks to the extraordinary vigour with which he pursues his philosophy of origins, he comes up against the outer limits of that philosophy, that is to say, the fact that the concept of the prime mover is antinomic; while, on the other hand, he clings to the idea while refusing to follow through the logic of that antinomy" (pg. 48)
 - "For all his dialectic, Hegel too – just like Kant – accepts something like the dominance of an absolute prime mover, only in his case it is the infinite subject, Absolute Spirit" (pg. 48)
 - "In Kant himself the concept of causality is in fact extremely broad. That is to say, his definition is highly formal, and for my part I believe that in the famous debate about relativity theory Ernst Cassirer was not altogether in the wrong when he maintained that thanks to its formal nature Kantian philosophy would be in a position to encompass relativity theory." (pg. 49)
 - "**Kant was critical of rationalism of the kind espoused by Leibniz and Wolff because he vigorously opposed the principle of an inner causation** – that is, a causation of things or objects in themselves, independently of the subject that confers on them the laws of causality. He launched an extremely sharp critique of the idea that we can know the internal nature of objects and hence their inner determinations in a very important note to the chapter entitled 'The Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection' (pg. 49)
 - "...apart from the dynamic categories, **one of the general theses of Kantian philosophy that is known to all of you is that things in themselves are obscure and unknowable by us**. We are only able to construct these objects by virtue of our apparatus of categories and the evidence of our senses, in other words, we only construct objects, as it were, from outside and with the assistance of our own consciousness; we cannot enter into them" (pg. 49)
 - "It would probably even be enough to remind ourselves that **Kant defined the object as something constructed by us in order to exclude the possibility that we could take these objects that are our own products and of whose inner nature we know nothing and go on and ascribe to them an internal existence of the kind conjectured by the preceding rationalist philosophy**. But this very exteriority itself has something unsatisfactory about it because the entirely formal framework of rules is capable of subsuming all sorts of things in itself that may well be wholly incompatible with anything that we might conceive of under the title of causality." (pg. 50)
 - "...our minds have not advanced beyond the level of mythology, that in our everyday consciousness we are lagging behind the stage reached by scientific criticism and that we are still operating with a basically animistic conception according to which things have an inner soul and an inward determinacy, conceptions which have ceased to be tenable now that the concepts of knowledge have been filtered as they have in philosophical criticism. This so-called external nature of causality, which incidentally is something that the whole of later scientific thought and the whole of Positivism shares with Kant, and which, as in Hume, has been taken incomparably further than it was by Kant himself, arises from the fact that **causality does not reside in things in themselves. It is, rather, an ordering principle according to which the subject combines successive states with each other. This means then that causality has nothing to do with the explanation of motivation, which sets out to further our understanding of successive events from within. It aims to achieve this on the basis of our inward awareness in which subject and object, that is, our experience of ourselves and we ourselves as the thing we experience, coincide, or are supposed to coincide so that the problem of the opposition between inner and outer disappears**" (pg. 50)
 - "...the concept of causality, that is, this sequence of states in accordance with rules, is broad enough to leave room for something we can call motivation" (pg. 51)
 - "...in his practical philosophy [Kant] treats freedom, or rather its supreme principle, the moral law – which demands nothing other than that I act purely in accordance with reason – as such a given. He treats it as something that in a sense cannot be inferred from anything else, simply because it is identical with the very same principle of reason which alone would be capable of drawing such an inference" (pg. 52)
 - "...the reason why I attach such great importance to explaining these rather complicated matters to you here is that they really are important if we are to lay the foundation for a moral philosophy" (pg. 53)
 - "Kant finds himself caught up in a certain contradiction. On the one hand, he has strictly to maintain the distinction between the intelligible and the empirical. For the fact is that if he were to tie the intelligible or absolute to empirical conditions, it would be at the cost of its absolute character and its absolute authority. But on the other hand, if these two spheres are absolutely separate and have nothing in common with each other – and indeed this seems to be what Kant is saying elsewhere – then it would be quite impossible to speak of any morality and any such distinctions between right and wrong behaviour. This is because everything that pertains to real action would simply become part of the empirical chain of cause and effect." (pg. 53)
 - "What we are referring to here is simply **that possibility of initiating a causal series** in some sense or other. I am telling you this...because in the fully developed practical philosophy of Kant this has the very great consequence that it results in a very curious theory that we shall have to look at more closely. This is the idea that while it is true that all my actions are conditioned by my character from which they necessarily flow, this character is one that I give myself through a free act. The only possible meaning that can be given to this free act is what I am tempted to call the purely epistemological one that as human beings we are able to initiate causal series which are not automatically included in the universal network of causality" (pg. 53)
- Lecture 6 (pg. 55)
- "...I should remind you that the difficulties we have been experiencing with Kant's doctrine of the antinomies can be traced back to the fact that **Kant's philosophy has a dual character**. On the one hand, there is a critical strand of thought, that is, the dissolution of dogmatic ideas that had simply been handed down and that he overcomes by recourse to a constitutive subjectivity. At the same time he sets limits by establishing that the knowledge the naive consciousness tends to think of as the knowledge of things is in reality knowledge that arises merely in the subjective mind and cannot therefore be said to be the direct knowledge of existence. On the other hand, opposed to this and at least as powerful, there is the other strand of thought according to which he would like to try to salvage the objective character of thought through this subjective analysis. Moreover, he aims to go even further than this since he strives to rescue what before him was known as ontology, and what we are again inclined to call ontology today. And he

- hopes to rescue it in a particular sphere, namely the sphere of the intelligible – and this means for him the sphere of morality or freedom. This dual character is what actually motivates the strange attitude that Kant adopts towards the problem of freedom." (pg. 55-56)
- "...we can summarize once more the meaning of the doctrine of the third antinomy, the antinomy of causality and freedom. If causality rules absolutely, if, in other words, there is nothing but the law of cause and effect, this would make an absolute of the laws imposed by human beings on the things in themselves of which they actually know nothing, that is, of everything that is needed to control nature, both human and extra-human. This would confer on that absolute the same quality of blindness and externality which, as I explained to you last time, is characteristic of causality in nature and knowledge in terms of the categories as developed in the spirit of Kant. The domination of nature – and we might well say, as blind domination it means mere nature – would itself become an absolute. If, on the other hand, there were nothing but freedom, or as Kant puts it, 'freedom without guidance', without a law that could organize the phenomenal world, it would be a form of freedom that is quite devoid of any element of law, and hence it too would signify a relapse into a mere state of nature, namely into the natural chaos of a purely arbitrary state of affairs. It is interesting to note that on the one hand, in his critique of the consequences that the doctrine of absolute freedom would have, Kant uses the same expression 'blind' that he also used when he was speaking of the exclusive dominance of causality. **His philosophy as a whole is opposed to both. It is opposed to the making absolute of the mechanical principle – and the critique of this making absolute of the mechanical principle forms the essential content of the Critique of Judgement; and it is no less opposed, on the other hand, to the amorphous, accidental and arbitrary"** (pg. 56-57)
 - "For his part Kant never deviates for a single second from his conviction that the unity to be discovered in our reason must also be ascribed to things in themselves, if those things are to be otherwise than truly chaotic, a relapse into utter blindness and disorder." (pg. 57)
 - "...this point there is a crucial fallacy in the Kantian philosophy itself, one which had a calamitous influence throughout the whole of post-Kantian philosophy. It arises because the category of absolute unity was hypostatized and conflated with the absolute. And this was something against which the most significant and the most free-spirited of the German idealists made the most energetic protests..." (pg. 57)
 - **"...the entire doctrine of the antinomies is designed to bring together the idea of conformity to law and unity on the one hand, and freedom on the other."** (pg. 57-58)
 - "Moving on from the attempt to prove this basically self-contradictory thesis, we can explain the signs of the further contradictions to which the doctrine of causality and freedom lead, although at the same time we cannot but acknowledge the fact that **Kant's greatness manifests itself in the completely frank and open way in which he makes these contradictions explicit. I have said that this dialectic is not just a dialectic which exposes our false use of reason, but a dialectic inherent in the situation itself"** (pg. 58)
 - "This doctrine of the ultimate end of pure reason makes a major contribution to the doctrine of contradiction and our understanding of the contradiction with which we were concerned in the previous lectures because the ultimate end of the pure employment of our reason turns out to be practice, action, and not theoretical knowledge or what Kant consistently refers to in this section as 'speculation'. This is how the strange and genuinely contradictory element arises, even more contradictory than the contradictions of the doctrine of the antinomies. In the spirit of the doctrine of the antinomies we can say that causality triumphs, because in the realm of experience we can only think causally – because once we go beyond the realm of experience we end up in insoluble contradictions, regardless of whether we affirm causality or deny it. Whereas here, from the standpoint of the primacy of practice, the triumph of freedom, if you will allow me this strategic trope of speech, gazes out at us in an equally unambiguous way. We can say, therefore, that while Kant criticizes the antinomies of pure reason, the necessity of these antinomies becomes manifest in the Kantian theory itself. It does this because his own philosophy amounts to the statement that in the realm of theory causality is dominant, while in the practical realm only freedom counts." (pg. 58)
 - "When we read here in Kant of the 'tendency of its nature', if we understand correctly the concept of nature as Kant borrowed it from the eighteenth century as a whole, and especially from Rousseau, we realize that it means more than something psychological – more than the idea that our 'nature' is such that we ourselves impel our reason to the point of the absolute. Instead, **'nature' here has to be taken in its strict sense to mean that reason is impelled by its own essence to go beyond the possible limits of experience. This thought, Ladies and Gentlemen, is in fact extraordinarily plausible and extraordinarily illuminating"** (pg. 59)
 - **"...the corollary of reason is the idea of truth. Reason is essentially the embodiment of consciousness which has truth as its goal – or so we might define it. If it is interrupted, broken off, suspended, and if it is told that it has to surrender its own true purpose: the search for truth, then reason is prevented by pure rationality, in order to make it see reason, from satisfying the requirements of its own nature"** (pg. 59)
 - "...if there is just the tiniest amount of freedom, just a little corner, then this must mean that the entire business of a chain of cause and effect has a hole in it and in that case I can no longer ascribe universality to it. For in that event it is quite unclear why there should not be an element of freedom in countless other places. But this question, that certainly seems on the face of it to be a question of knowledge, or, as Kant calls it, of speculation, is simply swept under the table [by Kant]..." (pg. 64)
 - "I have now told you a certain amount about the attitude of indifference that characterizes the speculative interest according to Kant; and I have also said that **no matter how we act, nothing is more important for us than those ideas which Kant claims are only of significance for our actions**. In certain circumstances, for example, they may prevent us from taking any action at all, and the concept of action may fall by the wayside, as is the case with monks of various kinds, with quietist movements, or else with Schopenhauer's philosophy." (pg. 64)
 - **"...according to the Kantian doctrine the moral law is given to me, it is a fact; experience teaches me that I should act morally**. But lest this experience lead me into inconsistencies, it also contains the implication that I should reckon with the existence of these metaphysical entities so that – and this is one of the great paradoxes of Kantian philosophy – I cannot act freely for the sake of the existence of God, but that God exists only in order that I should act freely. This relationship has been completely inverted, and in consequence practice has gained the absolute priority. That is the actual justification for the thesis that I have developed here, namely the idea that in the philosophy of Kant practice has priority over theory" (pg. 65-66)
 - Lecture 7 (pg. 67)
 - **"...the three cardinal propositions that Kant regards as the cardinal propositions of ethics are those that maintain the existence of freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul and the existence of God**. According to Kant, these three propositions have their decisive meaning not in theoretical philosophy, in other words, not in our knowledge of what is the case, but in practical philosophy. This means that, following the Kantian theory, they are strictly, necessarily bound up with the question 'What shall we do?' and can really only be understood and explained in connection with what we should do" (pg. 67)
 - **"...Kant's disclaimer that theory has no interest in these propositions does not seem to be entirely convincing**. For if anything matters to a man in his own life, aside from his actions, then it must be the question whether or not everything comes to an end with his death" (pg. 68)
 - "I do not wish to repeat this entire complex of arguments here, but would just like to remind you that I criticized this distinction in the last lecture, or one of the earlier lectures. Kant says, as you will recollect, that the theoretical interest in these propositions is very slight." (pg. 68)
 - **"...according to Kant, we can neither obtain any answer to these questions from our experience, nor do they really enter effectively into the apparatus of our categories, that is, the preconditions in whose absence it would not be possible for us to experience anything at all"** (pg. 68-69)
 - **"...action has both a form and a content**. We can speak of the form and content of moral action in the much weightier sense that here too there is a

- distinction between universal rules, the universal norms in accordance with which we act, however problematic they may be, and the specific action that results and that then, precisely because it is a specific action, necessarily entails the principle of individuation, that is, it includes some concrete element of the material of experience" (pg. 69-70)
- "Practical reason in Kant always means practical *pure* reason, in other words, the a priori ability to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, and not what we mean when we say of someone that he is a practical or an impractical person" (pg. 70)
 - "An action is supposed to be the direct product of my mind and must be independent of any material that is tied to it. And I can only conceive of it as practical if it is independent, if it is my own act and is bound to nothing that is not determined by me as a thinking, rational being." (pg. 70-71)
 - "Regarded socially, what that means – and it will perhaps be of assistance to you to think of these rather abstruse ideas in slightly more concrete terms – what that means is that something like a supreme metaphysical principle has been created out of the idea of the emancipation of the bourgeois individual – the idea of bourgeois autonomy. **Humanity at the end of the eighteenth century was caught up in a struggle for bourgeois emancipation from tutelage, and it is as if this struggle were reflected in philosophy in such a way that this freedom, the freedom that had yet to be achieved, became the supreme principle, the principle in which philosophy reached its pinnacle and was equated with reason.** You can only understand Kant and particularly Kant's practical philosophy properly once you realize that for him freedom and reason are actually the same thing." (pg. 71)
 - "You can only understand Kant and particularly Kant's practical philosophy properly once you realize that for him freedom and reason are actually the same thing. And similarly, the entire construction of the categorical imperative, about which we shall perhaps be able to say something today in this context, can only be understood if the very strange coupling of freedom and law that is contained in the categorical imperative is arrived at in such a way that **the principle of freedom should itself be nothing but reason, pure reason, and that it should not be subject to constraints by anything external**, alien to it that is itself not rational. And the kernel of the Kantian idea here is that everything that I do not recognize as a purely rational being, and every rule that is not derived from my own reason actually restricts the principle of freedom. It does this because it binds me to something that is not myself, something that is alien to me and upon which I make myself dependent." (pg. 71)
 - "Kant's so-called rigorism, the massive and almost inhuman harshness and severity with which Kant excludes from his moral philosophy everything to do with happiness and everything that came to be regarded by his successors as an integral element of practice, all of that is excluded essentially for the sake of freedom" (pg. 71)
 - "You have this very curious and paradoxical construction in Kant that in a certain sense the **two conflicting impulses of moral philosophy, namely the idea of freedom and the idea of suppression** – no better word occurs to me – the suppression, above all, of every natural impulse, the suppression of affection and the suppression of sympathy – both are really suppressed for the sake of freedom. The entire realm of impulses and interests, all of that is suppressed by Kant with a theoretically very cruel harshness, and really only so that I should not make myself dependent on anything that is incompatible with the principle of my own freedom, my own reason." (pg. 71-72)
 - "...this system is predicated on the idea that we live in a world in which **the fulfilment of my natural impulses or whatever we may call them** – my need for happiness, affection and everything else – **is incompatible with reason as a universal principle.** And all this happens without his ever really asking himself whether the absolute making real of reason does not entail the fulfilment of all the desires that have been suppressed" (pg. 72)
 - **"...if as acting human beings we make ourselves dependent on some material factor or other, if my action does not depend solely on my idea, and more particularly on my idea of the universal law, then it really ceases to be practical; it is no longer free"** (pg. 72)
 - "Thanks to this line of argument **the sphere of morality in Kant is in general construed as the sphere of freedom**, because it would otherwise come within the sphere of mere nature in which, as you have now heard at some length, causality holds sway to the exclusion of freedom and which for that reason belongs entirely to theoretical reason and not to pure practical reason." (pg. 72)
 - ◆ **"By 'the practical' I mean everything that is possible through freedom.**" If you now think through what I have said then this statement will be comprehensible to you as a cornerstone of Kantian philosophy in general" (pg. 72)
 - "The entire problem that Kant's moral philosophy now finds itself confronted by is how to derive from his practical philosophy those three cardinal propositions or principles about which I spoke to you at the outset" (pg. 73)
 - "In order to understand that in Kant ethics is constructed as an aporetic construct, that is to say, as a system that arises from the difficulties inherent in its initial situation, you need to understand how Kant extricates himself from this dilemma. He does so by establishing the principle of ethics – and we may say, in anticipation of what comes later, that this principle of ethics is none other than the moral law, that is, the categorical imperative – as a principle that is neither deduced from reason, since that would place him in the camp of the rationalists, nor from experience. Instead he says, **'The moral law is a fact, the moral law is a given.'** And this is the point on which the entire argument hinges" (pg. 74)
 - "...this is probably the most important of all; it is the decisive crux in the entire structure of moral philosophy in Kant" (pg. 74)
 - "To this day we do not have a really adequate account of Kant's concept of the given." (pg. 76)
 - "And I should like to conclude by saying that this concept of the given does not of course refer to immediately given sense-data, but refers to quite a different order of things without its being in any sense a mere sham." (pg. 77)
 - Lecture 8 (pg. 78)
 - "...in moral philosophy what Kant regards as 'given' is in truth nothing but reason itself and to that extent the adversary of experience, even though it is only through experience that I can know of the existence or givenness of this reason. This is the famous problem – one that constantly recurs in Kant's philosophy – of the division into the consciousness, which is observed, reason which is to be observed and the reason which does the observing. This is a problem that only became fully thematic with post-Kantian philosophy. **To act morally, according to Kant, means as much as to act in accordance with pure reason.** What is meant by this sphere of the given nature of the moral law and ultimately of reason itself can perhaps best be expressed in terms of the structure of the system as a kind of neutral zone between *a priori* knowledge and experience. What is meant, on the one hand, is the given nature of reason; reason is given in the sense that it cannot be pursued any further, it is irreducible to anything else. On the other hand, however, what is also meant is the attempt to justify this givenness by saying that just as with other experience I am supposed to be able to appropriate reason and its laws directly. So if you will permit the image, we are talking about a kind of no-man's-land between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge. It contains the entire thematic contents of post-Kantian idealism, which strove to synthesize *a priori* and *a posteriori* in one, and laboured with equal consistency to synthesize the two realms of theoretical and practical reason, which Kant had likewise separated, and to unite them by virtue of their common root in what then became known as spirit [Geist]. **Underlying this in Kant there is an unfathomable problem, namely the problem of how to justify a priori knowledge itself, the problem of how I know about a priori knowledge.** This problem is intractable because I can only obtain a priori knowledge through experience, by apprehending some form or other, even though the rightful source of this a priori knowledge, namely experience, is incompatible with a priori knowledge" (pg. 78-79)
 - **"We may summarize the problem in this way:** on the one hand, the concept of knowledge a priori precludes experience because a priori knowledge is a kind of knowledge that is absolutely independent of all experience, but on the other hand, I can only obtain a purchase on this a priori knowledge through experience, through perception of one kind or another. And here we have a contradiction that cannot be resolved by

- the procedures of ordinary, traditional logic. The consequence of this is that philosophy can have no other recourse than to make this contradiction a theme in itself. For **if I may attempt to define dialectical thought from this standpoint, we might say that it is the refusal to accept the denial or elimination of contradictions** – if these contradictions make their appearance as forcefully as this – **but instead it makes contradiction into an object or theme of philosophical reflection itself**" (pg. 79)
- "To act morally, according to Kant, means in effect to act in accordance with pure reason; and the supreme determining feature of pure reason in Kant is the a priori, the synthetic judgement a priori. A synthetic judgement a priori, and thus the shape in which we apprehend the a priori, **is defined for Kant by two qualities** – you must forgive me here if I take you back to a fundamental definition from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but you will soon see that it stands in a very compelling relation to practical reason. **These two characteristics are necessity and universality.** If we transfer these two principles of necessity and universality to practical reason we then arrive automatically at that feature of Kant's practical philosophy that he introduced under the name of the categorical imperative. From this point of view the categorical imperative is simply the maxim governing action, the supreme principle of every practical action that combines the two elements of necessity and universality with each other. It must be universal, and the a priori judgement is universal because it may not be restricted by anything individual or particular" (pg. 79-80)
 - "for the concept of necessity, this is implicit in the concept of law. That is to say, reason generally makes its appearance with the claim of deductive necessity, with the claim that everything it implies follows in accordance with the propositions of logic. And this element of necessity already possesses an affinity – I phrase this cautiously – with the causality that is supposed to hold sway in the realm of empirical phenomena. If Kant transfers the principle of necessity to reason itself in the shape of the idea of making inferences in accordance with rules, this means that in a sense the principle of causality is now to be found in the intelligible sphere, that is within a realm independent of experience, whereas it had previously been confined, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, to the realm of appearances." (pg. 80)
 - "...**the whole of Kant's moral philosophy is tied to the concept of autonomy which is regarded as the realm where freedom and necessity meet.** What this means is that **the moral laws are indeed the laws of freedom – because as a rational being I give them to myself without making myself dependent on any external factor.** At the same time, however, they have the character of laws because rational action and rational deduction cannot be understood except as acting and thinking in conformity with laws and rules. So this is perhaps the first point to be made about the given nature of the moral law, what we might call a second-order givenness. It should be regarded as the existence of reason – the presence and registering of reason as such and not of any experiential content it may possess – and this implies also its two aspects, necessity and universality, whereby the concept of necessity instantly implies the opposite of necessity, namely freedom, since this reason is defined by Kant as the organ of freedom." (pg. 80)
 - "...Kant asserts that this freedom and this moral law are both givens" (pg. 80)
 - "...in the practical philosophy, givenness is based on obligation, that is the coercion that proceeds from moral principles" (pg. 81)
 - "What [Kant] has in mind...is the element of compulsion that is exerted by moral principles. In its simplest terms what this means is that as empirical beings we experience the obligation to perform certain actions, or to leave them undone" (pg. 81)
 - "What needs to be said here is that, empirically, Kant is in the right when he appeals to obligation, something he does repeatedly in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and that this obligation is supposed to represent the most powerful reason for us to recognize the moral law and to acknowledge that some such thing as conscience really does exist. The only problem that arises here is that the actual existence of conscience – and here Kant falls into a trap of his own making – and the actual existence of compulsive behaviour of the kind that is commonly covered by the concept of conscience tells us nothing about the legitimacy of this authority" (pg. 81)
 - ◆ "When I say that Kant has fallen into a trap of his own making, what I mean is simply this: if he desires to exclude every empirical element from his foundation of moral philosophy – and that is his aim – he cannot then appeal to the empirical existence of the so-called moral compulsion in man himself because this compulsion is itself an empirical fact." (pg. 81-82)
 - "Psychoanalysis in its strict form has shown that these compulsive mechanisms that we are subject to are phylogenetic, that is to say, they are internalizations of actual power, internalizations of dominant social norms. These norms are transmitted to us through the family and we generally appropriate them by identifying with father figures. By the strict form of psychoanalysis I mean its Freudian version and not the adulterated versions, the attempts at depth on the part of people like Jung and Adler which result only in greater superficiality. Moreover, psychoanalysis has shown something that would not have been to Kant's taste at all. This is the idea that the authority known to psychoanalysis as compulsive character, or in Freud's later writing as super-ego, is irrational in so far as it is pathogenic. That means that this compulsion tends to be transmitted to things that are irreconcilable with reason" (pg. 82)
 - "You will now know what is meant by the statement, 'By "the practical" I mean everything that is possible through freedom.' This is because **freedom means nothing more than a form of behaviour that is guided simply and solely by reason**, and because action in the strong sense is characterized solely by that; whereas action, in the fully subjective sense of acts determined exclusively by subjectivity, ceases to exist the moment an act becomes dependent on anything other than subjectivity" (pg. 83)
 - "here we touch on the cardinal point of disagreement between Kant and Hegel, the conditions of the exercise of our free will are empirical. Thus if my free will leads me to set a house on fire, the exercise of this act of will is tied to the existence of the house, the courage I need to carry out the crime, the availability of fuel, and similar empirical factors. But to interpret Kant in this way would be to misunderstand him since **the nub of his conception of the sphere of morality is precisely that the moral is something that is absolutely independent of empirical conditions**" (pg. 83-84)
 - "this will enable you to understand why in a significant sense **Kant's ethics is an ethics of conviction, in contrast to what has been called an ethics of responsibility in which empirical conditions have to be taken into account.** This is because **the effect of my actions is treated as a determining factor in the moral act of freedom.** In this way, then, Kant makes a distinction between the pragmatic laws of free behaviour, that is, everything that could be described as a means–ends relation, and the moral law proper. And the entire pragmatic sphere, that is, the entire sphere in which moral behaviour, however nobly motivated, makes itself dependent on empirical conditions and empirical ends, is one he rejects. He has only one concern and this is that the moral law as such should be obeyed, and the effects of any resultant actions are excluded from consideration. This is the ultimate explanation for the fact that Kant's ethics has been described, not without a certain justice, as rigorist." (pg. 84)
 - "...you have here the explanation of everything that, as early as the *Critique of Pure Reason*, can be described as the primacy of practical reason. For if our reason is in general only directed at the moral and everything else is no more than what might be called a stimulus for reason, then according to this theory practical reason must have priority over theoretical." (pg. 85)
 - "by reinterpreting freedom as the freedom of the unconfined and absolute employment of reason and at the same time, as the law that I have to obey and in accordance with which I must act, this philosophy at once acquires an authoritarian aspect" (pg. 86)
 - ◆ "**if the concept of reason is the supreme authority, and nothing is moral but reason, then it follows that all action that does not result from the employment of reason is immoral** – I am speaking now in the spirit of Kant himself, of immanent critique. The moment he fails to acknowledge this, he himself, by attempting to preserve the authority of the moral law, introduces into his own philosophy an element that contradicts his own concept of autonomy. But if that is the case, then the moral law is in fact not sufficient on its own to induce human beings to behave morally." (pg. 86)
 - "...the so-called empirical proof of our freedom is provided by the fact that reason is given us as the faculty by means of which we can test

- reality. It is extremely interesting and once again provides proof of Kant's immense honesty that in this passage, when it comes to the crunch, he does not postulate reason as a logical faculty floating in a vacuum. Instead, his thoughts here are very much empirical thoughts concerning the actual employment of reason as a faculty that enables us to test reality and, if necessary, to defer certain gratifications if they conflict with our overall interests. You see, then, that here, where he really has to argue in order to demonstrate the existence of reason, he ignores the absolute antithesis between the pragmatic laws of reason and the actual moral laws. He ignores it because he is perceptive enough and truthful enough to realize that reason as the pure organ of truth and reason as the organ of our self-preservation are not two absolutely separate things that have nothing to do with each other. **He can see that the reason that makes itself autonomous and focuses entirely on truth is a dialectical product...**" (pg. 87)
- "...Kant is to be found in the mainstream of modern rationalist thought because he infers even the existence of God from reason, which is identical with the moral law, and does not postulate God as an absolute" (pg. 85)
 - Lecture 9 (pg. 89)
 - "I should like to start by reminding you of the assertion that 'Reason provides laws which are imperatives, that is, objective laws of freedom'. This statement contains a contradiction in a compressed form, for according to Kant freedom is precisely something that is not subject to laws, and this will perhaps help you to grasp the starting-point of dialectics for which I wish also to prepare you." (pg. 89)
 - **"...what dialectics does is to take such a contradiction as we find compressed in a single statement here and to follow out its implications and resolve it.** Thus one of the merits of Kant's philosophy, and this is the reason why I place such great stress on such contradictory, such glaringly contradictory statements on Kant's part, is that it enables us to achieve clarity about the dialectic; you can see that **it represents the attempt to unfold such glaring and therefore static contradictions** instead of simply allowing them to manifest themselves in what might be thought of as a kind of syncopation" (pg. 89)
 - **"Kant attempts** here – and this is of crucial importance for the aporetic nature of his moral philosophy as a whole – **to master this contradiction between freedom and law** – and I would ask you to pay close attention to this, since it really is the pivotal point of his entire moral philosophy – **by bringing these two elements of law and freedom together in this one sentence and resolving them so that the element of law does not apply to what exists, but only to what ought to exist.** As such, however, it should do so with absolute stringency, absolute rigour. Nevertheless, it is left open to the individual human subjects at whom these imperatives are directed to decide whether to comply with them or not – and this distinguishes them sharply from the laws of nature – so that it does not need to be established whether in the empirical world anything is ever done in conformity with these laws or not. This stands in contrast to the laws of nature, which were simply the laws governing actual events in nature." (pg. 89-90)
 - **"...I do not share the attitudes of the philologists** – attitudes which I am sure that very many of you will hold to be absolutely valid and which you will have been taught to respect so utterly that it will give you quite a wrench to have to jettison them. In particular I do not share their view that products of the mind can in essence be elucidated by an appeal to the will and intention of their creator. I believe that a whole series of possible sources of error is involved in such an appeal, one of which, perhaps the crudest of all, stems from the fact that the author's will and intention cannot be identified with absolute certainty, any more than it is possible to infer the so-called intention of the legislator in interpretations of the law, an idea that, if I am correctly informed, still haunts legal experts" (pg. 92)
 - **"The essence of a mental product is that in it the will of the individual thinker is submerged in the subject-matter, in the coercion exerted by the subject-matter, to the point where that will disappears entirely. Intellectual products are not the expression of intention and of the person who creates them, but represent the extinction of that intention in the truth of the objective matter in hand.** And this is why I believe that this objective matter has a force and a weight even in the texts themselves that is greater, particularly in significant texts, than the force of whatever the author's own purposes may have been. In consequence I would say that the task of a philosophical interpretation of a text is to do justice to this product of conflicting forces as it happens to be formulated, rather than to anything the author may have thought on the subject, since these thoughts represent no more than a particular, and in a sense ephemeral viewpoint" (pg. 92-93)
 - **"...you must recollect that in Kant reason is itself the organ of the good and in his moral philosophy there is no organ of the good other than reason. It follows that reason cannot be divorced from self-preservation, from the satisfaction of human needs. For reason is supposed to provide us with the law that according to Kant is unconditional and absolute** – and Kant is the last person to have deceived himself about this, given that the entire history of philosophy in modern times has asserted it..." (pg. 94)
 - "...Kant, unlike his successors, possessed what we might call in shorthand the consciousness of non-identity – a feature of great importance for his moral philosophy. The Kantian system of transcendental philosophy – and I am speaking here of Kant's philosophy as a whole – does not presume to deduce everything from some supreme principle, as Fichte did in a quite strict sense. For since knowledge in Kant's view is composed from a deducible and a non-deducible element, the interaction of these elements and the embodiment of knowledge and the embodiment of action cannot themselves be deduced in any pure manner. So Kant's curious attitude of resignation when faced by things that positively exist, the given world, does not just contain this element of heteronomy. Viewed from the other side it contains the idea of setting limits to the absolute claims of reason, in so far as reason makes the claim that everything that exists and every action is nothing but its own product. Paradoxically, then, even though Kant criticized heteronomy so fiercely, everything that is non-ego, and is thereby heteronomous, is more revered in a certain sense and is allowed to assert itself more powerfully than in the idealist philosophies. The latter do indeed concede a greater recognition of the non-ego than does Kant, but since they absorb it into the ego, in effect they dissolve it there and hence strive to vindicate and legitimate it as rational" (pg. 96)
 - **"I believe that we can only think meaningfully about the entire sphere of moral philosophy if we are conscious of its twin aspects: first, that the entire sphere must be permeated by reason and second, that notwithstanding this, reason is not the sum total of morality"** (pg. 97)
 - "I believe that it is appropriate particularly for a secular and enlightened philosophy not simply to undermine such [religious] ideas by subjecting their authority to critical scrutiny, but also – in the course of reflection on the nature of thought – to salvage them as ingredients of moral action and to incorporate them into one's actual conduct" (pg. 97-98)
 - "...such things as moral philosophy or virtue are only possible in a circumscribed universe, in contrast to the immeasurably expanding universe of today which is incommensurable with our experience. This is because it is only where our universe is limited that something like Kant's celebrated freedom can survive. **In the immeasurably expanded world of experience and the infinitely numerous ramifications of the processes of socialization that this world of experience imposes on us, the possibility of freedom has sunk to such a minimal level that we can or must ask ourselves very seriously whether any scope is left for our moral categories.** Particularly since, even if someone were to live his life as an individual in the spirit of the categorical imperative, it is extremely uncertain how far even such a moral life would be able to assert itself given the objective snares and entanglements of modern life." (pg. 98-99)
 - Lecture 10 (pg. 100)
 - "Let us assume first that the determinism of nature is total, that is, everything in nature is determined by cause and effect, in conformity with laws. In that event Kant's assertion that the moral law is a given, an ordinance, something that irresistibly imposes itself on us, would itself – if I may be allowed this extreme formulation – be profoundly immoral. It would be immoral because it would make demands on people which, because they are empirical beings, they could not possibly satisfy" (pg. 100-101)
 - "[Kant] rightly claims that what characterizes the natural sciences is their search for unity, that is, their striving to reduce the largest possible diversity

- of facts to a minimum of functional equations." (pg. 102)
- "We can imagine things that do not yet exist, and even though all the elements of our ideas come from the given world, existing reality, they are not reducible to their origins in nature because our mind organizes them or, to put it another way, disposes of them freely. And I believe that if you want to go back to the origins of what Kant actually meant by freedom, if you want to obtain a precise picture of the model that underlies his concept of freedom, a concept which in general we use in a fairly casual, imprecise manner, then it will turn out to be simply this remarkable faculty that enables us to organize in our imagination the various components of the natural world or of existing reality, and to rearrange them in different ways from those in which we found them initially and in which they exist in reality. This fact, this readily observable fact, that in its origins and its content mind points back to nature, but at the same time is not reducible to it, is, I believe, what Kant probably means by this entire doctrine of freedom in the midst of nature" (pg. 103)
 - "this is something that cannot be expressed adequately in a logic devoid of contradictions of the kind Kant advocates, an either-or logic, since in such a logic this situation can only be contradictory. It can only be expressed adequately in a dialectical logic in which the product of thought does not resemble the premises from which it sprang. I would say, incidentally, that this is the crucial distinction between a dialectical mode of thinking and that of the prima philosophia or ontology. And one implication of the dialectical method is that the primacy of origins, the primacy of the first thing, if I may express myself a little paradoxically, is not deferred to in the sense that I have just illustrated with my simple little model" (pg. 103)
 - "The truth is that we are no longer simply a piece of nature from the moment we recognize that we are a piece of nature. I think that it is not possible to express this more emphatically, for **delusion is really nothing other than that stolid, blinkered pig-headedness that lacks the capacity for self-reflection and that succumbs to the delusion that all is natural conditioning precisely because it does nothing but set out in pursuit of immediate ends, immediate activities. It is not for nothing that delusion is also a category of myth**, the category by means of which human beings are represented, as they are in myths, as beings unable to transcend nature. Moreover, any being that stands outside nature and might be described as a human subject can be said to possess consciousness of self, the capacity for self-reflection in which the self observes: I myself am a part of nature. By virtue of that fact the human subject is liberated from the blind pursuit of natural ends and becomes capable of alternative actions. These are ideas that underlie Kantian ethics, in an unexpressed and objective manner." (pg. 103-104)
 - "I said that what transcends nature is nature that has become conscious of itself. Kant himself says this in a way, but at the same time the idea is alien to him because for him the domination of nature by means of the category of reason (which is the master category as far as the domination of nature is concerned) is itself something absolute and self-evident. And in general all the categories he uses in ethics are really nothing but the categories by which the domination of nature is achieved. It can be said, albeit with some licence and by departing a little from the literal meaning of the text, but without, I believe, distorting his intentions, that **the categorical imperative itself is nothing but the principle for achieving the domination of nature, raised to a norm, elevated into an absolute.** This means that if I am so to act that I am dependent on neither any external nor any internal agency, but solely on the universal laws of reason, this is tantamount to the total domination of nature, just as reason itself is in fact the most abstract statement of the principle of the domination of nature." (pg. 104)
 - "...the concept of mediation does not exist for him. **Mediation here is not to be understood as a middle term, but in the sense that through the mediation of two diametrically opposed moments the one becomes conscious that it necessarily implies the other.** In this sense we may argue that through this blind domination of nature in Kant what is constantly reproduced is that portion of nature that is not illuminated. In other words, we may say that Kantian morality is at root nothing other than domination" (pg. 105)
 - "...Kant's moral philosophy is moral philosophy *par excellence*, moral philosophy as such. Because it rules out empirical reality from consideration, this *chorisis*, this extreme segregation of the realms of nature and morality, is what makes possible something like a fully articulated and logically consistent philosophy of morality." (pg. 106)
 - "Now that I have, as I believe, given you a fairly thorough account of the questions of principle, I can concentrate more on specific aspects of his moral philosophy" (pg. 106)
 - "You must instead be clear in your minds that **empiricism is identical in its basic stance with scepticism.** When you come to study the history of philosophy, when you prepare for an examination on Hume, for example, you will at some point realize that Hume's philosophy is essentially sceptical" (pg. 107)
 - "...the more you admit empirical conditions, the more you rule out the possibility of any objective definition of the good life and of moral action" (pg. 107)
 - "the Kantian formalism that Kant was always being accused of is partly to be explained by the fact that he wished to preserve the possibility of a universally applicable formulation of the ethical despite this aggressive empiricism and despite the scepticism associated with it. **His aim was to achieve such a high degree of universality that it would disqualify sceptical arguments** to the effect that the values under discussion had to be regarded as the product of mere empirical conditioning." (pg. 107)
 - "Kantian ethics are rigorous in the sense that, even though their universality and necessity are not indeed a matter of natural fact, the ethical commandments will not allow the smallest concession. In particular, every action performed out of inclination is regarded as heteronomous and, if not simply condemned out of hand, it is at least treated as something outside the realm of ethical decision. And this is the feature of Kantian ethics that gave rise to the earliest objections." (pg. 107)
 - "...we find in his writings something that Kant only hinted at, namely the idea of a union of the otherwise opposed principles of nature and freedom" (pg. 107-108)
 - Lecture 11 (pg. 110)
 - "**I have tried in a number of ways to make clear to you that the principle of moral action in Kant is really nothing but reason itself, reason, moreover, that has freed itself from all the restrictions of particular ends and that in general proceeds only in accordance with the most universal matters of substance.**" (pg. 110)
 - "...in many respects Fichte really does carry Kant's ideas to their logical conclusions" (pg. 111)
 - "on the one hand, the Kantian principle of morality is reason, a form of action that accords with reason absolutely and without any reservations. It thus ignores the particular nature of the particular ends of the individual and confines itself to the universal structure of rational rules. On the other hand, however, because reason is conceived as the universal, that is, as the faculty that is identical in all human beings, it can also be argued that reason and its conformity to law, which, as we have seen, Kant claims to be something immediately given, can be said to be something immediate. Thus what is needed for right action is not any reflection about reason, but immediate action in accordance with reason and the logical consistency of reason" (pg. 111)
 - "...there is some truth in this Kantian conception of the rational nature of right action – notwithstanding its blind spot, the defect that simply cannot be eradicated. **The element of truth is, as I attempted to explain to you last time, that only insight, non-blindness, in other words, only self-reflection is capable of raising human subjects out of their purely natural context**" (pg. 113)
 - "There was one further point I wanted to make. This element of non-identity between the consciousness of right action and right action itself is also made explicit in Kantian philosophy..." (pg. 113)
 - "What we discover is that **the Kantian distinction between the kingdom of freedom and the kingdom of necessity contains an extremely important**

- insight.** More specifically, we discover that we can pinpoint the element of non-identity by saying that in practical philosophy, that is, in Kant's writings on moral philosophy, the moral law is indeed conceived as a strict law, but as a law that merely prescribes what should be the case, and says nothing at all about what is in fact the case. Accordingly, we find that even in the theory the gap persists between moral law and moral practice that I have just been attempting to represent to you as a necessary component of the theory. It is to be found in those assertions in Kant's practical philosophy that describe the categorical imperative and the moral laws in general as obligation [Nötigung]. That is to say, these laws do indeed possess the character of a third thing, the form of necessity, since, according to Kant, they confront us in such a way that, as rational actors, we cannot but comply with them. To that extent their character as laws is strictly preserved. But, as Kant repeatedly reminds us, they are not natural laws, not laws about existing phenomena, but propositions about what ought to exist" (pg. 113-114)
- **"when we talk of the prescriptive character of reason, its nature as an imperative, what you need to understand is that there has been a crucial change from the concept of reason in antiquity that I reminded you of in connection with Plato.** Reason has now ceased to be merely the ability to form the correct concepts and to articulate concepts in accordance with the nature of the matter to be analysed in the manner you find illustrated in the Platonic dialectic itself. Instead, reason in Kant is what we might call a productive faculty, a kind of activity. And the entire argument about the autonomy of its laws is based on this idea of reason as an activity in the sense that my reason does not simply lead me to acquiesce passively in these laws, but rather, these laws are laws that I am to produce from within myself" (pg. 114)
 - "By will we mean simply a factor that, metaphysically, is identical with reason, in the sense that reason is itself a force, an activity, a productive power, as indeed had already been argued in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the theory of original apperception as an original process of creation. To that extent we can say that at its very heart Kantian philosophy did in fact anticipate Fichte's subsequent doctrine in which the practical and the theoretical are directly equated. **It follows that reason in Kant means something quite different now from its meaning for the Greeks. It means,** and this is the legacy of Rousseau in Kant's practical philosophy, **the possibility of a moral organization of the world** of a kind that never appeared in antiquity, so far as I have been able to establish, apart perhaps from certain speculations on the part of leftist strands in Socratic thinking. The reason why the Greeks failed to develop along these lines was that from the outset their concept of reason was far too preoccupied with arranging pre-given material. Furthermore, the idea that reality in its entirety might be produced purely by reason was quite alien to them, since they still conceived of the shaping of reality far too much in terms of a secularized natural religion, rather than as something predetermined by the nature of given structures" (pg. 114-115)
 - **"The entire Kantian ethics is,** as Lukács observed at a time when he was still allowed to think independently about such matters, **a private ethics.** This means that it is an ethics in which the problem of possible conflicts between the values imposed on individuals and the objective norms that either hold sway in a given society, or arise from the desire to change society, simply does not arise. When it comes down to it, the world to which this extraordinarily sublimated ethics has been tailored is not so very different from the agrarian society...Such a society is one in which every individual finds himself in a traditional, solidly built and un-problematical world, and so he really does know at any given moment what he is supposed to do." (pg. 116)
 - "It is without doubt one of the concrete sides of the rationality of Kantian ethics – by which I mean the requirement implicit in Kant's ethics to behave in a strictly rational way – that we should act strictly in accordance with the model of bourgeois rationality, that is, with the rules of exchange. According to this model you should give each man what he deserves and you should press for what is due to you without cheating him or allowing yourself to be cheated" (pg. 117)
 - "...Kant's argument is inconsistent because he teaches that in order to be good, you have no need of philosophy." (pg. 117)
 - "...[however,] Kant's belief that we have no need of philosophy because the moral is an immediate given also contains an element of truth" (pg. 118)
 - **"The fundamental problem of Kantian ethics is autonomy,** and its opposite is heteronomy" (pg. 118)
 - "Autonomy is the law that I give myself. However, by 'law' I do not mean the experience we all have when we emancipate ourselves from universally valid ideas of law taken from traditional ethics, but at the same time desire to act morally by promulgating our own code to guide our actions..." (pg. 118)
 - **"This is not what is meant by autonomy, for in Kant the idea of autonomy contains from the outset the idea of universality."** (pg. 118)
 - ◆ "However, this concept of universality is heavily loaded in the sense that the law I give myself is not concerned simply with my own personal needs or inclinations or the chance nature of my individuality. Instead the law must be universal and this means for Kant that the law I give myself must be of such a kind that I can imagine it as the foundation of a universal legislation, that is, a legislation that does not violate the freedom and the autonomy of other individuals. The opposing concept, and this is the epitome of what Kant rejects as the juridical source of ethics, is heteronomy. Heteronomy is the law that is imposed on me by others, that I receive without its being a law given by my own reason. Freedom – to underscore its place in Kant's philosophy as emphatically as possible – means to give laws to oneself. If I do not give myself laws, if I do not act in accordance with the laws of my own reason, I make myself dependent on heteronomy, on laws that hold good outside myself, and I thereby become unfree. This concept of heteronomy in Kant does not refer merely to unfreedom in a political sense, in other words, to the need to adjust blindly to norms imposed on me by others. It refers also to restrictions on my reason of whatever kind. Thus it includes my own instincts and my own needs, as well as any constraints on my civic freedom by external factors of every kind whatever their source. It is precisely at this point, Ladies and Gentlemen, that Kant finds himself in full accord with the Classical tradition" (pg. 118-119)
 - ◇ "As early as Aristotle's ethics we find that the concept of $\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\theta\epsilon\rho\acute{\alpha}$, of freedom, is understood in the twofold form of freedom from tutelage. What Aristotle, as an early Greek philosopher, means by this is of course tutelage at the hands of the $\tau\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\nu\acute{\gamma}\iota\varsigma$, the tyranny of his own pupil, Alexander the Great, as well as of our dependence on our own emotions. The task of freeing ourselves from these formed part of the teaching of the Cynics in the earlier phase of Greek philosophy, and of the first generation of Stoics in the Classical period. Hence we can say that this twofold meaning of the concept of freedom, of outer freedom and inner freedom, can be said to be a prominent, even dominant theme of the history of philosophy as a whole, and one about which philosophers have agreed, even though in other respects their philosophies are violently opposed to one another" (pg. 119)
 - ◆ "...because this extreme view of the concept of freedom is based on its absolute independence from all existing beings, from nature as such, it threatens to become transformed into unfreedom. Human beings have denial imposed upon them and above all they are not able to recover those things they have been forced by this imperative to renounce." (pg. 120)
 - Transcript of Lecture 12 (pg. 121)
 - **"The postulated absolute state of lawlessness and freedom is identical with unfreedom.** The same thing applies to inner freedom. **If people pander to their own needs without reference to reality and with no control over their own egos, they become dependent on themselves and therefore unfree.** The addict is the extreme case; he cannot stop himself from satisfying his own needs even when they are incompatible with self-preservation. The idea that an absolute freedom that is not also an intrinsically determined freedom amounts to the negation of freedom is not the invention of puritanical schoolmasters. It has an element of truth. Kant's interlocking of freedom and law is to be taken seriously; it is no mere ideology. On the other hand, the idea of law always contains a potential threat to freedom. The law as an all-embracing regulation that tolerates no exceptions contains

- a totalitarian element and acts as a constraint on people even when that constraint lacks the justification of reason. Where freedom is restricted it stands on a knife's edge, ready to vanish entirely. The sphere of law, even when it formally subserves the idea of protecting freedom and guaranteeing it, contains the tendency to abolish freedom. The relationship between freedom and the law is not a well-balanced, rational compromise, but possesses dynamic elements on both sides. What the law encompasses is the instinctual energies of human beings; these energies doubtless need to be contained, but should not be sublimated out of existence. On the other hand, a psychological authority that is nurtured by sources of energy that have been separated off – the super-ego, for example – tends to turn into an absolute and to abolish freedom. There, too, there is no balance. Since the law tends to assert itself more effectively than freedom, we have to stay on our guard and be constantly vigilant in the face of a fetishization of law, for example, of juridical norms that claim that decisions once taken are irrevocable. We cannot remain satisfied with any so-called order since no sooner is an order established than it is all up with freedom. We cannot rely on a stable balance between the two" (pg. 122)
- "Kant discovered a highly original framework with which to stabilize the *a priori* balance in the relationship between freedom and law. **The freedom of each individual should only be restricted to a certain extent, and should be restricted by law only to the extent to which it restricts the freedom of another individual**" (pg. 122)
 - "...the freedom of each individual should only be restricted at the point where it restricts the freedom of another individual." (pg. 141)
 - **"Social function and the principle of moral philosophy are linked. The individual who exists absolutely for himself is nevertheless a function. In order to be able to exist human beings have been brought together through the process of socialization. Freedom is not given to an individual in isolation, but with regard to the social totality in which human beings live. The concrete specificity of the moral law can only be made a reality within a concept of social function..."** (pg. 122-123)
 - "The fact that Kant can take natural consciousness as his startingpoint, that he can begin with the moral intuitions that we all have, is less offensive than might be thought at first sight. This is because he can take the moral law as a given, one that is even present in our ordinary consciousness; our task is to lay it bare. However that may be and whether or not the moral law is a given – this approach contains an element of truth. We cannot simply invent an ethics, we cannot simply decide to adopt a code that goes against the morals of one's own age. To do that would mean giving oneself a dispensation from many otherwise prevailing norms, but it also tends to assume the existence of norms in others from which you hold yourself to be exempt. These norms contain an element of universal validity and this explains why **it is always vain and futile to pretend to ignore the universal.** On the other hand, **a so-called responsible human being cannot simply declare himself satisfied with the norms that prevail in a particular society. Our task rather – and this is what is so valuable about grounding ethics in natural consciousness – is to confront prevailing norms with our own consciousness and to measure each against the other.** This cannot be done by imagining that we can simply invent new norms. For the most part, to set aside existing values without taking into account the reality that underlies them leads to a regression to an even more primitive state of affairs. **Ignorance is not the medium of freedom.** You can only liberate yourself from prevailing values if you can reflect them within yourself. Kant's method is to advance towards the categorical imperative by means of an increasingly abstract process of thought. His premise is that in general we act in accordance with principles. Kant can scarcely conceive of a life not based on principles." (pg. 123-124)
 - **"Reality today is so overpowering that it calls for agility, flexibility and conformity – qualities that rule out action in accordance with principles.** Kant's principles are predicated on a strong, stable self, something that no longer exists in that form. Anyone who were to act in accordance with principles today would seem to us to be indescribably pedantic." (pg. 124)
 - "The concept of will [in Kant] is extraordinarily formal in nature. My faculty of desire, from which my actions flow, is supposed to be directed by my reason towards particular ends; the will is restricted to a faculty of desire orientated towards ends and is guided by ends. This definition is important because this concept of will deviates so hugely from normal linguistic usage and is by and large inappropriate to the actual phenomenon of the will" (pg. 125)
 - Lecture 13 (pg. 126)
 - "...in its essential motifs, **Kantian philosophy objectively presses on towards dialectics, but it is presented in accordance with the rules of traditional logic.** Instead of a dialectical treatment of concepts, that is, instead of introducing contradiction directly into the concept, Kant adjusts to this situation by a continuous process of revision and self-correction" (pg. 127)
 - "...if the will is in fact the mediating category between desire and reason, then reason itself has an affinity with the will, that it is related to the will. If we look closely at Kantian philosophy and Kantian epistemology, we shall find this confirmed. We shall discover that the central concept of the theory of knowledge and hence the true definition of reason in Kant is in fact something very like the will. This is the idea of original apperception, that is, of pure productive power. Reason for Kant – and this is one of the most crucial innovations of his philosophy – is not really measured against the objectivities of logic and objective logical laws, but is conceived from the outset as an activity, as productivity, from which logical laws are then supposed to arise..." (pg. 131)
 - "...we might say that what Kant has done is to have taken the work ethic of bourgeois society, that is, the standard governing the process of production of goods that presides over bourgeois society as a whole, and to have adopted it as his own supreme philosophical standard. In other words, the necessity of social labour as the supreme, binding norm has become an abstract principle in his thought, and we would almost have to say that what he really means by radical evil is nothing other than laziness, the failure to satisfy this requirement of bourgeois society." (pg. 131)
 - **"...his philosophy starts off by postulating freedom and extracts an immense pathos from it, but in the process of developing its meaning, this freedom dwindles to the point of extinction and his philosophy ends up by dispensing with freedom entirely** – even though this is done in a purely formal manner, without deferring in any obvious way to authoritarian or hierarchical ideas. Of the two factors that are held in suspension here, that of necessity or law and that of freedom, the element of necessity actually devours that of freedom." (pg. 133)
 - "...there is a tendency in Kant's elaboration of the practical philosophy to end up by reducing the element of freedom as far as possible" (pg. 134)
 - "...Kantian ethics ensures that the coercive character of nature from which this idea of law has been borrowed is given the last word. That is to say, by declaring itself to have absolute dominion over nature, by proclaiming that its fundamental principle is to suppress nature and ensure control over it, Kantian ethics itself remains subservient to nature. This means that the blind, coercive nature of the laws to which non-human nature remains subject is extended to include the Kantian ethic itself. Roughly speaking, **we may legitimately say that the society in which we live, the apparent world of freedom in which we live, is in reality nothing but a continuation of natural history. This is because we are dependent upon blind, organic necessities of the kind that we project onto non-human nature.**" (pg. 134-135)
 - "We might therefore formulate **the principle of Kantian ethics** by saying that it is concerned simply with an objective reason, entirely independent of a rationality extending to subjective, human ends and human goals. This objectivity of reason extends to the final end and includes the reason for the existence of reason in the first place. But this brings me to an extraordinarily complex problem, full of contradictions..." (pg. 135)
 - Lecture 14 (pg. 137)
 - "I may remind you that **we had defined the moral law or rational principle as the pure principle of the domination of nature, and by this we meant the domination of our inner nature as well as nature outside us.** And I established there that Kant stood in a long tradition on this matter, one that can be traced back to Aristotle, on the one hand, and the Stoics, on the other." (pg. 137)

- "...he states that organisms are constructed for the purpose of self-preservation. If we give it this meaning, it becomes evident that the rational behaviour of human beings is rational in so far as it serves the principle that had been regarded as far back as Spinoza as the true fundamental principle of every existent being: *esse conservare*, self-preservation. Thus **reason is defined, in Kant as in Spinoza, as a self-preserving rationality...**" (pg. 137)
 - "The situation seems to be that civilization in general demands that we exercise rational control over ourselves and over external nature in the world in which we live, but that it is not able to discover any appropriate reward, while the demand is sustained so that civilization should be preserved. But if that is the case, because civilization cannot prove that such control has benefits for others or is rational in a prudential sense, there is nothing for it but for this demand to become an absolute and to be inflated into something existing in its own right. In fact an inflation of this sort is precisely what we see in Kant's categorical imperative." (pg. 139)
 - "...the difference between a so-called ethics of conviction and a so-called ethics of responsibility...can be seen as the decisive problem of Kantian moral philosophy and of the debates that followed on from it" (pg. 143)
 - "...[the] **problem of the convergence of the subjective and objective elements in moral philosophy...represents a great danger of the gravest kind...**" (pg. 143)
 - "This theory may be said to acknowledge the divergence between a present good and the good that is required, total goodness; but it imagines it can solve the problem by giving the totality, the ultimate end, priority over the particular and the individual. Plausible though the idea may seem to be at first, we have been able to see it tested out with the most catastrophic consequences in our own age. We now know what it really means to commit crimes in the name of such a primacy of the ultimate end or the social totality. We now know that what it leads to is to strip the concept of the good of every tangible substance, and that it amounts to nothing more than abstract domination on the part of whoever happens to have the greater power. Such rulers barricade themselves behind the idea of the objectively greater good and claim that merely subjective interests and rights are safe in their hands" (pg. 143)
 - "Kantian moral philosophy is incompatible with totalitarian morality, with the totalitarian reversal of morality in which the rather playful principle that the end justifies the means is turned into one that is deadly serious." (pg. 144)
 - "**a moral philosophy and a moral practice that ignore this antagonism between the highly justifiable interests of the whole and those of the individual, between the conflicting interests of the universal and the particular, must inevitably regress to barbarism and heteronomy. Moral philosophy must give expression to this antinomy, just as Kant gave expression to it, magisterially. It is not the task of moral philosophy to strive to reduce conflict to harmony"** (pg. 144)
- Lecture 15 (pg. 146)
 - "to think about mankind in terms of the contents of people's lives would essentially be a question of responsibility, responsibility towards empirical existence, self-preservation and the fulfilment of the species to which we belong for good or ill. **This idea of responsibility is the very thing that Kant rejects fundamentally as a principle of ethics; there is no real place for it in his moral philosophy.** You are aware that **Kant inherited the concept of freedom from Greek ethics, but that he radicalized it to an extraordinary degree.** The fact that without freedom, without the idea of freedom, moral philosophy would make no sense at all will be clear to you, because given the situation of complete, unrelieved determinism every criterion of good and evil would be absolutely meaningless; it would not even be possible to raise the issue. But the concept of freedom was modified by Kant in a very crucial way. I may remind you that even in Aristotle it was not simply defined as freedom from external compulsion, but also as freedom from emotions, that is, from instinctual drives, and ethical behaviour was equated, as by the Stoics, with mastery of the feelings." (pg. 146-147)
 - "**...the concept of freedom is taken to refer exclusively to something that cannot be said to possess an ulterior cause. This means that Kant's moral philosophy can be said to be essentially an ethics of conviction.** In it this definition of freedom is made so formal, or if you like, so much a matter of epistemology, that not only is every dependence on concrete realities eliminated, but also every relation to any matter of substance that might be brought to bear on the ethics itself. For it is self-evident that if a free action is an action that is not to be reducible to any cause of whatever kind, this would rule out any action that is caused, for example, by the failings of a given situation, or even by factors governing any given situation on which I must base my action in order to achieve anything at all. Any such action would be regarded as heteronomous, as an action that reintroduced the element of causality into freedom. Thanks to this Kant's philosophy became an extreme ethics of conviction, and Kant was well aware of the particular nature of his own achievement in moral philosophy when he placed the moral, the locus of morality, squarely in the interior of the human subject." (pg. 147)
 - "That is to say, this interiority is nothing but the abstract reference point of reason itself, but defined negatively as something radically distinct from everything external of whatever kind. Thus **moral philosophy is to be based on a pure reason existing only in itself, and to the extent that it does not externalize itself and remains independent of every factor external to it.**" (pg. 147)
 - "The decisive distinction between Kant's ethics of conviction and Plato's ethics of ideas lies in the fact that the only defining factor of moral action Kant will allow is the universal principle of subjectivity itself, without regard to anything objective, apart from the most universal fact that there must be something objective, some thing or other must exist, if action is to be possible at all. In this respect, then, Kant's ethics is in fact in agreement with the philosophy of Fichte." (pg. 148)
 - "I believe that you must be clear in your minds that Kant was a metaphysicist and that he faced in two directions. On the one hand, against empiricism, and thus also against the senses wherever he encountered them; and on the other hand, against heteronomy in the shape of theology. The moral law may not be conceived as coming from God, and it is nothing but a purely conceptualized subjectivity." (pg. 148)
 - "This really does bring us to **the crucial question of the distinction between, on the one hand, the so-called ethics of conviction and on the other, the ethics of goods,** and more particularly the ethics of responsibility about which we should say something now. **An ethics of conviction is an ethics that seeks refuge in the pure will, that is, it recognizes the interiority of the moral subject as its only authority. In contrast to that, the ethics of goods and the ethics of responsibility take as their starting-point an existing reality,** though under certain conditions this may be a mental reality, as perceived by this subject to which it is then counterpoised" (pg. 149)
 - "the idea that the moral behaviour of the individual might decisively impinge on external reality is entirely absent from Kant. And this element of the genuine impotence of the individual in the face of external reality is undoubtedly one of the crucial internal preconditions for the pure construction of interiority in Kant. **From the very outset the moral subject plays no part in the construction of the world; he has no influence on the world,** aside from some extremely abstract meditations on the shaping of history – in which, however, the relation of the moral subject to concrete historical forces plays no role. **Because of this lack of influence morality is necessarily turned into a matter of conviction, basically, into the form of action of people who are firmly convinced that their action is quite unable to change the course of the world in the here and now.** This impotence can be discerned throughout the entire corpus of moral philosophy in German idealism. Conviction is something that simply exists for itself; it finds fulfilment in itself and remains without influence on the organization of society. In return, there is a sense in which it remains relatively unthreatened by society. Its pathos is to criticize a society in which everything becomes a means and in which nothing remains an end. But on the other hand, this idea should be supplemented by its dialectical opposite. This is **the idea that reason, the faculty that gives a law to itself, thereby becomes an end in itself,** and hence, as I asserted last time, **becomes a fetish because it despairs of being able to realize any goals in the world outside itself.** The immense pathos of the emancipated citizen becomes fused with the feeling of impotence, and these twin themes are deeply embedded in Kant's

ethics. I believe, Ladies and Gentlemen, that I have now given you a preliminary introduction to the problems underlying both an ethics of conviction and an ethics of responsibility. In particular, this feeling of impotence justifies us in criticizing the ethics of conviction because it fails to offer us anything concrete, in other words, it fails to provide us with a casuistic method, one that would enable us to apply a general moral principle to a particular case. And on the other hand – I hardly need to spell this out – it has been shown again and again that moral casuistry has surrendered to relativism by following the principle of justifying the means by the end, and that it can therefore lead to negativity and evil." (pg. 154-155)

- "the pathos of Kantian philosophy lies in the fact that it seeks an end which is in conflict with the tendency for everything to become merely a means." (pg. 151)
- "I have decided to concentrate today on this aspect of the ethics of conviction, that is, on the interconnections between private life, interiority and bourgeois society" (pg. 153)
- Lecture 16 (pg. 157)
 - "I explained to you last time that there is a problem with the categorical imperative. We can describe it in simple terms by saying that the path from the supreme universality of the moral law to the specific case is not as unproblematic as it appears in Kant's moral philosophy" (pg. 157)
 - "...the moral is not self-evident, but instead a pure moral demand can by virtue of its own purity be transformed into evil. It may do this, to put it briefly, by destroying the object, or more accurately, the subject, on whom this moral demand is imposed" (pg. 158)
 - "we might say that the contradiction I have been at pains to point out to you, the contradiction between the conditional nature of moral action and the categories of the moral itself, the objectivity and authority of moral concepts themselves..." (pg. 161)
 - **"What concerns us is the relation between an ethics of conviction and an ethics of responsibility"** (pg. 162)
 - "...the requirement that moral behaviour should be purely rational behaviour in conformity with the categorical imperative amounts to saying that in all our actions we should be ruled by reason, and that means that we should include within reason everything that it can possibly encompass. Because of the internal contradictions inherent in Kantian moral philosophy, of which I have now told you more than enough, Kant utterly fails to draw this conclusion." (pg. 163)
 - "To act in accordance with reason would be abstract self-preservation freed from the self, and it would degenerate into the evil that is the way of the world in which the stronger emerges as the victor. For this reason, then, there is no good life in the bad one, for a formal ethics cannot underwrite it, and the ethics of responsibility that surrenders to otherness cannot underwrite it either. The question that moral philosophy confronts today is how it should react to this dilemma, and I should like to say something about that next time" (pg. 166)
- Lecture 17 (pg. 167)
 - "On the question of whether moral philosophy is possible today, the only thing I would be able to say is that essentially it would consist in the attempt to make conscious the critique of moral philosophy, the critique of its options and an awareness of its antinomies." (pg. 167)
 - "no one can promise that the reflections that can be entertained in the realm of moral philosophy can be used to establish a canonical plan for the good life because life itself is so deformed and distorted that no one is able to live the good life in it or to fulfil his destiny as a human being. Indeed, I would almost go so far as to say that, given the way the world is organized, even the simplest demand for integrity and decency must necessarily lead almost everyone to protest." (pg. 167)
 - **"The only thing that can perhaps be said is that the good life today would consist in resistance to the forms of the bad life that have been seen through and critically dissected by the most progressive minds.** Other than this negative prescription no guidance can really be envisaged." (pg. 167-168)
 - "I have in mind is the determinate negation of everything that has been seen through, and thus the ability to focus upon the power of resistance to all the things imposed on us, to everything the world has made of us, and intends to make of us to a vastly greater degree. Little else remains to us, other than the power to reflect on these matters and to oppose them from the outset, notwithstanding our consciousness of our impotence. This resistance to what the world has made of us does not at all imply merely an opposition to the external world on the grounds that we would be fully entitled to resist it – all such attempts would merely fortify the principle of the 'way of the world' that is anyway at work in us, and would only benefit the bad." (pg. 168)
 - "...what is needed above all is that consciousness of our own fallibility, and in that respect I would say that the element of self-reflection has today become the true heir to what used to be called moral categories" (pg. 169)
 - "...resistance also means resistance to heteronomy in its concrete forms. Today this means the countless forms of morality that are imposed from outside" (pg. 170)
 - "The difficulty underlying all this is of course the difficulty of a private ethics, that is, the behaviour of the individual has long since ceased to link up with objective good and evil" (pg. 172)
 - **"I would say that the place of moral philosophy today lies more in the concrete denunciation of the inhuman, than in vague and abstract attempts to situate man in his existence. In short, all the problems of moral philosophy come under the general rubric of private ethics, that is, they refer in reality to a society that is still individualistic, a society of the sort that has been overtaken by history.** This individualistic society has its limitations and its particular features; they can be read off from the so-called basic problem of moral philosophy, namely that of free will. That is why for a moral philosophy which is necessarily a theory of private ethics, the highest point it can rise to is that of the antinomy of causality and freedom which figures in Kant's philosophy in an unresolved and for that reason exemplary fashion." (pg. 175-176)
 - "In the same spirit I have shown how the exteriority of the super-ego has come to confront the interiority of the moral principle that had been the achievement of philosophy at its zenith. **Freedom, Kant thought, is literally and truly an idea.** It necessarily presupposes the freedom of all, and cannot even be conceived as an isolated thing, that is, in the absence of social freedom. **Existential ethics appears to many of you to be advanced. Motivated by its protest against the administered world, it made an absolute of spontaneity and of the human subject in so far as it has not been co-opted. That is the error of this ethics since precisely because this spontaneity lacks reflexivity and is separated from objective reality, objectivity re-enters it,** just as Sartre has ended up placing himself at the service of Communist ideology. This means that either this spontaneity will be eliminated, if it is seriously intended, and buried beneath the great ideology, or it lapses into administration. In short, **anything that we can call morality today merges into the question of the organization of the world.** We might even say that the quest for the good life is the quest for the right form of politics, if indeed such a right form of politics lay within the realm of what can be achieved today." (pg. 176)

d. Further Readings:

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