STUDIA PHILOSOPHICA KANTIANA

filozofický časopis pre kriticko-rekonštrukčné uvažovanie

1/2026
ročník 15

STUDIA PHILOSOPHICA KANTIANA 1/2026

VYDAVATELSTVO PREŠOVSKEJ UNIVERZITY

ISSN 1338-7758 (print)
ISSN 2585-7673 (online)

STUDIA PHILOSOPHICA KANTIANA 1/2026, ročník 15
Filozofický časopis pre kriticko-rekonštrukčné uvažovanie

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Časopis založil v roku 2012 pri príležitosti 15. výročia založenia Prešovskej univerzity v Prešove profesor Ľubomír Belás so svojimi spolupracovníkmi. Časopis vychádza s podporou OZ Pro Kantiana.

EV 4620/12 (print) **EV 178/23/EPP (online)**
ISSN 1338-7758 (print) **ISSN 2585-7673 (online)**

Časopis je indexovaný v databáze Emerging Sources Citation Index spoločnosti Clarivate Analytics (Web of Science).

Časopis je nepredajný, vychádza dvakrát ročne.
Číslo vyšlo v júni 2026.

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Sandra Zákutná

Vážení čitatelia,

aktuálne číslo časopisu *Studia Philosophica Kantiana* otvára jeho 15. ročník. Ide o špeciálne číslo venované Kantovi vo vzťahu s filozofickou praxou, na ktorom sa ako editor podieľal Florin Lobont, a zameriava sa na otázky, ako môže Kantova filozofia osloviť súčasné filozofické poradenstvo, vzdelávanie, etické rozhodovanie alebo sebaporozumenie.

Elliot D. Cohen v štúdii „Logic-Based Therapy's Analytic of Practical Reason: How Kant's Categorical Imperatives Set Metarules for Regulating Clients' Emotional Reasoning" prepája Kanta s terapiou založenou na logike a ukazuje, ako môžu kategorické imperatívy slúžiť ako metapravidlá na skúmanie emočného uvažovania. Samuel Zinaich, Jr. v príspevku „Kant, Boundary Violations, and Counseling Ethics" vysvetľuje cez Kantovu formuláciu ľudskosti, prečo sú sexuálne porušenia hraníc v poradenskom prostredí hlbokým morálnym zlyhaním.

Ioan Buș v texte „The Transcendental Deduction of the Categories in the B Edition of the Critique of Pure Reason: Necessity and Sufficiency in the Conditions of Objective Judgment" rekonštruuje transcendentálnu dedukciu ako analýzu podmienok objektívneho súdu. Florin Lobont a Dianna Vasiu v príspevku „From Counterpoint to Community: Bach, Kant, and Philosophical Enquiry with Adolescents" rozvíjajú pedagogický model filozofického skúmania s adolescentmi na podklade Bachovej kontrapunktickej hudby a kantovských tém reflektujúceho súdu, autonómie a účelnosti.

Ovidiu Ionuț Badea v článku „Maxim-Based Value Elicitation in Philosophical Counseling" rozvíja kantovsky inšpirovanú metódu objasňovania hodnôt v poradenskom rozhovore prostredníctvom maxím ako praktických pravidiel, ktoré podrobuje testu univerzality, ľudskosti a publicity. Ramona Băluțescu a Adrian Marcu v texte „Virtue, Duty, and the Moral Ecology of Organ Donation: From Kantian to Neo-Aristotelian Perspectives in Dialogue with Orthodox Theology“ ukazujú, že dôveryhodnosť darcovstva orgánov závisí nielen od práva a súhlasu, ale aj od charakteru inštitúcií, praktickej múdrosti a morálneho formovania

Diana Ghinea v príspevku „The Relevance of the Incognoscibility of Kant’s Things in Themselves for Modern Philosophical Counseling“ rozvíja systematickú aplikáciu Kantovej náuky o veciach osebe na moderné filozofické poradenstvo a ukazuje, že ich štruktúrna nepoznateľnosť môže v poradenskom vzťahu podporovať epistemickú pokoru, chrániť autonómiu klienta a brániť paternalizmu. Číslo uzatvára recenzia Florina Lobonta na knihu Marcusa Willascheka *Kant: A Revolution in Thinking*.

Sandra Zákutná
jún 2026

Editorial

Sandra Zákutná

Dear readers,

The current issue of *Studia Philosophica Kantiana* opens its 15th volume. This special issue, edited by Florin Lobont, is devoted to Kant in relation to philosophical practice, and it addresses questions of how Kant's philosophy can speak to contemporary philosophical counseling, education, ethical deliberation, and self-understanding.

Elliot D. Cohen, in "Logic-Based Therapy's Analytic of Practical Reason: How Kant's Categorical Imperatives Set Metarules for Regulating Clients' Emotional Reasoning," connects Kant with logic-based therapy and shows how the categorical imperatives can function as metarules for examining emotional reasoning. Samuel Zinaich, Jr., in "Kant, Boundary Violations, and Counseling Ethics," explains through Kant's Formula of Humanity why sexual boundary violations in the counseling setting are a profound moral failure.

Ioan Buș, in "The Transcendental Deduction of the Categories in the B Edition of The Critique of Pure Reason: Necessity and Sufficiency in the Conditions of Objective Judgment," reconstructs the transcendental deduction as an analysis of the conditions of objective judgment. Florin Lobont and Dianna Vasiu, in "From Counterpoint to Community: Bach, Kant, and Philosophical Enquiry with Adolescents," develop a pedagogical model of philosophical enquiry with adolescents on the basis of Bach's contrapuntal music and Kantian themes of reflective judgment, autonomy, and purposiveness.

Ovidiu Ionuț Badea, in "Maxim-Based Value Elicitation in Philosophical Counseling," develops a Kant-inspired method of value clarification in counseling dialogue through maxims as practical rules, which he subjects to tests of universality, humanity, and publicity. Ramona Băluțescu and Adrian Marcu, in "Virtue, Duty, and the Moral Ecology of Organ Donation: From Kantian to Neo-Aristotelian Perspectives in Dialogue with Orthodox Theology," show that the credibility of organ donation depends not only on law and consent, but also on institutional character, practical wisdom, and moral formation.

Diana Ghinea, in "The Relevance of the Incognoscibility of Kant's Things in Themselves for Modern Philosophical Counseling," develops a systematic application of Kant's doctrine of things in themselves to modern philosophical counseling and shows that their structural incognoscibility can foster epistemic humility, protect client autonomy, and resist paternalism in the counseling relationship. The issue concludes with Florin Lobont's review of Marcus Willaschek's *Kant: A Revolution in Thinking*.

Sandra Zákutná
June 2026

Editor's Note

Florin Lobont

This special issue of *Studia Philosophica Kantiana* is dedicated to the relation between Kant and philosophical practice. The theme is not merely commemorative, nor does it treat Kant as a canonical figure to be repeatedly explained from a distance. Rather, the issue asks what Kantian philosophy can still do when it is brought into contact with living practices of judgment, counseling, education, ethical deliberation, and self-clarification. Kant's critical philosophy is often approached through its most demanding theoretical structures: the transcendental deduction, the limits of knowledge, the architecture of reason, the status of things in themselves. Yet these structures are never detached from the practical vocation of reason. Kant's philosophy offers, perhaps more than any other modern system, a disciplined way of thinking about autonomy without arbitrariness, moral law without moralism, dignity without sentimentality, and limits without resignation. For philosophical practice, this is a particularly fertile inheritance. It allows us to understand counseling, dialogue, education, and ethical inquiry not as techniques for producing quick answers, but as spaces in which persons learn to examine the principles under which they think, feel, decide, and act.

Elliot D. Cohen's "Logic-Based Therapy's Analytic of Practical Reason: How Kant's Categorical Imperatives Set Metarules for Regulating Clients' Emotional Reasoning" opens the issue by placing Kant in direct conversation with Logic-Based Therapy. The article develops a powerful and technically precise proposal: Kant's formulations of the Categorical Imperative can function as rational metarules for identifying and challenging destructive patterns in clients' emotional reasoning. Cohen's analysis begins from the LBT claim that distressing emotions often involve inferential structures, practical syllogisms, and self-defeating speech acts such as demanding, self-damning, other-damning, or disavowing one's capacity to cope. By introducing illocutionary force operators and modal operators into the analysis of emotional reasoning, the article gives philosophical counseling a sharper diagnostic grammar. Kant's practical philosophy is not invoked here as an abstract moral authority, but as a regulative framework capable of testing whether the rules embedded in emotional life can be rationally sustained. In this sense, the paper shows how the Categorical Imperative may become therapeutically relevant without being reduced to therapy: it helps clients examine the hidden laws by which they condemn themselves, demand impossibilities, or surrender their agency.

Samuel Zinaich, Jr.'s "Kant, Boundary Violations, and Counseling Ethics" turns to one of the most morally urgent areas of counseling practice: the violation of professional and personal boundaries. Focusing on the case of Scott Owen, the article uses Kant's Formula of Humanity to illuminate why sexual boundary violations in counseling are not merely breaches of professional regulation, but profound violations of autonomy, dignity, and informed consent. Zinaich's central Kantian insight is that the wrongness of such conduct lies in treating clients merely as means: manipulating them, obscuring the real nature of the counselor's purposes, and undermining their capacity for rationally informed decision-making. The article is especially valuable because it connects Kantian ethics to the concrete architecture of professional codes, showing that the prohibition against sexual intimacy with current clients is not an arbitrary institutional rule but an expression of a deeper moral requirement. Philosophical practice, on this view, must include not only dialogue about values, but also the ethical formation of the practitioner. Without respect for clients as ends in themselves, counseling ceases to be a helping relationship and becomes a site of domination.

Ioan Buș's "The Transcendental Deduction of the Categories in the B Edition of The Critique of Pure Reason: Necessity and Sufficiency in the Conditions of Objective Judgment" provides the issue with its most technically Kantian contribution. At first glance, its focus on the B-Deduction may seem more theoretical than practical. Yet the article belongs in this issue precisely because philosophical practice depends on the possibility of judgment: on the capacity to distinguish subjective association from objective validity, private impression from communicable claim, and ungrounded certainty from warranted understanding. Buș reconstructs Kant's Transcendental Deduction as a two-stage strategy, interpreting §§15–20 as establishing the sufficiency of the categories for cognition in general, and §§22–26 as establishing their necessity for objectively valid experience within our spatio-temporal sensibility. This reading reframes the well-known problem of the two steps of the B-Deduction by emphasizing the passage from objective validity to objective reality. For the broader concerns of the issue, the article reminds us that Kantian practice cannot be severed from Kantian critique: before reason can guide action responsibly, it must understand the conditions under which judgment can claim validity at all.

Florin Lobont and Dianna Vasiu's "From Counterpoint to Community: Bach, Kant, and Philosophical Enquiry with Adolescents" offers an original contribution to Kantian philosophical pedagogy. The article does not claim historical influence between Bach and Kant; instead, it develops a structural and pedagogical analogy between Bach's contrapuntal writing and Kantian themes of reflective judgment, autonomy, purposiveness, and rule-governed freedom. Centered on Bach's Two-Part Invention No. 1 in C major, BWV 772, the article proposes a model for philosophical enquiry with adolescents aged 13–16. In this model, music becomes neither decoration nor illustration, but a shared object of perception through which students learn to notice form, relation, independence, interdependence, repetition, transformation, tension, and closure. The Community of Enquiry (a Peircean model of collaborative inquiry later adapted by Matthew Lipman for the Philosophy for Children program he founded) then turns these perceptions into philosophical questions: Can freedom exist within rules? Can two independent voices belong to one whole? What remains the same when something changes? By bringing Kant, Bach, Philosophy for Children, and music pedagogy into dialogue, the article shows how aesthetic experience can cultivate the habits of reflective autonomy in young people before those habits are fully conceptualized.

Ovidiu Ionuț Badea's "Maxim-Based Value Elicitation in Philosophical Counselling" develops a methodologically clear and practically usable Kantian technique for philosophical counselling. The article argues that maxims, understood as self-imposed practical rules, can serve as disciplined units of ethical self-clarification. Rather than asking clients simply to name their values, the proposed method reconstructs the operative rule under which they act: "When C, I will do A in order to achieve E, for reason R." This reconstruction allows the counsellor and client to examine not merely what the client endorses in principle, but how values are actually organized in recurrent patterns of action. Badea then subjects such maxims to three Kantian tests: universalizability, respect for humanity, and publicity. The purpose is not to moralize, but to disclose hidden tensions between declared commitments and lived rules. The article is particularly important for philosophical practice because it offers a middle path between unstructured conversation and therapeutic technique. It preserves the autonomy of the client while giving the dialogue a rigorous form through which heteronomous patterns—fear, social pressure, habit, evasive self-description—can be brought into reflective view.

Ramona Băluțescu and Adrian Marcu's "Virtue, Duty, and the Moral Ecology of Organ Donation: From Kantian to Neo-Aristotelian Perspectives in Dialogue with Orthodox Theology" widens the issue's ethical horizon by bringing Kantian ethics into conversation with neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics and Christian Orthodox theological concerns. The article begins from the recognition that Kantian ethics provides indispensable moral boundaries in transplantation ethics: persons must not be instrumentalized, dignity must be protected, and consent cannot be bypassed. Yet the authors argue that duty-based reasoning alone is insufficient to explain how trust, moral motivation, institutional credibility, and communal discernment are actually formed. For this reason, they introduce neo-Aristotelian concepts such as character, practical wisdom, moral formation, and institutional virtue. This synthesis is especially significant in contexts where organ donation is shaped not only by medical facts and legal rules, but also by grief, religious hesitation, distrust, and symbolic meanings of the body. The article does not try to force agreement where metaphysical and theological uncertainties remain. Instead, it proposes a more patient moral vocabulary, one in which organ donation may be understood as admirable without being compulsory, and in which ethical legitimacy depends as much on trustworthy practices as on correct principles.

Diana Ghinea's "The Relevance of the Incognoscibility of Kant's Things in Themselves for Modern Philosophical Counseling" brings one of Kant's most difficult theoretical doctrines into the heart of counselling practice. The article argues that the structural incognoscibility of things in themselves can guide philosophical counsellors toward epistemic humility, respect for the opacity of the other, and resistance to paternalism. Clients often seek definitive answers about who they truly are, what their lives ultimately mean, or what decision would finally reveal their essence. Ghinea's Kantian proposal is that the counselor must resist the temptation to offer such metaphysical certainties. The client's "true self" is not an object available to theoretical possession by the counselor, nor even by the client in any final and transparent way. This does not make counseling futile; it makes it more ethically responsible. The counselor's task is not to uncover a hidden noumenal essence, but to help the client examine empirical self-narratives, clarify concepts, identify tensions, and deliberate within the limits of finite human knowledge. In this way, Kant's doctrine of limits becomes a practical discipline of respect.

The issue concludes with Florin Lobont's review of Marcus Willaschek's *Kant: A Revolution in Thinking*, translated by Peter Lewis. The review presents Willaschek's book as a rare achievement: an introduction that preserves Kant's systematic range while making his philosophy newly available to a wider readership. Particular attention is given to Willaschek's emphasis on the primacy of practice, his treatment of Kant as a philosopher of modern freedom, and his capacity to connect Kant's theoretical, moral, political, and religious concerns without reducing them to a textbook schema. The review also notes the book's limits, including the inevitable compression of a broad interpretive project and the relatively limited engagement with some areas of Kant's reception. Yet its final judgment is generous and persuasive: Willaschek succeeds in showing why Kant still matters, not because the historical Kant can answer all contemporary questions, but because the questions he formulated remain unfinished. In that respect, the review offers a fitting close to this special issue. Kant's revolution in thinking continues wherever reason is asked to become practical: in counseling, in education, in ethical life, in institutions, and in the fragile but necessary work of human self-understanding.

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Logic-Based Therapy's Analytic of Practical Reason: How Kant's Categorical Imperatives Set Metarules for Regulating Clients' Emotional Reasoning

Abstract: Kant's "Analytic of Practical Reason" investigated the grounds of practical reasoning in a similar way his "Transcendental Analytic of Pure Reason" investigated the grounds of pure reason. Arguably, his work in the latter domain can be applied to Logic-Based Therapy (LBT), a form of philosophical counseling and psychotherapy that addresses client's practical reasoning embedded in clients' cognitive emotions. This paper investigates how three of Kant's formulations of the Categorical Imperative can provide the basis for rational metarules, to regulate the logico-linguistic structures of clients' emotional reasoning, by debunking the use of certain types of illocutionary force operators of speech acts in combination with certain types of modal operators inside the deductive networks of clients' emotional reasoning. This paper illustrates the application of the Kantian approach to a prototypical network of client practical reasoning often embedded in cognitive emotions such as depression and guilt.

Key words: Logic-based therapy, Categorical imperative, Emotional reasoning, Illocutionary force, Modal logic

Logic-Based Therapy (LBT) is a philosophical approach to counseling and psychotherapy that maintains that people emotionally and behaviorally upset themselves—experience depression, anxiety, guilt, anger, and other negative emotions—by deducing self-destructive conclusions from irrational speech acts they perform in the premises of their practical syllogism chains. LBT practitioners help their clients identify such networks of irrational, self-defeating, emotively valanced logico-linguistic activities referred to as "emotional reasoning." Practitioners then help their clients identify and perform more rational activities aimed at building "guiding virtues" that counteract and replace the former self-defeating activities.[1]

[1] Cohen, E. D., 2022. *Cognitive-Behavior Interventions for Self-Defeating Thoughts: Helping Clients to Overcome the Tyranny of "I Can't."* London: Routledge.

One especially pervasive and problematic case of such destructive emotional reasoning is the activity of damning oneself or others. For example, a client may say, "I failed to engage my philosophy students—many of them do not do the readings or participate in class. Therefore, I am a complete failure." Often, such emotional reasoning stems from higher-order logico-linguistic activities, notably demanding perfection.[2] Thus, the client may tell themselves that they *must never* fail at anything of great importance to them such as their activities as a philosophy professor. For illustrative purposes, consider the following emotional reasoning network consisting of deductive inferences:

1. I must never fail at anything important to me like teaching philosophy.
2. Therefore, if I fail to engage my students in learning to do philosophy, then I am a failure.
3. I have failed to engage my students in learning to do philosophy.
4. Therefore, I am a failure.
5. If I am a failure, then I can't stand it.
6. Therefore, I can't stand it.

I have elsewhere introduced symbolism for what I have called "illocutionary force operators" ("I-F operators" for brevity) to make explicit the illocutionary forces of the associated speech acts performed in a logico-linguistic inferential structure such as the above one. I have used the lightning bolt, "ϟ" as the generic symbol for an I-F operator and symbolize the specific force by using letters placed after it.[3] Following are symbols that cover the speech acts discussed in this paper:

1. ϟ *dd* = Demanding
2. ϟ *dn* = Damning
   ϟ *s-dn* = self-damning
   ϟ *o-dn* = other-damning
3. ϟ -v-dv = volitionally disavowing (denying capacity to cope)

[2] Cohen, E. D., 2022. *Cognitive-Behavior Interventions for Self-Defeating Thoughts: Helping Clients to Overcome the Tyranny of "I Can't."*, ibid.; Cohen, E. D., 2019. *Making Peace With Imperfection: Discover your Perfectionism Type, End the Cycle of Criticism, and Embrace Self-Acceptance*. Oakland, CA: Impact Press.

[3] Cohen, E. D., 2026 (in press). "How to Identify, Interpret, and Represent Cognitive Emotions in Logic-Based Therapy." *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 46(2).

Modal operators such as possibility and necessity are also helpful in clarifying the structures of such emotional reasoning chains because emotions are often modal in nature. For example, the emotional reasoning grounding various types of anxiety involves possibility since its objects are always about future possibilities.[4] To represent "necessity," I here use the standard modal symbol, "□".

When this symbolism is applied, the above practical inference chain looks like this:

1. ϟ *dd* □ (I do not fail at anything important to me like teaching philosophy)
2. ∴ □ [If ϟ *r* (I fail to engage my students in learning to do philosophy), then ϟ *s-dn* (I am a failure)]
3. ϟ *r* (I have failed to engage my students in learning to do philosophy).
4. ∴ ϟ *s-dn* (I am a failure).
5. □ [If ϟ s-*dn* (I am a failure) then ϟ v-dv (my perceived existential state)]
6. ϟ v-dv (my perceived existential state)

So represented, it is easier to flag each of the illocutionary acts as they operate in their respective premises/conclusions.

Utilizing Kripke's "true in all possible worlds" interpretation of the necessity operator "□"in premise 1 (Parent, n.d.),[5] the client demands (ϟ *dd)* that it be true in all possible worlds (situations) that I do not fail at anything important like teaching philosophy. Notice how the illocutionary force operator (ϟ *dd)* ranges over the necessity operator since it is out front.

In conclusion 2, the client, in turn, deduces a rule of self-damning from premise 1, according to which, in any possible situation, if I report (ϟ *r*) my failing to engage my students in learning to do philosophy, then I am instructing myself to damn myself (ϟ *s-dn*) by telling myself that I am a failure. Notice here, in contrast to premise 1, the necessity operator ranges over the entire rule, including its illocutionary force operators because it is out front.

In premise 3, the client then reports the antecedent condition of 2 to be true, namely that he has, indeed, failed to engage his students in learning to

[4] Cohen, E. D., 2026 (in press). "How to Identify, Interpret, and Represent Cognitive Emotions in Logic-Based Therapy.", ibid.

[5] Parent, T., n.d. "Modal metaphysics." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* [Accessed: 2026-6-2]. Available at: https://iep.utm.edu/mod-meta/

do philosophy. Accordingly, in 4, via *modus ponens* from premises 2 and 3, the client concludes with performing the act of damning himself as a failure.

In premise 5, the client then adds a further rule instructing themselves, in all possible situations, to disavow their willpower to cope with or tolerate (ϟ *v-dv*) their perceived existential situation (state of thinking of themselves as a failure) if they damn themselves (ϟ *s-dn*) as a failure. This means that the client has adopted a rule such that, if they damn themselves as a failure then they must also deny their capacity to cope with, or tolerate, the painful perception of themselves as a failure because of having failed their students. Note that the necessity operator ranges over the I-F operators in this rule because it is out front, thus universalizing the rule.

Hence, in conclusion 6, the client deduces conclusion 6 from 4 and 5, via *modus ponens*. That is, they disavow their volitional capacity to cope with, or tolerate, the painful perception of themselves as a failure.

Forms of Categorical Imperative as Metarules for Debunking Self-Defeating I-F Operators in Universal Rules in Clients' Emotional Reasoning

With the above understanding of the logico-linguistic structure of emotional reasoning, I will show how Kant's various formulations of his "Categorical Imperative" can work as metarules in LBT for exposing the infelicities in certain rules in clients' emotional reasoning that apply combinations of modal operators such as necessity and possibility, and illocutionary force operators such as demanding, damning, and capacity disavowing. By "infelicities" I mean essentially what J. L. Austin[6] meant, namely, that these speech acts are self-defeating because they fail to satisfy certain necessary conditions for their performance.

Kant's Universalizability Formulation of the Categorical Imperative

Kant's universalizability formulation of the Categorical Imperative (UCI) states:

Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.[7]

[6] Austin, J. L., 1975. *How to Do Things with Words* (2nd Ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[7] Kant, I., 2024a, AA 4:421. *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, transl. by Abbott, T. K. Project Gutenberg. [Accessed: 2026-6-2]. Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5682/pg5682-images.html.

As applied to rules with a demanding (ϟ *dd*) illocutionary force operator (out front) ranging over a necessity modal operator, UCI provides a metarule for testing the rationality of universal demands such as in premise 1: ϟ *dd* □ (I do not fail at anything important to me like teaching philosophy).

This rule is as follows:

UCI Metarule

> Reject any demand that something be true in all possible worlds if the universal law being demanded is either (a) inconceivable (that is, self-contradictory) or (b) not rational to demand.

In the case of premise 1, while the demand it makes—that there be no possible worlds in which I fail at anything important to me like teaching philosophy—does not satisfy criterion (a), it does satisfy (b). That is, it is not reasonable. This is because human beings are, by their nature, imperfect fallible beings, and they will invariably fail at things important to them. Further, in a universe where human beings never failed at such things, there would be no opportunity to learn from one's mistakes, and no rational human being would care to inhabit such a universe. This would be a world in which our efforts, in always meeting with success, would give us nothing to strive for. We would thus lose the incentive to try, as our efforts would always be reciprocated with success. Hence, proclaiming that one was successful would mean nothing and everyone would laugh at someone who attempted to gain honor or approval from others due their success. Hence, Kant's UCI Metarule for testing the adequacy of demands would reject the perfectionistic demand made in premise 1 by exposing some of its major infelicities, i.e, self-defeating properties.

Kant's Respect for Persons Formulation of the Categorical Imperative

Kant's "Respect for Persons" formulation of the Categorical Imperative (RPCI), as is well-known, tells clients to "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only."[8] This metarule can be used to take aim at the rule in premise 2: □ [If ϟ *r* (I fail to engage my students in learning to do philosophy), then ϟ *s-dn* (I am a failure)].

[8] Kant, I., ibid., AA 4:429.

Effectively, Kant's metarule as applied to speech acts, enjoins:

RPCI Metarule

> Reject any universal rule that necessitates engaging in self-damning (or others-damning) if one falls short of perfection.

First, if a human being had to be perfect to have worth and dignity, none of us would ever have worth and dignity, for all humans fall short of perfection in one way or another.

Second, according to Kant, the worth and dignity of human beings, *as persons*, can neither be augmented or diminished by their utility.[9] Such extrinsic properties, such as teaching students to do philosophy, may provide a valuable service that can help students to navigate their own lives by helping them to perform such activities as clarifying concepts, examining assumptions, and exploring the logical implications of ideas, and for this it should, arguably, be encouraged. However, whether one succeeds at accomplishing this goal will neither increase nor diminish one's worth as a human person because this value is intrinsic, and hence not a function of accomplishments that have extrinsic value.

This is because human beings are not objects. The value of an object is exhausted by its usefulness. We discard a pen when it runs out of ink. However, humans are not objects to be discarded when they cease to perform a particular function. Indeed, no reasonable person would accept treating persons as objects because this implies that they themselves would also be discarded (killed or put in the "trash") as soon as they stop performing an extrinsically valuable service or function. But no rational human being would be disposed to accept such a fate.

Further, if a human person were to damn themselves whenever they failed at something, they would betray their worth and dignity as rational beings. This is because part of being rational is being capable of learning from one's mistakes, thus increasing their opportunities to use their capacity for reason to enhance the world, such as in becoming a better philosophy teacher.

Indeed, as an antidote to self-damning (and others-damning), LBT defines the guiding virtue of self-respect as unconditional self-acceptance, and it defines others-respect as unconditional others acceptance.[10] This resonates

[9] Ibid., sec. 1.

[10] Cohen, E. D., 2022. *Cognitive-Behavior Interventions for Self-Defeating Thoughts: Helping Clients to Overcome the Tyranny of "I Can't."*, ibid.

with the RPCI Metarule because, this rule effectively says to unconditionally accept oneself and others as loci of intrinsic worth and dignity and offers such unconditional acceptance of one's own and others' intrinsic worth and dignity as a goal to which to strive in this world.

Hence, according to LBT, whatever its philosophical grounds, self-respect involves unconditional self- and others-acceptance. For some, this may be because we are creatures who are self-aware. For others, it may be that we are children of God. However, like Kant, LBT rejects speech acts of self-damning and others damning as affronts to the intrinsic worth and dignity of human persons. Like Kant, too, it embraces, as its antidotal guiding virtue, respect for self and others, defined in terms of unconditional self/others acceptance, albeit fleshed out according to one's own normative philosophical view of human worth and dignity.

LBT hence appears to align with Kant's own idea of self-respect, which is a disposition to unconditionally accept our own and others' worth and dignity. For Kant, this virtue includes an intellectual feeling of reverence arising from our realization that we are subject to the "moral law," that is, the law which tells us to treat ourselves (and others) in accordance with our rational nature. It is this realization that we are *autonomous* beings, as distinct from heteronomous beings (mere objects), that gives birth to this sense of value and dignity. That is, unlike objects, which are entirely determined by external forces, we are *self-determining* beings whose capacity to reason gives us an internal moral compass (the "Moral Law" in terms of the Categorical Imperative), which guides us in building self-respect.

Kant's Autonomy Formulation of the Categorical Imperative

Kant states that,

> if there is a categorical imperative (i.e., a law for the will of every rational being), it can only command that everything be done from maxims of one's will regarded as a will which could at the same time will that it should itself give universal laws.[11]

And Kant also states,

> The will is in every action a law to itself, only expresses the principle: To act on no other maxim than that which can also have as an object itself as a universal law. Now this is precisely the formula of the categorical imperative

[11] Kant, I., ibid., AA 4:421.

> and is the principle of morality, so that a free will and a will subject to moral laws are one and the same.[12]

Thus, according to Kant, such a "free will" that "gives universal law" acts out of respect for the Moral Law that says to universalize one's maxim-not out of concern for personal interests, the welfare of others, cultural conformity, or even compassion for others. It is a will that does not allow itself to be manipulated by such external conditions, which would include failing to engage one's students. So, the client who concludes that he *can't stand* his existential circumstances is not free. This individual would be treating themselves as *hetero*nomous, rather than as *auto*nomous.

Hence, the derivative autonomy metarule (ACI) enjoins:

ACI Metarule

> Reject any universal rule with a capacity disavowing speech act that treats oneself like a mere object by disavowing one's capacity to determine one's own will.

ACI can provide a useful tool in LBT to disqualify rules with capacity disavowing I-F operators, such as rule 5 in the given emotional reasoning sample:

> □ [If ϟ s-*dn* (I am a failure) then ϟ v-dv (my perceived existential state)]

When the client concludes in 6 [ϟ v-dv (my perceived existential state)] that they "can't" stand damning themselves as a failure, then they (probably) "won't." But when the client asks if they can make a universal law out of keeping oneself stuck in this self-destructive state of self-damning, wallowing in self-pity, they clearly see that no rational being would want this for themselves and that being autonomous and free means acting according to a maxim that one can will to be a universal law. In LBT this would involve adopting a philosophical maxim that allows the client to reframe the situation so that they can move on.

For example, the Stoics would admonish the client not to demand that they control what is outside their control, such as students' willingness to do philosophy. A universe in which humans were always

[12] Ibid.

able to control other human's reactions is conceivable. Indeed, it is possible to use mind-control techniques to control human responses, turning every human being into a mere automaton. However, no rational human being would accept such a universal law because it would subtract the very core of what gives dignity to human existence—the capacity to make one's own rational choices.

So, in LBT, the stoically inclined client would remind themselves not to demand that they control their students' responses to their pedagogy, for this is not a demand that could be turned into a rationally acceptable universal law. The client is thus encouraged to relinquish such a demand by constructing counteractive emotional reasoning. For example:

> Let my students proceed not by being automatons of my pedagogy but instead autonomous beings who follow their own lights. If they should, for whatever reason, fail to bask in the light of philosophical inquiry, then rejoice in that I live in a universe in which my students have free agency and the capacity to choose according to their rational judgment, even if they choose not to exercise it.
> My students are not responsive to my attempts to engage them in doing philosophy.
> Therefore, rejoice in that I live in a universe in which my students are, nevertheless, free agents, not mere automata, with the capacity for rational judgment.

In such a case, the client begins to work on the virtue of rational self-control through an uplifting Stoic maxim that militates against a universe in which there is no capacity for rational self-control and people are merely manipulated and controlled. The paradox here is that the client's reason for feeling disempowered—not being able to engage one's students in philosophy—becomes the very reason to accept one's freedom. Kant expresses a similar point when he says that free will is a postulate of morality, for without this assumption, talk about how people *ought* morally to act would be nonsense. The implication of denying freedom hence becomes the very basis for affirming it.[13]

[13] Kant, I., 2024b. *The Critique of Practical Reason*, transl. by Abbott, T. K. Project Gutenberg E-book. [Accessed: 2026-6-2]. Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5683/5683-h/5683-h.htm#link2H_4_0041.

Conclusion

In this paper I have presented an example of a type of emotional reasoning chain that is commonly identified in treating clients using logic-based therapy (LBT) for emotional problems, generated by universal rules containing self-defeating speech acts imbedded in this chain such as modes of demanding, damnation, and capacity disavowing. I have shown how the import of these rules can be clarified by representing illocutionary force (IF), using symbols to represent IF operators and modal operators of possibility and necessity, in their relation to each other.

In the light of the latter LBT "analytic of practical reason," I have demonstrated how three expressions of Kant's Categorical Imperative can provide corresponding metarules (UCI, RPCI, and ACI) that can debunk the said rules in client's emotional reasoning. In this way, Kant's Categorical Imperatives can set metarules for regulating clients' emotional reasoning in logic-based therapy.

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Kant, Boundary Violations, and Counseling Ethics

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Abstract: In a recent ongoing investigation, Dr. Scott Owen of Provo, Utah, pleaded guilty to sexually abusing many of his clients. On top of permanently losing his counseling license, Owen received a 15-year sentence. According to the testimony, several young men who were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) were sent to Owen for Conversion Therapy. During the counseling sessions, many young men testified that Owen sexually abused them by touching them inappropriately amounting to what is called boundary violations. Using Immanuel Kant's second formula of the Categorical Imperative, The Formula of the End in Itself, I will argue that Owen failed to protect and enhance his client's autonomy and rational decision-making process, he violated the dignity of his clients, and breached the value of informed consent.
Key words: Immanuel Kant, Categorical Imperative, The Formula of the End in Itself, Autonomy, Rational decision-making, Dignity, Informed consent

Introduction

In a recent ongoing investigation, Dr. Scott Owen of Provo, Utah, pleaded guilty to sexually abusing many of his clients.[1] On top of permanently losing his counseling license, Owen received a 15-year sentence. According to the testimony, several young men who were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) were sent to Owen for Conversion Therapy. During the counseling sessions, many young men testified that Owen sexually abused them by touching them inappropriately amounting to what is called boundary violations.

In this paper, I plan to discuss this case using Immanuel Kant's Categori-

[1] Deepnewz.com, April 4, 2025. Former Provo Therapist Scott Owen Sentenced to 15 Years to Life for Sexual Abuse of Clients, Including Teenage Girl. [Accessed: 2026-4-27] Available at: https://deepnewz.com/crime/former-provo-therapist-scott-owen-sentenced-to-15-years-to-life-sexual-abuse-7139dfc4.

cal Imperative, in particularly, Kant's second formula, the Formula of the End in Itself. Using the second formula, I will argue that Owen failed to protect and enhance his client's autonomy and rational decision-making process, he violated the dignity of his clients, and he breached the value of informed consent.

Boundary Violations in a Counseling Session

The current version of the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* prohibits "sexual intimacies" with current patients or clients.[2] In particular, the norm is described as one of the few absolute standards of the APA: "Psychologists do not engage in sexual intimacies with current therapy/patients."[3] It is worded this way to eliminate any doubt about the exclusion of any exceptions for such an action. Additionally, this standard cannot be circumvented by ending the therapeutic relationship.

Cambell, et al. also illustrates the status of the rule against sexual interaction between therapists and their clients at the state level. They reason that every psychologist knows that such an action is prohibited because "every state prohibits sexual intimacies through state licensing laws that either incorporate the Ethics Code or include this prohibition separately."[4] Moreover, in addition to the state licensing laws, some states (not all states) have taken measures to criminalize such a psychological/client relationships and some states have "mandated reporting requirements."[5] However, Campbell, et al. comment that even though the wrongness of this action is nearly ubiquitous, some therapists continue to pursue intimate relationships with their clients.

Dr. Scott Owen's Case

Dr. Scott Owen received his Masters and Doctoral degrees in Counseling Psychology from Brigham Young University and was a licensed therapist. Owen specialized in the treatment of, among other things, pornography ad-

[2] Steinberg, A. (Lu). – Alpert, J. L. – Courtois, Ch., eds., 2021. *Sexual Boundary Violations in Psychotherapy: Facing Therapist Indiscretions, Transgressions, and Misconduct*. American Psychological Association. (electronic edition).

[3] Campbell, L., Knauss, L., Meaux, L., 2021. The American Psychological Association Ethics Code and Legal Statutes Regarding Sexual Boundary Violations: History and Current Status. In: Steinberg, A. (Lu). – Alpert, J. L. – Courtois, Ch., eds. *Sexual Boundary Violations in Psychotherapy: Facing Therapist Indiscretions, Transgressions, and Misconduct*. American Psychological Association. (electronic edition), p. 30.

[4] Ibid., p. 32.

[5] Ibid.

diction, sexual addictions, and Conversion Therapy for same-gender attraction. Of the latter issue, Owen developed a reputation, over a 20-year career, for applying Conversion Therapy to young gay men who were members of LDS.[6] LDS doctrine teaches that the highest level of heaven is reserved for heterosexual married couples.[7] Owen was himself a long-term member and officer of the LDS.

After Owen was arrested on Nov. 8, 2023, he permanently lost his license for the violation of Standards 10.05, Sexual Intimacies with Current Therapy Clients/Patients of the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*. Prior to that, as early as 2016, after numerous allegations by many of Owen's clients (which were ignored by the LDS), Owen voluntarily surrendered his license to the state in 2018 without any admission to guilt.[8] In 2025, Owen was sentenced to prison for 15 years to life.

The details of Owen's case are numerous and complicated. Even though this may be true, the evidence which emerged from Owen's case and which Owen's confession confirms, illuminates a morally egregious and premeditated sexual endeavor. According to the allegations, Owen would initially assure his clients that to overcome homosexuality, "touching" within a counseling context was key to helping his client's heal and learn how to accept intimacy and grow closer to God.[9] Although such "touching" is morally suspicious, it serves as the underlying reason for Owen's sexual grooming of his clients.

According to the testimony of Owen's victims, the touching would begin with seemingly innocent embraces at the end of the counseling sessions. As the sessions would continue, "touching" during the counseling sessions would take on a surreptitious manner. As the trust of the client grew, Owen would introduce more invasive contact. He would encourage his clients to undress, at other times there would be "make out sessions," which would include cuddling, kissing, touching in the genital areas, mutual masturbation, and so forth.[10] In the end, Owen pleaded guilty to three charges, admitting he sexually abused his patient who sought his help because of same-sex desires and Latter-day Saints faith.[11]

[6] Schreifels, J., The Salt Lake Tribune, 2025. *Utah Ex-Therapist Scott Owen Sentenced to Prison for Sexually Abusing Patients*. [Accessed: 2026-4-27]. Available at: https://www.propublica.org/article/scott-owen-utah-therapist-sexual-abuse-prison-sentence).
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid. It is estimated that Owen's had sexual contact with hundreds of clients.

Kant and the Formula of the End in Itself

I will now discuss Immanuel Kant's second Categorical Formula, the Formula of the End in Itself. First, I will briefly discuss what it means and how Kant applies it. After that, I will apply it to three issues that emerge in Dr. Scott Owen's case. To wit, I will direct Kant's formula to the ethical issues of client manipulation, respect for client dignity, and client informed consent.

Kant spells out the second formula of the Categorical Imperative in the following way: "*So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means*."[12] Two points are required to understand (at least partially) Kant's second formula, viz., what is the meaning of the phrase "never merely as a means"? Additionally, what does the term "end" mean? I will begin with the former.

According to Kant's text, to treat a person "merely as a means" refers to the treatment of a person in an arbitrary manner.[13] Although there are a number of definitions associated with the meaning of the term "arbitrary," at the time of the publication of the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, the most relevant definition for this discussion is this: "Unrestrained in the exercise of will; of uncontrolled power or authority, absolute; hence, despotic, tyrannical."[14] Thus, if a person P_1 treats another person P_2 *as merely a means*, then P_1 exerts a kind of despotic or repressive control over P_2. With this clarification in place, it makes sense that, according to Kant, such treatment between two equal individuals is unqualifiedly impermissible.

Before I discuss the term "end," one point of clarification is needed. To treat someone as *merely a means* does not rule out treating someone *as a means*. For example, to treat a person as a means is "to recognize the instrumental value an individual may possess within a specific context in-

[12] Kant, I., 2011. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: A German-English Edition*, Timmermann, J. – Gregor, M., eds. and trans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 87. Italics are in the German text and the English translation. The German text is from the second original edition published in 1786.

[13] The Timmermann and Gregor edition translates "zum beliebigen Gebrauche" as "discretionary use." Ibid., p. 85. The literal translation of the German is "for any use." I prefer the translation "arbitrary use." The latter translation picks up the spirit of the phrase "merely as a means." Additionally, this is the translation used by Ellington, J. W., 1994. In: Kant, I. *Ethical Philosophy*, 2nd ed., James W. Ellington, trans. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., p. 35.

[14] Oxford English Dictionary, 2026. "arbitrary (adj.), sense 3". [Accessed: 2026-5-27] Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6870915598.

cluding the goals and projects that may be tied to the instrumental value."[15] For example, suppose I set the goal to build a deck outside of my house. Unfortunately, I lack the skill to satisfy my goal. Consequently, it occurs to me that, if I want to satisfy my goal, it may be in my interest to hire an individual who is qualified to build decks, i.e., an individual whose goals and projects may be tied to the qualifications they possess. So, my goal may be attained by hiring and paying an individual whose goal is to realize his own goals and projects and my project at the same time.

However, here is an important point to underscore. To treat someone *merely as a means* not only recognizes the instrumental value an individual may possess, but it also involves taking advantage of their instrumental value. Such an action is particularly egregious when the treatment takes advantage of their instrumental value by trumping up unfounded complaints about the craftsmanship of the deck. Thus, such an unfounded response treats the deck-builder as merely a means.

I will now turn to the latter question: From Kant's point of view, what does it mean to call a person "an end"? The meaning of the word "end" is elusive in many ways. It echoes the ancient Greek term "*τέλος*" (telos), which means "*the fulfilment* or *completion* of anything" or "*the end proposed of an action, chief good of an action.*"[16] Unfortunately, a teleological understanding of the term resists Kant's own rejection of teleology.[17] Thus, the meaning of "end" must point to a different meaning even if the meaning may seem similar. Here's what I mean.

The word "end" occurs twice in Kant's German text:

> Nun sage ich: der Mensch und überhaupt jedes vernünftige Wesen, *existirt* als Zweck an sich selbst, *nicht bloß als Mittel* zum beliebigen Gebrauche für diesen oder jenen WIllen, sondern muß in allen seinen, sowol auf sich selbst, als auch auf andere vernünftige Wesen gerichteten Handlungen, jederzeit *zugleich als Zweck* betrachtet werden.

This is translated:

[15] Zinaich, Jr., S., 2024. *A Contemporary Introduction to Professional Ethics*, 2nd ed. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, p. 39.

[16] Perseus Digital Library, 2026. "*τέλος*" (telos) [Accessed: 2026-5-27]. Available at: https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=telos&la=greek#lexicon.

[17] Korsgaard, Ch. M., 2012. Introduction. In: Gregor, M. – Timmermann, J. – Korsgaard, Ch. M., eds., 2012. *Kant: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. xxii.

> Now I say: a human being and generally every rational being *exists* as an end in itself, *not merely as a means* for the discretionary use for this or that will, but must in all its actions, whether directed towards itself or also to other rational beings, always be considered *at the same time as an end*."[18] The German term, which is normally translated as "end," is "*Zweck*." "*Zweck*" also means "purpose" or "point.[19]

If this is so, what insight, if any, does this help with the meaning of "end"?

One way to understand the German term "*Zweck*" and a way which is consistent with the text above, points to the idea that rational beings are inherently purposive beings. This is to say that rational beings represent fundamentally and intrinsically (loci) sources of goals and projects. From this perspective, if it is indeed what Kant means, rational beings—humans, spirits, as well as God—possess absolute (or unconditional) value in virtue of being essentially fountains of rational purposive activity. Additionally, directly after the quote above, Kant writes the following: "All objects of inclinations have a conditional worth only; for if the inclinations, and the needs founded on them, did not exist, their object would be without worth. […] Therefore the worth of any object to be acquired by our action is always conditional."[20] Here's what I make of this qualification. There are two issues I want to underscore, the role of inclinations and the creation of value. I will begin with the former.

The meaning of "inclination" has historically pointed to a tendency or disposition to behave, think, or feel in a particular way. It is a readiness or willingness to do something. It can also mean a preference for a person, party, proposal, a leaning, or a bias.[21] Although not strictly an emotion, like an emotion, an inclination typically has an intention of an object it fixates on.[22] The attention of the inclination is triggered by the goals or projects antecedent to the inclination. Thus, inclinations represent a set of purposive behaviors. But something else occurs. According to Kant, we

[18] Kant, I., 2011. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: A German-English Edition*, ibid., p. 84–85. Italics are in the German text and the English translation.

[19] Cambridge Dictionary, 2026. "Zweck". [Accessed: 2026-5-27]. Available at: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/german-english/zweck?q=Zweck.

[20] Kant, I., 2011. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: A German-English Edition*, ibid., p. 85.

[21] Oxford English Dictionary, 2026. "inclination (n.), sense I.1.a,". [Accessed: 2026-5-27]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1175030405.

[22] Here I am following Elliot D. Cohen's view of the intentionality of emotions to understand the notion of an inclination. See Cohen, E. D., 2022. *Cognitive-Behavior Interventions for Self-Defeating Thoughts*. New York: Routledge, p. 16. More work is needed to chisel out more precisely the notion of "inclination."

add value to any object of our inclinations, value it did not have prior to our intentional inclination. Following Cohen here again, another way to put this, e.g., like emotions, an individual's inclinations rate or evaluate the intentional objects of the inclinations.[23] Thus, some of these intentional ratings may contain some sort of positive or negative value about the object, i.e., value (or disvalue) which is conditional in the sense that its value (or disvalue) temporarily serves a personal purpose.

Kant on Making a Lying Promise

Although I have partially and briefly discussed Kant's second formula, it may be useful to explain how he applies it to an other-regarding strict duty. Of this duty, Kant writes:

> *Secondly*, as far as necessary or owed duty to others is concerned, someone who has it in mind to make a lying promise to others will see at once that he wants to make use of another human being *merely as a means*, who does not at the same time contain in himself the end. For the one I want to use for my purposes by such a promise cannot possibly agree to my way of proceeding with him and thus himself contain the end of this action.[24]

In this situation, an individual, P_1, plans to make a lying promise to another individual, P_2. Although Kant does not explicitly state what instrument value P_2 possesses that P_1 desires to exploit,[25] Kant nevertheless remarks that P_1 will understand the following intuition: because of the lying promise he intends to exploit P_2 with, P_1 understands that the goal he intends to pursue is not the same goal P_2 thinks he will attain. The reason is that if P_2 understood what P_1 was going to do, P_2 would immediately object to P_1's plan and goal. This is to say that P_2 would not assent to be treated merely as a means.

The Formula of the End in Itself and Counselor Boundary Violations

Scott Owen's case illustrates serious boundary violations between a counse-

[23] Ibid., p. 17.

[24] Kant, I., 2011. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: A German-English Edition*, ibid., p. 89.

[25] Kant does state that the examples he uses to illustrate the Second Formula of the Categorical Imperative are in keeping with the previous examples he used to spell out the meaning of the First Formula of the Categorical Imperative. In the First Formula he puts in place a case where someone needs to borrow money but has no intention of paying back. Ibid., p. 87. With this in mind though, Kant does not explicitly mention the same case.

lor and a client. In this last section, I intend to discuss three obvious abuses: client manipulation, infringement of client dignity, and the breach of informed consent.

Client Manipulation

Owen's approach to counseling and to his clients employed the use of manipulation. By "manipulation" I follow Beauchamp and Childress: "[M]anipulation is a generic term for several forms of influence that are neither persuasive nor coercive. The essence of manipulation is swaying people to do what the manipulator wants by means other than coercion or persuasion."[26] Moreover, Beauchamp and Childress explain that a "[…] key form of manipulation is informational manipulation" which is the "deliberate act of managing information that nonpersuasively alters a person's understanding of a situation and thereby motivates him or her to do what the agent of influence intends."[27]

The question is how did Owen manipulate his clients and from the perspective of the Formula of the End in Itself, why is this wrong? I will begin with the former.

According to the investigations of ProPublica, some of the Bishops of the LDS sent to Owen young Mormon men who admitted to having same-sex desires. Owen would employ a form of Conversion Therapy to help the young men change their sexual orientation. Unfortunately, using his authority as a counselor and as a LDS Bishop, Owen would convince his clients that "[…] touching was a therapeutic way to learn how to accept love and intimacy."[28] Without understanding what was really going on, Owen would subtly turn the touching into sexual touching sessions.

So, the question is this: Did Owen violate Kant's Second Formula? A strong case can be made that Owen violated, on many occasions, his deep obligation to protect and enhance his client's autonomy and rational decision-making process. For example, Owen manipulated (many of) his young male clients. He deliberately and nonpersuasively altered his client's understanding of the methods he planned to use to help them change their sexual orientation. Thus, because Owen (secretly) intended to misrepresent himself to his clients, Owen knew that the goal he intended to pursue, viz., the goal of his own sexual gratification, was not the same goal his clients

[26] Beauchamp, T. L., Childress, J. F., 2001. *Principle of Biomedical Ethics*, 5th ed. Oxford University Press, p. 95.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Schreifels, J., The Salt Lake Tribune, 2025. *Utah Ex-Therapist Scott Owen Sentenced to Prison for Sexually Abusing Patients*, ibid.

thought they would attain. The reason is that if his clients understood what Owen was going to do, they would immediately object to Owen's plan and goal. This is to say that his clients would not assent to be treated merely as a means.

Infringement of Client Dignity

Owen's approach to counseling and to his clients failed to respect the dignity of his clients. Why is this so? Above, a case was made that Owen treated many of his clients as merely as a means. This is to say that Owen used his clients to satisfy his own sexual desires, a goal that his clients did not share. But why is this morally significant? To treat an individual in such a manner fails to recognize and fails to treat that individual as an End. Thus, Owen's behavior failed to recognize and missed the mark to treat many of his clients as Ends.

But what are we to make of this? I made the point above that to recognize that such a being is an End is to recognize that this being is a loci or fountain of rational purposive behavior. From such a viewpoint, rational beings create goals and projects. Such an acknowledgement, then, serves as the foundation for the intrinsic moral worth of all rational beings. It also requires that all rational beings must be treated with respect and dignity. Thus, because Owen treated many of his clients as merely a means, Owen failed, not only to recognize the intrinsic moral worth of the individuals who were his clients, but he also failed to live up to the counseling obligation to treat his clients with respect and dignity.

The Breach of Informed Consent

The last section to discuss is the moral impermissibility of violating the value of informed consent. Before I discuss this issue, what does informed consent mean? Again, I follow Beauchamp and Childress' view of informed consent. Briefly, informed consent involves an information component and a comprehensive component. Of the former, Beauchamp and Childress write: "The informational component refers to disclosure of information and comprehension of what is disclosed."[29] Of the latter, "The consent component refers to both a voluntary decision and an authorization to proceed."[30] Thus, as Beauchamp and Childress make clear that there are five components of informed consent: "(1) competence,

[29] Beauchamp, T. L., Childress, J. F., 2001. *Principle of Biomedical Ethics*, 5th ed. Oxford University Press, ibid., p. 79.
[30] Ibid.

(2) disclosure, (3) understanding, (4) voluntariness, and (5) consent."[31]

Because of the complexity of this definition, I will focus only on the violation of (2) disclosure. The notion of disclosure remains an essential aspect of informed consent. In fact, as Beauchamp and Childress make clear, historically speaking, it has been treated as the sole condition of informed consent.[32] Nevertheless, while disclosure makes sense as a necessary condition, too many counterexamples run forward, protesting that it cannot be a sufficient condition. Thus, other conditions must be in place before something like informed consent can be captured.

As an important necessary condition, disclosure has received a lot of attention in need of a standard. Beauchamp and Childress list three standards of disclosure: the professional practice standard, the reasonable person standard, and the subject standard.[33] Beauchamp and Childress reject the first two standards and (guardedly) endorse the third standard. I will briefly discuss all three standards starting with the first one. After that, I will apply the third standard to the Owen case.

The professional practice standard "holds that a professional communities customary practices determine adequate disclosure."[34] Briefly, this means that professionals in the professional industry determine what information would satisfy the disclosure standard.[35] One obvious problem with this standard, and as Beauchamp and Childress make clear, the most compelling objection, "the professional practice standard subverts the right of autonomous choice."[36]

The second standard does not, likewise, fare well. The reasonable person standard turns on the assumption that the relevant information during a disclosure is "measured by the significance a [hypothetical] reasonable person would attach to it..."[37] One problem with this standard points to the challenge of how to use such a standard. In particular, as Beauchamp and Childress clarify, the "abstract and hypothetical character makes it difficult for"[38] professionals to use.

The final standard, i.e., the subjective standard, unlike the reasonable person standard, "judges adequacy of information by reference to the

[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., pp. 80–81.
[33] Ibid., pp. 80–83.
[34] Ibid., p. 81.
[35] Ibid., p. 82.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

specific informational needs of the individual person."[39] This standard recognizes that different individuals have different disclosure needs, and as a result, disclosure "should be tailored to the individual."[40] Although Beauchamp and Childress state that this standard is the morally preferable standard of disclosure, it may still be insufficient in certain contexts, including the complex contexts of the legal industry and ethical situations.[41]

The subjective standard of disclosure brings to light something in Kant's Formula of the End of Itself that may be overlooked. Here's what I mean. Kant writes: "[…] someone who has it in mind to make a lying promise to others will see at once that he wants to make use of another human being *merely as a means*, who does not at the same time contain in himself the end."[42] What emerges from this example effectively illustrates the subjective standard of disclosure from the viewpoint of the individual who makes the lying promise. This is to say that when the individual makes the lying promise, he immediately realizes that the information he withholds is (subjectively) relevant information needed for disclosure and, as a result, the satisfaction of informed consent.

Thus, the discussion above brings light to the Owen case. Counselors have an obligation to treat their clients as rational decision-makers capable of informed consent. To ensure that this obligation is discharged, the counselor must disclose any information to the client in order to satisfy the subjective standard of disclosure. To intentionally leave out information that would affect the consent of the client points to treating the client as merely as a means. That is, if the counselor immediately realizes that withholding relevant information will affect the outcome in his favor, he understands that this will violate his duty of informed consent.

This leads to my final point. The above discussion demonstrates the egregious nature of Owen's actions. During his Conversion Therapy sessions, each time Owen recommended to the young Mormon men that "touching was a therapeutic way to learn how to accept love and intimacy," he immediately realized his failure of disclosure. Put another way, when Owen comprehended that the information he withheld was necessary to bring about his immoral goals and projects, he realized that the information he withheld from the young men, and if known to the young men, would undermine the nature of his sexual exploitations.

[39] Ibid., p. 83.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Kant, I., 2011. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: A German-English Edition*, ibid., p. 87.

Conclusion

The focus of this paper concentrates on the implications that Kant's Second Formula of the Categorical Imperative has for boundary violations in a counseling setting. I argue that Owen violated several important counseling values essentially treating his clients as merely as a means: First, Owen failed to protect and enhance his client's autonomy and rational decision-making process. Instead, on numerous occasions, Owen manipulated his clients to satisfy his sexual pleasures. This is to say that, using his authority as a counselor and as a Bishop of the LDS church, Owen deliberately and nonpersuasionly distorted his client's perspectives with the following result: He compromised his client's ability to make rationally informed decisions and, thus, undermined his client's ability to understand Owen's egregious goals. Second, instead of treating his clients as an End, i.e., as loci or fountains of rational purposive behavior with unconditional value, he violated the dignity of his clients, i.e., his actions humiliated his clients and diminished their self-worth. Third, Owen failed to respect the counseling value of informed consent. Owen withheld relevant information that affected the outcomes in his favor while, at the same, understanding that he was violating his duty of informed consent.

In the end, one of the great outstanding features of Kant's second formula of the Categorical Imperative is how it underscores the importance of the APA professional code (and other codes like it): "Psychologists do not engage in sexual intimacies with current therapy/patients."[43] As this article attempted to make clear, it needs no great play of imagination to see that the violation of this code leads to morally reprehensible consequences.

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The Transcendental Deduction of the Categories in the B Edition of The *Critique of Pure Reason*: Necessity and Sufficiency in the Conditions of Objective Judgment

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Abstract: This article reconstructs the Transcendental Deduction in the B edition of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as a two-stage strategy. It aims to clarify and reinforce the claim that the pure concepts of the understanding (the categories) possess objective validity only in relation to possible experience – a claim that establishes the transcendental conditions for objective judgment and its normative application.

First, by examining §§15–20, the paper argues that the unity required for cognition "in general" is grounded in the original synthetic unity of apperception: the "I think" must be able to accompany all my representations, while the logical functions of judgment provide the categorial forms as rules of synthesis. Second, through §§22–26 (with §21 serving as the pivot), the analysis demonstrates how this general result becomes specifically necessary for our spatio-temporal sensibility. The synthesis of apprehension and the determination of inner sense require categorial unity for any empirical intuition to constitute an object of experience.

The central interpretive proposal is that the first stage secures the sufficiency of the categories for cognition in general, while the second establishes their necessity for objectively valid experience, thereby delimiting their legitimate use to the domain of possible experience.
Key words: Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason (B Edition), Transcendental Deduction, Categories, Apperception, Objective Validity, Synthesis, Judgment, Possible Experience, Transcendental Philosophy, Normativity, Conditions of Judgment, Figurative Synthesis (synthesis speciosa), Transcendental Idealism

The academic controversy concerning the architectural layout of the Transcendental Deduction in the second edition [B] of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* revolves primarily around the interpretive challenge that Dieter

Henrich famously designated as the “two-steps-in-one-proof” problem.[1] Within the B-Deduction, the philosopher appears to formulate the identical conclusion twice: initially in §20 and subsequently in §26. To elucidate this singular structure, earlier commentators advanced two principal interpretations, both of which Henrich ultimately dismisses.

Erich Adickes and H. J. Paton sought to resolve this structural tension by appealing to Kant’s distinction within the first edition’s preface [A] between the objective and subjective dimensions of the deduction. They propose that §20 completes the proof of objective validity, whereas §26 demonstrates the subjective conditions of application. On the other hand, Benno Erdmann and Herman de Vleeschauwer offered a distinct structural explanation based on another Kantian distinction: the argumentative trajectories “from above” and “from below”. They propose that §20 be understood as a deduction “from above,” while §26 is to be regarded as a deduction “from below”.

Dieter Henrich revolutionized the interpretation of the B-Deduction by exposing the fatal deficiencies in both preceding positions. He rejected the Adickes/Paton reading because Kant explicitly affirms in §21 that the demonstration of the categories’ validity is only fully attained in §26, meaning §26 cannot be merely a subjective psychological deduction. He rejected the Erdmann/de Vleeschauwer reading because the argument in §20 cannot be seen strictly as a deduction “from above,” since it also starts with the manifold of sensible intuition. Instead, Henrich proposed that the two steps are united by a logical restriction that is established in the first step and overcome in the second. According to his reading, the result of the proof in §20 is valid only for those intuitions which already contain unity. He argues that the novelty of the second step (§26) is that it overcomes this restriction by looking at human sensibility: in our representations of space and time we have intuitions which contain unity and which at the same time include everything that can be present to our senses. Because space and time guarantee unity for all our sense-data, the categories are proven to be universally valid for all objects of our senses.

Against this background, I propose a fresh conceptual framing compared to Henrich’s restricted-to-unrestricted progression. While Henrich focuses on the transition from “intuitions with unity” to “all spatial-temporal intuitions”, I argue that the focus should shift to the philosophical stakes of the categories themselves: the transition from *sufficiency* to *necessity*, and from *validity* to *reality*.

[1] Henrich, D., 1969. The Proof-Structure of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction. *The Review of Metaphysics*, 22(4), p. 640.

As I articulate in my analysis, the first part of the deduction (§§15–20) argues for the sufficiency of the categories for knowledge *in general.*[2] At this stage, they are merely rules for synthesizing a general manifold, meaning they possess objective validity but not yet objective reality. The novelty of my hypothesis lies in interpreting the second step (§§22–26) not merely as the removal of a quantitative restriction, as Henrich suggests, but as the crucial ontological anchoring of these concepts. By applying the categories specifically to spatial-temporal intuition, I demonstrate that the second part argues for their necessity in producing valid knowledge according to the forms of sensibility. Therefore, my hypothesis reframes the two-step structure: I maintain that the first part of the transcendental deduction argues the *objective validity* of the categories, and the second part argues their *objective reality.*[3] This offers a compelling alternative to Henrich by emphasizing that §26 is required to prove that categories are actually constitutive of a concrete, spatial-temporal object, rather than just formally valid for an abstract consciousness.

The transcendental deduction of the categories took up the most time during Kant's writing of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. However, his effort to solve the problem of applying categories to intuitions continued even after the 1781 edition. Six years after the *princeps* edition, and following several attempts to argue the transcendental deduction of the categories, Kant published the final version of this argumentation.

Comparing the two main editions, one immediately notices the segmentation of the discussed topics into paragraphs in the B edition. The motivation for this is given by Kant at the end of the section: "Only up to this point have I found it necessary to divide the text into paragraphs, because we were dealing with elementary concepts".[4] Additionally, one can discern two sections of the deduction: §§15–20 and §§22–26, complemented by §21 as a moment of *respiro*. Added to these are two concluding paragraphs, §27 and *A brief summary of this deduction*.

[2] Cf. Kant, I., 2025 (reprint). *Critique of Pure Reason* B. Transl. and eds. by Guyer, P., Wood A. W. (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, B 144–145. Here I refer to the segmentation of the deduction where the unity of the manifold is proven relative to an empirical consciousness given in general (§§15–20), prior to its necessary connection to the forms of spatial-temporal sensibility (§§22–26).

[3] By "objective validity" I refer to the categories functioning as sufficient conditions for the unification of a manifold in general, whereas "objective reality" denotes their necessity in constituting a concrete spatial-temporal object (a thing).

[4] Kant, I., 1998. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Ed. by Timmermann, J. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, B 169. *Nur bis hieher habe ich die Abteilungen in Paragraphen nötig gefunden, weil wir es mit den Elementarbegriffen zu tun hatten*

The division of the deduction into two sections can be justified starting from §21 *Observation*. "[...] the empirical consciousness of a given manifold [my emphasis] in a single intuition is subject to a pure *a priori* self-consciousness, exactly as empirical intuition is subject to a pure sensible intuition, which also takes place *a priori*. The above proposition is the beginning of a deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding [...]".[5] Another fragment outlines what will be proven in the following paragraphs: "In what follows (§26) it will be shown, from the way in which the empirical intuition [my emphasis] is given in sensibility, that the unity of this intuition is no other than that which the category prescribes in general [...] to the manifold of a given intuition".[6]

That is to say, in §§15–20 it is proven that the unity of the manifold is given by the categories, relative to an empirical consciousness given in general, whereas in §§22–26 it is proven that the unity of the manifold of a spatial-temporal sensible intuition is given only through the intervention of the categories. In other words, the categories are conditions of possibility for knowledge, and through the necessity of unifying any manifold, they simultaneously possess objective validity. Kant's argumentation, however, will not be entirely faithful to this division of purpose, as the author intertwines arguments favorable to both stages. A hypothesis worth considering is that the first part of the transcendental deduction of the categories in the B edition argues for the sufficiency of the categories for knowledge *in general*, while the second part argues for their necessity in producing valid knowledge *according to the forms of sensibility*. Thus, the transcendental deduction would argue that the categories are both necessary and sufficient for knowledge.

Paragraphs §15–§20

Paragraph §15 debates the possibility of a connection of the manifold in general. The connection of the manifold given to intuition is the result of spontaneity. Intuition itself is merely receptivity, meaning it does not produce any necessary connection of that manifold. It follows that only the

[5] Ibid., B 144: [...] *das empirische Bewußtsein eines gegebenen Mannigfaltigen einer Anschauung ist eben so wohl einem reinen Selbstbewußtsein a priori unterworfen, wie empirische Anschauung einer reinen sinnlichen, die ebenfalls a priori statt hat. – Der obige Satz ist der Anfang einer Deduktion der reinen Verstandesbegriffe* [...].
[6] Ibid., B 144–145: *In der Folge (§ 26) wird nun aus der Art, wie die empirische Anschauung in der Sinnlichkeit gegeben wird, gezeigt werden, daß die Einheit derselben keine andere sei, als welche die Kategorie in genere [...] dem Mannigfaltigen einer gegebenen Anschauung überhaupt vorschreibt;*

understanding can produce that synthesis. One of the premises from which we start is that the understanding is a faculty of synthesis, sensibility one of reception, and neither produces the result of the other. Moreover, it starts from the premise that the manifold is given separately, successively (this premise was demonstrated in transcendental deduction A, which we abstract from in edition B). The basis of this idea is the fact that whatever is analyzed must previously have been synthesized. The connection in question need not be conscious; it can be a connection of the manifold of intuition or even of concepts. In the case of the synthesis of the manifold of intuition, Kant states that it does not matter whether this (intuition) is sensible or non-sensible. In the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, empirical and non-empirical (pure) intuitions were defined based on their content. The former have empirical content and the latter have pure content, but both are sensible. Kant brings into discussion here the *non-sensible* intuition, which can only be what he calls intellectual intuition. The claim of this paragraph is, therefore, that even in the case of non-sensible intuition, the understanding is what produces a synthesis of the manifold. How such an understanding would produce a synthesis can only be found through speculation, not proven (for generic consciousness, non-sensible intuition is exclusively a hypothesis that can only be thought, but by no means objectively valid, since we cannot abstract from our own cognitive faculties). However, if this thesis is juxtaposed with Kant's claim that, in the case of intellectual intuition, the categories no longer have any validity, because along with the intuition of a thing, it is also created, the following problem arises: what kind of synthesis does the understanding produce, and moreover, by means of what concepts? Here a contradiction seems to arise: if the understanding is intuitive, then it no longer uses categories, and if intuition does not produce any synthesis, what kind of support does the understanding have to produce the connection? These speculations are marginal to the purpose of the *Critique of Pure Reason*; they do not affect the main argument in any way. The reasoning that leads to these conclusions starts from how a rational being endowed with sensibility reaches knowledge, and then, through an exercise of imagination, certain features are abstracted. The contradiction the argument reaches, whether it pertains to the nature of the new faculty (the intuitive understanding) or resides in the impossibility of applying those conclusions to human knowledge, shows one thing: namely, that our cognitive faculties are none other than the ones mentioned—sensibility and understanding. In the following paragraphs, Kant will address the possibility of the divine, intuitive understanding, in order to argue the necessity and uniqueness of the categories for knowledge.

The concept of *synthesis* shows that "we can represent nothing as combined in the object without having previously combined it ourselves, and that among all representations, combination is the only one which cannot be given through objects".[7] Following an argument similar to the one in the first edition, it can easily be shown that this connection cannot be given by objects because only following the intervention of the understanding is an object composed; thus, only what the understanding has united in the object can subsequently be analyzed. But here Kant does nothing more than an analysis of the concept of connection, and it was previously established at the beginning of this paragraph that the connection of a manifold cannot come from the senses or from elsewhere, but only from the understanding".[8] In the footnote on the same page, Kant preempts a possible objection. If representations are identical, can they be thought analytically one through the other? The answer is negative, because even if the analysis of representations allows the relation of identity between them, the synthesis was made through the consciousness of those representations, so that even if they are identical, the consciousness of them is not, because it differs objectively from the other in temporal succession. The identity relation of representations is itself synthetic, unitary. The necessity of unity is demanded by the very objectivity of knowledge, which, without this unity, would not be possible, and would consist only of a concatenation of representations that would have no claims to consistency. It is, once again, obvious that the category of unity alone cannot provide this unity of synthesis, because it is that unity (indivisible) thought in relation to multiplicity, therefore quantitatively, whereas the unity targeted here is qualitative. What is not clear, following the interpretation of the deduction from the first edition, is the statement: "The category already presupposes combination".[9] But, abstracting from the first edition of the deduction, it has been established up to this point that we have pure concepts of the understanding which are used in judgments as logical functions. The categories at this moment do not have a transcendental character; their role in the process of organizing the objectivity of experience has not yet been deduced. Thus, all that can be said is that, to use the categories (as indicated in the metaphysical deduction), the connection

[7] Ibid., B 130: *wir uns nichts als im Object verbunden vorstellen können, ohne es vorher selbst verbunden zu haben, und unter allen Vorstellungen die Verbindung die einzige ist, die nicht durch Objecte gegeben [...] werden kann.*

[8] Ibid., B 130–131: *Der Begriff der Verbindung führt aber, außer dem Begriffe des Mannigfaltigen und der Synthesis desselben, noch den der Einheit desselben bei sich.*

[9] Ibid., B 131: *Also setzt die Kategorie schon Verbindung voraus.*

of the manifold must already be established, because here the logical use of the categories is involved, not the transcendental one. Only later will it be proven that the logical use of the categories has as its ground their transcendental employment. Therefore, the unity that the objectivity of experience necessarily requires is given neither by the senses nor by the categories (with the previous mention), so that the only possibility of explanation must be sought "higher up [...] namely in that which contains the ground of the unity of diverse concepts in judgments".[10]

Paragraph §16 presents the original synthetic unity of apperception, a unity required in the previous analysis. "The I think must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that the representation would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me."[11] Reformulated, the argument maintains that any representation can be accompanied by its consciousness, and if it cannot be accompanied by the corresponding consciousness, then it means that, for the subject, it has no relevance. It is highlighted by the author that this consciousness is necessary regarding the possibility of accompanying a representation, but it does not necessarily accompany every representation. In other words, I can have representations of which I am not conscious, but I cannot have representations of which I cannot be conscious, or at least, if I have them, they have no meaning for me, and I cannot use them in any way. Furthermore, the entire discourse about representations of which I cannot be conscious is inherently aporetic, because it actually speaks about what cannot be spoken about, according to the premises of the discourse.

If this judgment must be consistent with any representation about which I can say it is mine, then it can be deduced from here that the entire manifold of intuition also has a necessary relation, regarding its possibility, with the judgment: *I think*. The mentioned judgment is an act of the understanding and cannot be considered as belonging to sensibility because, above all, being a judgment, it must include a synthesis, which cannot be a product of receptivity. But this judgment should not be thought of as a representation of a substantial *I*, which would subsist permanently; the "I" is not identified with the soul. It is merely a function of synthesis. Kant calls the "I think" judgment "pure apperception," or "original apperception". This is

[10] Ibid.: *höher [...]nämlich in demjenigen, was den Grund der Einheit verschiedener Begriffe in Urteilen [...] enthält.*

[11] Ibid., B 131–132: *Das: Ich denke, muß alle meine Vorstellungen begleiten können; denn sonst würde etwas in mir vorgestellt werden, was gar nicht gedacht werden könnte, welches eben so viel heißt, als die Vorstellung würde entweder unmöglich, oder wenigstens für mich nichts sein.*

pure inasmuch as it is distinguished from empirical apperception; the latter is an apperception of the internal states of the subject, constantly changing, so that it cannot accompany the representations of the manifold to confer unity upon them. Moreover, pure apperception is considered original precisely because it must be able to accompany all other representations, "being one and the same in all consciousness".[12] "The unity of this representation I call also the transcendental unity of self-consciousness, in order to indicate the possibility of a priori knowledge arising from it."[13] The relation with the identity of the subject takes place not by the fact that pure apperception accompanies any representation, but "by the fact that I add one representation to another and am conscious of their synthesis".[14] Thus, if all my representations must be able to be accompanied by pure apperception, the latter in turn is not possible except when a synthesis of a manifold is achieved; it itself does not have a content of its own, so as not to depend on the material of sensibility. Therefore, any analytical unity of apperception is possible only because a synthetic unity of it was previously achieved. All representations can be united in one consciousness and called "mine," and only in this way is the synthesis of the manifold possible, because otherwise "I should have as many-colored and diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious".[15]

Since pure apperception is a condition of possibility for the synthesis of any manifold, because it must be able to accompany any synthesis and is the condition of the consciousness of any synthesis inasmuch as it is thought, and, moreover, is achieved only within the synthesis of the manifold, having no proper content, it "precedes a priori all my determinate thinking".[16] Kant admits that this principle of the identity of apperception, the *I think* judgment, is an analytical principle, because identity is an analytical relation. But, even if it is so, it still contains a synthesis, that of the manifold of intuition, which cannot reach unity outside pure apperception. Only through intuition can the manifold be given, and only applied to a manifold does pure apperception have meaning.

Paragraph §17 shows that the principle of the synthetic unity of apper-

[12] Ibid., B 132: *in allem Bewußtsein ein und dasselbe ist.*

[13] Ibid.: *Die Einheit dieser Vorstellung nenne ich auch die transzendentale Einheit des Selbstbewußtseins, um die Möglichkeit der Erkenntnis a priori aus ihr zu bezeichnen.*

[14] Ibid., B 133: *dadurch, daß ich eine Vorstellung zu der andern hinzusetze und mir der Synthesis derselben bewußt bin.*

[15] Ibid., B 134: *ich ein so vielfarbiges, verschiedenes Selbst haben würde, als ich Vorstellungen habe, deren ich mir bewußt bin.*

[16] Ibid., *vor allem meinem bestimmten Denken a priori vorhergeht.*

ception is the supreme principle of all employment of the understanding. Just as in the case of sensibility the supreme principle of any intuition was that the entire manifold be subject to the forms of sensibility, similarly, the supreme principle of the unity of synthesis relative to the understanding is that the sensible manifold be subject to the conditions of transcendental apperception. "Under the first principle stand all the manifold representations of intuition, in so far as they are given to us; under the second, in so far as they must be capable of being combined in one consciousness".[17]

The relation of representations to an object presupposes the unity of those representations, because otherwise the object cannot be conceived. But this unity is possible due to transcendental apperception. Therefore, pure apperception is what ensures the relation of representations to the corresponding objects, thus making knowledge possible. The very possibility of the understanding is grounded on this unity of apperception.

Kant brings back into discussion the intuitive understanding. The unity of apperception is a principle of knowledge only for "[...] an understanding through whose pure self-consciousness in the representation 'I am', the manifold of intuition would at the same time be given".[18] Thus, through the representation of my own state, if pure apperception is devoid of content, it means that the understanding is not intuitive, and its content must come from sensibility. But how is pure apperception possible in the representation devoid of content: "*I am*"? Since, as Kant stated earlier, transcendental apperception is itself possible only in the case of a synthesis of representations; it contains a synthesis, even if it reflects an analytical principle. What exactly is connected in the representation "*I am*" since nothing manifold is given? Moreover, the existence of this "*I*" must be an empirical existence, that is, sensory. I consider that the argument must be interpreted from the following perspective: since a pure apperception devoid of any content is not possible for the human understanding, it means that all content must come from sensibility. If a pure apperception without the contribution of sensibility were possible, then the only possibility to have a content would be an intuitive understanding which, along with thinking of an object, would also lead to the creation of that object. It is easily observed that this is not the case with the human understanding. In arguing the impossibility of another type of understanding, Kant states that the human understanding cannot form "the least concept of any other possible understanding, either of one

[17] Ibid., B 136–137: *Unter dem ersteren stehen alle mannigfaltige Vorstellungen der Anschauung, sofern sie uns gegeben werden, unter dem zweiten, sofern sie in einem Bewußtsein verbunden werden müssen.*
[18] Ibid., B 138–139: *ein Verstand, durch dessen reines Selbstbewußtsein in der Vorstellung: Ich bin, zugleich das Mannigfaltige der Anschauung gegeben würde.*

that would itself intuit, or of one that, while possessing a sensible intuition, would possess one of a different kind from that which underlies space and time."[19] But, if a concept about another type of understanding cannot be constituted, what kind of concept is what Kant calls divine understanding, or intuitive understanding, from which he deduces the conclusion that thinking an object is the same as producing it? A certain kind of concept is possible since we speak of the "intuitive understanding". This is, as referred to at the beginning of the work regarding the concepts of "happiness", "fate", etc., a usurped concept, which has no meaning, but can have a corresponding reality. The "intuitive understanding" is not a discursive concept, nor an empirical one, and even less a pure, original concept. It is a negative concept, obtained by eliminating the possibility of a manifold given through sensibility. The intuitive understanding is inherently contradictory; it cannot be thought simultaneously as intuitive and as a function of synthesis, so it could have an absolute reality, which however could never be an object of knowledge for us. The intuitive understanding has the same significance as the concept of a "square circle" – it is impossible to know, although it exists as a term in language and we can operate various judgments with it, in a meta-discourse.

Paragraph §18 summarizes the previous ideas about transcendental apperception. "The transcendental unity of apperception is that unity through which all the manifold given in an intuition is united in a concept of the object."[20] Up to now it has been shown that the transcendental unity of apperception is necessary for the knowledge of the object; but this fragment says more than that, namely that this unity is what reunites the manifold given by intuition into the concept. What remains to be proven is how transcendental apperception, in its unity, reunites the manifold, meaning it produces the synthesis. Is apperception more than a condition of the possibility of synthesizing a manifold that constitutes itself into an object, an active function, of reuniting the manifold? It can also be interpreted otherwise. As transcendental unity, apperception reunites the manifold into a concept about the object. Transcendental unity, however, presupposes more than the simple requirement of consistency of the manifold with the judgment "I think", but at this moment Kant does not yet present these synthesis functions that constitute the transcendental unity of apperception and that re-

[19] Ibid., B 139: *nicht den mindesten Begriff von einem andern möglichen Verstande machen können, weder von einem solchen, der selbst anschaute, noch der zwar einer sinnlichen Anschauung, aber von anderer Art, als die im Raume und der Zeit zum Grunde liegt, fähig wäre.*

[20] Ibid.: *Die transzendentale Einheit der Apperzeption ist diejenige, durch welche alles in einer Anschauung gegebene Mannigfaltige in einen Begriff vom Objekt vereinigt wird.*

alize the synthesis of the manifold. They will be presented in the following paragraphs, so the statement at the beginning of this fragment must be taken with the reservation of the lack of proof in its favor. It is still uncertain *how* apperception conditions the synthesis of the manifold.

At the end of the paragraph, the differences are resumed between the subjective unity of consciousness, which is always empirical and changing, and the objective unity of consciousness, *a priori* and permanently identical with itself. The former is a determination of inner sense, whereas the latter is a condition of possibility of the former and has an objective validity.

Paragraph §19 details the role of categories in the scheme of knowledge, by referring to the logical form of all judgments, a form that consists in the objective unity of the apperception of the concepts contained therein. The logic of his time presents judgment as the relation between two concepts, which displeases Kant, because this definition applies exclusively to categorical judgments and does not account for hypothetical or disjunctive judgments. Another Kantian dissatisfaction is the distinct presentation of the four syllogistic figures, which in fact, in his opinion, are but a single figure (the first) and variations of it. But, bypassing these logical obstacles, what matters here is the relation established by the understanding between concepts. If the definition of judgment is a clear one or if the four syllogistic figures are indeed distinct and independent, these problems affect rather the metaphysical deduction of the categories and less their transcendental deduction. In the relation established between concepts, if one distinguishes what belongs to the understanding from what belongs to reproductive imagination, to the extent that the intervention of reproductive imagination is merely subjective, while the activity of the understanding is objective, "I find that a judgment is nothing but the manner in which given modes of knowledge are brought to the objective unity of apperception."[21] Thus, to judge presupposes, as in the case of the synthesis of any representations, the requirement of consistency with pure apperception. The difference between a simple association of representations and a judgment is given by the copula "is", which distinguishes subjective unity from objective unity. It designates "the relation of the representations to the original apperception, and their necessary unity".[22] Even if the judgment is empirical, hence contingent, it nonetheless includes a necessity, namely that the relation in intuition of representations to one another, although not necessary, is made "in virtue

[21] Ibid., B 141: *so finde ich, daß ein Urteil nichts andres sei, als die Art, gegebene Erkenntnisse zur objektiven Einheit der Apperzeption zu bringen.*

[22] Ibid., B 142: *Beziehung derselben auf die ursprüngliche Apperzeption und die notwendige Einheit derselben.*

of the necessary unity of apperception in the synthesis of intuitions, that is, according to principles of the objective determination of all representations, in so far as knowledge can be acquired by means of these representations".[23] All these principles, Kant says, are derived from the fundamental principle of the transcendental unity of apperception. The confusion that arises stems from the qualification of necessity conferred on all judgments when it is known from the *Introduction* that only *a priori* judgments have this attribute, not the empirical ones. What is necessary in any judgment is the unity of apperception, which is itself *a priori*, but this unity does not have a content independent of sensibility, such that it produces a necessary judgment regarding the relation of the subject with the predicate. Moreover, if one takes into account that *a priori* judgments are necessary since they do not rely on experience, then understanding that any judgment is necessary, since the synthesis of representations is made according to the necessity of transcendental apperception, is erroneous, because the necessity of a judgment is not given by the relation with transcendental apperception, but is given, if applicable, by the relation between its representations. In other words, the synthesis of the representations of the manifold must be made, to become a cognition, in accordance with the requirements of the unity of original apperception, but these requirements are not a sufficient condition of the necessity of the synthesis, but only a necessary one. Kant offers two examples: the judgment "bodies are heavy"[24] is not a necessary judgment, even if the synthesis of the representations of "body" and "weight" was made necessarily respecting the conditions of the unity of pure apperception. These conditions make this judgment a cognition, but they do not make it a necessary judgment. Cognition represents an objective relation of representations, unlike their simple association in reproductive imagination. The same representations remain at the status of subjective unity if stated in the following formulation: "If I support a body, I feel an impression of weight".[25] This latter judgment is called in the *Prolegomena* a judgment of perception, which constitutes a synthesis of a manifold, but does not reach the level of an objective unity. The two representations are not united in the object, so that I can say "It, the body, is heavy";[26] they do not represent something independent of the subject's state, of the one who thinks that judgment. In the *Prolegomena*, the latter judgment, the judgment of perception, is named

[23] Ibid.: *vermöge der notwendigen Einheit der Apperzeption in der Synthesis der Anschauungen, d. i. nach Prinzipien der objektiven Bestimmung aller Vorstellungen, sofern daraus Erkenntnis werden kann*
[24] Ibid.: *Körper sind schwer.*
[25] Ibid.: *Wenn ich einen Körper trage, so fühle ich einen Druck der Schwere.*
[26] Ibid.: *Er, der Körper, ist schwer.*

so only with the reservation that, in fact, it does not represent a judgment proper – according to the definition given above for judgment B 141.

The principles that "objectively determine all representations"[27] are in fact the categories, all of them resulting from the original apperception. Of course, the principles of pure understanding, which will be treated later, are those rules that condition the synthesis of the manifold into an objective unity, but they themselves are rules of applying the categories to experience, so, down to the last condition, they are also derived, or "deduced" from transcendental apperception. Paragraph §18 leaves undecided the way in which pure apperception, in its unity, conditions the unity of the synthesis of the manifold. In paragraph §19 the problem still remains undecided, but a new perspective is added to it: the same unity of original apperception is the condition both for the objective unity of the synthesis of the manifold and for the objective unity of the synthesis of representations in a judgment. The statement from the metaphysical deduction "The same function which gives unity to the various representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in an intuition; and this unity, in its most general expression, we entitle the pure concept of the understanding"[28] thus finds a partial foundation. It is not yet proven that these principles are in fact the categories deduced in the mentioned chapter. But, according to Kantian theory, judgment is nothing but a representation of representations, so that regardless of the origin of representations, through intuition or (indirectly) reproductive imagination, they will be synthesized through the same process.

Paragraph §20 argues that all sensible intuitions are subject to categories as conditions under which alone their manifold can come together in one consciousness. Summarizing the argument up to this point, it can be said that any knowledge begins with a synthesis of a manifold, which is the work of spontaneity. But, the concept of knowledge presupposes objectivity, so that synthesis must be objective. Any synthesis must be in agreement with transcendental apperception which conditions any representation that can be "mine". The unity of the synthesis can only be given by the unity of transcendental apperception, an apperception that is merely a function that has no other content than that procured by sensibility. The transcendental unity of apperception also conditions the synthesis of representations in a judgment (a representation of representations).

[27] Ibid.: *die objektive Bestimmung aller Vorstellungen.*

[28] Ibid., A 79 / B 104–105: *Dieselbe Funktion, welche den verschiedenen Vorstellungen in einem Urteile Einheit gibt, die gibt auch der bloßen Synthesis verschiedene Vorstellungen in einer Anschauung Einheit, welche, allgemein ausgedrückt, der reine Verstandesbegriff heißt.*

Paragraph §20 argues that the functions the understanding uses to give unity to the synthesis of representations in judgment are "the logical function of judgments",[29] so that what was deduced in paragraphs §§9–12 becomes: the categories are rules for the synthesis of the manifold and conditions for the unity of transcendental apperception. The categories are derived (deduced) from the fundamental principle of the unity of transcendental apperception, which is original apperception, by considering its logical function in judgments.

Pure apperception is not identical to the transcendental unity of apperception. When speaking of *unity*, what is kept in mind is a unitary synthesis of a manifold – a synthetic unity, or the analysis of such a unity – an analytical unity. Reference is never made (directly and exclusively) to the category of unity, opposed to multiplicity. Moreover, pure apperception is merely a function, which only by obtaining a sensible content (pure or empirical) can produce the unity of pure apperception. The following concepts are considered identical: "pure apperception", "transcendental apperception" and "original apperception". The first expression emphasizes independence, especially from sensibility, the second expression specifies it as a condition of possibility of experience, and the last specifies its non-derived character. Original apperception is distinguished from subjective, empirical apperception. The transcendental unity of apperception presupposes the necessary intervention of categories. Not every manifold reaches an objective unity, but any knowledge presupposes this objective unity.

Paragraph §21. The categories ensure the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of sensibility. But, is it possible that that unity is obtained by other means too? Because what was stated was only that pure apperception uses categories to unify the sensible manifold. Thus, if other ways of unifying intuition are possible, then the categories no longer have objective validity; they will be contingent. If it is proven that they are necessary, only then can it be stated that they are objectively valid, namely that they have transcendental reality and, at the same time, are conditions of possibility of knowledge. Up to this point they can only be considered as some concepts, which, like any concept, include rules for synthesizing the manifold (and empirical concepts contain such rules of synthesis). Proving that these concepts are conditions of possibility of experience means showing that they apply to all experience, or in other words, are conditions of possible experience. The possibility of other ways of unifying the manifold is rejected by Kant by considering the variant of a non-sensible intuition (as I showed earlier),

[29] Ibid., B 143: *die logische Funktion der Urteile.*

meaning the intuitive understanding. This variant being rejected, the categories prove their necessity regarding a sensible intuition. However, the application of categories to a particular type of intuition, namely the spatial-temporal one, remains to be explained. The question can be raised whether there is a difference between necessary conditions of possibility and sufficient conditions of possibility. I believe this difference rightly appears when speaking of the conditions of reality of a thing. But, regarding the conditions of its possibility, the difference disappears. Conditions of possibility cannot be non-necessary (contingent), because then something would be possible without them, so they would no longer be conditions of possibility. A condition of reality can be non-necessary, because in its absence that thing is still possible, which would not be the case if a condition of its possibility were suppressed. Thus, if a condition is necessary, it is also a condition of possibility.

Paragraph §21 presents the following argumentative path:

> In the sequel (§ 26) it will be shown, from the way in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility, that its unity is no other than that which the category (according to § 20) prescribes to the manifold of a given intuition in general. In thus explaining a priori the validity of the categories in respect of all objects of our senses, the purpose of the deduction will first be fully attained.[30]

In other words, if it is shown that only by means of categories can one reach the unity of the synthesis of a specific intuitive manifold (spatial-temporal), it is proven that they are necessary for knowledge and that, therefore, they have objective validity for our knowledge. The deduction will start from the way empirical intuition is given, so previously presented arguments will be resumed, but this time the emphasis will not fall on the possibility of achieving the unity of synthesis through categories, but on the particularity of the way this unity is achieved.

Kant maintains in this paragraph that the premise from which one starts was the fact that the manifold is given prior to the synthesis of the understanding and independent of it. Another paragraph seemingly contradicts what I announced to be the strategy of the transcendental deduction and its purpose in the following paragraphs.

[30] Ibid., B 144–145: *In der Folge (§ 26) wird nun aus der Art, wie die empirische Anschauung in der Sinnlichkeit gegeben wird, gezeigt werden, daß die Einheit derselben keine andere sei, als welche die Kategorie (nach § 20) dem Mannigfaltigen einer gegebenen Anschauung überhaupt vorschreibt, und dadurch also, daß ihre Gültigkeit a priori in Ansehung aller Gegenstände unserer Sinne erklärt wird, die Absicht der Deduktion zuerst völlig erreicht werden.*

> But for the peculiar property of our understanding, that it can produce a priori unity of apperception solely by means of the categories, and only by such and so many, no further ground can be given, any more than why we have precisely these and no other functions for judgments, or why space and time are the only forms of our possible intuition.[31]

What was previously announced, namely that in what follows it will be shown that the unity of intuition is none other than that which the category prescribes in general, is now contradicted by the statement that the unity of *a priori* apperception is given only by the categories and no reason can be brought for this fact. I propose the following solution to the aporia through conceptual delimitations. A first difference between the two statements is that the first speaks of the unity of intuition, while the second speaks of the unity of *a priori* apperception. The specific difference between these is that the unity of intuition must be, and always is, consistent with the experience it makes possible. Being a unity of a sensible manifold, be it pure or empirical, it must be subject to the forms of sensibility and the forms of the understanding. So that, this manifold cannot contradict possible experience. Judgments of perception, invoked several times on other occasions, are not taken into account here, because they do not contain a unity of synthesis. Moreover, judgments of perception could not contradict possible experience by the fact that they could state something that would not be in consensus with the forms of the understanding. A judgment of perception asserts a state of the subject, which becomes a proper judgment only if considered as such; without its reference to the subject, it is merely a sensation or a perception, which however cannot deceive – only judgments about what the senses offer us can deceive us, not the senses themselves. On the other hand, the unity of *a priori* apperception is not, necessarily, in agreement with possible experience, as Kant will argue in the following paragraphs; *to know* and *to think* are not the same thing. Any concept can be in agreement with the pure concepts of the understanding without being able to designate a spatial or temporal object. Such a concept would only have to take into account the mathematical categories (according to the classification from the metaphysical deduction of the categories – those of quantity and those of quality), because the dynamical ones (the categories of rela-

[31] Ibid., B 145–146: *Von der Eigentümlichkeit unseres Verstandes aber, nur vermittelst der Kategorien und nur gerade durch diese Art und Zahl derselben Einheit der Apperzeption a priori zu Stande zu bringen, läßt sich eben so wenig ferner ein Grund angeben, als warum wir gerade diese und keine andere Funktionen zu Urteilen haben, oder warum Zeit und Raum die einzigen Formen unserer möglichen Anschauung sind.*

tion and modality), which always concern a relation to something existing, could not be applied to a non-spatial and non-temporal object.

I believe that what Kant argues in the last fragment of paragraph §21 is the impossibility, or at least the difficulty, of providing a motivation for the fact that the human understanding is the way it is. But this does not remove the task of proving that only through categories can knowledge be obtained. In other words, it must be shown that these categories are objectively valid, but it cannot be argued why the understanding uses categories, just as a reason cannot be offered for the fact that sensibility receives the manifold through spatial and temporal forms. Kant does not attempt in the objective deduction to ground the faculty of thinking, but the use of this faculty and its claims to knowledge. It is worth mentioning that only regarding the understanding does the problem of a subjective deduction arise, and not concerning sensibility, or imagination (depending on how it is thought in relation to the understanding – whether they form together one faculty, spontaneity, or whether they are separate).

Paragraphs §22–§26

Regarding the employment of the understanding, Kant subjects to attention in paragraph §22 the application of categories to objects other than those of experience. Knowledge, as has been said on other occasions, has two major components: intuition and the category. Through intuition the object is given, and through the category it is thought. But if the latter is missing from the cognitive process, then knowledge can no longer be achieved. An object that is only thought, without any possible intuition corresponding to it, never reaches more than an idea about a form (not in the spatial sense). If it is impossible to associate an intuition with it, then that object is not and can never be an object of experience. Moreover, since intuition is always sensible, the concept must be related to the senses, but not necessarily to sensations. With the help of pure intuition (opposed to the empirical one, which contains sensations) *a priori* knowledge about objects is possible, "but only as regards their form, as appearances".[32] The fragment continues with a seemingly surprising statement: "whether there can be things which must be intuited in this form, is a question not yet decided."[33] It was argued in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* that any phenomenon must be comprehended

[32] Ibid., B 147: *aber nur der Form nach, als Erscheinungen.*

[33] Ibid.: *ob es Dinge geben könne, die in dieser Form angeschaut werden müssen, bleibt dabei noch unausgemacht.*

within the forms of sensibility. But whether the forms of sensibility comprehend any phenomenon is an unanswered problem, because we cannot have knowledge about objects that cannot be brought into experience in any way. I can say, however, that if something is a phenomenon for me, then it is certainly in accordance with the forms of sensibility. If the quoted fragment were to abstract from the possibility of the existence of a thing, considering only its existence, then the answer would no longer be problematic, because I indeed need a sign of experience to say that there are things in accordance with pure intuitions and concepts. But here we speak of the possibility of something existing in accordance with my *a priori* knowledge. Mathematical concepts have a meaning insofar as an experience is found to conform to them. This conclusion leads to the statement that "[...] all mathematical concepts are not by themselves knowledge, except in so far as one presupposes that there are things which can be presented to us only in accordance with the form of that pure sensible intuition".[34] The consequence resulting from this, with respect to the pure concepts of the understanding, is that they, even when they unify a manifold of pure sensible intuition, do not yield knowledge unless they can be related to empirical intuitions, "that is, they serve only for the possibility of empirical knowledge. This knowledge is called experience."[35] The categories therefore have validity only regarding possible experience, or in other words, possible empirical knowledge (empirical knowledge is not itself possible outside pure knowledge). Starting from the statements about mathematical concepts, a consequence can also be deduced: a mathematical judgment, moreover, a synthetic *a priori* judgment is a piece of knowledge if an object can exist that is in accordance with it, meaning if this object corresponds to a possible thing. From here, by obversion: if an object in accordance with a synthetic *a priori* judgment cannot exist, this cannot be a piece of knowledge. The whole argument can be restructured as follows: a pure intuition has as its object a phenomenon. The same synthesis of intuition has a thing as its object only if existence is added to it. But, in order to add such an attribute, an empirical intuition is needed, because only *a priori*.

Kant argues that even in the case of space and time, their employment is limited to the relation with the objects of the senses. The forms of sensibility have no reality outside the senses. But

[34] Ibid.: *Folglich sind alle mathematische Begriffe für sich nicht Erkenntnisse, außer sofern man voraussetzt, daß es Dinge gebe, die sich nur der Form jener reinen sinnlichen Anschauung gemäß uns darstellen lassen.*

[35] Ibid.: *d. i. sie dienen nur zur Möglichkeit empirischer Erkenntnis. Diese aber heißt Erfahrung.*

> the pure concepts of the understanding are free from this limitation, and extend to objects of intuition in general, be it similar to our own or not, if only it be sensible and not intellectual. But this further extension [...] does not help us. For they are then mere empty concepts of objects.[36]

If an object of a non-sensible intuition is admitted as given, it can be represented by all the attributes of sensible intuition, but in a negative manner, stating how it is not, but this does not procure knowledge. By merely saying that our intuition does not apply to this object, it is impossible to apply any category to it, because, ultimately, what manifold would it have to unify?

In the following paragraph, Kant introduces a difference regarding the synthesis of the manifold. He calls the synthesis of the manifold in a sensible intuition a figurative synthesis (*synthesis speciosa*) B 151, and distinguishes it from the synthesis of an intuition in general, called the synthesis of the understanding (*synthesis intellectualis*) B 151 – about both it can be said that they are transcendental, not only because they precede *a priori* any knowledge, but also because they ground other *a priori* knowledge. Of course, the difference between the two types of syntheses is the genus-species difference, the former being the application of the latter to a sensible intuition. The figurative synthesis, insofar as it relates to a sensible intuition, is called the transcendental synthesis of imagination, and imagination is "the faculty of representing in intuition an object that is not itself present"[37] Through this subjective condition, imagination belongs to sensibility, although its synthesis is a function of spontaneity.

> In so far as imagination is spontaneity, I sometimes also entitle it the productive imagination, and thereby distinguish it from the reproductive, whose synthesis is entirely subject to empirical laws [...] and which, therefore, contributes nothing to the explanation of the possibility of a priori knowledge, and for this reason belongs not to transcendental philosophy, but to psychology.[38]

[36] Ibid., B 148: *die reinen Verstandesbegriffe sind von dieser Einschränkung frei und erstrecken sich auf Gegenstände der Anschauung überhaupt, sie mag der unsrigen ähnlich sein oder nicht, wenn sie nur sinnlich und nicht intellektuell ist. Diese weitere Ausdehnung* [...] *hilft uns aber nichts. Denn es sind alsdann bloße leere Begriffe von Objekten* [...]

[37] Ibid., B 151: *Einbildungskraft ist das Vermögen, einen Gegenstand auch ohne dessen Gegenwart in der Anschauung vorzustellen.*

[38] Ibid., B 152: *So fern nun die Einbildungskraft Spontaneität ist, nenne ich sie auch bisweilen die produktive Einbildungskraft, und unterscheide sie dadurch von der reproduktiven, deren Synthesis lediglich empirischen Gesetzen ... unterworfen ist, und welche daher zur Erklärung der Möglichkeit der Erkenntnis a priori nichts beiträgt, und um deswillen nicht in die Transzendentalphilosophie, sondern in die Psychologie gehört.*

It can be argued that imagination, as a reproductive function, belongs to receptivity, and as a productive function, belongs to spontaneity.

The secondary discussion, concerning the deduction of the categories, is continued by Kant by specifying a paradox: inner sense "presents even ourselves to consciousness only as we appear to ourselves, not as we are in ourselves, since we intuit ourselves only as we are inwardly affected, and this seems to be contradictory"[39] The understanding, not being a faculty of intuitions, cannot have a manifold of its own, so as to have a direct relation with its own reality. The manifold is given to the understanding, namely by sensibility, which in turn is affected by objects, so on this path the understanding cannot have knowledge about itself as it is, but only as it appears to itself. The explanation is quite simple; as Kant states: "I, as intelligence and thinking subject, know myself as an object that is thought, in so far as I am given to myself in intuition also, only, like other phenomena, [...] this problem presents no greater or less difficulty than how I can be an object to myself at all."[40] In the transcendental synthesis of the manifold of representations in general, I am conscious of myself, but this consciousness is not an act of intuiting, but an act of thinking, which means that it cannot be knowledge, but only an idea. "The 'I think' expresses the act of determining my existence. [...] But the mode in which I am to determine it is not thereby given."[41] However, without an intuition, this judgment cannot determine existence. Furthermore, transcendental apperception, as a function of the understanding, manifests itself only in the synthesis of a manifold, which means that it takes place only if it relates to an intuition. From which it follows that any determination of existence presupposes a relation to an intuition, whether it represents a piece of knowledge or not. "[...] I exist as an intelligence which is conscious solely of its power of combination",[42] which, however, has only a sensible content.

Paragraph §26 was announced (§21) as a second part of the transcendental deduction. Up to now,

[39] Ibid., B 152–153: *daß er uns selbst dem Bewußtsein nur so darstellt, wie wir uns selbst erscheinen, nicht wie wir an uns selbst sind, weil wir uns nämlich nur so anschauen, wie wir innerlich affiziert werden...*

[40] Ibid., B 155: *Ich, als Intelligenz und denkend Subjekt, erkenne mich selbst als gedachtes Objekt, sofern ich mir noch überdem in der Anschauung gegeben bin, nur gleich andern Phänomenen...*

[41] Ibid., B 157: *Der Satz: Ich denke, drückt den Aktus aus, der mein Dasein bestimmt[...]aber die Art, wie ich es bestimmen soll [...] ist dadurch noch nicht gegeben.*

[42] Ibid., B 158: *ich existiere als Intelligenz, die sich lediglich ihres Verbindungsvermögens bewußt ist.*

> The possibility of the categories as a priori knowledge of objects of an intuition in general was exhibited (§§20, 21). We are now to explain the possibility of knowing a priori, by means of categories, whatever objects Gegenstände may present themselves to our senses, not indeed in respect of the form of their intuition, but in respect of the laws of their combination.[43]

The purpose of the second part of the transcendental deduction is achieved by relating the unity of the categories to our particular (spatial-temporal) intuition. This was abstracted from previously, in the first part of the deduction (§§15–20), as the understanding was considered separately from sensibility, and the way a sensible manifold is given was not taken into account. Thus, by proving that the very way the manifold of an intuition is given to us is subject to the categories, it is shown that only through categories can we reach the unity of synthesis. The argument is not entirely new; it was also brought up in §17:

> To know anything in space, for instance, a line, I must draw it, and thus synthetically bring about a determinate combination of the given manifold, so that the unity of this action is at the same time the unity of consciousness (as in the concept of a line), and it is through this unity of consciousness that an object (a determinate space) is first known. The synthetic unity of consciousness is, therefore, an objective condition of all knowledge [...][44]

Kant defines the synthesis of apprehension here as "the combination of the manifold in an empirical intuition, whereby perception, that is, empirical consciousness of the intuition (as appearance), is possible."[45] The synthesis of apprehension must conform to the forms of sensible intuition. Space and time, as forms of this sensibility, are at the same time intuitions, which therefore determine the unity of the manifold. Therefore, the unity of the synthesis is given first *a priori*, as a condition of the synthesis of any ap-

[43] Ibid., B 159: *die Möglichkeit der Kategorien als Erkenntnisse a priori von Gegenständen einer Anschauung überhaupt (§ 20. 21) dargetan worden. Jetzt soll die Möglichkeit, durch Kategorien die Gegenstände, die nur immer unseren Sinnen vorkommen mögen, und zwar nicht der Form ihrer Anschauung, sondern den Gesetzen ihrer Verbindung nach, a priori zu erkennen [...] erklärt werden.*
[44] Ibid., B 137–138: *Um irgend etwas im Raume zu erkennen, z.B. eine Linie, muß ich sie ziehen, und also eine bestimmte Verbindung des gegebenen Mannigfaltigen synthetisch zu Stande bringen, so daß die Einheit dieser Handlung zugleich die Einheit des Bewußtseins (im Begriffe einer Linie) ist, und dadurch allererst ein Objekt (ein bestimmter Raum) erkannt wird. Die synthetische Einheit des Bewußtseins ist also eine objektive Bedingung aller Erkenntnis...*
[45] Ibid., B 160: *die Zusammensetzung des Mannigfaltigen in einer empirischen Anschauung, dadurch Wahrnehmung, d.i. empirisches Bewußtsein derselben (als Erscheinung), möglich wird.*

prehension, because intuitions have an *a priori* content. From this it follows that an *a priori* knowledge of nature is possible, so that through categories the understanding determines the objects that can be given to the senses and, moreover, also determines the relations between objects. It can be stated, consequently, that the understanding prescribes laws to nature, and the categories are necessary elements of any human knowledge, which means that they have objective validity in relation to possible experience. Even if the understanding prescribes laws to nature, nevertheless, particular laws cannot be entirely deduced *a priori*; they must be in conformity with the *a priori* ones, but the contribution of experience is also needed to deduce them completely. The stages of the transcendental deduction in its second part (§§22–26) can be summarized as follows:

The goal: Categories are necessary for the knowledge of objects of a sensible spatial-temporal intuition.

- Categories are valid (support knowledge) only with regard to possible experience – §§22, 23.
- The understanding determines inner sense in accordance with the synthetic unity of apperception, thus categories have objective reality for a spatio-temporal intuition – §24.
- Categories procure an *a priori* knowledge of nature – §26.

The result of this deduction is that: "we cannot have a priori knowledge of any object except in so far as it is an object of possible experience."[46]

The necessity of knowledge can also have other alternatives, which Kant attempts to eliminate. Mainly, he refers to two: extracting necessity from experience, which is not possible, as we cannot have a complete induction, and incomplete induction leads only to probable results. The second possibility is the implantation of the categories in us by the Creator, so that they are thus in conformity with nature. This possibility is also excluded, as it is hard to maintain. The conclusion would still lack necessity, because not even phenomena could be known objectively anymore; all that could be said would be: "I am so constituted that I cannot think this representation otherwise than as thus combined".[47] But all knowledge would be in this case only an illusion. Three levels of knowledge are distinguished here: absolute knowledge, of things in themselves, independent of our way of construct-

[46] Ibid., B 166: *daß uns keine Erkenntnis a priori möglich sei, als lediglich von Gegenständen möglicher Erfahrung.*

[47] Ibid., B 168: *ich bin so gebaut, daß ich diese Vorstellung nicht anders als so verbunden denken kann.*

ing reality; knowledge of phenomena, which takes into account the *a priori* forms of the mind *Gemüt*; and illusion, a deceptive knowledge, which, as will be argued in the continuation of the chapters of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, has multiple causes.

I believe that the two parts of the transcendental deduction of the categories can be interpreted as follows: relating the categories to sensible intuition is necessary to present them as conditions of experience, because, without this argument, being only conditions of the unification of a manifold in general, they have objective validity, but it does not follow from this that they can also have objective reality; in other words, it does not follow that they are constitutive of a spatial-temporal object, i.e., of a thing. One can imagine a being having the same categories as ours, but completely different forms of sensibility. For this being, the categories will not ground the same mathematical and empirical judgments that we necessarily think. In this case, the categories would not necessarily ground synthetic *a priori* judgments, as they appear in the exact sciences targeted by Kant. It must be noted that the philosopher starts from the question: "How are mathematics and physics possible?" So, the general purpose is to ground certain already given cognitions. For this reason, the relating of categories, in the transcendental deduction, to sensible, spatial-temporal intuition is necessary. The question is further asked: why didn't he do this at the beginning of the deduction? The answer I think can be this: if it had been argued in the announced variant, then the universal validity of the categories with reference to any manifold would no longer have been proven. So, in another order of ideas, the first part of the transcendental deduction argues the *objective validity* of the categories, and the second part argues their *objective reality*.

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From Counterpoint to Community: Bach, Kant, and Philosophical Enquiry with Adolescents

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Abstract: This article examines how Johann Sebastian Bach's contrapuntal writing can serve as a stimulus for philosophical enquiry with adolescents aged 13–16. The argument does not claim any historical influence between Bach and Kant. Rather, it proposes a structural and pedagogical analogy between Bach's rule-governed polyphony and Kant's account of reflective judgment, autonomy, and purposiveness. Focusing on Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 1* in C major, BWV 772, the article shows how students can move from attentive listening to conceptual discussion within a Community of Enquiry. The musical work becomes a shared object of perception: students hear imitation, continuity, variation, tension, and closure before they are asked to name or theorize them. Through guided dialogue, these musical observations can be transformed into philosophical questions about freedom and constraint, identity and transformation, expectation and fulfilment, and the difference between personal response and reasoned judgment. The model advances Philosophy for Children and Community of Enquiry pedagogy by offering a concrete music-centred procedure in which aesthetic experience is not treated as decorative, but as the starting point for disciplined conceptual reflection. Its scope is deliberately limited: the approach depends on students' developmental readiness, the teacher's musical and dialogical competence, the selected work, and the classroom environment.
Key words: Kant, Reflective judgment, J. S. Bach, *Two-Part Invention No. 1*, Philosophy for Children, Community of Enquiry, Adolescent education

Introduction

This article proposes a pedagogical model linking structured musical experience to the development of reflective judgment and philosophical enquiry in adolescents aged 13 to 16. The model draws on Kant's analysis of judgment in the *Critique of Judgment* (CJ), his conception of autonomy in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (GMS), and his remarks on education in the *Lectures on Pedagogy*.[1] These philosophical resources are brought into dialogue with the structural features of certain musical repertoires, exemplified here by the contrapuntal writing of Johann Sebastian Bach. The choice of Bach is illustrative rather than prescriptive: his music provides unusually clear examples of ordered multiplicity, internal normativity, and purposive coherence, which lend themselves to reflective exploration in pedagogical settings.

The pedagogical approach integrates music with the Community of Enquiry (CoE) framework associated with Philosophy for Children (P4C), as developed by Matthew Lipman, Ann-Margaret Sharp, Joanna Haynes, and others.[2] Within a CoE, music operates not as a source of philosophical propositions but as a shared experiential stimulus from which conceptual questions naturally arise. Children (including adolescents) listen to, perform, or move to musical excerpts; they describe what they perceive; they identify patterns or contrasts; and they generate questions that invite conceptual exploration. The enquiry is then conducted through reason-giving, collaborative discussion. This sequence allows young learners to move from perceptual discernment to conceptual articulation without requiring premature abstraction.

This transition becomes more convincing when read alongside Orff Schulwerk and the Kodály Method. In Orff-based settings, students often come to understand patterns through movement, gesture, percussion, and playful improvisation before they can explain what they have grasped. Kodály, by contrast, builds understanding through the disciplined habits of singing, inner hearing, solmization, and carefully sequenced literacy work. The two traditions proceed differently, yet both ask learners to notice fine distinctions, hold patterns in mind, and re-

[1] Regarding the Kantian pedagogical perspective, K. Bosáková notes that Kant's anthropological reflections are inseparable from the project of *Bildung* and practical self-formation. She cites Kant's pedagogical orientation according to which the human being must be educated toward freedom and maturity rather than merely trained for utility. She also recalls Kant's statement that all progress in culture ultimately has the human being as its end. In this sense, educational cultivation aims at autonomy, confidence, and participation in a wider civic world. This supports the present article's use of music not as ornament, but as a medium for the formation of judgment and independence. Bosáková, K., 2024. Moving Around the Question of the Human. Was Kant an Anthropological Philosopher? *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 13(1), esp. pp. 52, 57–58.

[2] Lipman, M., 2003. *Thinking in Education*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Haynes, J., 2002. *Children as Philosophers: Learning through Enquiry and Dialogue in the Primary Classroom*. London: Routledge.

spond imaginatively to form. Those are precisely the kinds of capacities upon which reflective judgment depends.[3]

The present article narrows its pedagogical focus to adolescents aged 13–16 and to one concrete musical example: Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 1* in C major, BWV 772.[4] This restriction is methodologically important. Younger children may respond richly to music through movement, metaphor, and emotion, but the present argument requires learners who can begin to distinguish personal response from structural observation and who can give reasons for interpretive claims. The selected age group is therefore appropriate for connecting musical perception with philosophical enquiry. Bach's invention is used not as an illustration of Kantian doctrine, but as a compact musical field in which students can hear independence and interdependence, rule and freedom, repetition and transformation. The Community of Enquiry then provides the dialogical setting in which these perceptions may become philosophical questions.

The argument unfolds in three parts. Part I clarifies the structural analogy between Bach's contrapuntal writing and Kant's account of reflective judgment, purposiveness, and autonomy. Part II develops a concrete pedagogical application centred on Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 1* in C major, BWV 772, within a Community of Enquiry for adolescents aged 13–16. Part III clarifies the limits and innovation of the model, showing how it advances P4C/CoE practice without reducing music to philosophy or philosophy to music.

I. Structural Affinities Between Bach's Counterpoint and Kantian Judgment

1. Methodological Framework

Any attempt to place musical structure in dialogue with Kantian philosophy must begin with methodological clarity. There is no historical evidence that Kant was aware of Bach's music, nor that Bach anticipated Kant's critical system; the relationship proposed here is therefore *structural rather than historical*. The inquiry compares forms, not intentions, and analyses patterns of organization rather than claims of influence.

Structural analogy respects Kant's caution against speculative infer-

[3] Kant, I., 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Ed. Guyer, P., trans. Guyer, P., Matthews, E. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[4] Bach, J. S., n.d. *Inventions and Sinfonias*, BWV 772–801. Ed. Scheideler, U.; fingering Schneidt, M. Munich: G. Henle Verlag. Urtext Edition, HN 589.

ence, focusing on internal features of two domains — musical and philosophical — and examining where these exhibit comparable logics. The comparison seeks insight through parallelism rather than genealogy.

The advantage of this method, for the present article, is not that it permits unlimited analogies, but that it allows one carefully delimited comparison to be pedagogically productive. Bach's contrapuntal writing is treated here as a structured musical field in which relations of independence, constraint, continuation, and closure become audible. The comparison with Kant remains analogical: it concerns forms of judgment and organization, not historical influence or doctrinal identity.

By focusing on structural relations—such as independence of lines, internal normativity, and purposive coherence—the analysis avoids overinterpretation. The aim is neither to translate music into philosophy nor to claim that musical works contain philosophical doctrines, but to show how musical structures can serve as analogues clarifying aspects of Kant's theory of judgment and autonomy. This level of analogy suffices for pedagogical purposes in contexts where children explore conceptual distinctions arising from shared perceptual experiences.

2. Rule-Governed Independence: Counterpoint and the Form of Autonomy

One of the most distinctive features of Bach's polyphonic writing is the independence of voices within a system of strict internal constraint. In a typical two- or three-part invention, or in the fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier, each voice is melodically self-sufficient, with its own contour, rhythm, and developmental trajectory, yet remains bound by the rules of counterpoint, regulating intervals, dissonances, entries, and inter-voice relations. Musicologists such as Alfred Mann, Christoph Wolff, and David Schulenberg have documented these internal laws as defining characteristics of Bach's compositional practice.[5]

This combination of freedom and lawfulness provides a close structural analogue to Kant's conception of moral autonomy. In the *Groundwork*, Kant argues that freedom is not opposed to law; law is intrinsic to freedom because a free will "is a law to itself" (GMS, Ak. 4:440).[6] Auton-

[5] Mann, A., 1987. *The Study of Fugue*. New York: Dover Publications; Wolff, C., 2000. *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*. New York: W. W. Norton; Schulenberg, D., 2006. *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

[6] Kant, I., 1998. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Ed. and trans. Gregor, M. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

omy does not consist in acting without rules, but in endorsing rules that reason can affirm as universally valid. Heteronomy, by contrast, subjects the will to inclinations or external commands.

A comparable principle can be observed in Bach's contrapuntal writing. Each voice acquires clarity and expressive scope precisely through its relation to the larger musical whole. Constraint here is not the negation of freedom but one of its conditions. In this respect, both the musical and moral domains present freedom as something achieved through participation in an order that is internally governed rather than externally imposed.

Although these features can be studied in larger fugal works, they are also audible in a compact pedagogical form in Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 1* in C major. Its two voices do not merely accompany one another; they answer, imitate, and transform a shared musical idea. This makes the piece especially useful for classroom enquiry, because students can hear both independence and interdependence without needing advanced technical training.

This structural resonance is pedagogically significant. Children listening to or performing simple contrapuntal textures can perceive that individual parts retain their identity while contributing to a coherent whole. Without theoretical vocabulary, they intuitively grasp that the freedom of a single voice gains meaning only through its relation to others. This experience forms an intuitive analogue of Kant's insight and it can be taken up explicitly within a Community of Enquiry as a basis for philosophical reflection.

3. Tonal Directionality and Purposiveness Without Determinate Purpose

Another meeting point between Bach's idiom and Kant's aesthetics can be found in the peculiar experience Kant describes as purposiveness without purpose. Tonal writing of the eighteenth century frequently feels as though it is going somewhere. A dominant harmony unsettles the listener and asks for continuation; sequential motion can intensify expectancy; a cadence often sounds less like interruption than arrival. None of this requires a story, an image, or any representational programme. The impression of direction is generated from within the musical language itself. Even listeners with no technical training commonly sense that one event calls for another, or that a phrase has reached its proper close. Kant's analysis of aesthetic judgment offers a precise account of this experience. In §9 of the *Critique of Judgment*, he describes the judgment of beauty as grounded in a "free harmony of the faculties" (CJ, 5:217), where imagination and understanding interact without the imposition of a determinate concept.[7] This experience produces the feeling of purposiveness: the form appears suited to our cognitive faculties even though it serves no conceptual end (CJ, 5:227). The judgment is reflective rather than determinative; it seeks a concept adequate to the intuition rather than applying one already in hand.[8]

The teleological character of tonal music exemplifies this experience. The resulting pleasure stems less from the recognition of any external end than from an apprehension of internal coherence. Order is sensed through voice-leading, patterned continuation, and cadential resolution before it is named conceptually. In this respect, listeners encounter something akin to Kantian purposiveness without purpose. The pedagogical implications are equally significant. Children frequently describe cadences as moments when "the music is finishing," or hear sequences as "climbing" or "going somewhere," despite having no formal theoretical vocabulary. Such remarks indicate early exercises of reflective judgment: attention is directed toward structural relations rather than representational content. Within a Community of Enquiry, these intuitions can be refined into distinctions between repetition and development, expectation and closure, or tension and release.

4. Internal Normativity and the Autonomy of Musical Practice

Fugal composition provides a clear example of internal normativity in Western art music. Its procedures—the construction of a subject, formulation of an appropriate answer, treatment of a countersubject, and permissible transformations—arise from the internal logic of the practice itself rather than external representational aims. Scholars such as Alfred Mann and Laurence Dreyfus have shown that Bach's fugal idiom is defined by procedural constraints that generate expressive possibilities through their limitations.[9] These constraints do not restrict creativity; they constitute the conditions under which it flourishes. A fugue is

[7] Kant, I. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ibid.

[8] Allison, H. E., 2001. *Kant's Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[9] Mann, A., 1987. *The Study of Fugue*. New York: Dover; Laurence Dreyfus, L., 1996. *Bach and the Patterns of Invention*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

thus an autonomous structure: its rules emerge from systemic relations among its elements, not from outside imposition.

This structural autonomy parallels Kant's account of moral autonomy, in which the will is bound by the law it gives to itself rather than external commands: "the property of the will by which it is a law to itself" (GMS, Ak. 4:440),[10] contrasting it with heteronomy, where the will is subordinated to inclinations or external authorities. Moral law derives from pure practical reason; it is validated internally, not by external aims.

Although musical and moral domains differ, the similarity lies in the *self-sufficiency of the normative framework*. In both, normativity arises internally: a fugal answer is appropriate depending on its relation to the subject and tonal system; a maxim is morally acceptable if it can be universalized. The analogy shows how children engaging with a simplified fugal texture encounter rules as generative principles rather than arbitrary constraints.

Pedagogically, this insight is particularly powerful when mediated by the Kodály Method, which emphasizes internalization of structural relations through solmization and literacy. Singing, recognizing, or notating imitative entries allows children to experience permissible transformations within a system. They need not grasp Kant's theory of autonomy; they encounter *a domain of rules whose normative force is intrinsic*. Within a CoE, these experiences can prompt discussions about what counts as a rule, how rules differ from preferences, and why some structures feel coherent while others do not.

5. Reflective Judgment and Concept Formation Through Musical Experience

Reflective judgment, which Kant distinguishes from determinative judgment, occurs when a particular is encountered for which no settled concept is immediately available (CJ, 5:179). Rather than applying an already given rule, the mind searches for one adequate to the case before it. This activity is central not only to aesthetic judgment but also to the gradual formation of concepts and to the P4C tradition, where enquiry proceeds through dialogue, revision, and clarification rather than through the passive acceptance of definitions.

Music often prompts this kind of reflection. When youngsters hear a motive return in altered form, they may wonder whether it is "the

[10] Kant, I., 1998. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ibid.

same" or "different," requiring conceptual articulation. Listening to a sequence, they may sense that a pattern continues despite changes in pitch, prompting them to determine essential versus variable features. Engagement with such patterns, as noted by Doug Goodkin and Lois Choksy,[11] strengthens their ability to discern structural relations before articulating them.[12]

In a Bach invention, for example, the initial motive may appear literally, then transposed, inverted, or sequenced. Students' intuitive sense of "sameness" across transformations becomes fertile for enquiry. The CoE encourages them to propose criteria – contour, intervallic pattern, or rhythm – and debate whether a transformation preserves identity or creates a new idea. These discussions exemplify reflective judgment: the community seeks concepts adequate to their perceptual experiences.

Younger children often register such differences in imagistic or metaphorical terms ("it sounds like the shadow of the first bit"), whereas older learners (on whom this article focuses) begin to formulate more explicit criteria. The gradual movement from perceptual recognition to conceptual articulation exemplifies a core function of judgment in Kant's sense, and music offers a shared, low-risk medium in which that development can occur.

6. Compatibility Without Reduction: Preserving the Autonomy of Music and Philosophy

A final consideration concerns the need to avoid reducing either domain to the other. Structural analogies between musical practice and Kant's philosophy are illuminating, but they do not imply that music conveys philosophical doctrines or that Kant's theory is intrinsically musical. Music remains a non-conceptual art: it gives rise to judgments of taste, not truth. Kant emphasizes that aesthetic pleasure arises from

[11] Goodkin, D., 2004. *Play, Sing, and Dance: An Introduction to Orff Schulwerk*. Mainz: Schott – EAMC; Choksy, L., 1999. *The Kodály Method I: Comprehensive Music Education*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

[12] Convergently, L. E. Motorina argues that Kant's anthropology includes attention to implicit and pre-conceptual dimensions of cognition, including what Kant elsewhere calls obscure or indistinct representations. She connects this with the broader task of what the human being "can and should make of himself" as a free being. Such a reading supports the present claim that children may recognize musical identity, transformation, tension, or closure before possessing explicit conceptual vocabulary for them. Musical understanding can therefore precede discursive articulation without being cognitively empty. Motorina, L. E., 2017. Kant's Anthropology as a Coherent Doctrine of Man. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 6(2), esp. pp. 21–22, 26, 28.

the free play of imagination and understanding (CJ, 5:217), whereas philosophy proceeds through concepts, reasons, and argumentative scrutiny. The present pedagogical model preserves that distinction by treating music not as a carrier of propositions, but as a stimulus from which philosophical enquiry may begin. Educators invite students to reflect on structural features and articulate conceptual distinctions, maintaining a conceptual focus even when the stimulus is non-conceptual.

The present article therefore keeps the analogy deliberately narrow. Its concern is not to establish a general theory of all music-centred philosophical enquiry, nor to claim that any coherent musical form may be paired with any philosophical framework. Bach's contrapuntal writing and Kant's account of judgment are brought together here because they offer a particularly clear case in which musical structure, reflective judgment, and dialogical enquiry can illuminate one another without being collapsed into one another. Other repertoires or philosophical traditions may later be explored through a similar procedure, but such extensions would require separate justification. In the present argument, the restriction to Bach and Kant is a strength rather than a limitation, because it allows the pedagogical mechanism to be shown with sufficient precision.

II. Pedagogical Application: Bach's Invention No. 1 as a Music-Centred Community of Enquiry

7. Why Music? Why This Model? Philosophical and Affective Foundations

The previous section has insisted on keeping the analogy between Bach and Kant carefully delimited: structural rather than historical, pedagogical rather than doctrinal. This narrowing is not merely a precaution. It also indicates how the model should be brought into the classroom. If the argument is to remain convincing, it must pass through one concrete musical work rather than through general claims about music as such. The following section therefore turns to J. S. Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 1 in C major*, BWV 772. The work is short enough to be used in a classroom, clear enough for non-specialist listeners to follow with guidance, and structurally rich enough to support philosophical reflection. Its two voices imitate, answer, overlap, and diverge while remaining part of a coherent whole. This makes the piece especially suitable for discussion of autonomy, rule-governed freedom, identity through transformation, and purposiveness without an externally imposed programme.

The activity is designed for students aged 13–16. At this age, learners are usually able to move beyond immediate liking or disliking and begin to justify their responses. They may still begin as lay listeners, noticing energy, balance, tension, or mood, but with guidance they can learn to connect these impressions to audible features of the work. The aim is not to turn them into technical analysts. It is to help them notice that their responses are not arbitrary and that music can give them something precise to think about together.

Because music does not contain concepts, the enquiry necessarily operates within the realm of analogy, intuition, and reflective expansion. Philosophical exploration therefore remains general rather than doctrinal. What the model can do is prepare students for ideas such as autonomy, purposiveness, or reflective judgment without asking them to absorb a philosophical system in advance. That is not a defect of the approach. It is one of its educational strengths. The task here is less to transmit doctrine than to form habits of thought that later make doctrine intelligible.

What unifies these diverse possibilities is not stylistic similarity but methodological consistency. The educator selects a musical excerpt with a clear perceivable structure—motivic, harmonic, rhythmic, timbral, or textural—and invites students to explore what they notice and feel. Thus, the Community of Enquiry can develop from these perceptions into conceptual exploration. In this sense, the model is not tied to any particular repertoire or philosophical framework. It is better understood as a general procedure for bringing aesthetic experience into contact with enquiry. Feeling often provides the first impulse: something is noticed, puzzled over, or found compelling. From there, perception sharpens, concepts begin to form, and discussion becomes possible. Emotion is not the enemy of reflection in such cases. More often, it is what sets reflection in motion.

8. Structuring a Music-Centred Community of Enquiry

At the centre of the model stands the Community of Enquiry, the setting in which musical experience can be turned into philosophical conversation. Developed within the P4C tradition by Matthew Lipman, Ann-

Margaret Sharp, and others,[13] the CoE offers enough structure to sustain serious discussion while remaining open to unexpected lines of thought. Music is especially useful here. It is rich in pattern, capable of stirring response, and suggestive without telling learners what to think.[14]

A session may begin with uninterrupted listening. Students are first asked simply what they noticed: whether the music seemed orderly or free, whether the two voices seemed to cooperate or compete, whether something returned, and whether the ending felt prepared. The second listening is more focused. The teacher may ask students to follow one voice, then the other, or to raise a hand when they think an idea has returned. Only after this perceptual work should the class move toward philosophical questioning. Possible questions include: Can two independent voices still belong to one whole? Can rules make freedom possible? What makes a musical idea remain the same when it changes? Is an ending satisfying because we expected it, or do we learn to expect it because of how the music is built?

Within the Community of Enquiry, the musical work remains the common reference point. Students are encouraged to return to the piece when claims become too general. A student who says that the music is "free" may be asked where that freedom is heard. Another who says that the voices "follow rules" may be asked whether rules restrict the music or make it possible. In this way, the dialogue moves between listening and reasoning. The philosophical concepts are not imposed from above; they are gradually drawn out of shared attention to the musical example.

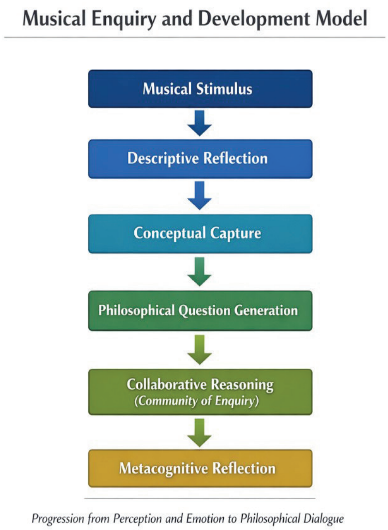
The facilitator's judgment plays an essential role in a CoE. He or she must ensure that the discussions remain open and as close to the topic as possible, and provide structure without steering learners toward prefabricated conclusions. Feeling, attentive observation, and the giving of reasons all need room within the same conversation.

[13] Lipman, M., Sharp, A. M., Oscanyan, F. S., 1980. *Philosophy in the Classroom*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

[14] In a similar vein, the Kantian scholar A. Salikov emphasizes that Kant's lectures on anthropology were conceived as a pragmatic discipline directed toward worldly judgment and social competence. He notes Kant's description of anthropology as knowledge useful for morality, interaction among persons, and "the way to educate and govern human beings." Anthropology therefore mediates between abstract philosophy and lived practice. This is consonant with the present pedagogical model, where musical experience becomes the starting point for reflection, communication, and collaborative judgment within a Community of Enquiry. Salikov, A., 2018. Some Political Aspects of Kant's Lectures on Anthropology. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 7(1), esp. pp. 4–5, 15–16.

8.1. Schematic Overview of the Music-Centred Enquiry Model

The model may be described in broad stages rather than as a rigid sequence. Learners begin with a shared musical encounter. They then give initial descriptions of what they noticed or felt, gradually identify patterns that seem significant, and turn those observations into questions worth discussing. From there, collaborative reasoning becomes possible within the Community of Enquiry. The process concludes, where appropriate, with reflection on how the discussion unfolded and what was learned from it.



Source: authors' own diagram.

The diagram should be read as a flexible pedagogical sequence rather than as a rigid method. Students first encounter Bach's invention as listeners. They then describe what they hear in ordinary language. With guidance, some of these descriptions are connected to structural features such as imitation, repetition, variation, tension, and closure. These observations become the basis for philosophical questions, which are then discussed in a Community of Enquiry. The final stage asks students to reflect not only on the music, but also on how their own judgment changed through listening and dialogue.

Expert and Lay Listening

The model also requires a distinction between expert and lay listening. Expert listening usually attends to explicitly musical relations: subject, imitation, sequence, interval, cadence, tonal direction, and the distribution of voices. Lay listening more often begins with affective or global impressions: the music may seem calm, tense, playful, orderly, restless, or complete. These two modes of listening are not opposed, and the distinction should not be understood hierarchically.

Affective response is not a mistake, and structural listening is not emotionless. The difference lies rather in the balance between immediate experience and articulated criteria. In the classroom, this distinction becomes pedagogically productive. Students aged 13–16 may first describe Bach's invention in ordinary language: one voice "answers" another, the music "keeps going," or the ending "sounds right." The teacher's task is to help them refine these responses without dismissing them. A feeling of order can be connected to imitation; a feeling of movement can be connected to sequence; a feeling of closure can be connected to cadence. In this way, lay listening is not replaced by expert listening. It is educated by it. The Community of Enquiry then gives students the opportunity to ask what kind of judgment they are making when they move from "I like this" to "this passage is coherent because…". That movement is central to the article's Kantian argument.

Phase 1: Attentive Listening to Bach's Invention (Musical Stimulus)
A session should begin with attentive listening to Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 1* in C major, BWV 772. At this first stage, the aim is not explanation but encounter. Students are invited to listen for what they notice: whether the music seems orderly or restless, whether the two voices appear to cooperate or compete, whether an idea returns, and whether the ending feels prepared. These first responses may still be intuitive, but they provide the experiential material from which later enquiry can grow.

Phase 2: Descriptive Articulation (Reflection)
After the first listening, students are asked to describe their responses in ordinary language. Precision is not yet the main goal. One student may hear balance, another movement, another tension, another a sense of return. Such descriptions are pedagogically valuable because they

show how lay listening begins: not with technical analysis, but with felt and perceptual impressions. The teacher's task is to preserve these responses while gradually asking students to connect them to what can actually be heard in the music.

Phase 3: Structural Noticing (Conceptual Capture)
The second listening should be more focused. Students may be asked to follow the entry of one voice, then the other, or to indicate when they think the opening musical idea returns. At this point, impressions begin to acquire structure. What first sounded simply "orderly" may now be connected with imitation; what felt like movement may be connected with sequence; what seemed like completion may be connected with cadence. Students are therefore no longer merely reacting to the music. They are beginning to organize experience in ways that make philosophical reflection possible.

Phase 4: Philosophical Question Formation (Question Generation)
From these emerging distinctions, philosophical questions can arise naturally. What makes a musical idea remain the same when it changes? Can two independent voices still belong to one whole? Do rules restrict freedom, or can they make freedom possible? Why does an ending feel satisfying? Such questions are not imposed from outside. They grow from the students' attempts to understand what they have heard in Bach's invention.

Phase 5: Dialogical Deliberation (Collaborative Reasoning)
The enquiry then proceeds through dialogue within the Community of Enquiry. Students offer reasons, test interpretations, disagree, reconsider, and return to the musical example when needed. Bach's invention serves as a common reference point, preventing the discussion from becoming purely subjective. A claim such as "the voices are free" or "the music follows rules" must be connected to something audible in the work. In this way, judgment is exercised publicly and collaboratively.

Phase 6: Reflective Review (Metacognitive Reflection)
The session should end with a brief reflective review. Students may consider what changed in their listening, which question proved most difficult, whether their first impression was confirmed or revised, and how the discussion affected their understanding of the music. This final

stage is important because it turns enquiry back upon itself. Students do not merely listen and speak; they begin to notice how their own judgment develops through attention, dialogue, and reasons.

9. Adolescents Aged 13–16: Reflective Judgment, Structure, and Dialogue

The model is best suited to adolescents aged 13–16 because it requires more than an immediate emotional response to music. They must be able to listen repeatedly, compare what they hear, distinguish personal impression from structural observation, and give reasons for interpretive claims. These capacities are not fully mature, and they vary considerably among learners, but they are sufficiently developed in this age range to make a Bach-centred Community of Enquiry pedagogically plausible.

In work with Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 1*, students can first approach the music through ordinary listening. They may describe the piece as lively, orderly, playful, insistent, or balanced. The teacher then helps them connect these impressions to audible relations: one voice begins and the other answers; an idea returns but not always in the same place; movement continues through sequence; closure feels prepared rather than accidental. Such guidance allows students to move gradually from affective response toward reflective judgment.

The philosophical discussion should remain close to the musical example. If students ask whether the two voices are free, they should be invited to say what in the music gives that impression. If they claim that the music follows rules, they should consider whether rules merely restrict the voices or allow them to cooperate. If they notice that the opening idea returns in altered form, they can ask what makes something remain the same through change. In this way, Bach's invention becomes a shared object through which questions about autonomy, identity, order, and purposiveness can be explored.

This does not require students to master Kant's philosophy. Rather, the teacher may introduce simplified conceptual language after the musical experience has already generated the problem. Kant's reflective judgment can then be presented as a way of naming a familiar activity: the attempt to find adequate concepts for something first encountered in perception. The educational value lies in this movement from hearing, to noticing, to questioning, to reasoned dialogue.

10. Assessment, Reflection, and the Development of Autonomy

Assessment in this model should not measure technical musical achievement alone. Its central concern is the quality of the movement from perception to judgment. Students may be assessed informally according to whether they can describe what they hear, connect an impression to an audible feature, formulate a philosophical question, offer reasons, listen to alternative interpretations, and revise their view when appropriate.

In this sense, the model links musical attention with intellectual autonomy. A student who moves from "I like this passage" to "this passage feels coherent because the second voice answers the first and the ending sounds prepared" has begun to transform preference into judgment. The Community of Enquiry strengthens this process by requiring students to make their interpretations public, test them against the musical example, and respond to others. Autonomy is therefore not treated as isolated self-expression, but as the ability to think for oneself in a shared space of reasons.

Kant's *Lectures on Pedagogy* repeatedly return to the need for education to cultivate both discipline and freedom, so that autonomy becomes something responsibly exercised rather than merely asserted.[15] The present model serves that aim by giving learners room for independent thought within a shared and demanding dialogue. Emotion need not be treated as a distraction. It often alerts students to contrasts that matter, sustains attention, and prompts further questioning. When examined rather than dismissed, it becomes part of reflective judgment itself.

The same arrangement can also foster what Kant calls the public use of reason: the practice of stating one's view openly and answering for it before others.[16] A well-run Community of Enquiry models this in miniature. Students learn to speak clearly, attend seriously to objections, and revise positions when reasons require it. In doing so, they move toward forms of cognitive, affective, and social autonomy.

[15] Kant, I., 1997. *Lectures on Pedagogy*. In: Heath, P. – Schneewind, J. B., eds. *Lectures on Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[16] Kant, I., 1996. *Practical Philosophy*. Ed. and trans. Gregor, M. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Schmidt, J., 1992. What Is Enlightenment? A Question, Its Context, and Some Consequences. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 30(2), pp. 247–260.

III. Limits, Innovation, and Theoretical Significance

11. Synthesis

The preceding sections have argued that Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 1* can function as a concrete stimulus for reflective judgment within a Community of Enquiry. The work gives students a shared perceptual object: two voices, a recurring musical idea, imitation, continuation, variation, and closure. These musical relations can be heard before they are conceptually named. The philosophical task begins when students try to say what they have heard, compare interpretations, and give reasons for their claims.

This movement from perception to concept is the point at which Kant becomes pedagogically useful. The article does not claim that Bach's music should be used to teach Kantian philosophy. Rather, it argues that Bach's contrapuntal structure can help students experience, in an accessible form, problems that Kant's theory of judgment helps us understand: how we seek order without simply applying a ready-made concept, how freedom can exist within lawfulness, and how purposiveness can be felt without an external purpose.

Within this framework, Bach's music serves as a particularly transparent illustration of ordered complexity, independence-within-constraint, and purposive coherence. Crucially, however, the pedagogical framework is not dependent upon Bach's idiom, nor upon any singular stylistic canon. Its broader applicability rests on the presence of perceivable structural relations capable of sustaining conceptual enquiry.

What this synthesis offers is therefore not a reinterpretation of Kant, but a pedagogical instantiation of capacities Kant identifies as fundamental to judgment. Musical structure provides a concrete experiential field in which relations such as similarity and difference, dependence and independence, tension and resolution may be perceived prior to conceptual articulation. When these relations become objects of communal reflection, learners engage in the movement Kant describes: judgment operating without predetermined concepts, yet oriented toward conceptual coherence.

At the same time, this synthesis clarifies an essential constraint. Musical experience does not itself become philosophical discourse. Music remains a non-conceptual and affective domain; philosophy remains conceptual and discursive. Their relationship is mediated by enquiry. Such a distinction preserves the autonomy of both domains while allowing musical structure to function as a catalyst for reflective activity rather than as a bearer of philosophical content.

When enquiry begins from a shared musical experience, students have something concrete to return to as they test claims, offer reasons, and negotiate criteria together. Such practices are closely tied to intellectual autonomy: one learns to think for oneself without becoming deaf to the views of others. At the same time, the embodied habits encouraged by Orff work and the procedural discipline characteristic of Kodály practice help keep reflection connected to experience rather than allowing it to drift too quickly into abstraction.

12. Maintaining Distinct Domains: Music as Experience, Philosophy as Conceptual Reflection

Methodological clarity depends on keeping music and philosophy distinct. Music unfolds in time, works through affect, and does not proceed by concepts. Philosophy, by contrast, trades in distinctions, reasons, and explicit argument. In the present model, the relation between them is neither mystical nor reductive. Experience comes first; reflection follows.

The model depends on preserving the difference between music and philosophy. Bach's invention is not a philosophical text, and it should not be treated as if it secretly contained Kantian doctrine. Music unfolds through time, perception, affect, and form. Philosophy proceeds through concepts, reasons, distinctions, and arguments. The educational connection between them is mediated by enquiry.

For this reason, the teacher should not begin by explaining Kant and then asking students to find Kant in Bach. The better sequence is the reverse: students listen, notice, describe, and question; only then may philosophical vocabulary be introduced as a way of clarifying what the enquiry has already begun to uncover. This preserves the autonomy of both domains. Music gives the community something concrete to experience together; philosophy gives the community tools for thinking about that experience.

13. Developmental Limits and Pedagogical Conditions

Although the model may later be tested with other repertoires, the present article restricts itself to Bach in order to demonstrate the pedagogical mechanism with sufficient precision. However, this model has clear limits. It is not equally suitable for every age group, every classroom, or every musical work. Its strongest application is with adolescents aged 13–16, because students at this stage are more likely to sustain attention to a complex musical example, distinguish emotional response from structural observation, and give reasons for interpretive claims. Even within this age range, however, results will depend on several conditions: prior musical exposure, the teacher's ability to guide listening, the quality of the classroom climate, the type of school, the time available, and the students' confidence in speaking before others. These factors do not invalidate the model, but they prevent exaggerated claims about its universal effectiveness.

The teacher's role is therefore decisive. The teacher need not be a professional musicologist, but must be able to select a musically appropriate excerpt, direct attention to audible features, and prevent the discussion from becoming either purely technical or purely subjective. The selected music must be complex enough to reward attention but clear enough to remain accessible. Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 1* fulfils this function because its imitative structure can be heard without advanced theoretical training, while still supporting discussion of rule, freedom, identity, and coherence. The classroom environment must also support careful listening and respectful disagreement. Without such conditions, the Community of Enquiry risks becoming either an exchange of impressions without reasons or a teacher-led explanation that leaves little room for enquiry.

14. Innovation of the Model

The music-centred enquiry model contributes to educational theory by illustrating how aesthetic experience can give rise to conceptual reflection without reducing either domain. Kant's account of reflective judgment provides a useful framework: cognition involves not only applying concepts but seeking concepts adequate to new experiences. Music offers precisely the kind of structured yet non-conceptual experience that invites such activity.[17] When learners perceive similarity and difference, tension and resolution, or expectation and closure, they exercise capacities central to judgment formation.[18]

17 Bowman, W., 1998. *Philosophical Perspectives on Music*. New York: Oxford University Press.
18 Recent Kant scholarship in *Studia Philosophica Kantiana* has likewise stressed that anthropology and pedagogy form an indispensable practical complement to critique, because they concern how rational capacities are cultivated in concrete human beings rather than merely analyzed in abstraction. See Bosáková, K., 2024. Moving Around the Question of the Human. Was Kant an Anthropological Philosopher?, ibid., pp. 52–58; Salikov, A., 2018. Some Political Aspects of Kant's Lectures on Anthropology, ibid., pp. 4–5.

The innovation of the model lies in the way it connects three elements that are often treated separately. First, Bach's contrapuntal writing provides a shared aesthetic object whose structure can be heard and revisited. Second, Kant's account of reflective judgment gives philosophical language for the movement from perception toward conceptual articulation. Third, P4C and the Community of Enquiry provide the dialogical procedure through which students test claims, offer reasons, revise interpretations, and learn to think with others. The model therefore does not merely add music to philosophy lessons as an attractive stimulus. It uses musical structure as the medium through which philosophical questions become available.

This advances existing P4C and CoE practice by giving the community a non-verbal but highly structured object of enquiry. Many P4C sessions begin from stories, images, or moral dilemmas. A Bach invention offers a different kind of stimulus: it does not state a problem, describe a conflict, or propose a narrative. Instead, it presents relations that must be noticed, interpreted, and discussed. Students must learn to say what they hear, to distinguish evidence from preference, and to test whether their interpretation can be shared by others. In this sense, music-centred philosophical enquiry strengthens the epistemic discipline of the Community of Enquiry while preserving its openness.

The employment of Orff and Kodály approaches reinforces this point. Both perspectives focus on the role of embodiment, gradual internalization, and well-paced sequenced learning. Conceptual insight is not treated as separate from perception, but as something that grows through disciplined engagement with it.

Conclusion: Music as a Gateway to Reflective Autonomy

This article has argued that Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 1* in C major, BWV 772, can serve as a concrete stimulus for philosophical enquiry with adolescents aged 13–16. Its contrapuntal structure allows students to hear independence and interdependence, rule and freedom, repetition and transformation, tension and closure. These relations are first perceived musically, but they can become philosophically significant when explored within a Community of Enquiry.

The article has not claimed that Bach's music contains Kantian philosophy, nor that Kant's theory requires musical illustration. The relation is pedagogical and analogical. Bach's music offers a structured experience; Kant's account of reflective judgment helps clarify the movement from perception to concept; P4C/CoE provides the dialogical setting in which students learn to give reasons, listen to others, and revise their interpretations.

The model is intentionally limited. It depends on an appropriate age group, a carefully selected work, a competent facilitator, and a classroom climate that supports both attentive listening and respectful disagreement. Within these limits, however, the model offers a distinctive contribution to P4C and Community of Enquiry practice. It shows how philosophical reflection can begin not only from stories, dilemmas, or texts, but also from the disciplined listening to musical form.

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Maxim-Based Value Elicitation in Philosophical Counseling

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Abstract: This article develops a Kant-inspired technique of value elicitation for philosophical counseling by treating maxims—self-imposed practical rules—as the primary units of ethical self-clarification. Instead of approaching clients' dilemmas as chiefly emotional conflicts or as problems of welfare-optimization, the proposed method reconstructs deliberation in a precise form: "When C, I will do A in order to achieve E (for reason R)." Once articulated, a client's working maxim is subjected to three Kantian "stress tests": (i) universalizability as a check on practical coherence, (ii) the Formula of Humanity as a test of respect for persons (including self-respect), and (iii) a publicity test to distinguish defensible commitments from rationalizations. The aim is not to moralize but to make implicit values explicit, identifying internal conflicts among them, and supporting a transition from heteronomous patterns (fear, social pressure, unexamined habit) to autonomous self-legislation.
Key words: Philosophical counseling, Kantian ethics, Maxims, Autonomy, Value elicitation, Practical reasoning, Self-respect, Publicity

1. Introduction

Philosophical counseling usually begins not with an abstract puzzle, but with a lived fracture in practical life. Someone says: "I keep agreeing and then resent myself." "I say honesty matters to me, yet I still hide what matters most." "I know what I ought to do, but I go on doing otherwise." Remarks of this kind need not indicate pathology. More often, they reveal a disturbance in agency: the person can no longer state with clarity the rule by which he or she is living, or can state it only in a flattering, partial, or evasive way.

This creates a methodological difficulty. Philosophical counseling is right to resist becoming psychotherapy by another name. It does not diagnose disorders, prescribe treatment, or place the interlocutor under therapeutic authority. Yet the opposite danger is just as real. Without some disciplined unit of analysis, the conversation can drift into aspirational moral language, repeated self-descriptions, or a gentle exchange of consoling abstractions. The real question, then, is not whether philosophical counseling should become technical in any strong sense, but whether it can adopt a limited and usable structure without ceasing to be philosophical.[1]

I argue that it can. More specifically, I argue that *the maxim* can function as a disciplined unit of value elicitation in philosophical counseling, provided two conditions are kept clearly in view from the start. First, a maxim should not be treated as a transparent report of an inner state. In counseling, it is better understood as a revisable reconstruction of the practical rule that makes a recurring pattern of action intelligible. Second, Kantian testing should not be used as a device for delivering moral verdicts. Its point is not to judge from above, but to ask whether the rule under which a person is already acting can be reflectively avowed as a principle of agency.

The claim I want to make is modest. I am not offering a complete theory of philosophical counseling, nor making an empirical claim about outcomes. The proposal is conceptual and methodological. My arguments are as follows: first, that maxim-work gives us a more exact unit of practical clarification than free-floating value language; second, that a Kantian framework helps explain why some modes of agency fail not only because they are ineffective, but because they cannot be owned without evasion; and third, that a carefully limited publicity heuristic can illuminate cases in which a practical rule works only by hiding its decisive reason from the very person whose cooperation it enlists.

2. Why philosophical counseling needs a unit of analysis

One of the enduring strengths of philosophical counseling, from Lahav to Raabe and Achenbach, is its refusal to reduce existential difficulty to symptom management. The interlocutor is approached as someone trying to think, judge, orient himself or herself, and live un-

[1] Lahav, R., 1996. What Is Philosophical in Philosophical Counselling? *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 13(3); Raabe, P. B., 2000. *Philosophical Counseling: Theory and Practice*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

der concepts such as truthfulness, dignity, consistency, responsibility, or meaning. That refusal matters philosophically. It preserves a space in which a life can be examined under normative concepts rather than translated too quickly into the language of pathology, adaptation, or coping alone.[2]

But that very strength exposes a weakness. If philosophical counseling is not to become merely inspirational or conversational, it must identify the level at which practical life becomes critically examinable. The usual answer is "values." Yet values, when elicited as isolated nouns, are often too indeterminate to carry real analytical weight. A person may sincerely affirm honesty, care, loyalty, freedom, or dignity and still act under a rule that regularly subordinates one of these to fear, convenience, dependency, self-protection, image-management, or conflict avoidance. The problem is rarely the absence of values. More often, it is that the operative rule of action remains hidden beneath values declared at the level of endorsement.

For that reason, I propose the maxim, rather than the value list, as the primary unit of clarification. This does not abandon the language of values; it re-situates it. Values are not discarded, but drawn out of the rule under which the person acts. What end is being secured? What reason is being invoked? What competing considerations are being muted, deferred, or sacrificed? On this approach, values no longer remain admirable labels. They appear as tensions and fault lines internal to practical reasoning itself.

This also differentiates the present proposal from more therapeutic forms of values clarification. Those approaches have shown, and rightly so, that human suffering often involves disordered action in relation to what one takes to matter. That insight is important. My claim, however, is that philosophical counseling needs a more explicitly normative and interpretive unit than a list of values or a structure of preferences. The maxim matters because it makes visible not only what a person says matters, but also the practical rule that organizes recurrent choice. In that sense, the proposal is narrower than a full therapeutic model and more exacting than ordinary value elicitation.[3]

2 Achenbach, G. B., 1995. Philosophy, Philosophical Practice, and Psychotherapy. In: Lahav, R. – Tillmanns, M., eds. *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*. Lanham: University Press of America; Lahav, R., 1996. What Is Philosophical in Philosophical Counselling?, ibid.; Raabe, P. B., 2000. *Philosophical Counseling: Theory and Practice*, ibid.

3 Raabe, P. B., 2000. *Philosophical Counseling: Theory and Practice*, ibid.

3. Kantian foundations and the article's normative commitment

In Kantian ethics, a maxim is the subjective principle on which an agent acts. That familiar definition becomes methodologically useful only once we stop assuming that such a principle is always readily available to introspection in finished form. In many cases, people do not clearly know what rule best describes their conduct. They act under principles they would not spontaneously formulate, or would formulate only in softened, euphemized, or self-protective terms. Counseling should therefore not ask for the maxim as if it were simply waiting intact in consciousness. It should reconstruct a working maxim dialogically and test whether that reconstruction makes the pattern of action more intelligible to the interlocutor.

This reconstructive approach avoids two symmetrical errors. The first is naive introspectionism: whatever the client says first is treated as the maxim. The second is counselor authoritarianism: the counselor claims privileged access to the "real" principle behind the client's conduct. Maxim-work should do neither. It treats the practical rule as a hypothesis that can be proposed, refined, resisted, corrected, and reformulated until it becomes both interpretively illuminating and recognizably the client's own.

At this point, the normative commitment of the method should be stated openly. It is not neutral among all moral vocabularies. It is shaped by a Kantian conception of autonomy as reflective self-legislation, and by a corresponding concern for self-respect, dignity, and accountability to reasons one can avow. That commitment should not be hidden behind procedural language. If maxim-work deserves a place in philosophical counseling, it is because it helps distinguish between merely being moved by pressures and acting from a rule one can own. I therefore do not deny the method's normativity. I make it explicit, because philosophical counseling is better served by transparent commitments than by a pretense of neutrality.

This matters especially because Kantian language is often mistrusted in counseling contexts. It can sound juridical, overly abstract, or insensitive to dependence, attachment, and care. That objection is serious. It cannot be brushed aside by the easy reply that care, too, can be autonomously chosen. The deeper worry is that an autonomy-centered framework may fail to register the extent to which persons are formed through relations of vulnerability, attachment, and responsibility. Yet the present method asks a narrower question. It does not equate autonomy with self-sufficiency or emotional distance. It asks: what rule am I giving myself, and can I avow that rule without self-deception? That question leaves open the possibility that a demanding maxim of care is fully avowable. It also leaves open the possibility that what presents itself as care may conceal fear, dependency, appeasement, or self-erasure. Precisely because care is morally serious, it should not be placed beyond examination.[4]

The same is true of self-respect. In counseling, a recurrent practical difficulty is not sheer weakness of will, but self-subordination: the repeated treatment of one's own standpoint as dispensable in order to preserve an external good such as approval, attachment, calm, or security. Kantian ethics is useful here not because it supplies a quick charge of servility, but because it offers a language for why some forms of self-dispossession matter morally. A person may keep complying, smoothing over conflict, omitting one's own judgment, or styling oneself for another's comfort, while still describing one's conduct in flattering moral terms. Maxim-work helps test whether the rule involved can genuinely be owned rather than merely endured.[5]

4. The protocol of maxim-work

The protocol proposed here is intentionally simple. A working maxim is formulated according to the following schema:

When C, I will do A in order to achieve E, because R.

The four elements are condition, action, end, and reason. The schema is not meant to offer an exhaustive theory of action, still less a piece of strict Kant exegesis. It is a practical device for making a recurrent rule discussable. Its adequacy is therefore not metaphysical but dialogical: if a formulation does not help the interlocutor recognize a real pattern in his or her conduct, it needs to be revised.

[4] O'Neill, O., 1990. *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Gilligan, C., 1982. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Noddings, N., 1984. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Held, V., 2005. *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[5] Hill, T. E. Jr., 1973. Servility and Self-Respect. *The Monist*, 57(1); Hill, T. E. Jr., 1991. *Autonomy and Self-Respect*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Baron, M. W., 1995. *Kantian Ethics Almost Without Apology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

The advantages of this schema are fairly direct. First, it slows down self-description. Clients often move too quickly from conduct to moralized summary: "I stayed quiet because I care." "I lied because I had no choice." "I agreed because I wanted peace." The schema forces distinctions. Under what condition did you act? What exactly did you do? What good were you trying to secure? What reason seemed to justify that end? These questions often reveal a gap between what the action in fact secures and the moral vocabulary by which it is defended.

Second, the distinction between E and R is diagnostically useful. The end may be approval, safety, image-control, relief from tension, or the preservation of a valued attachment. The reason may be expressed in nobler terms: loyalty, realism, kindness, generosity, responsibility. Sometimes these really do coincide. Sometimes they do not. The point is not to accuse the interlocutor of bad faith whenever a divergence appears, but to identify the exact point at which philosophical work begins: the place where justificatory language and operative purpose no longer sit easily together.

Third, the schema allows values to emerge from action rather than precede it as slogans. The end reveals what good is being pursued. The reason reveals the justificatory vocabulary that authorizes the pursuit of that good. The threatened counter-values reveal what must be muted or sacrificed for the rule to function. In this way, the method yields a value-profile out of the maxim itself.

A workable maxim should meet three conditions. It should be recurrent rather than merely episodic, action-guiding rather than a name for a mood, and close enough to the client's own practical language to remain recognizable. Because counseling always risks colonizing the other's speech with a more polished vocabulary, proposed formulations should be offered only as trial reconstructions: "Let me see whether this is close." "What in this sentence sounds false to you?" "Where is this wording mine rather than yours?" The client's correction is not a secondary matter. It is often the first moment of practical ownership.

5. Three Kantian tests and one auxiliary heuristic

Once a working maxim has been formulated, the conversation moves from description to assessment. The question is no longer simply whether this is the rule under which I act, but whether it can be my rule in a reflectively defensible sense.

The first test is universalizability. In counseling, this should not be staged as an abstract exercise in world-design. Its more practical function is to ask whether the rule depends on background conditions that its own generalization would erode or destroy. This is where parasitic maxims often come into view: deception that depends on trust, selective omission that depends on norms of sincerity, emotional concealment that depends on another person's continuing to relate to a managed falsehood. Universalizability matters here because it reveals a practical incoherence internal to the rule itself, not merely an unfortunate consequence.[6]

The second test is the Formula of Humanity. The question here is whether the maxim treats a person, whether another person or oneself, merely as a means. In counseling, this point needs to be put carefully. Social life constantly involves making use of one another in a minimal and unobjectionable sense. The problem arises when a maxim bypasses the conditions under which a person could participate as a rational agent in what is being done. Manipulation, strategic opacity, and the management of another person's deliberative situation are the clearest examples. But the test is equally important in self-relations. Many clients are not mainly exploiting others. They are participating in their own reduction by silencing, stylizing, or erasing themselves in order to preserve some external good.[7]

The third device has to be introduced more cautiously. I call it a publicity heuristic rather than a third strict Kantian formula. Its guiding question is this: could the decisive reason of this maxim be disclosed, at least in principle, to the person whose agency it recruits, without the strategy collapsing? A negative answer does not by itself prove wrongdoing. Privacy is not manipulation, and not every undisclosed reason is owed to every other person. But the question is philosophically revealing in a limited class of cases, namely those in which a maxim secures cooperation by withholding from the other the very consideration that makes the strategy effective.[8] The method should not claim a textual authority it does not actually possess. The heuristic is auxiliary. It is meant for cases

[6] Kant, I., 1998. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Ed. and transl. by Gregor, M. Introduction by Korsgaard, C. M. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Herman, B., 1993. *The Practice of Moral Judgment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Wood, A. W., 1999. *Kant's Ethical Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[7] Kant, I., 1998. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ibid.; Hill, T. E. Jr., 1973. Servility and Self-Respect, ibid.; Baron, M. W., 1995. *Kantian Ethics Almost Without Apology*, ibid.

[8] Luban, D., 1996. The Publicity Principle. In: Goodin, R. E., ed. *The Theory of Institutional Design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 154–165.

of strategic opacity, not for all morally serious conduct. Used in that limited way, it can bring into view a practical asymmetry that neither universalizability nor the humanity formula always captures with sufficient phenomenological sharpness.

Because these tests are normatively demanding, safeguards are essential. At a minimum, the method requires explicit consent to the procedure, role clarity, and reversibility. The interlocutor should know that the conversation is not psychotherapy, not diagnosis, and not a demand for confession. The counselor's formulations must remain contestable. And the client must be able to withdraw, suspend, or revise the inquiry without the suggestion that resistance itself proves the point. Philosophical counseling does not escape influence merely because it works through reflection. If anything, the clearer it becomes about reasons, the more careful it must be about the authority it exercises.

6. Three analytical vignettes

The following vignettes are analytical rather than empirical. Their purpose is to show what the method can illuminate and where its limits become visible.

The first case concerns strategic omission. A client seeking an important professional opportunity says, "I am not lying. I am simply not mentioning the parts that would make them reject me." A plausible maxim is reconstructed as follows: When an important opportunity depends on how I am perceived, I will omit relevant information in order to secure the opportunity, because another loss would be intolerable. Universalizability reveals the parasitic structure fairly quickly. The strategy depends on a background practice of credible representation while covertly exploiting that very practice. The humanity test sharpens the problem: the decision-maker is invited to choose, but not under conditions that respect his or her deliberation. The publicity heuristic then shows why the rule is unstable as a principle of agency: the client cannot avow to the other person the reason that makes concealment useful.

The second case concerns chronic self-suppression in an intimate relationship. A client says, "I keep the peace, but then I feel invisible." An initial reconstruction might be: When disagreement threatens someone I love, I will suppress my preference in order to preserve harmony, because conflict risks abandonment. The client resists that formulation: "That is not all it is. I really think love means putting the other first."

This resistance is philosophically important. It shows that fear is not the whole story; it is entangled with a serious moral ideal. A revised maxim follows: When my partner is distressed, I will prioritize his wellbeing over my preference, because love requires generosity and I can bear the loss more easily.

This second version does not simply collapse under universalizability. A caring rule of this sort can be intelligible, and sometimes admirable. But the humanity test complicates the picture. If the partner never encounters the disagreement being withheld, he is not relating to her actual standpoint but to a managed relationship. The publicity heuristic adds a second layer of scrutiny: could she disclose, at least in principle, that what appears as spontaneous agreement is partly a standing policy of self-suppression? At that point another maxim often comes into view beneath the first: When disagreement risks destabilizing attachment, I will conceal my difference in order to avoid loss. The result is not a dramatic moral verdict. It is a more exact map of the conflict between care and fear.

The third case concerns protective deception under coercion. A client preparing to leave an abusive partner asks whether concealment makes her dishonest in a morally condemning sense. The maxim is formulated narrowly: When a coercive partner asks whether I am preparing to leave, I will conceal the truth in order to protect my safety and preserve the possibility of leaving, because truthful disclosure would expose me to harm. Here the method must be handled with particular care. Universalizability has to be indexed not to the banal rule "lie when useful," but to the specific condition of coercive domination. The humanity test becomes two-sided: concealment is present, but so is the protection of one's own rational agency against weaponized disclosure. The publicity heuristic must also be re-indexed. The relevant audience is not the abuser, but a reasonable third party to whom the client could avow her reason without contradiction. In such a case, the method does not deliver moral purity. It clarifies why ordinary truthfulness norms are strained under domination and why self-protective concealment may be the more avowable rule.

7. Objections and limits

The strongest objection is that the method covertly moralizes. In one sense, that objection is correct. Maxim-work is not normatively neutral. It is guided by a Kantian concern for avowability, respect for agency, and accountability to reasons. The answer, however, is not to deny normativity but to discipline it. The method should be presented as one explicit normative practice among others. Its tests must remain contestable in dialogue, and success should never be identified with the client's agreement with the counselor. The standard is clarity, not submission.

A second objection is that the article overstates the Kantian status of the publicity element. That criticism would be justified if the claim were that publicity functions here as a third formula of the categorical imperative. That is not the claim. The more limited point is that, in counseling contexts marked by strategic opacity, a publicity heuristic can reveal whether a practical rule depends for its success on managing another person's deliberative situation from behind a veil. The heuristic is therefore philosophically associated with Kantian concerns, but methodologically secondary.

A third objection concerns relational and cultural thickness. The article remains agent-centered insofar as it takes the person's operative rule as its basic unit of analysis. That focus may understate the extent to which agency is itself formed through social roles, histories of dependence, and unequal structures of recognition. The limitation is real. Maxim-work should not be treated as the universal core of philosophical counseling, but as a method especially suited to cases in which the practical difficulty turns on the tension between avowed commitments and recurrent rules of action.

A fourth limitation is evidential. This is a conceptual article, not an empirical study. The vignettes are analytical constructions, not case data. Nothing here establishes clinical effectiveness, comparative superiority, or generalizability across populations and settings. Those are important questions, but they are not the ones answered here. The narrower claim is that maxim-work yields a clearer philosophical picture of certain forms of practical conflict, and that Kantian tools illuminate why some rules fail not only strategically but as candidates for reflective ownership.

8. Conclusion

Philosophical counseling gains little by becoming a softened copy of psychotherapy. But it also gains little by treating ethical self-description as sufficient simply because it is sincere. What it needs is a disciplined point at which practical life can be made answerable to examination without being reduced to diagnosis. The maxim provides such a point.

The central claim of this article has been that maxim-work helps philosophical counseling move from abstract value language to the practical rule under which a person is actually living. Once reconstructed, that rule can be tested for coherence, for respect toward agency, and, in a narrower class of cases, for the strategic opacity on which it may depend. Used carefully, this is not moralizing from outside. It is an inquiry into whether a person can own the rule by which he or she is already acting.

That is the real aim of the method. Not purity, not control, and not quick behavioral correction. Its aim is avowable agency: the capacity to state one's rule more plainly, to see what it serves, to recognize what it costs, and to decide whether it can be lived by without evasion.[9]

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[9] For recent discussions of Kantian ethics in applied contexts, see: Fišerová, M., 2024. Perpetual Peace Today: Ethics and Politics of Sustainability. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 13(2), pp. 87–100; Miškocová, A., 2024. Moral Formation in Kant's Philosophy. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 13(2), pp. 227–238.

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Virtue, Duty, and the Moral Ecology of Organ Donation: From Kantian to Neo-Aristotelian Perspectives in Dialogue with Orthodox Theology

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Abstract: This article extends a recent Kantian-inspired dialogical framework for addressing spiritual and moral obstacles to organ donation by bringing it into conversation with neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics. Kantian ethics secures non-negotiable constraints such as respect for persons, dignity, and consent, but it is less well equipped to explain how trust, moral motivation, and institutional credibility are formed and sustained in practice. Drawing on contemporary bioethics, nursing ethics, and neo-Aristotelian analyses of organ donation, we argue that concepts such as character, practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), and moral formation provide an essential complement to duty-based reasoning. This synthesis helps explain why organ donation may be morally admirable without being morally obligatory, why disagreement about donation can persist without irrationality, and why the legitimacy of transplantation depends not only on legal safeguards but also on institutional character. The analysis remains attentive to Orthodox theological concerns about death, bodily integrity, and apophatic restraint, while proposing a non-triumphalist ethical vocabulary capable of supporting morally credible transplantation practices under conditions of pluralism and uncertainty.
Key words: Organ donation and transplantation, Kantian ethics, Virtue ethics, Neo-Aristotelianism, Orthodox theology, Moral formation, Brain death

Introduction

In an earlier analysis of Romania's continuing deadlock over post-mortem organ donation from brain-dead persons, it was argued that a Kantian-inspired dialogical framework can help mediate between Orthodox spiritual concerns and the life-preserving aims of transplantation medicine. The force of that argument lay in a structural affinity: Kant's critical philosophy, like Orthodox apophaticism, insists on the limits of what may be claimed as knowledge,[1] especially where empirical medical criteria are burdened with metaphysical or spiritual certainty about death.[2]

What now needs development is not a change of ethical framework, but an enlargement of moral vocabulary. If the debate remains confined to duty, sanctity, prohibition, and permission, it fails to account for the slow formation of trust, judgment, and moral sensibility within communities. The question is not only whether organ donation can be justified in principle, but how it may become intelligible as a morally serious practice under conditions of grief, distrust, and spiritual hesitation.

This issue is especially pressing in Romania's post-pandemic context. As argued elsewhere, diminished confidence in medical institutions, together with recent public positions of the Romanian Orthodox Church that appear more receptive to paired organ donation than to deceased donation, has direct consequences for heart and liver transplantation, which generally depend on organs retrieved after death.[3] If the Church continues to function as a trusted moral authority for many believers, then the question is not whether it should replace medicine, but what kind of ethical language might support responsible discernment about medical facts, human vulnerability, and the ends of care.

This article therefore retains the Kantian framework as its normative boundary-setting structure, while using neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics as a complementary account of moral formation, practical judgment, and institutional credibility. Kantian ethics remains indispensable in setting moral limits: persons must not be instrumentalized, consent cannot be bypassed, and human dignity is non-negotiable.[4] Yet a duty-

[1] In a recent insightful analysis of Kant's view on the limits of knowledge, Edvardas Rimkus notes that, according to the great German philosopher, "[k]nowledge achieved by scientific methods is not complete or final, but only partial knowledge of some aspects of the objects of cognition". (Rimkus, E., 2023. The Question of the Limits of Cognition in Kant's Philosophy. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 12(1), p. 28.)

[2] Băluțescu, R., 2024. Matters of Life or Death: Spiritual Obstacles to Organ Donation in Contemporary Romania. Towards a Kantian-Inspired Dialogical Framework for Breaking the Deadlock. *Cogito*, XVI(4).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Kant's Formula of Humanity requires that persons always be treated as ends in themselves and never merely as means. Applied to donation ethics, this supports the centrality of valid consent and the rejection of instrumentalization. (Kant, I., 1998. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Ed. and trans. Gregor, M. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ak. 4:429); Onora O'Neill develops a contemporary Kantian account of autonomy grounded less in preference satisfaction than in principled agency, trust, and non-deception—highly relevant to informed consent in medicine. (O'Neill, O., 2002. *Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)

based framework alone says too little about moral psychology, about the cultivation of trust, and about the virtues required of clinicians, families, institutions, and communities.[5] Virtue ethics helps address this lack by shifting attention toward character, practical wisdom, affective formation, and the institutional habits that make ethical practices credible.

Therefore, the present paper develops a dialogue between Kantian ethics, neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, and Orthodox moral concerns in order to clarify the ethical conditions under which organ donation may be responsibly proposed, meaningfully understood, and legitimately refused. Our aim is deliberately limited. We do not offer a comprehensive account of transplantation ethics, nor do we claim to resolve longstanding controversies surrounding brain death, bodily integrity, or post-mortem beneficence. Rather, we seek to identify a more adequate moral vocabulary for thinking about organ donation in societies where law, medicine, religion, and historical distrust remain deeply entangled.

By "neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics" we do not mean a single unified school, but a family of contemporary approaches that retrieve Aristotelian themes of character, habituation, practical wisdom, flourishing, and the moral formation of practices. The article uses this family of approaches in a deliberately delimited way. To make this delimitation explicit, we draw selectively on authors whose work illuminates different dimensions of this shared Aristotelian inheritance. MacIntyre is relevant primarily for his account of practices, institutions, internal goods, and tradition-dependent rationality; Annas for her understanding of virtue as intelligent, developmental practical skill; Nussbaum for her attention to flourishing, vulnerability, and the concrete conditions under which human capacities can be exercised; and Pellegrino for his account of medicine as a moral practice ordered toward the good of the patient. These approaches differ significantly, and the article does not attempt to synthesize them into a complete theory. It draws on their shared Aristotelian grammar only insofar as it helps clarify the moral ecology of organ donation: the formation of trust, the exercise of judgment, the moral character of institutions, and the difference between admirable donation and compulsory moral duty.

[5] Edmund Pellegrino argues that medicine is inherently a moral practice ordered toward the good of the patient, not merely a technical service. (Pellegrino, E. D.,Thomasma, D. C., 1993. *The Virtues in Medical Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.)

1. Kantian Limits, Orthodox Discernment, and the Need for Moral Formation

Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics is a promising partner for the Kantian register of dignity, autonomy, and duty because it directs ethical attention to the terrain on which public controversies actually unfold: character, trust, exemplarity, emotion, and judgment. This is not a rejection of Kant. It is an attempt to supply what rule-centered debate often lacks—an account of how communities come to form stable dispositions such as generosity, compassion, courage, honesty, and justice, and how these dispositions make certain actions recognizable as morally fitting even in circumstances marked by loss and metaphysical uncertainty.

In this respect, virtue ethics can function as the moral psychology of the earlier dialogical framework. It explains how a culture capable of sustaining donation depends on more than propositions, prohibitions, or legal structures.[6] Contemporary transplant ethics increasingly moves in this direction. In a recent debate in *Medicina Intensiva*, del Rio Gallegos and colleagues stress that professionals involved in organ donation do not cease to be moral agents when they follow protocols. Whether organ donation is handled well cannot be decided only by checking that the right steps were followed. Much also depends on character, seasoned judgment, and sensitivity to the realities of the case in front of those involved. Cases rarely repeat themselves.[7]

That claim is structurally neo-Aristotelian. In morally complex situations, good practice cannot be reduced to compliance. It depends on cultivated judgment. This point is especially important in Romania, where public resistance to transplantation cannot be addressed only by legal clarification or medical information. Orthodoxy itself is a tradition of formation, habituation, exemplarity, and ascetic discipline. It is therefore not alien to virtue language, even where it remains skeptical of abstract bioethical discourse. A virtue-based ethical idiom may thus prove more intelligible than one framed exclusively in terms of autonomy or utility.

One important bridge between virtue ethics and transplantation is already visible in David M. Shaw's proposal that post-mortem organ

[6] Băluțescu, R., 2024. Matters of Life or Death: Spiritual Obstacles to Organ Donation in Contemporary Romania. Towards a Kantian-Inspired Dialogical Framework for Breaking the Deadlock, ibid.

[7] del Rio Gallegos, F., Escribá Bárcena, A., Grau Carmona, T., Mateos Rodriguez, A., 2025. The organ donation process: An ethical commitment. *Medicina Intensiva*, 49, p. 115.

donation may be understood as a "virtuous death," one that mitigates the moral misfortune of sudden death through a form of eudaimonic continuity extending into the lives one helps preserve.[8] Shaw's point is not sentimental. He does not deny the tragedy of death; rather, he suggests that donation can be interpreted as an act continuous with a person's practical identity and commitments. Read alongside Kantian respect for persons, this helps explain why donation need not be seen merely as the "use" of a body, but can sometimes be understood as a final expression of beneficence—provided that dignity and consent remain intact.[9]

2. Altruism, Motivation, and the Moral Boundaries of Donation

A major fault line in contemporary transplant ethics concerns the place of altruism. Gregory Moorlock, Jonathan Ives, and Heather Draper have shown that altruism often functions less as a neutral moral ideal than as a gatekeeping device that determines which motivations count as ethically acceptable and which are excluded from policy recognition.[10] Their critique is important because it exposes how transplant discourse sometimes presupposes an unrealistic image of moral purity.

Insisting on "pure altruism" as the only acceptable motivational basis for donation risks distorting how moral agency actually works. Human action is often shaped by mixed motives: love, family loyalty, gratitude, reciprocity, grief, a wish to create meaning out of suffering, or a desire to honor the values of the deceased. From a neo-Aristotelian perspective, this complexity is not ethically suspect in itself. Virtues are not defined by motivational sterility, but by the capacity of practical reason to orient action toward appropriate goods in concrete circumstances.

This is particularly helpful when placed alongside Kantian worries about instrumentalization. Kantian ethics rightly resists any framework in which persons are treated merely as means. But it does not follow that only motivations free of affective or relational entanglement are morally

[8] Shaw, D. M., 2017. A virtuous death: Organ donation and eudaimonia. *Bioethical Inquiry*, 14, pp. 319–321.

[9] Kant distinguishes duties of right from duties of virtue and includes beneficence among the latter: we ought to adopt others' permissible ends as ends of our own. This offers a Kantian basis for viewing donation as morally admirable without making it strictly compulsory. (Kant, I., 1996. *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Ed. and trans. Gregor, M. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)

[10] Moorlock, G., Ives, J., Draper, H., 2014. Altruism in organ donation: an unnecessary requirement? *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 40(2), pp. 134–138.

acceptable. The critique offered by Moorlock and colleagues allows us to distinguish more clearly between morally problematic incentives and morally intelligible reasons for donation. Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics thus broadens the moral anthropology of the debate without weakening the central Kantian concern for respect.[11]

This also explains why the present article resists both extremes: the reduction of donation to a merely optional private preference and the elevation of donation into a universal moral requirement. Virtue ethics allows donation to be described as morally admirable when it expresses generosity, fidelity, and practical wisdom, while Kantian ethics prevents admiration from becoming coercive expectation.

3. Commodification and the Virtue Ethics of Gifts

The distinction between donation and sale remains one of the most revealing tests for any ethical approach to transplantation. Several phenomenological and theological accounts of the gift, including those associated with Jean-Luc Marion, have emphasized that giving and receiving at the threshold of death cannot be adequately described in market terms.[12] On such views, donation exceeds simple exchange. It bears meanings of gratuity, self-giving, and relational asymmetry that cannot be captured by the language of equivalence.

At the same time, this phenomenology of the gift also reveals the ethical ambivalence of receiving. A gift of such magnitude may generate gratitude, but also guilt, indebtedness, and a sense of asymmetrical obligation. The recipient may experience donation not only as rescue, but as a burden of unpayable debt. In some accounts, transplantation even acquires a symbolic or spiritual dimension in which donor and recipient are imagined as joined through the act of transfer.[13] Whether or not one endorses such interpretations, they show that the moral meaning of donation cannot be exhausted by procedural notions of consent and allocation.

Barbro Björkman's Aristotelian analysis of organ markets is especially useful here. She argues that the wrongness of organ selling cannot be reduced simply to exploitation. More fundamentally, markets corrupt social practices that ought to be ordered by virtues such as generosity

[11] Ibid.
[12] Marion, J.-L., 1991. *God without Being.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
[13] Ibid.

and justice.[14] From this point of view, donation is not morally valuable merely because it is unpaid. It is valuable because it belongs to a practice structured by common goods, trust, and moral recognition. Virtue ethics therefore provides a principled, though not simplistic, basis for rejecting commodification while still allowing nuanced discussion of support, recognition, and non-market forms of compensation.

4. Relational Ethics in Practice: Families, Clinicians, Trust, and Consent

The ethical quality of organ donation is inseparable from the quality of the relationships that sustain it. This is one of the clearest lessons of the nursing ethics literature. Families of deceased donors are not merely consent-givers who appear at the end of a medical process. They are moral participants attempting to navigate grief, uncertainty, responsibility, and meaning. The narrative review in *Nursing Ethics* stresses relational continuity, truthfulness, prudence, and compassionate accompaniment as central to ethically sound support for potential donors' relatives.[15]

Here, the complementarity of Kantian and neo-Aristotelian approaches becomes particularly visible. Kantian ethics secures the minimum moral boundaries of transplantation: no donation without respect for persons, no acceptable practice without dignity, and no legitimacy where consent is manipulated or ignored.[16] Virtue ethics explains how those moral boundaries become livable and credible in concrete settings. In societies such as the Romanian one, where public trust is mediated by religious and communal narratives, this distinction matters. Rules may authorize a practice, but they do not by themselves make it morally intelligible. This point can also be framed in Kantian terms, since moral formation is not exhausted by theoretical assent to duty. As Andrea Miškocová writes, "Morality is not a mere theoretical base but a place from which practical virtuous action begins. It is not enough to speak of the individual acting morally only for himself. The consequences

[14] Björkman, B., 2008. *Virtue Ethics, Bioethics, and the Ownership of Biological Material*. PhD dissertation. Stockholm: KTH Royal Institute of Technology.

[15] Baumann, A., Thilly, N., Joseph, L., Claudot, F., 2022. Ethical Reflection Support for Potential Organ Donors' Relatives: A Narrative Review. *Nursing Ethics*, 29(3).

[16] In her apt account of Kant's connection between duty, virtue and dignity, Andrea Miškocová writes: "The attainment of virtue is not merely a possibility for man, but his inner duty, for it exists in man not only as a prerequisite of his freedom, but as a power which is acquired by the contemplation of the dignity of the rational law and the practice of virtue." (Miškocová, A., 2024. Moral Formation in Kant's Philosophy. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 13(2), p. 232.

of his actions are cosmopolitan, manifesting themselves at the level of society."[17]

A virtue-based perspective also opens a productive dialogue with Orthodox moral anthropology, which has traditionally emphasized formation more than isolated rule-following. Orthodox ethics, like Aristotle's, is concerned with the shaping of persons through repeated practices, exemplars, and communal rhythms. This may help explain why appeals framed only in terms of autonomy or efficiency often leave Orthodox believers unconvinced in matters of organ donation, whereas narratives centered on self-giving, responsibility, and faithful care tend to carry greater moral force. In this respect, Aristotle's language of *hexis* (charity) offers a useful conceptual bridge for interpreting donation not as a technocratic intervention at the end of life, but as a possible extension of a life oriented toward love of neighbor.[18]

The role of moral exemplars is central here. Virtue ethics has long held that people learn morally not only from principles but from lives that render the virtues visible. In the setting of organ donation, such exemplars might be donor families who speak of donation as a meaningful way of responding to loss, or clinicians who show honesty, restraint, and compassion in end-of-life care.

Contemporary virtue ethics can make the same point without relying on an analogy external to bioethics: moral judgment is shaped not only by rules and outcomes, but also by the perceived character of agents, the intelligibility of their motives, and the narrative coherence of their conduct. In transplantation contexts, this matters because families and communities assess not only whether professionals have followed a protocol, but whether their conduct displays honesty, restraint, compassion,

[17] Ibid., p. 228.

[18] Aristotle describes moral virtue as a *hexis*: a relatively stable disposition of character, expressed in choice and guided by reason toward an appropriate mean (NE II.6, 1106b36–1107a2). Read in this light, donation need not be understood as a single detached gesture. It can instead be seen as the outward sign of a formed character, one schooled in generosity and responsive to what the situation rightly calls for. (Aristotle, 2009. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Ross, W. D., rev. Brown, L. Oxford: Oxford University Press); Martha Nussbaum observes that, for Aristotle, ethical excellence cannot be measured by occasional good deeds taken one by one. It belongs instead to a character gradually formed through habituation, sound judgment, and a sensitive response to particular circumstances. Seen in this way, *hexis* is better understood as a durable moral orientation than as a mere routine or automatic habit. (Nussbaum, M. C., 2001. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Rev. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, esp. pp. 290–318.)

and fidelity to the good of the patient.[19]

When transplant practices are not connected to recognizable virtues, they are more likely to arouse moral suspicion, even when they comply with legal and procedural requirements. This becomes especially important in post-mortem donation, where the donor can no longer speak and surviving relatives must often reconstruct the meaning of the act. Families need more than procedural explanation; they often need reassurance that donation is faithful to the life and values of the deceased. In that respect, the healthcare professional is not simply an administrator of consent, but also a moral witness whose conduct may help a family understand donation as an ethically coherent act rather than an extraction performed under institutional pressure.[20]

The concept of *phronēsis* is crucial here. Practical wisdom is not a method for reaching final answers, but a virtue of context-sensitive discernment.[21] This matters not only for clinicians but also for dialogue between medicine and religious authority. When churches are asked to pronounce definitively on complex questions such as brain death or procurement protocols, a virtue-based perspective supports a more modest and dialogical role: one that articulates moral concerns, acknowledges epistemic limits, and engages medical expertise without claiming exhaustive competence.[22]

The same virtue-based framework also helps make sense of the erosion of public trust in healthcare institutions. Trust is not produced by regulation alone. The same virtue-based framework also helps make sense of the erosion of public trust in healthcare institutions. Trust is not produced by regulation alone. This is especially important in post-communist societies, where institutional memory includes coercion, opacity, and suspicion. In the Romanian case, mistrust of organ donation should not be dismissed as mere ignorance. It is historically shaped and morally charged. Virtue ethics allows these suspicions to be taken seriously without granting them automatic authority. It treats them as signals of

[19] Annas, J., 2011. *Intelligent Virtue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; MacIntyre, A., 2007. *After Virtue*. 3rd ed. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.; Pellegrino, E. D., Thomasma, D. C., 1993. The Virtues in Medical Practice, ibid.

[20] Baumann, A., Thilly, N., Joseph, L., Claudot, F., 2022. Ethical Reflection Support, ibid.

[21] Julia Annas interprets virtue as intelligent skill-like development rather than rule compliance, making her especially relevant to clinical judgment and moral formation. (Annas, J., 2011. *Intelligent Virtue*, ibid.)

[22] Băluțescu, R., 2024. Matters of Life or Death: Spiritual Obstacles to Organ Donation in Contemporary Romania. Towards a Kantian-Inspired Dialogical Framework for Breaking the Deadlock, ibid., pp. 24, 25.

damaged civic trust rather than as irrational obstacles to be swept away.

A sociological perspective reinforces this point. Talcott Parsons famously described illness as a form of “legitimate deviance” within the social system: a condition that suspends ordinary obligations while placing the individual under the authority of medicine.[23] Organ failure is thus not only a biological crisis but a disruption of social participation. Transplantation appears, within this framework, as a mechanism of restoration. Yet that same restorative authority can become morally suspect when it is experienced as domination rather than care. Read alongside virtue ethics, Parsons’ analysis suggests that institutions do not earn trust merely by fulfilling technical functions.

Authority by itself does not generate public trust. Trust develops when institutional power is perceived to serve care, fairness, and shared benefit rather than simple control.[24] Recent sociological research points in much the same direction. Resistance to organ donation often appears to arise not only from private religious conviction, but from mistrust and weakened relations between citizens and institutions. One qualitative study carried out in a predominantly religious context reported that family refusal was associated more strongly with distrust of healthcare systems, poor communication, and limited public recognition of donors than with doctrine itself. In that setting, religion more often shaped how institutional conduct was interpreted than directly caused refusal.[25] Although these findings cannot simply be transferred to Romania, they illuminate structurally comparable dynamics in contexts where religion, family consent, and institutional credibility remain closely intertwined.

The same is true of broader proposals for a “sociology of donation.” Such approaches remind us that donation is not a discrete act motivated by individual altruism alone, but a socially embedded practice shaped by norms, narratives, and institutional arrangements.[26] Sociology does

[23] Parsons, T., 1951. Illness and the Role of the Physician: A Sociological Perspective. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 21(3); Parsons, T., 1967. *Sociological Theory and Modern Society*. New York: Free Press.

[24] Alasdair MacIntyre’s account of practices and virtues helps explain why institutions require internal goods and moral excellences, not only external regulation. (MacIntyre, A., 2007. *After Virtue*, ibid.)

[25] Lalehgani, H., Babaee, S., Yazdannick, A. R., Alimohammadi, N., Saneie, B., Ramezannejad, P., 2024. Explanation of the sociological patterns of organ donation: An analytical study. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 13(87).

[26] Machin, L. L., Williams, R. A., Frith, L., 2020. Proposing a sociology of donation: The donation of body parts and products for art, education, research, or treatment. *Sociology Compass*, 14, e12826.

not replace ethics here. Rather, it clarifies how trust, suspicion, generosity, and reluctance are socially formed, while Kantian and neo-Aristotelian ethics remain necessary to assess what is morally permissible and admirable within those practices.

This broader perspective also deepens our understanding of consent. Kantian bioethics rightly insists that consent is a threshold condition. Yet virtue ethics directs attention to the circumstances under which consent becomes ethically meaningful. The law may accept consent given in moments of pressure, confusion, loneliness, or mistrust. Ethics may hesitate. Consent formed through respectful, truthful, unhurried conversation has greater moral force and better reflects institutional *phronēsis*.[27] Consent, in other words, is not merely a formal event but a relational process.[28]

The same applies to vulnerability. A virtue-ethical approach does not treat vulnerability simply as a factor triggering additional safeguards, though such safeguards remain important. It treats vulnerability as a familiar part of human life, one that calls for gentleness, patience, honesty, and courage. The more serious moral failure lies not in vulnerability itself, but in neglecting it, exploiting it, or turning it into an instrument of pressure. This insight also helps explain why critiques of reductive altruism matter. Moral value does not arise from denying vulnerability, but from responding to it well.[29]

Taken together, these lines of argument suggest that the future ethical credibility of transplantation depends less on achieving final metaphysical agreement than on cultivating moral reliability. Kantian ethics establishes the inviolability of persons; neo-Aristotelian ethics explains how respect becomes believable in practice.[30] In societies negotiating between religious tradition, historical trauma, and modern medicine, ethical reform is therefore likely to be slow, relational, and practice-based rather than rhetorically decisive.

[27] Baumann, A., Thilly, N., Joseph, L., Claudot, F., 2022. Ethical Reflection Support, ibid.

[28] Kant repeatedly links rightful interaction with the independence of each person's choice under universal law. In modern bioethics, informed consent can be read as one institutional expression of that requirement. (Kant, I., 1996. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ibid.)

[29] Moorlock, G., Ives, J., Draper, H., 2014. Altruism in organ donation, ibid.

[30] Martha Nussbaum links respect for persons with the real possibility of flourishing through concrete capabilities rather than abstract recognition alone. (Nussbaum, M. C., 2011. *Creating Capabilities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.)

5. Bodily Integrity, Grief, and Meaning-Making After Death

Concerns about bodily integrity after death remain among the most persistent spiritual and cultural obstacles to organ donation. Within Orthodox contexts, these concerns are often expressed not in the language of biology but in that of reverence: the body is regarded as bound up with personhood, death, mourning, and resurrection, not as inert material available for technical use. A neo-Aristotelian approach can help clarify that respect for bodily integrity need not entail absolute bodily inviolability. The moral question is not whether the body may undergo alteration after death, but whether such alteration occurs within a practice ordered toward genuine human goods and governed by restraint, dignity, and consent.[31]

Parsons' sociological framework is illuminating here as well. If health is socially coded as a condition of functional participation, then the body also carries symbolic meaning that exceeds its biological status. Post-mortem bodily integrity may therefore represent continuity of identity, not merely physical completeness.[32] Transplantation confronts not only biological death but also the cultural and spiritual significance of the body. Any ethically serious engagement with organ donation must therefore acknowledge that the body functions both as biological substrate and as bearer of collective and religious meaning.

Virtue ethics also helps temper the moral language often used in this area. Generosity, sacrifice, and courage are real virtues, but they can be badly misused if romanticized. Giving is not always good simply because it is costly. Contemporary virtue theory insists that generosity is a mean, not a cult of self-erasure. In post-mortem donation, where the primary moral agent is no longer present and others must interpret the meaning of the act, ethical legitimacy depends not on heroic sacrifice but on prudent and faithful interpretation supported by trustworthy institutions.[33]

Björkman's distinction between donation and sale reinforces this point. Similar physical acts may be morally understood in radically different ways depending on the practice in which they are embedded. When transfer is governed by profit, moral perception is distorted. When

[31] Băluțescu, R., 2024. Matters of Life or Death: Spiritual Obstacles to Organ Donation in Contemporary Romania. Towards a Kantian-Inspired Dialogical Framework for Breaking the Deadlock, ibid., p. 12.

[32] Parsons, T., 1967. *Sociological Theory and Modern Society*, ibid.

[33] Moorlock, G., Ives, J., Draper, H., 2014. Altruism in organ donation, ibid.

it is structured by trust, shared goods, and respect, donation can be seen as morally intelligible rather than corrupting. This is why public narratives matter so much.[34] If organ donation is presented only as a technical answer to scarcity, it may appear cold, managerial, or utilitarian. If it is presented through truthful narratives that integrate loss, love, gratitude, and responsibility, it becomes more recognizably human.[35]

Yet such narratives must remain restrained. Virtue ethics rejects manipulation, even when deployed for apparently noble ends. Overidealized portrayals of donation can produce backlash, particularly in societies already suspicious of institutional motives. Practical wisdom requires attention to moral readiness. Some communities may need time, transparency, and repeated experiences of trustworthy practice before donation can be received as a virtue rather than as a threat. In this sense, moral patience is not peripheral to transplantation ethics; it is one of its central, if neglected, virtues.

6. Moral Responsibility, Reciprocity, and Institutional Ethics

Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics treats responsibility as relational rather than as a burden borne by isolated individuals. In the context of transplantation, responsibility is distributed across donors, families, clinicians, institutions, policymakers, and the wider civic culture. Autonomy remains indispensable, but it is never exercised outside practices that either sustain or erode responsible choice. This is particularly important in transplantation, where no single actor controls the entire moral field.

The same relational logic applies to reciprocity. Critics sometimes fear that appeals to reciprocity place covert pressure on citizens by implying that one owes donation to the community. Virtue ethics helps avoid this distortion. Reciprocity need not mean moral accounting. It can instead name a shared orientation toward sustaining practices that protect common goods. Properly understood, reciprocity is not a demand imposed on vulnerable individuals, but a recognition that flourishing depends on forms of mutual participation that no one creates alone.[36]

This perspective also changes how we evaluate opt-in and opt-out systems. Policy debates often focus on effectiveness and donation rates. Virtue ethics asks a deeper question: what sorts of moral dispositions are

[34] Björkman, B., 2008. *Virtue Ethics, Bioethics, and the Ownership of Biological Material*, ibid., p. 21.
[35] Baumann, A., Thilly, N., Joseph, L., Claudot, F., 2022. Ethical Reflection Support, ibid., pp. 672–673.
[36] Moorlock, G., Ives, J., Draper, H., 2014. Altruism in organ donation, ibid., p. 136.

cultivated by a given consent regime? An opt-out system may increase procurement while weakening trust if it is perceived as appropriation. An opt-in system may yield slower gains while better respecting agency if it is supported by long-term moral education and transparent institutional practice. Legal architecture therefore cannot be assessed solely by outcomes detached from moral formation.[37]

This caution is especially important in contexts marked by fragile public trust. Legal reform cannot compensate for institutional opacity. Where citizens suspect self-interest, coercion, or disregard for the dead, they are unlikely to experience presumed consent as an expression of solidarity. They may instead experience it as moral overreach. Virtue ethics interprets such reactions not as irrationality pure and simple, but as evidence that institutions have failed to display the character required to make their authority credible. Laws can authorize practice; only moral reliability can secure legitimacy.

Parsons' analysis sharpens this point. If medicine operates as a system of social regulation designed to manage disruption and restore functional participation, transplantation occupies a structurally delicate position. It combines restoration with exceptional power over the threshold between life and death.[38] When this power is exercised transparently and justly, it can reinforce social trust. When it appears opaque or self-serving, it risks being perceived as domination. The ethical stakes of transplantation are therefore never only clinical; they are also civic and institutional.

Grief belongs within this institutional picture. It is not an external difficulty that interrupts otherwise rational decision-making. It is one of the central moral contexts in which post-mortem donation occurs. Virtue ethics resists marginalizing grief. It insists that grief calls forth specific virtues from professionals and institutions: truthfulness, patience, compassion, restraint, and attentiveness. Decisions made in grief are not morally defective because emotion is present. Their ethical quality depends on whether grief is met with practical wisdom or with procedural insensitivity.[39]

From this perspective, organ donation can sometimes become part of moral repair. It does not redeem death, nor does it transform refusal into failure. But it may help some families integrate loss into a narrative

[37] MacIntyre, A., 2007. *After Virtue*, ibid.
[38] Parsons, T., 1967. *Sociological Theory and Modern Society*, ibid.
[39] Shaw, D. M., 2017. A virtuous death, ibid., pp. 320–321.

that affirms shared goods and relational continuity.

What matters ethically is not whether donation always brings healing, but whether families are treated as moral agents whose decisions deserve respect in moments of vulnerability. That insistence on acknowledgment resonates strongly with Kantian respect for persons while avoiding the level of abstraction that can distance grieving families.

The question of posthumous beneficence also becomes easier to frame within virtue ethics. Kantian ethics has difficulty with the idea of agency after death, whereas virtue ethics understands beneficence as continuous with the orientation of a person's life rather than as a discrete act performed by a presently acting subject. On this view, post-mortem donation can be seen as morally continuous with virtues cultivated during life, without requiring doubtful metaphysical claims about the ongoing interests of the dead.[40]

Practices of remembrance and acknowledgment have significance as well. Public recognition of donors and respectful communication with families are not merely symbolic gestures. They disclose institutional character and can sustain trust and gratitude without recasting donation in market terms.[41] Where such acknowledgment is absent, even procedurally acceptable donation may later be interpreted as violation. The ethics of transplantation is inseparable from the ethics of mourning.

7. Moral Disagreement, Epistemic Humility, and the Limits of Ethical Consensus

Among the more important contributions neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics can offer transplant ethics is a disciplined sense of epistemic humility. In matters marked by grief, uncertainty, and deep pluralism, ethics should resist the temptation of finality. Humility here is not indecision. It is the recognition that disagreement may persist even among informed and morally serious persons, and that overconfident judgment may itself become a moral fault.[42]

This humility fits well with the Kantian dimensions of the earlier dialogical framework. Kantian ethics does not guarantee agreement in every case. It sets limits designed to block moral overreach: persons

[40] Băluțescu, R., 2024. Matters of Life or Death: Spiritual Obstacles to Organ Donation in Contemporary Romania. Towards a Kantian-Inspired Dialogical Framework for Breaking the Deadlock, ibid., p. 13.

[41] Baumann, A., Thilly, N., Joseph, L., Claudot, F., 2022. Ethical Reflection Support, ibid., p. 673.

[42] Moorlock, G., Ives, J., Draper, H., 2014. Altruism in organ donation, ibid., p. 134.

must never be treated merely as means, consent cannot be bypassed, and dignity remains inviolable. In the context of organ donation, this means that dissent should not automatically be dismissed as irrational or morally backward. Refusal may instead reflect a different moral ontology rather than simple ignorance.[43]

From a neo-Aristotelian perspective, moral disagreement often arises from differing conceptions of the human good rather than from factual mistake alone. This is especially true in transplantation, where death, bodily integrity, generosity, and care are interpreted within different religious, cultural, and historical frameworks. An ethics that ignores these differences risks becoming imperial in tone, even when its substantive aims are benevolent.[44]

Parsons' account of health as culturally mediated reinforces this insight. Health and illness are not interpreted in social life in purely biological terms. They are shaped, too, by wider values and inherited assumptions that influence how people interpret flourishing, normal functioning, and the integrity of the body.[45] In communities where bodily wholeness after death is tied to sacred embodiment or resurrection, the language of functional restoration may fail to persuade. In such cases, ethical disagreement is often normative rather than merely informational.

The nursing ethics literature supports this point by showing that families and professionals frequently disagree not only about facts, but also about meanings: what donation signifies, what obligations continue after death, and what counts as respect.[46] Efforts to settle such disagreements through scripts, slogans, or procedural authority may deepen mistrust instead of easing it. Virtue ethics interprets this not as a reason to abandon ethical guidance, but as evidence that moral consensus cannot be manufactured without attending to interpretation, narrative, and relational context.

This has consequences for public policy. If reasonable disagreement is likely to persist, then policy should aim less at unanimity than at legitimacy under disagreement. A transplant system should be capable of functioning ethically even where participation remains partial, con-

[43] Băluțescu, R., 2024. Matters of Life or Death: Spiritual Obstacles to Organ Donation in Contemporary Romania. Towards a Kantian-Inspired Dialogical Framework for Breaking the Deadlock, ibid., p. 7.

[44] Björkman, B., 2008. *Virtue Ethics, Bioethics, and the Ownership of Biological Material*, ibid.

[45] Parsons, T., 1967. *Sociological Theory and Modern Society*, ibid.

[46] Baumann, A., Thilly, N., Joseph, L., Claudot, F., 2022. Ethical Reflection Support, ibid.

tested, and morally diverse. Virtue ethics supports such an approach by prioritizing trustworthiness over maximal compliance.[47]

The same applies to public discourse. Campaigns that assume inevitable convergence on one moral view tend to underestimate the depth of pluralism. A virtue-based approach, by contrast, leaves room for the possibility that some disagreements endure because they arise from moral frameworks that are internally coherent yet incompatible with one another.[48] Recognizing this does not weaken ethics. It disciplines it. It limits the moral authority of persuasion and underscores the importance of restraint.

Professional ethics is equally implicated. Clinicians and transplant coordinators often speak from positions of asymmetrical knowledge and authority. Virtue ethics would hold that authority of this sort should be exercised with an awareness of its own boundaries. Ethical excellence is shown less by securing consent quickly than by knowing when to pause, clarify, listen with care, and sometimes refrain from further pressure.[49] Such restraint is not administrative failure; it is a professional virtue grounded in respect for moral agency under conditions of uncertainty.

The model proposed here is not limited in principle to Orthodox contexts, although its theological vocabulary would require careful translation. Its transferable element is not a specifically Orthodox doctrine of the body, but the combination of Kantian limits, virtue-based moral formation, and dialogical restraint under conditions of metaphysical disagreement. In Jewish and Islamic ethics, for example, questions of bodily integrity, the sanctity of life, post-mortem respect, communal obligation, and the authority of legal-religious interpretation are articulated through different conceptual grammars.[50] A responsible extension of the present framework would therefore not impose Orthodox categories on those traditions, but would ask analogous questions: what counts as respect for the body, how consent and family authority are understood, how life-saving benefit is weighed against post-mortem integrity, and

[47] Moorlock, G., Ives, J., Draper, H., 2014. Altruism in organ donation, ibid.

[48] Björkman, *Virtue Ethics, Bioethics, and the Ownership of Biological Material*, ibid.

[49] Dalal, A. R., 2015. Philosophy of organ donation: Review of ethical facets. *World Journal of Transplantation*, 5(2), pp. 44–51.

[50] Tarabeih, M., Marey-Sarwan, I., Amiel, A., Na'amnih, W., 2025. Posthumous Organ Donation in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism: How Religious Beliefs Shape the Decision to Donate. *Omega*, 92(1); Bokek-Cohen, Y., Abu-Rakia, R., Azuri, P., Tarabeih, M., 2022. The View of the Three Monotheistic Religions Toward Cadaveric Organ Donation. *Omega*, 85(2); Padela, A. I., Auda, J., 2020. The Moral Status of Organ Donation and Transplantation Within Islamic Law: The Fiqh Council of North America's Position. *Transplantation Direct*, 6(3), e536.

which virtues institutions must display in order to become trustworthy. The framework is therefore transferable only at the level of method: it offers a way of structuring dialogue among dignity, vulnerability, practical wisdom, and religiously formed moral meaning, not a ready-made substantive conclusion for all traditions. Such transferability is modest but important: it concerns the ethics of translation between moral worlds, not the export of a single theological solution.

None of this entails relativism. Both Kantian and neo-Aristotelian approaches retain the ability to condemn coercion, deception, exploitation, and commodification. What humility limits is not moral judgment itself, but unwarranted claims to finality in situations where disagreement remains both reasonable and durable.[51] In transplantation ethics, that balance is especially fragile, since both overconfidence and excessive caution can do real harm. Virtue ethics does not remove this tension, but offers a way to navigate it through *phronēsis*: judgment that is sensitive to context and shaped by experience, reflection, and character rather than by algorithmic certainty.[52]

From this perspective, the enduring ethical credibility of organ donation depends less on complete agreement than on the ability of institutions and persons to act responsibly while disagreement remains unresolved. Epistemic humility strengthens ethical seriousness because it aligns moral ambition with the complexity of moral reality.

Conclusion

This article has argued that ethical reflection on organ donation is better served by a framework capable of sustaining responsible practice under conditions of uncertainty and pluralism than by the pursuit of definitive moral closure. The dialogue between Kantian ethics and neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics does not eliminate disagreement, nor does it promise universal endorsement of donation. What it offers instead is a more adequate moral vocabulary for explaining how organ donation may be responsibly proposed, legitimately refused, and publicly defended without distortion.[53]

Within this integrated framework, organ donation appears neither as a strict duty nor as a morally empty private option. Its ethical meaning

[51] Shaw, D. M., 2017. A virtuous death, ibid.

[52] Björkman, B., 2008. *Virtue Ethics, Bioethics, and the Ownership of Biological Material*, ibid.

[53] Ibid.

depends on how it is embedded within relationships, institutions, and forms of life. Kantian ethics places firm limits on treating persons merely as instruments. Virtue ethics, by contrast, helps explain how respect becomes visible in ordinary practice through character, trustworthy conduct, narrative coherence, and prudent judgment.[54] Without Kantian limits, virtue language can become morally overreaching. Without virtue, rule-based ethics can become cold, abstract, and institutionally unpersuasive.[55]

Organ donation concentrates tensions between autonomy and solidarity, vulnerability and agency, life-saving benefit and reverence for the dead. What emerges from this article is that ethical resilience depends less on consensus than on reliability over time: on institutions worthy of trust, on professionals who act with prudence and honesty, and on communities able to sustain serious moral disagreement without sliding into suspicion or coercion.[56]

For policymakers, clinicians, and religious communities alike, the challenge is therefore not to eliminate disagreement, but to act well within it. That requires transparency, narrative honesty, restraint, and moral education rather than persuasive urgency. Virtue ethics reminds us that ethical progress is measured not only by outcomes, but by the quality of the practices that produce them. Where trust is patiently cultivated and dignity consistently upheld, organ donation may come to be seen as morally intelligible without becoming morally compulsory.[57]

A morally credible transplant culture must therefore leave room not only for generous donation, but also for conscientious refusal. Refusal should not automatically be interpreted as ignorance, selfishness, or hostility to medicine; it may express grief, reverence for the body, distrust shaped by history, or a religiously formed understanding of death. The ethical task is not to erase such refusal, but to ensure that both donation and refusal occur within practices marked by truthfulness, patience, and respect.

The central claim of this follow-up remains deliberately modest. We do not argue that organ donation must be universally embraced, nor

[54] Kant's ethics does not deny the importance of sympathetic concern, but insists that moral worth lies in acting from duty while cultivating dispositions supportive of duty. This leaves room for humane professional conduct alongside principled limits. (Kant, I., 1997. *Lectures on Ethics*. Eds. Heath, P., Schneewind, J. B. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)

[55] Nussbaum, M. C., 2011. *Creating Capabilities*, ibid.

[56] Dalal, A. R., 2015. Philosophy of organ donation, ibid., p. 50.

[57] Moorlock, G., Ives, J., Draper, H., 2014. Altruism in organ donation, ibid.

that the ethical tensions surrounding it can be fully resolved. We argue only that a combined Kantian and neo-Aristotelian approach provides a richer and more realistic moral vocabulary for navigating those tensions without reductionism. By recognizing both the limits of ethical authority and the genuine possibility of moral excellence, this framework remains alert to the seriousness of death while also giving due regard to the moral hopes of those who continue living.[58]

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[58] Shaw, D. M., 2017. A virtuous death, ibid., p. 321.

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The Relevance of the Incognoscibility of Kant's Things in Themselves for Modern Philosophical Counseling

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Abstract: This article develops a systematic application of Kant's doctrine of *things in themselves* to the practice of modern philosophical counseling. Building on my earlier reconstruction of Kant's transcendental metaphysics,[1] which draws on Anja Jauernig's[2] two-level ontology, I argue that the structural incognoscibility of *things in themselves* offers a productive normative-epistemic framework for counseling practice. Recent discussions in *Studia Philosophica Kantiana* have examined Kant's relevance for contemporary practical contexts, including autonomy in education[3] and the ethics of duty in interpersonal relations, in Petkanič's terms.[4] Extending this line of inquiry, I propose that the Kantian limit-concept of *the thing in itself*, properly understood, prevents dogmatic metaphysical claims about the client's essence and fosters epistemic humility in the counseling relationship. The article proceeds in four stages: first, I reconstruct the incognoscibility thesis using Jauernig's interpretation and my own account; second, I introduce the analogy between constructivist theories of visual perception and self-knowledge in counseling; third, I translate incognoscibility into normative principles for counseling practice; fourth, I develop concrete applications showing how respecting structural opacity protects client autonomy and resists paternalism.

Key words: Kant, *Things in themselves*, Incognoscibility, Philosophical counseling, Epistemic humility, Autonomy

[1] Ghinea, D., 2025. *Lucrurile în sine la Immanuel Kant: Perspective de interpretare și reconstrucție contemporane*. București: Cartea Românească Educațional.

[2] Jauernig, A., 2021. *The World According to Kant: Appearances and Things in Themselves*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[3] Marques, J. O. A., 2025. Autonomy as the foundation of learning in Kant and Paulo Freire. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 14(2), pp. 5–21.

[4] Petkanič, M., 2025. Kant's and Kierkegaard's Ethics of Duty. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 14(2), pp. 257–280.

Introduction

Philosophical counseling, as a practice distinct from psychotherapy and life coaching, aims to help clients achieve conceptual clarity about their beliefs, values, and life-orienting commitments through sustained dialogue. Yet this dialogical practice confronts a fundamental tension: clients often seek definitive answers about who they truly are, what they should do, or what their lives ultimately mean, while the counselor must resist the temptation to provide metaphysical certainties that exceed the bounds of what can be known. Recent work in *Studia Philosophica Kantiana* has explored Kant's continued relevance for understanding autonomy in pedagogical contexts,[5] the ethics of duty and respect for the moral law,[6] moral formation as cultivation of self-legislative capacity,[7] and the application of Kant's peace project to contemporary conflict resolution.[8] Building on this reconstructive approach to Kant's practical philosophy, I argue that Kant's doctrine of *things in themselves* – specifically, the thesis of their structural incognoscibility – offers a principled solution to the counselor's dilemma.

My central claim is that the incognoscibility of *things in themselves*, when properly reconstructed, yields a normative-epistemic stance that should guide philosophical counselors in their work with clients. This stance has three components: (1) epistemic humility regarding what can be known about the client's ultimate grounds (motives, history, capacities); (2) respect for the opacity of the other as a limit-condition of ethical engagement; (3) resistance to paternalistic "insights" that presume transparent access to the client's essence. In my previous work, I have developed a systematic interpretation of Kant's *things in themselves* that emphasizes their role as transcendental grounds of experience which remain structurally beyond the reach of human cognition.[9] Here, I will try to extend that account by showing how the logic of incognoscibility can be translated into the practice of philosophical counseling.

[5] Marques, J. O. A., 2025. Autonomy as the foundation of learning in Kant and Paulo Freire, ibid., pp. 237–249.

[6] Petkanič, M., 2025. Kant's and Kierkegaard's Ethics of Duty, ibid., pp. 257–280.

[7] Miškocová, A., 2024. Moral formation in Kant's philosophy. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 13(2), pp. 227–244.

[8] See Kupś, T., 2024. Kant's project of perpetual peace today. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 13(1), pp. 9–27. On the same topic, Šajda, P., 2024. Working for peace in situations of conflict: On Schmitt's reception of Kant. *Studia Philosophica Kantiana*, 13(1), pp. 28–44.

[9] Ghinea, D., 2025. *Lucrurile în sine la Immanuel Kant: Perspective de interpretare și reconstrucție contemporane,* ibid., pp. 10–16.

My paper is structured as follows:

Section 1: Kant's metaphysics of *things in themselves* – the reconstruction of the Kantian account of *things in themselves* and their incognoscibility, drawing on Jauernig's[10] two-level ontology and my own interpretation[11]). I distinguish structural incognoscibility (the *thing in itself as* a transcendental ground that cannot in principle be known) from contingent ignorance (empirical facts we do not yet know) and conceptual indeterminacy (vague or contested concepts).

Section 2: I develop an analogy between constructivist theories of visual perception -specifically, Gregory's[12] hypothesis model – and the structure of self-knowledge in counseling contexts. Just as visual perception is indirect, constructive, and fallible, so too is the client's self-understanding built from partial evidence, past experience, and revisable interpretations.

Section 3: I translate the incognoscibility thesis into normative principles for counseling: the principle of epistemic humility, the principle of non-appropriation of the other, and the principle of acknowledged opacity.

Section 4: I apply these principles to concrete counseling scenarios, showing how respecting incognoscibility protects autonomy, prevents dogmatism, and reframes the client's demand for absolute certainty. In the end, I offer a brief conclusion which summarizes my paper and suggests possible directions for future research.

1. Kant on Things in Themselves and the Incognoscibility Thesis

1.1. The Two-Level Ontology: Jauernig's Reconstruction

According to Anja Jauernig, Kant's "world" comprises two irreducible levels of reality: the transcendental level, which is mind-independent and contains *things in themselves*, and the empirical level, which is mind-dependent and contains appearances (or representations). These two levels are not merely epistemic perspectives on a single set of objects; rather, they are ontologically distinct domains – *things in themselves* and appear-

[10] Jauernig, A., 2021. *The World According to Kant: Appearances and Things in Themselves*, ibid., p. 32.

[11] Ghinea, D., 2025. *Lucrurile în sine la Immanuel Kant: Perspective de interpretare și reconstrucție contemporane,* ibid., pp. 106–116.

[12] Gregory, R. L., 1974. Perceptions as hypotheses. In: Brown, S. C., ed. *Philosophy of Psychology*. London: Macmillan, pp. 195–210.

ances are numerically distinct entities that do not overlap.[13]

This two-level ontology has several key features relevant to the incognoscibility thesis. First, *things in themselves* are characterized negatively: they are not spatio-temporal, not subject to the categories of the understanding, and not accessible to human sensibility.[14] Second, *things in themselves* play a positive causal-explanatory role in Kant's system: they affect our sensibility at the transcendental level, giving rise to sensations which provide the material input for empirical representations.[15]

Third, the human mind is fundamentally finite and non-creative; it possesses a passive component – sensibility – that produces representations only in response to being affected by objects external to itself.[16] This finitude is the ultimate ground of the incognoscibility thesis: because human cognition requires both sensory intuition and conceptual synthesis, and because we possess only a sensible (not intellectual) intuition, things as they are in themselves remain beyond our cognitive reach.[17]

1.2. Incognoscibility: What Exactly Cannot Be Known

Building on Jauernig's framework, I propose a more precise formulation of the incognoscibility thesis. By "incognoscibility of *things in themselves*" I mean the following: *things in themselves* are structurally inaccessible to human cognitive faculties, because such access would require a non-sensible (intellectual) intuition that we do not possess.[18] This structural inaccessibility must be distinguished from three other epistemic limitations:

1) contingent ignorance: there are many empirical facts we do not currently know (the precise number of stars in a distant galaxy, the detailed neurochemistry of a person's brain states) but could in principle discover through further empirical investigation. Contingent ignorance is overcome by extending our empirical inquiry; it poses no principled barrier to knowledge.

[13] Jauernig, A., 2021. *The World According to Kant: Appearances and Things in Themselves*, *ibid.*, pp. 78–112.

[14] KrV, A 249/B 306. All references to Kant's works are to the Academy edition (*Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin: Reimer/de Gruyter, 1900–), cited by volume and page (AA), except for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is cited by A- and B-edition page numbers.

[15] KrV, A 19–20/B 33–34. See Jauernig, A., 2021. *The World According to Kant: Appearances and Things in Themselves*, ibid., pp. 145–178.

[16] KrV, A 51/B 75.

[17] KrV, A 249–253/B 305–309.

[18] KrV, A 249/B 306.

2) conceptual indeterminacy: certain concepts are vague, contested, or context-dependent (for instance "happiness," "justice," or "authentic self-expression"), and this vagueness generates interpretive disputes. Conceptual indeterminacy can sometimes be reduced through philosophical clarification, though some degree of contestability may remain ineliminable in normative domains.

3) structural incognoscibility: *the thing in itself* names the transcendental ground of empirical experience – the mind-independent reality that affects our sensibility and thereby grounds the existence of appearances. Because this ground operates at a level prior to the application of our cognitive forms (space, time, categories),[19] it cannot be brought under those forms and thus cannot be known by us.[20] Structural incognoscibility is not a gap to be filled by future inquiry or conceptual refinement; it is an intrinsic limit of finite human cognition.

This distinction is crucial for the counseling application, because counseling does not aim to overcome structural incognoscibility (which is impossible), but to acknowledge it and work within its constraints. The client's ultimate grounds – the transcendental conditions of their experience, the noumenal substrate of their agency, the *thing in itself* dimension of their selfhood – remain permanently opaque. What counseling can address is the empirical self (the self as appearance, constituted by experiences, beliefs, values, and narratives) and the conceptual frameworks through which the client interprets their life. For that to happen, it is the counselor who must resist the temptation to claim access to a deeper metaphysical "true self" that transcends these empirical and conceptual layers.

1.3. The Positive Role of Incognoscibility: Humility, Moral Space, and Respect

One might object that incognoscibility is a purely negative doctrine – a confession of ignorance with no constructive content. Against this view, I argue,[21] following Jauernig,[22] that the incognoscibility thesis plays several positive roles in Kant's critical system:

[19] KrV, A 251–252/B 306–307.
[20] Ghinea, D., 2025. *Lucrurile în sine la Immanuel Kant: Perspective de interpretare și reconstrucție contemporane,* ibid., pp. 118–145.
[21] Ghinea, D., 2025. *Lucrurile în sine la Immanuel Kant: Perspective de interpretare și reconstrucție contemporane,* ibid., pp. 167–189.
[22] Jauernig, A., 2021. *The World According to Kant: Appearances and Things in Themselves*, ibid., pp. 312–354.

- **epistemic humility**: recognizing the limits of human cognition prevents dogmatic metaphysics - the pretense to knowledge of supersensible reality (God, immortality, the soul as substance) that exceeds our cognitive capacity.[23] The incognoscibility thesis thus safeguards the critical subject by marking the boundary beyond which theoretical reason cannot legitimately venture.

- **moral space**: by placing *things in themselves* beyond the reach of theoretical cognition, Kant secures conceptual room for moral faith and practical postulates.[24] The moral law commands unconditionally, and this command presupposes freedom; yet freedom cannot be theoretically demonstrated if the self is exhaustively determined by natural causality. The distinction between appearances and *things in themselves* allows Kant to reconcile natural determinism (in the empirical domain) with transcendental freedom (at the noumenal level) without contradiction.[25]

- **the respect for the other**: the incognoscibility of *the thing in itself* grounds a specific ethical attitude toward other persons. If the other's noumenal reality – their freedom, their moral agency, their ultimate grounds – is structurally inaccessible to me, then I am prohibited from treating the other as a fully transparent object of theoretical cognition. Respecting the other as an end in itself[26] requires acknowledging what I cannot know about them, not merely what I do know. This theme has been explored in recent Kantian scholarship on duty and interpersonal ethics,[27] and I propose extending it into the counseling context.

If we consider these positive rules, we can describe incognoscibility not a defect, but a foundational feature of Kant's critical philosophy, because it establishes the proper scope and limits of human knowledge, protects the space for moral agency, and grounds an ethics of epistemic humility and respect. Basically, these functions make the incognoscibility thesis a promising resource for modern philosophical counseling and might actually improve the relation between a client and his counselor.

[23] KrV, A 295–296/B 352–353.
[24] AA 5:3–4.
[25] KrV, A 532–558/B 560–586.
[26] AA 4:428–430.
[27] Petkanič, M., 2025. Kant's and Kierkegaard's Ethics of Duty, ibid.

2. From Visual Perception to Self-Knowledge: An Analogy

2.1. Constructivist Theories of Visual Perception

To bridge Kant's metaphysics and counseling practice, I propose an analogy between the structure of visual perception and the structure of self-knowledge,[28] by examining how Kant's two-level ontology can be applied to contemporary empiricist theories of visual perception, specifically the constructivist approach developed by Richard Gregory. Gregory's central claim is that perceptions are hypotheses: sensory receptors receive signals from the external environment, these signals trigger neural events, and the brain constructs perceptual interpretations by integrating sensory input with stored knowledge, past experience, and contextual expectations.[29]

Several features of Gregory's model are relevant for our purposes. First, perception is indirect: we do not have unmediated access to external objects; rather, we construct internal representations based on partial and often ambiguous sensory cues. Second, perception is constructive: the brain actively generates interpretations that go beyond the raw sensory input, filling in missing information, anticipating movement, and disambiguating perceptual scenes. Third, perception is fallible: because it relies on hypotheses built from past experience, perception is vulnerable to illusions, ambiguity, and error.[30] Fourth, perception requires a basis: constructive processes presuppose some initial input that triggers hypothesis-formation. Gregory himself acknowledges the problem of identifying this "starting point" of perception – the ground-level stimulus that sets the constructive process in motion.[31]

In my reconstruction,[32] I argued that introducing Kant's *things in themselves* can address Gregory's starting-point problem. *Things in themselves*, as transcendental grounds that affect sensibility, provide the ultimate basis for sensory input without being themselves part of the perceptual representation: they ground the existence of sensations (the "raw material" of perception) while remaining outside the constructive, hypothesis-driven

[28] Ghinea, D., 2025. *Lucrurile în sine la Immanuel Kant: Perspective de interpretare și reconstrucție contemporane,* ibid., pp. 210–248.
[29] Gregory, R. L., 1974. Perceptions as hypotheses, ibid., pp. 181–197. See also Gordon, I. E., 2004. *Theories of Visual Perception* (3rd ed.). New York: Psychology Press, pp. 181–197.
[30] Gregory, R. L., 1974. Perceptions as hypotheses, ibid., pp. 186–190. See also Gordon, I. E., 2004. *Theories of Visual Perception*, ibid., pp. 128–131.
[31] Gordon, I. E., 2004. *Theories of Visual Perception*, ibid., pp. 132–135.
[32] Ghinea, D., 2025. *Lucrurile în sine la Immanuel Kant: Perspective de interpretare și reconstrucție contemporane,* ibid., pp. 235–242.

perceptual process. This move preserves Gregory's empirical account, while adding a transcendental layer that explains why there is sensory input at all.

2.2. Self-Knowledge in Counseling as a Constructive Process

The analogy to counseling seems to be straightforward for me. Just as visual perception is an indirect, constructive, fallible process of hypothesis-formation, so too is the client's self-knowledge an interpretive construction built from partial evidence, past experiences, and revisable narratives. He does not enjoy transparent introspective access to their own motives, values, or identity; rather, they assemble a self-understanding through interpretation, often guided by cultural narratives, emotional responses, and significant life events. This self-understanding is hypothesis-like: it is a provisional, contestable interpretation that can be revised in light of new evidence, alternative frameworks, or dialogical challenge.

Philosophical counseling, on this model, facilitates the client's constructive process, because the counselor helps the client examine the coherence of their self-narrative, question unexamined assumptions, explore alternative interpretations, and clarify the conceptual categories they use to make sense of their experience.[33] But – crucially – the counselor does not claim privileged access to the client's "true self" or ultimate grounds. Just as the visual perceiver cannot access the *thing in itself* that grounds sensory input, the counselor cannot access the noumenal substrate of the client's agency. What is available for dialogical exploration is the empirical self (the self as appearance, constructed through interpretation) and the conceptual frameworks that shape this construction.

This analogy has important normative implications: if self-knowledge is constructive and fallible, then the counselor must adopt a stance of epistemic humility, recognizing that any interpretation – whether the client's or the counselor's – is provisional and revisable. If the ultimate grounds of the client's experience (the *thing-in-itself* dimension of selfhood) are structurally incognoscible, then the counselor must resist metaphysical dogmatism – the pretense to know the client's essence or "real" motivations. And if the client's self-understanding is hypothesis-like, then the counselor's primary task is not to deliver authoritative judgments, but to facilitate critical reflection, helping the client test, refine, and sometimes abandon inadequate self-interpretations.

[33] Achenbach, G. B., 2004. *Philosophical Practice*. Lexington Books, pp. 115–129.

2.3. The Starting-Point Problem in Counseling

Gregory's starting-point problem has a direct parallel in counseling. If the client's self-understanding is a constructive process built from interpretations of past experience, what grounds this process? *What is the ultimate basis for the client's experience of themselves?* One tempting answer is to posit a pre-interpretive, immediately given "authentic self" that grounds all subsequent self-narratives, which unfortunately collapses into metaphysical dogmatism: it assumes transparent introspective access to a stable essence, precisely the assumption that the constructivist model rejects.

A better answer, informed by Kant, is to recognize that the ultimate ground of the client's experience is a transcendental self – a *thing in itself* that affects the client's sensibility and thereby generates the experiential material from which the empirical self is constructed. This transcendental self is not an object of knowledge (neither for the client nor for the counselor); it is a limiting concept that marks the boundary of what can be known. Just as *things in themselves* ground sensory input without being part of empirical perception, the transcendental self-grounds the client's experience without being accessible to introspection or dialogue.

This move has a paradoxical, but liberating consequence: the client's "true self," understood as the noumenal ground of their agency, is permanently unknowable. What the client can know is only the empirical self – the self as it appears through the lens of interpretation, shaped by memory, narrative, and conceptual frameworks. Counseling thus becomes a practice of working with appearances, not a quest to uncover a hidden noumenal essence, which reduces the pressure on both client and counselor: the client is not required to achieve impossible self-transparency, and the counselor is not expected to deliver metaphysical certainties.

3. Normative Principles for Counseling: Translating Incognoscibility into Practice

3.1. The Principle of Epistemic Humility

The first normative implication of the incognoscibility thesis is epistemic humility. If the ultimate grounds of the client's experience (the *thing-in-itself* dimension of selfhood) are structurally beyond the reach of human cognition, then both client and counselor must accept that certain questions admit no final answer. *Who am I, really? What is my true purpose? What is the ultimate meaning of my suffering? What is the meaning of life in general?* – these questions, insofar as they demand access to noumenal reality, exceed the bounds of possible knowledge. The counselor's task is not to provide answers to these unanswerable inquiries, but to help the client recognize the limits of self-knowledge and learn to live well within them.

Epistemic humility has several practical dimensions – one is that the counselor refrains from dogmatic assertions about the client's "real" motivations, hidden desires, or unconscious conflicts. Psychoanalytic interpretations that claim to reveal a latent truth inaccessible to the client's conscious awareness may offer valuable hypotheses, but they cannot be presented as metaphysical certainties, which is why the counselor must always qualify interpretive claims with appropriate epistemic modesty: "One way to understand this pattern is…,"; "It seems plausible that…,"; "We might explore whether…".[34]

Another is that the counselor helps the client distinguish between what can and cannot be known, since some questions are empirically answerable *(Do I enjoy this type of work? Have I been happier in relationships characterized by X or Y?)*, some are conceptually clarifiable *(What do I mean by "authenticity"? Are my values consistent?)*, and some are structurally unanswerable *(What is my noumenal essence? What would I choose under conditions of perfect self-transparency?)* – recognizing this distinction prevents anyone from investing futile effort in pursuing impossible self-knowledge.

The third dimension is that epistemic humility fosters openness to revision: if self-understanding is a constructive hypothesis rather than a discovered fact, then it is always provisional and subject to reinterpretation. The counselor encourages the client to hold their self-narrative lightly, treating it as a working model rather than a final verdict and this openness reduces existential anxiety: the client is not trapped in a fixed identity, but free to revise their self-interpretation as new experiences and insights emerge.

3.2. The Principle of Non-Appropriation of the Other

The second normative principle is non-appropriation of the other. If the client's noumenal reality is structurally incognoscible, then the counselor must resist the temptation to appropriate the client's experience by sub-

[34] Raabe, P. B., 2001. *Philosophical Counseling: Theory and Practice*. Westport, CT: Praeger, pp. 58–72.

suming it under a theoretical framework that claims totalizing explanatory power. To appropriate the other is to treat them as a fully transparent object of cognition, exhaustively describable by a theory (psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioral, etc.). But if *the thing-in-itself* dimension of the client's selfhood remains opaque, then any such theoretical appropriation necessarily falsifies the client's reality by reducing it to what can be known.

Non-appropriation is closely related to Kant's formula of humanity: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end and never merely as a means".[35]

Respecting the client as an end in themselves requires acknowledging the limits of what can be known and the counselor must not treat him as a case study, a data point, or an instance of a general theory, instead, engage the client as a singular individual whose full reality exceeds any theoretical categorization.

Practically, non-appropriation means that the counselor listens more than theorize – he resists the impulse to impose premature interpretations and creates space for the client's own voice, allowing him to articulate the experience in his own terms. When the counselor does offer interpretive suggestions, these are presented as invitations for the client to consider, not as authoritative diagnoses.[36] The client retains the authority to accept, reject, or modify the counselor's interpretations, because his experience ultimately surpasses the counselor's conceptual grasp.

This principle resonates with recent work on the ethics of interpersonal relations: Petkanič[37] argues that Kant's account of duty provides a framework for understanding obligations that respect the other's autonomy without reducing them to objects of instrumental reason. Similarly, non-appropriation in counseling respects the client's autonomy by refusing to colonize their experience with the counselor's theoretical categories.

3.3. The Principle of Acknowledged Opacity

The third normative principle is acknowledged opacity, which requires the counselor to explicitly thematize the limits of self-knowledge in the counseling dialogue. Rather than treating incognoscibility as a private philosophical thesis, the counselor makes it a topic of conversation:

[35] AA 4:429, the Formula of Humanity.
[36] Achenbach, G. B., 1995. *Philosophical Practice,* ibid., pp. 102–118.
[37] Petkanič, M., 2025. Kant's and Kierkegaard's Ethics of Duty, ibid.

"There are aspects of your experience that neither of us can fully understand"; "Some questions may not have definitive answers"; "Part of learning to live well is accepting what we cannot know about ourselves."

Acknowledged opacity serves several functions:

- it normalizes the client's experience of uncertainty – many clients enter counseling with the anxious conviction that they should be able to achieve complete self-transparency and that their failure to do so reflects personal inadequacy. By explicitly naming structural incognoscibility, the counselor reassures the client that some degree of opacity is not a failure but an intrinsic feature of human selfhood.
- acknowledged opacity shifts the counseling goal from discovery to construction – if there is no hidden noumenal essence waiting to be uncovered, then the client's task is not to discover who they "really are", but to construct a self-understanding that is coherent, meaningful, and conducive to flourishing. This constructivist reframing is empowering: the client is not a passive discoverer of pre-given truths, but an active author of their self-narrative.
- acknowledged opacity also prevents the counselor from overreaching, by reminding both parties that ultimate grounds remain inaccessible, by constraining the counselor's interpretive ambitions and by protecting the client from manipulative claims to insight. The counselor cannot say, *"I know the real reason you struggle with relationships,"* because such a claim presumes access to the client's noumenal reality, but instead, he will offer explanations such as: *"One possible pattern I notice is…,"*, *"One could interpret this such as…"*, *"From what you are saying one can conclude that…"*, leaving room for the client's own judgment.

4. Application: Counseling Practice Guided by Incognoscibility

4.1. The Counselor's Stance: Epistemic Humility in Action

A very important question we must answer when we talk about counseling is: *How does a counselor who respects incognoscibility conduct the dialogue with his clients?* The counselor's stance is characterized by three interrelated practices:

(1) question-posing over answer-giving: the counselor prioritizes open-ended questions that invite the client to deepen their self-understanding rather than delivering authoritative interpretations. Socratic questioning—"What do you mean by 'authentic'?"; "Can you think of a time when you felt differently?"; "How would you describe your values in this domain?"—creates space for the client's own voice and acknowledges that the answers must come from the client's lived experience, not from the counselor's theory.[38] This method embodies epistemic humility, because the counselor does not presume to know the client's truth, but facilitates the client's exploration of their own experience.

(2) interpretive plurality over theoretical monism: the counselor offers multiple possible interpretations of the client's experience rather than insisting on a single "correct" reading. For example, if a client reports chronic dissatisfaction with their career, the counselor might suggest several lenses:

> We could explore whether this dissatisfaction reflects a mismatch between your values and your work environment, or whether it stems from unrealistic expectations shaped by cultural narratives of success, or whether it signals a deeper existential concern about meaning and purpose.

By presenting alternatives, the counselor acknowledges the underdetermination of interpretation by evidence and invites the client to participate in selecting or synthesizing frameworks. This plurality respects the incognoscibility of the client's ultimate grounds: because we cannot access the noumenal truth of the client's situation, we must work with multiple provisional hypotheses.

(3) collaborative exploration over expert diagnosis: the counselor treats the counseling dialogue as a joint inquiry in which both parties bring distinct forms of expertise. The client is the expert on their own lived experience; the counselor is the expert on conceptual analysis, philosophical frameworks, and dialogical method, but neither party has privileged access to the client's noumenal reality. This collaboration embodies both epistemic humility (the counselor admits the limits of their insight) and respect for the client's autonomy (the client retains authority over their self-interpretation).[39]

One article on autonomy and education offers a helpful parallel: Marques[40] argues that autonomy, for Kant, is not the imposition of external authority, but the cultivation of the capacity for self-directed critical thinking. If we extend these hypotheses to counseling, we reach the con-

[38] Raabe, P. B., 2001. *Philosophical Counseling: Theory and Practice,* ibid., pp. 45–57.
[39] Achenbach, G. B., 1995. *Philosophical Practice,* ibid., pp. 125–140.
[40] Marques, J. O. A., 2025. Autonomy as the foundation of learning in Kant and Paulo Freire, ibid., pp. 237–249.

clusion that the counselor guided by incognoscibility does not impose interpretations, instead cultivates the client's capacity for critical self-reflection.

4.2. Working with Clients' Desire for Certainty

A common challenge in philosophical counseling is the client's demand for absolute certainty. Clients often seek definitive answers to questions like "What is my true calling?"; "Should I end this relationship?"; "What is the meaning of my life?"; "How am I going to raise my children?"; "Am I a good parent?" and the counselor who respects incognoscibility needs to help the client reframe it.

Consider a concrete scenario. A client, Oana, expresses deep anxiety about whether she has chosen the "right" career path (a CEO in a multinational company). She fears that she may be living inauthentically, pursuing a profession that does not reflect her "true self", which is why she asks the counselor: "How can I know if this is really who I am?"

A counselor committed to incognoscibility might respond as follows:

> Oana, the question you're asking –*'Is this really who I am?'* – presupposes that there is a fixed, discoverable essence that constitutes your 'true self,' independent of your choices and experiences. But what if the self is not something you discover but something you construct? What if there is no single 'right' answer waiting to be uncovered, but rather multiple possible ways of understanding yourself, each with its own coherence and costs? The anxiety you feel may stems from the belief that you should be able to achieve perfect self-transparency, to know with certainty who you 'really' are. But that kind of certainty may be impossible for finite beings like us. What if, instead of seeking certainty, we explore how you might live well with uncertainty – how you might make choices that are meaningful and revisable, without requiring metaphysical guarantees?

This response enacts all three principles: (1) epistemic humility: the counselor acknowledges that the "true self" is unknowable; (2) non-appropriation: the counselor does not impose a theoretical framework, but invites Oana to reconsider her assumptions and (3) acknowledged opacity: the counselor explicitly names the impossibility of perfect self-transparency and reframes it as a condition to be accepted rather than a problem to be solved.

The dialogue might continue by exploring what Oana means by "authenticity," whether her current career aligns with her stated values, and how she might revise her self-understanding in light of new experiences, all while the counselor consistently resists the temptation to deliver a verdict about Oana's "true" identity, because such a verdict would presume access to her noumenal reality.

4.3. Ethical Implications: Respect, Autonomy, and Non-Paternalism

The incognoscibility thesis has profound ethical implications for the counseling relationship, because if the client's noumenal reality is structurally inaccessible, then the counselor is ethically prohibited from claiming to know what is best for him. This prohibition grounds a strong anti-paternalism: the counselor cannot justify coercive or manipulative interventions on the grounds that "I know your true interests better than you do and I can definitely help", because no such knowledge is possible.

Respecting incognoscibility means respecting the client's autonomy in a specific, Kantian sense – autonomy, for Kant, is the capacity to give oneself the moral law, to act on principles that one can rationally endorse[41] and as a result, the autonomous agent is not subject to heteronomous determination by external authorities or unexamined desires. In the counseling context, respecting autonomy means helping the client develop their capacity for critical self-reflection – their ability to examine their beliefs, values, and narratives and to revise them in light of reasoned deliberation, while the counselor does not impose their own values or interpretations, but facilitates the client's autonomous self-determination.[42]

Incognoscibility strengthens this account of autonomy by ruling out a subtle form of paternalism: the claim that the counselor, through superior theoretical insight, can access the client's "real" motivations or interests that the client themselves cannot see. Such a claim treats the client as epistemically inferior, as someone who needs the counselor's expertise to reveal truths hidden from introspection. But if the client's noumenal reality is incognoscible to both parties, then this form

[41] AA 4:440–445.

[42] Marques, J. O. A., 2025. Autonomy as the foundation of learning in Kant and Paulo Freire, ibid., pp.237-249.

of epistemic paternalism is unjustified, and they both stand on equal epistemic footing with respect to the client's ultimate grounds; neither has privileged access, no use can come at the end of the philosophical counseling session.

This does not mean the counselor has nothing to offer, because his expertise lies in conceptual analysis, logical coherence, and dialogical method – skills that help the client clarify their thinking without presupposing knowledge of his essence. The counselor might say, "I notice a tension between these two values you've articulated; can we explore how you might reconcile them?" or "This narrative seems to rest on an assumption we haven't examined; what if we question it?" — these interventions respect the client's autonomy by enhancing their critical capacities rather than substituting the counselor's judgment for their own.

One recent paper has emphasized the connection between duty, respect, and the recognition of the other's moral status.[43] Extending this line of thought, I suggest that respecting the incognoscibility of the other is a duty grounded in the recognition of their status as an end in themselves – to treat the client as an end is to acknowledge the limits of what can be known about them and to resist the totalizing gaze that reduces them to an object of theoretical cognition.

4.4. A Second Scenario: Counseling and Existential Uncertainty

Consider a second scenario that illustrates how acknowledged opacity can reduce existential anxiety. A client, Andrew, has recently experienced the death of a close friend and is struggling with questions of meaning and mortality, asking himself: "What is the point of anything if we all just die in the end? How can I know that my life matters?"

A counselor committed to incognoscibility might respond:

> Andrew, you're asking two different kinds of questions. The first – *'What is the point of life?'* – is a metaphysical question about ultimate meaning, and it may not have a definitive answer that finite beings like us can discover. The second – *'How can I live in a way that feels meaningful to me?'* – is a practical question that you can address by reflecting on your values, commitments, and experiences. Kant would say that we cannot know the ultimate purpose of existence from a theoretical standpoint, because such knowledge would require access to a God's-eye view of reality. But we can

[43] Petkanič, M., 2025. Kant's and Kierkegaard's Ethics of Duty, ibid.

> act as though our actions matter, by committing ourselves to principles we can rationally endorse and by treating ourselves and others as ends in themselves. The uncertainty you feel about cosmic meaning is not something you can eliminate through philosophical argument or introspection, but you can learn to live meaningfully within that uncertainty, by focusing on what you can know and control – your choices, your relationships, your values.

This response exemplifies acknowledged opacity – the counselor does not pretend to answer the unanswerable metaphysical question but helps Andrew distinguish between what can and cannot be known. He redirects his attention from the impossible quest for noumenal certainty to the practical task of constructing a meaningful life within the bounds of finite human existence, and this method does not trivialize Andrew's existential concerns; rather, it honors them by taking seriously the limits of human knowledge.

The dialogue might proceed by exploring what values Andrew holds most dear, how his friend's death has reshaped his understanding of those values, and how he might honor his friend's memory through meaningful action. And the counselor will not offer a metaphysical theodicy to the subject of mortality, because they exceed the bounds of possible human knowledge and he will try to help the client by explaining such limit, so that Andrew could be redirected to those questions and problems which can have a solution or an answer.

This approach also resonates with a discussion[44] on Kant's relevance for situations of conflict and uncertainty, by examining how Kant's project of perpetual peace can inform contemporary practices of conflict resolution and reconciliation. The counseling relationship, understood as a peaceful dialogue that respects the opacity of the other, embodies the Kantian ideal of treating persons as ends in themselves even – or especially - when metaphysical certainties are unavailable. Just as perpetual peace requires acknowledging the limits of what we can know about others' intentions and ultimate grounds, philosophical counseling requires acknowledging the structural incognoscibility of the client's noumenal reality.

[44] See Kupś, T., 2024. Kant's project of perpetual peace today, ibid. On the same topic, Šajda, P., 2024. Working for peace in situations of conflict: On Schmitt's reception of Kant, ibid.

Final remarks and conclusion

In my article I have argued that Kant's doctrine of the incognoscibility of *things in themselves* offers a productive normative-epistemic framework for modern philosophical counseling. Building on Jauernig's two-level ontology and my own reconstruction of Kant's metaphysics, I have shown that the structural inaccessibility of *things in themselves* grounds three normative principles for counseling practice: epistemic humility, non-appropriation of the other, and acknowledged opacity. These principles protect client autonomy, resist paternalism, and reframe the client's demand for absolute certainty as a misguided quest for impossible self-transparency.

The analogy between constructivist theories of visual perception and self-knowledge in counseling illuminates the structure of the counseling dialogue: just as visual perception is an indirect, constructive, fallible process of hypothesis-formation, so too is the client's self-understanding a provisional interpretation built from partial evidence and revisable frameworks. The counselor's task is not to uncover a hidden noumenal essence, but to facilitate the client's critical reflection on their empirical self-narrative.

The argument has several limitations that suggest directions for future research:

- I have focused on the epistemic dimensions of incognoscibility without fully developing its connection to Kant's moral philosophy, which is why future work should explore how the incognoscibility thesis relates to the categorical imperative, the kingdom of ends, and the postulates of practical reason.
- not addressing the challenge of integrating Kantian principles with other counseling traditions (existentialist, phenomenological, narrative), as a more comprehensive account would show how incognoscibility complements or conflicts with alternative frameworks.
- a limited number of concrete scenarios – a fuller application would require a systematic case-study analysis examining diverse counseling contexts (grief, career choice, relationship conflict, trauma).

Despite these limitations, I believe that my paper has established a foundational claim: the incognoscibility of *things in themselves*, properly understood, is not an obstacle to philosophical counseling, but a guiding principle that shapes the counselor's stance, protects client autonomy, and fosters a practice of epistemic humility and respect. In a cultural moment characterized by the promise of total self-optimization and the demand for perfect self-transparency, the Kantian doctrine of incognoscibility offers a salutary reminder: some aspects of human selfhood remain, and must remain, beyond the reach of knowledge. Learning to live well within these limits is not a counsel of despair but a condition of ethical counseling practice and also a challenge for each and every one of us trying to help the client reach those answers which could shape their understanding of their life and the world.

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Reason, Freedom, and the Continuing Revolution of Kantian Thought

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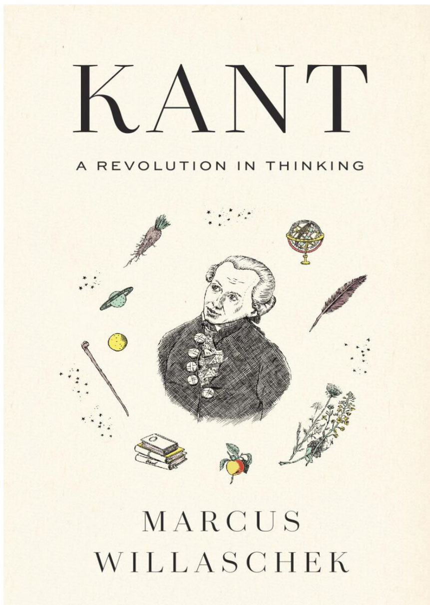
Willaschek, Marcus: *Kant: A Revolution in Thinking*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2025. 368 pp. Translated by Peter Lewis. ISBN 9780674296107.



Marcus Willaschek's *Kant: A Revolution in Thinking* is an unusually successful book. It manages to do something many introductions promise and few achieve: it presents Kant in his full systematic range without reducing him either to a museum monument or to a specialist's puzzle. The volume, first appeared in German in 2023 as *Kant: Die Revolution des Denkens,* Verlag C. H. Beck oHG, München, reaches the Anglophone world in Peter Lewis's lucid translation. The result deserves a wide readership, not only among students encountering Kant for the first time, but also among scholars interested in how Kant can be reintroduced to the public without distortion.

The organizing idea is stated from the outset: Kant's philosophy is revolutionary in at least three senses. There is, first, the personal revolution in Kant's own moral self-understanding; second, the famous revolution in metaphysics and epistemology associated with the *Critique of Pure Rea-*

son; and third, the political revolution represented by the French Revolution and its impact on Kant's later thought. Willaschek uses this triadic frame to connect biography, doctrine, and historical context in a way that feels organic rather than schematic. It allows him to portray Kant neither as a detached professor nor as a merely textual philosopher, but as a thinker responding to crises of religion, politics, science, and moral life.

The book is divided into thirty relatively short thematic chapters, arranged not chronologically but by domains: politics and history, morality, law and society, human nature, metaphysics, and legacy. This decision is wise. Readers are introduced first to Kant's practical philosophy before being led into the more forbidding terrain of transcendental idealism and the antinomies. Anyone who has taught Kant knows how often beginners are repelled by premature immersion in the Transcendental Deduction. Willaschek instead starts from questions that remain recognizably ours: peace, coercion, dignity, religion, property, cosmopolitanism, education. Only later does he turn to space, objectivity, things in themselves, and freedom.

This practical orientation is not merely pedagogical. It reflects Willaschek's substantive interpretation of Kant. He emphasizes what he calls the primacy of practice: Kant's conviction that reason is not exhausted by theoretical cognition but is essentially oriented toward action. That thesis gives coherence to the whole presentation. Thus *Perpetual Peace* is treated not as an occasional pamphlet but as integral to Kant's system; the doctrine of dignity is connected to autonomy rather than sentiment; religion is read through moral reason rather than ecclesiastical dogma. Even readers who disagree with aspects of this emphasis will recognize that it captures something central in Kant's self-understanding.

One of the book's strongest achievements is its treatment of Kant's political philosophy. The chapter on perpetual peace is especially fine. Willaschek avoids the two standard caricatures: Kant as naïve pacifist and Kant as cold legal formalist. He shows instead a thinker deeply aware of conflict, ambition, and the fragility of institutions, yet unwilling to surrender the regulative ideal of a lawful international order. In our own moment, when cosmopolitan hopes are widely dismissed as sentimental residues of the 1990s, this reconstruction has genuine force. Willaschek's Kant is realistic without cynicism.

The chapters on morality are similarly accomplished. The categorical imperative is explained with admirable economy and without the usual textbook stiffness. Willaschek rightly insists that Kantian morality is not a machine for deriving answers but a discipline of reflective self-legislation. He is also attentive to the social dimensions of respect, obligation, and reciprocal recognition. Particularly effective is the chapter linking Rousseau to Kant's mature conception of dignity. Here Willaschek reminds us that autonomy in Kant is not aristocratic self-sufficiency but the equal worth of persons irrespective of rank, talent, or fortune.

Where the book is especially refreshing is in its willingness to discuss Kant's defects without making them the interpretive center. Willaschek explicitly addresses Kant's racist remarks, anti-Jewish prejudices, and demeaning judgments about women and homosexuality, stating plainly that these views are indefensible and fall beneath the level of Kant's best insights. Yet he resists the now familiar ritual in which every historical thinker is measured chiefly by present moral failure. This balance is intellectually mature. It neither excuses nor sensationalizes.

On the theoretical side, the exposition of transcendental idealism is clear and responsible. Willaschek avoids both metaphysical melodrama and deflationary trivialization. He presents Kant's central claim as the objectivity of the human standpoint: experience is structured by forms and concepts that are not copied from things but supplied by the conditions of cognition. That formulation is apt, though some specialists may wish for a sharper distinction between epistemic conditions and ontological commitments. Likewise, readers hoping for sustained engagement with current analytic debates on idealism, affection, or nonconceptual content will not find it here. But that is not the book's aim. It is synthetic rather than interventionist.

There are, inevitably, limits to a project of this breadth. The chapter format sometimes produces brisk transitions where deeper argumentative reconstruction would have been welcome. Specialists may also feel that figures central to Kant's reception—Fichte, Hegel, neo-Kantianism, Rawls, Habermas—receive less sustained treatment than they merit. At moments Willaschek's admiration for Kant leads him to understate unresolved tensions, especially between universalism and anthropology, legality and politics, or moral rigorism and empirical psychology. Yet these are criticisms of omission rather than distortion.

A word should be said about style. The prose is lively, urbane, and free of needless jargon. Anecdotes about Königsberg society, Mendelssohn, the French Revolution, or Kant's domestic routines are used not as ornament but as interpretive openings. Lewis's translation reads naturally and preserves cadence without pedantry. The English edition should therefore travel far beyond German-speaking Kant scholarship.

What, finally, is the significance of this book? It lies in recovering Kant as a philosopher of modern freedom whose questions remain unfinished. How can reason be authoritative without dogmatism? How can law secure liberty rather than suppress it? How can moral equality survive social hierarchy? How can peace become more than an interval between wars? How can objectivity be humanly conditioned without collapsing into relativism? Willaschek shows that Kant still matters because these questions still matter.

This is not a technical monograph that alters the state of a specialized debate. It is something rarer: a large-scale interpretive introduction written by a first-rate scholar at the height of his powers. It will bring new readers to Kant and give experienced readers occasion to revisit familiar texts under a unifying perspective. In an age of shrinking attention and expanding noise, that is no small achievement.

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