

The Preface

1. Threefold Structure

¶¶1–5. The old classification is useful to locate the metaphysics or morals.

¶¶6–10. Extending the division of labour to philosophy. Arguing for the necessity of a pure moral philosophy, devoid of any empirical content. The point of a metaphysics of morals is to explore the idea and principles of a possible pure will, rather than human action as such.

¶¶11–14. Remarks about the aim, method, and organisation of GMS.

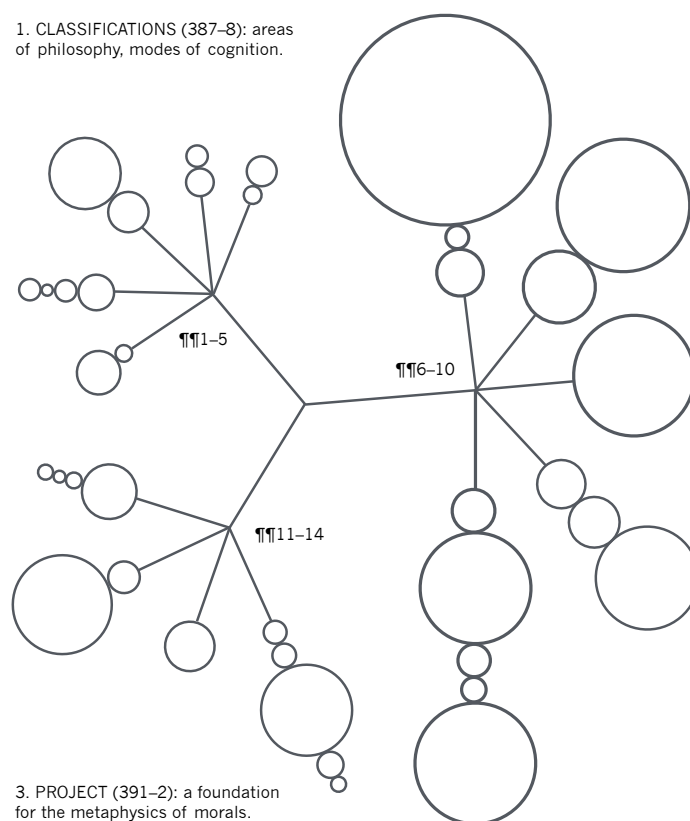
2. Divisions (387–8)

According to Aetius (Greek doxographer, c. 100 CE), “The Stoics said that wisdom (*σοφία*) is scientific knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*) of the divine and the human, and that philosophy is the practice of expertise in utility (*φιλοσοφίαν ἄσκησιν ἐπιτηδείου τέχνης*). Virtue first and foremost is utility, and virtues, at their most generic, are triple: the physical one (*φυσικόν*), the ethical one (*ἠθικόν*), and the logical one (*λογικόν*). Hence philosophy too has three parts: physics, ethics and logic. Physics is practised whenever we investigate the world and what is in it, ethics is our engagement with human life, and logic our engagement with discourse, which they also call dialectic.” (LS 26A, SVF 2.35)

And Diogenes Laertius (c. 300 CE) adds, “They [the Stoics] compare philosophy to a living being, likening logic to bones and sinews, ethics to the fleshier parts, and physics to the soul. They make a further comparison to an egg: logic is the outside, ethics what comes next, and physics the innermost part; or to a fertile field: the surrounding wall corresponds to logic, its fruits to ethics, and its land or trees to physics; or to a city which is well fortified and governed by reason.” (LS 26B, DL 7.40)

Relevance. Ethics has an empirical and a pure part. They must not be conflated. Yet: if morality is not pure, or merely speculative, that is, *practical*, and thus related to motivational factors (e.g., desires, feelings) that drive human agency, then how can purely intellectual principle have motivational force, or how is it possible that pure reason is practical (i.e. determine the will)?

1. CLASSIFICATIONS (387–8): areas of philosophy, modes of cognition.



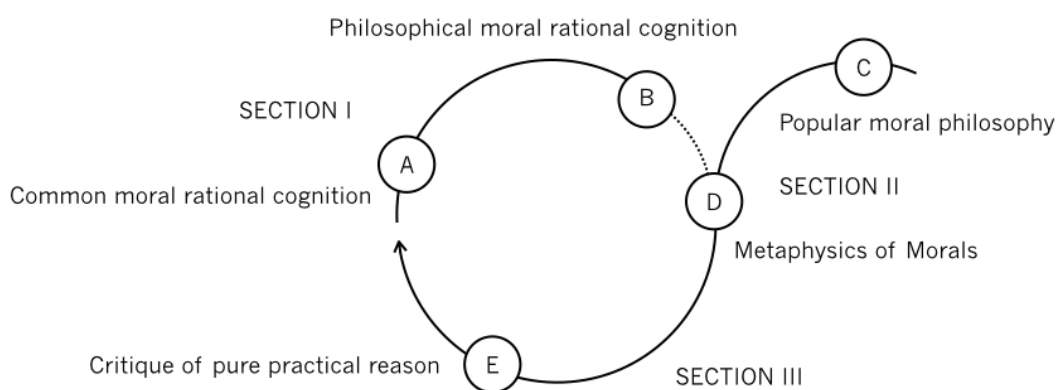
2. REASONS (388–91): the necessity for a pure moral philosophy, i.e. a metaphysics of morals.

3. PROJECT (391–2): a foundation for the metaphysics of morals.

3. The Line of Thought at 389.5–35 (§§7–8)

1. Conceptual analysis of the common idea of duty and actual moral laws (e.g., thou shalt not lie) reveals an **obligation** (*Verbindlichkeit*) not only for humans, but all rational beings. Moral laws bind or command regardless of our (subjective) interests or inclinations (429.29n), they disallow exceptions (424.20), and are unconditional (43216).
2. In other words, the ground of the obligation is not **contingent** on human nature, or the human condition in this world (situative, relative factors).
3. For if it were, obligations would have no **absolute necessity**.
4. But moral laws hold not only for actual cases, or in the specific human circumstances, but also **counterfactually**.
5. This is because when we consider what to do, and weigh alternative options for us to enact, we consider **possibilities**, are hence think counterfactually. Furthermore, without fixed principles, or **unconditional** moral laws, we could not consider such alternatives, let alone choose between them. Moral laws are presupposed for evaluating moral agency, hence not derived from experience.
6. Necessity is linked to epistemology: cognition (*Erkenntnis*) of moral laws is *a priori* (i.e. independent of experience).
7. The ground of obligation lies exclusively in the concepts of pure reason, i.e. reason unconditioned by ‘material’ aspects, de-sensitised, devoid of considerations about the objects of cognition (see 1).
8. The possibility of moral philosophy requires a metaphysics of morals: a pure enquiry into the grounds of moral obligation as such. (Outlook: hence the relevance of a *pure will*, i.e. one inclined by interests and desires.)

4. Transitions (392.17–28)



Back to the beginning (*wiederum zurück ... zur gemeinen Erkenntniß*): common ethical reasoning and acting is justified by supreme norms of correct moral judging (390.2), which provides stability and durability (405.3), and sustains reliable and perfect function (410.22)—we act morally for morality’s sake.

