

15. Now, what is true of the mathematical may be also true of the moral relations. We may have the faculty of perceiving these relations whether they be occupied by actually existent objects or not; or although we should be in ignorance of the objects. On the imagination that one of the inhabitants of the planet Jupiter had the mysterious knowledge of all my movements, and a mysterious power of guidance and protection over me; that he eyed me with constant benevolence, and ever acted the part of my friend and my guardian—I could immediately pronounce on the gratitude and the kind regard that were due from me back again: And should the imagination become a reality, and be authentically made known to me as such, I have a moral nature, a law within my heart, which already tells me how I should respond to this communication. The instance is extravagant; but it enables us at once to perceive what that is which must be fetched to us from without, and what that is which we have to meet it from within. The objects are either made known by observation; or, if they exist without the limits of observation, they are made known by the credible report or revelation of others. But when thus made known, they may meet with a prior and a ready made Ethics in ourselves. The objects may be placed beyond the limits of human experience; but though the knowledge of their existence must therefore be brought to us from afar, a sense of the correspondent moralities which are due to them may arise spontaneously in our bosoms. After the mind has gotten, in whatever way, its information of their reality—