The treatment of the nature of evil brought us to the very edge of the critical treatment of practical philosophy that has been sketched thus far. Now I want to turn to the work that Kant wished for the longest time to produce and which was the crowning of his practical philosophy: *The Metaphysics of Morals*. There are four distinct problems that have to be addressed in interpreting this work. First, how does the Doctrine of Right relate to the critical treatment of morality? Second, how does the Doctrine of Virtue provide us with the means for connecting the moral law to ethical situations? Third, what is the unity of the whole work of which these two doctrinal treatments are both part? Fourth and finally, what is the connection between Kant’s doctrinal works in practical philosophy with his critical work in the most general terms? These questions are all of considerable difficulty. I propose to address the overarching problem about the relationship between critical and doctrinal treatments in the last chapter where I will also give an account of how *The Metaphysics of Morals* is a unified work. The discussion of the Doctrine of Virtue will be undertaken in Chapter 7. In this chapter I propose therefore to undertake an overview of the Doctrine of Right with the problem of its relationship to the critical treatment of morality underpinning this interpretation.

The Doctrine of Right has a very specific place in Kant’s practical philosophy. It is the place where Kant sets out a lengthy and complicated account of possession as the basis for a defence of property rights and in which a discussion of the nature of civil society is set forth that draws on the traditions of both contractarian and natural law treatments. Whilst the former is included under the heading ‘private right’, the latter is contained in the account of ‘public right’. However, it is not sufficient to provide an overarching interpretation of the Doctrine of Right in terms
of how the notions of the two types of right can be said to relate as there is also a wider question that has been consistently raised in secondary literature on this work, the question of whether the treatment of right is to be taken as belonging within the province of moral philosophy at all. I will begin therefore by setting out this problem as an introduction to the framework within which, in my view, the interpretative dilemmas that arise in reading the Doctrine of Right must be set.

Is the Doctrine of Right independent of Kant’s practical system?

In some respects this is a very peculiar question to raise not least because of the fact that the Doctrine of Right is presented by Kant as the first part of his doctrinal treatment of morals. In the preface to the *Critique of Judgment* Kant stated that with its publication he had completed his critical enterprise and intended now to proceed to the doctrinal one (Ak. 5:170). This statement is in some respects peculiar, not least in relation to theoretical philosophy as Kant published *The Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* prior to the writing of the *Critique of Judgment*. It is far from clear, however, that this work could be regarded as part of the doctrinal part of theoretical philosophy as this was intended to consist in a metaphysics of nature not in a metaphysics of natural science.\(^1\) Matters are further complicated by the status of the *Opus Postumum*. In the area of practical philosophy, furthermore, as we have noted in the reading of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, the critical treatment was not completed until this work extended considerably the account of areas first covered in the postulates of pure practical reason. Despite these caveats it is clear that Kant saw a continuity between his critical treatments of moral questions and his doctrinal ones and since the Doctrine of Right is the first part of his work on doctrinal moral philosophy it would seem prima facie obvious that it belongs within the framework of his systematic account of morality.

The reason why there are questions that can be raised here however is that Kant also does wish to separate his treatment of right in some important respects from the treatment of ethics strictly speaking.\(^2\) For example, during the introduction to the Doctrine of Right Kant states that the work will treat ‘strict right’ by which he means ‘that which is not mingled with anything ethical’ (Ak. 6:232). This separation of the treatment of right from the ethical is intended as allowing that the basis of right not be grounded on the necessity of incorporating right notions