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REPORT ON STUDENT ESSAY COMPETITION

The competition attracted fifteen entries from ten universities. The judging was done by a committee consisting of Gerald Dworkin (chair), Lawrence Becker, and Ronald Rogowski. Each member of the committee read all the entries and ranked them independently. All agreed that the best essay was the one by Ping-cheung Lo, a graduate student in the department of philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo. His essay follows this report. The two runners-up chosen by the committee are Aaron Ben-Zeev of the philosophy department at the University of Chicago and Neil Gallagher of the philosophy department at Brown University. The title of Mr. Ben-Zeev's essay is "Who Is a Rational Agent?" and the title of Mr. Gallagher's is "Calculating Desert, Calculating Utility: The Problem of Measure."

I should like to offer my personal thanks to the panel of judges for their conscientious work under some time pressure and to extend congratulations, on behalf of myself and the committee, to Messrs. Lo, Ben-Zeev, and Gallagher.

B. B.

A Critical Reevaluation of the Alleged "Empty Formalism" of Kantian Ethics*

Ping-cheung Lo

I

Ever since Hegel, Kantian ethics has been charged with "empty Formalism."¹ His "supreme principle of morality" or the "ultimate norm for correct moral judgement," namely, "Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law," is criticized as an empty formula which gives no concrete direction for human conduct. Corresponding to this barrenness is his alleged stern insistence on "duty for duty's sake." On the one hand, Hegel says this

* I am deeply indebted to Professors Kah-kyung Cho, Newton Garver, Jorge J. E. Gracia, George F. Hourani, Thomas D. Perry, and to Terrence O'Connell, all of the philosophy department at the State University of New York at Buffalo, for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper.

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. with notes by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), par. 135, p. 90.

“has constituted the merit of Kant’s moral philosophy and its loftiness of outlook.”² Yet he adds that a mere insistence on this point is a “preaching” rather than a “science of morals,” because “from this point of view, no immanent doctrine of duties is possible.”³ “Every action explicitly calls for a particular content and a specific end, while duty as an abstraction entails nothing of the kind.”⁴

Dissatisfied with this characterization and criticism, many scholars have tried to defend Kant either by attempting to disclose the real nature of the Categorical Imperative⁵ or by spelling out the specific procedures for applying it.⁶ Whether they have succeeded or not is not my concern in this paper. What interests me is that their interpretations and defenses of the Kantian Categorical Imperative all focus on its first formulation in the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, while treating the other two formulations which Kant has also stated straightforwardly in the same work as subsidiary. Consequently they pay no serious attention to them.

The aim in this paper is to give an interpretation and to offer a line of defense of Kantian ethics by taking the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative (“Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end”; to be abbreviated as CI.2), rather than its first formulation (“Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law”; to be abbreviated as CI.1), as crucial. I shall show that there is strong textual evidence for interpreting Kant in this way. I believe that when viewed in this light Kantian ethics is by no means devoid of

2. *Ibid.*, addition to par. 133, p. 253.

3. *Ibid.*, par. 135, p. 90.

4. *Ibid.*, par. 134, p. 89.

5. C. D. Broad and L. W. Beck argue that the nature of the Categorical Imperative is analogous to that of a rule of the syllogism rather than a premise from which any specific conclusion can be drawn. See C. D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, International Library of Psychology and Scientific Method (Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1965), pp. 122-23; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy*, trans. and ed. L. W. Beck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), see Beck’s introduction, pp. 21-23; Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. L. W. Beck, Library of Liberal Arts (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1959), see Beck’s introduction, p. xvi. A. R. C. Duncan and T. C. Williams regard the Categorical Imperative, not as a criterion of determining rightness or wrongness of conduct at all, but as a description of the work of pure practical reason and the nature of moral action. See A. R. C. Duncan, *Practical Reason and Morality: A Study of Immanuel Kant’s Foundations for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957), see esp. chaps. 1, 7, 10, 11; pp. 1-18, 96-118, 150-82; T. C. Williams, *The Concept of the Categorical Imperative: A Study of the Place of the Categorical Imperative in Kant’s Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), see esp. chaps. 4, 7-10, pp. 37-56, 80-136.

6. See M. G. Singer, *Generalization in Ethics: An Essay in the Logic of Ethics with the Rudiments of a System of Moral Philosophy* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963), chaps. 8-9, pp. 217-29; Onora Nell, *Acting on Principle: An Essay on Kantian Ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), see esp. chaps. 4-5, pp. 43-93. I have to confess my ignorance of the situation in the recent German philosophical world. On that account only the scholarship in the English-speaking world is taken into consideration here.

content, and that it can furnish a concrete guide for human conduct. I shall attempt to show that this principle is "teleological" in the literal sense, and that the derivative imperatives, albeit teleological, are still categorical rather than hypothetical. Only then, I believe, can the accusation of the "emptiness" or barrenness" of Kantian ethics be decisively refuted.⁷

My plan is as follows. First of all, I shall attempt to furnish the ground for CI.2, which Kant has done too sketchily and inadequately in the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785),⁸ by supplementing it with the arguments in the second part of the *Metaphysik der Sitten* (1797)—that is, the *Metaphysische Angangsgründe der Tugendlehre*⁹—and in other writings. His teleological theory of human actions, his theory of ends, and his theory of rational nature as an end in itself will all be discussed here. Second, I shall proceed to show how CI.2 can be applied so that both obligatory and prohibitory duties can be generated without conflicts. Third, I shall try to reinforce my contention by explicating the true Kantian view of duty, and by drawing some supporting evidence for the proposed "teleological" interpretation from other sources. Fourth, I shall attempt to show that both Kant and his readers are responsible for these misunderstandings. This paper will then conclude by raising some difficulties which would be faced by this "teleological" moral philosophy.

II

The first grounds of CI.2 are Kant's teleological theory of human action and his theory of ends. In line with Aristotle, Kant argues in *The Doctrine of Virtue* that one of the crucial differences between human beings and brutes is that the actions of men are not solely determined by blind in-

7. It is interesting to note that in spite of so many defenses of CI.1 previously made, Kantian ethics was still relentlessly attacked and ridiculed by scholars in the past decade. See Richard Taylor, *Good and Evil: A New Direction* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1970), pp. xii, 108–14. Although H. H. Schroeder pointed out decades ago in "Some Common Misinterpretations of the Kantian Ethics" (*Philosophical Review* 49 [July 1940]: 424–46, p. 442) that the accusation of emptiness of the Categorical Imperative can best be refuted by appealing to CI.2, he has not elaborated this point at all. It is also true that many a scholar has noticed the existence of CI.2 in Kantian ethics, but it seems that none of them has conceived of it as a viable alternative to CI.1. The only exception I know is Alan Donagan and his work *The Theory of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). Although this book is not on Kantian ethics itself, strictly speaking, it still sheds a lot of light on this topic, and it will quite often be referred to by me in this paper.

8. The English translation I use is: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. with notes and analyzed by H. J. Paton (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1964). From now on this work is to be abbreviated as "GMS." Numerical references are page number in, first, the Royal Prussian Academy and, second, to the second German edition of that work.

9. The English translation I use is: Immanuel Kant, *The Doctrine of Virtue*, pt. 2 of *The Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Mary J. Gregor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971). From now on this work is to be abbreviated as "MS." "Einkl." is the abbreviation of *Einleitung* (Introduction) of this work. Page references are given according to the Royal Prussian Academy German Edition.

stincts and purposeless impulses. This is because they possess reason, and because “the power to set an end—any end whatsoever—is the characteristic of humanity (as distinguished from animality)” (MS, *Einl.*, sec. 8, p. 392). In a further passage Kant even strongly states: “For pure practical reason is a power of ends as such, and for it to be indifferent to ends or to take no interest in them would be a contradiction, because then it would not determine the maxims for actions either (since every maxim contains an end) and so would not be practical reason” (MS, *Einl.*, sec. 9, p. 395). “Every action, therefore, has its end” (MS, *Einl.*, sec. 3, p. 385). However, according to Kant in the *Groundwork*, another difference between human deliberate action and animal behavior is that man acts on a principle of action (GMS 412/36). Hence every principle of action, no matter whether it is a subjective one (i.e., a maxim) or an objective one (i.e., a law), also contains an end. The Categorical Imperative is an objective principle of an action which stands in a relation of necessitating the human will (GMS 413/37); hence it should have an end, too.

Kant argues for this through an implicit *reductio ad absurdum* argument: “Now there must be such an end and a categorical imperative corresponding to it. . . . For were there no such ends, then all ends would be valid for practical reason only as means to other ends; and since there can be no action without an end, a *categorical* imperative would be impossible. And this would do away with all moral philosophy” (MS, *Einl.*, sec. 3, p. 385; cf. GMS 428/66). Now Kant insists repeatedly throughout his ethical writings that there is such a Categorical Imperative. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he explicitly asserts that the existence of such a Moral Law is a “fact of pure reason.”¹⁰ Therefore, that there is a special end of action which corresponds to the Categorical Imperative is beyond doubt.

There is another argument in *The Doctrine of Virtue* which argues that such an end in morality is indispensable. Human beings are mixtures of rational nature and inclination, and hence they always find themselves in moral conflicts or “natural dialectics” (GMS 405/23). Hence Kant argues that “since the sensuous inclinations tempt us to ends (as the matter of choice) which may be contrary to duty, legislative reason can check their influence only by another end, a *moral end* set up against the ends of inclination, which must therefore be given *a priori*, independently of the inclinations” (MS, *Einl.*, sec. 1, pp. 380–81).

In these ways Kant argues that the Categorical Imperative, apart from having a form, should also contain an end for the sake of which our actions are to be directed. As he has already said in the *Groundwork*, “the ground of every enactment of practical law lies *objectively in the rule* and in the form of universality which (according to our first principle) makes the rule capable of being a law (and indeed a law of nature); *subjectively*, however, it lies in the *end*” (GMS 431/70).

10. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Library of Liberal Arts, 1956), p. 31.

This conclusion seems somewhat startling, and two objections can be raised immediately. The first objection is this. In the discussion on imperatives in the *Groundwork*, has Kant not insisted repeatedly that moral laws have to be categorical, that is, unconditioned? And the very reason for a categorical imperative to be categorical is because it declares "an action as objectively necessary in itself apart from its relation to a further end" (GMS 414/39). Is this a flat contradiction to the above claim that a categorical imperative should enjoin an end? How can an imperative enjoin an end without itself becoming hypothetical, that is, "an action is commanded, not absolutely, but only as a means to a further purpose" (GMS 416/43)? Is the conception of "a teleological categorical imperative" not contradictory in itself? Furthermore, the second objection is: Has Kant not said in the *Groundwork* too that a categorical imperative "is concerned, not with the matter of the action and its presumed results, but with its form and with the principle from which it follows" (GMS 416/43)? Does this indicate that the Categorical Imperative should be empty of any end at all?

With these questions in mind, Kant distinguishes two kinds of ends—subjective and objective—before he reformulates the Categorical Imperative (GMS 427–28/63–65). First of all, subjective ends are those ends in view of which human beings act in their daily lives. Different persons have different sets of such ends in their lives, hence none of them is valid for every human being, still less for the other kind of rational beings. An objective end, on the other hand, is an end which is valid for every rational being. (These are among the meanings of "subjective" and "objective" in the *Groundwork*.) Second, subjective ends are ends set by our inclination. That is the very reason why they vary from individual to individual and why they are not valid for perfect rational beings, who have no inclination at all. They are ends of those who desire them only. In the case of an objective end, the very reason for it to be valid for every rational being is that it is set by our reason so that every rational being, so long as his rational reflection is free from the disturbances of desires, will necessarily pursue it. Third, a subjective end is something to be brought about as an effect (*die Wirkung*) through a certain action, which serves merely as a means. (Elsewhere in the *Groundwork* it is also called *die Absicht*, or the purpose; *die Folge*, or the result; and *der Erfolg*, or the consequence. See GMS 400/13, 402/18, 416/43.) In a later passage he even clearly calls it "*the end that has to be produced*" (*der bewirkende Zweck* [GMS 437/82]). In contrast, an objective end is something which is actually existing in this world already. We need not bring it into existence, but only have to respect its existence. It is called by Kant "*the self-existent end*" (*der selbständige Zweck* [GMS 437/82]). Fourth, since subjective ends are ends of us so far as we desire them, their values are relative. If we do not desire them, they will be valueless to us. In other words, they are not valuable in themselves. An objective end, on the other hand, is something which is valuable by its very nature. Its value is absolute. Hence it is

also "*an end in itself*," something which should be regarded as an end in all circumstances, but never merely as a means to some other ends.

In light of these distinctions, we can understand that it is only the presence of a subjective end which will make the imperative which enjoins it become hypothetical or conditional. As it is subjective only, that is, the end of him who wills to choose it, it cannot be the corresponding end of a categorical imperative, which is supposed to be objective, that is, an end for all rational beings. Since it is set by our inclination, the imperative which enjoins an action in view of this end has binding force on us only if we desire the end. This imperative is then actually in the form of "You ought to do so and so, if you desire the end." The binding force of such an imperative is therefore conditioned, and it is a hypothetical rather than a categorical imperative. Even if the end is not set by our inclination, but by our reason, insofar as it is a producible end, it still cannot be the end of a categorical imperative. This is because when an imperative enjoins an action in order to attain that end, that action has binding force on us only because it is a means to that end. It has no binding force in itself. Once it is no longer an efficient means to bring about that end, it will not be enjoined by the imperative which aims at bringing about that end. Hence its binding force is still conditional and the imperative itself is hypothetical. Furthermore, subjective ends possess only relative value, so they cannot be the ground of the absolute Moral Law.

On the contrary, the presence of an objective end will not weaken the unconditional force of the imperative. As it is objective, it corresponds to the objective nature of a categorical imperative. It is "perceived" by our reason, so an imperative which enjoins an action in view of this end has a binding force independent of whether one desires it or not. One ought to do so and so, without an "if" as a prior condition. Such an end is not something to be produced, hence the action which is enjoined by the imperative is necessary or has binding force in itself, which is independent of whether it is a good means to a further end or not. Moreover, such an end has an absolute value which is most suitable to be the ground of an imperative which has a universal and unconditioned binding force (cf. GMS 414-16/39-44, 444/93-94).

In short, the answer to the first objection is that the difference between a hypothetical and a categorical imperative is not a matter of whether it has an end or not. The real distinction between them is a matter of conditional or unconditional binding force. Both hypothetical imperatives and categorical imperatives have ends, as human deliberate actions are teleological. Nonetheless, the end of a hypothetical imperative is a subjective and producible one, which therefore reduces its binding force. The end of a categorical imperative, on the other hand, is an objective and self-existent one, which will not impair the unconditional binding force of the imperative at all.

As to the second objection, that the Moral Law is formal and should have no matter at all, it can be immediately dissolved if we understand better what Kant means by "formal." Later in the *Groundwork* he clarifies it in this way: "Practical principles are *formal* if they abstract from all subjective ends; they are *material*, on the other hand, if they are based on such ends and consequently on certain impulses" (GMS 427/64). In other words, for Kant *formal* is not equivalent to *empty*. A formal moral law is only empty of subjective ends, but not of an objective end. The idea of formal by no means excludes any content at all.

Similarly, when Kant says that a categorical imperative must "abstract from all objects" (GMS 441/89), it would not constitute any refutation to the claim that a categorical imperative should have an end at all. It is because the objects here should be interpreted as "all objects of the faculty of desire" (GMS 400/13), or "an object as the effect of my proposed action" (GMS 400/14), which are, again, subjective ends only.

Much has been said above about the compatibility of a categorical imperative and an end of action. The crucial point is the distinction between a subjective, producible end and an objective, self-existent end. Nevertheless, someone may reject this distinction as meaningless because the concept of a "self-existent end" is in itself unintelligible. Such philosophers as H. Sidgwick and W. D. Ross argue that an end of an action is necessarily something not yet to come into being, so logically it cannot be self-existent.¹¹ This is in line with the Aristotelian and commonsense conception of an end.¹² Therefore a categorical imperative either does not prescribe an end, or if it does, it will inevitably fall to a hypothetical level.

In order to answer this criticism, we have to notice how Kant tries to surpass Aristotle. In spite of his affinity with Aristotle in claiming that every human deliberate action is performed in view of an end, he does not see an end only as a certain thing or a certain state of affairs that is to be produced or brought forth. He sees an end as "what serves the will as an objective ground of its self-determination" (GMS 427/63).¹³ In other words, the end of an action, as Kant conceives it as the *objective ground* (i.e., the ground in objects) of our self-determination, or the *matter* or *object of our free choice* (MS, *Einl.*, sec. 1, pp. 380–81; sec. 3, p. 384; sec. 6, p. 389), is contrasted with the *subjective ground* (i.e., the ground in us human subjects) of our self-determination, that is, either impulses or

11. I owe this information to Donagan, who quotes their criticisms as contained in *Methods of Ethics* (7th ed. [London: Macmillan Co., 1907], p. 390) and *Kant's Ethical Theory* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954], p. 51) in his own *Theory of Morality*, p. 63.

12. Cf. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1

13. It is a pity that one of the very best Kantian commentators, H. J. Paton, to whom I am greatly indebted, fails to grasp the point that I am going to raise and has ventured rashly to substitute "a subjective ground" for the German phrase "*der objektive Grund*" in his translation of this passage—which I believe is a mistake. See Kant, *Groundwork*, pp. 95, 138 (p. 63, n. 2).

motives. Hence Kant also calls it a “*material determining ground of choice*” (MS, *Einl.*, sec. 1, p. 381).

This concept of an end of an action is broader than the commonsense and Aristotelian one, because it is true that the “matter” or the object of our free choice can either be something already existing (an objective end) or something which does not yet exist but is intended to be brought into existence (a subjective end). Alan Donagan uses the common English expression “for the sake of” to interpret this Kantian concept of an objective end. Undoubtedly, we very often perform an action for the sake of producing or obtaining something, that is, to bring it into existence. Nevertheless, Donagan argues that we also very often commit or omit an action just for the sake of some already existing beings, with no other purposes of producing something in mind, for example, in the cases of courtesy, respect, and gratitude.¹⁴

One may reply that in performing an action out of gratitude, one may still have certain producible ends in mind. One may want to bring it about that his benefactor is aware of his gratitude, or that one may simply want to promote good and avoid harm for him. In such cases “to perform an action simply for the sake of an existing being” can be reduced to “to perform an action for the sake of the welfare, interests, happiness, etc. of the existing being” or “to perform an action for the sake of certain consequences.” However, as Donagan has already shown, such a reduction is untenable. On the one hand, one may commit or omit an action out of gratitude to his benefactor even if the benefactor will not be able to be aware of it (an extreme case of this is that the benefactor may well have already died). On the other hand, the crucial factor in making such a decision to commit or omit an action out of gratitude is not simply that this action can have the consequence of the maximization of the good, but the fact that this particular person is his benefactor, on that account only is he obliged to take care of his welfare or interests. If the consequence of the greater balance of good over evil is the crucial reason for such an action, one is obliged to do the same action to everybody if the same balance of good over evil can be produced for him in similar circumstances. The very nature of the duty of gratitude, however, is that it is a duty to a particular kind of person only, but not to everybody. Hence the maximization of the good is by no means the ground of acting out of gratitude. In other words, the “material determining ground” of our deliberate actions can really be some already existing beings. We act simply for their own sake and not for the sake of any further purposes.

Further elucidations of this point will be made below when I am going to show how Kant attempts to derive specific duties from a nonconsequentialist ground.¹⁵ The main point that I want to make here is that Kant seems to take man’s deliberate actions to be teleological in two different ways, whereas Aristotle, Sidgwick, and Ross have conceived only

14. Donagan, pp. 63–64, 224–29.

15. P. 191 below.

one of them. If an end of an action can be something already existing, then the expression "self-existent end" is not contradictory. A "teleological" categorical imperative is thereby conceptually possible.

After such a digression of clarification, let us go back to the main theme. I have tried to show that according to Kant, because of the teleological nature of human action, the Categorical Imperative should have a corresponding end, too. This end has to be objective, self-existent, and discovered by reason. In the *Groundwork*, after making such distinctions between the two kinds of ends, Kant proceeds to propose one more important criterion in determining whether a certain objective and self-existent end can be the end of the Moral Law or not: "Suppose, however, there were something *whose existence* has in *itself* an absolute value, something which as *an end in itself* could be a ground of determinate laws; then in it, and in it alone, would there be the ground of a possible categorical imperative—that is, of a practical law" (GMS 428/64). It is significant to note that for Kant, the "right" is still based on the "good"—only that this intrinsic good is an already existing one and is independent of all human desires. Kant then immediately goes on to offer his view: "Now I say that man, and in general every rational being, *exists* as an end in himself, *not merely as a means* for arbitrary use by this or that will: he must in all his actions, whether they are directed to himself or to other rational beings, always be viewed *at the same time as an end* . . . for unless this is so, nothing at all of *absolute* value would be found anywhere" (GMS 428/64–65).

But why does a rational being or rational nature have an absolute value in itself?¹⁶ This is not explained by Kant until a few pages later. The precise reason is that pure reason in its practical use is capable of enacting moral laws. Human beings, who also possess rational nature, thus stand above the rest of the world by having the status as the legislators of universal and necessary laws. In other words, "*autonomy* is therefore the ground of the dignity of human nature and of *every* rational nature"

16. In one later passage, Kant writes that "*rational nature exists as an end in itself*" (GMS 429/66). It seems as though Kant is talking of rational nature in general. Nevertheless other passages suggest that he is talking about each concrete rational being ("*every* rational being *exists* as an end in himself" [GMS 428/64]; "*humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other*" [GMS 429/66]). Robert Paul Wolff thinks that Kant could not mean the former, otherwise "one might urge eugenic schemes in the interest of 'rational nature' which could hardly be justified in the name of 'every rational creature' or 'humanity.'" See Robert Paul Wolff, *The Autonomy of Reason: A Commentary on Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1973), p. 176n. Taken together with many other passages in *The Doctrine of Virtue*, I think Wolff's interpretation is correct, and the following remark of Taylor is completely mistaken: "Ends in Themselves are, thus, not to be thought of as those men that live and toil on earth; they are not suffering, rejoicing, fumbling, living, and dying human beings; they are not men that anyone has ever seen, or would be apt to recognize as men if he did see them, or apt to like very much if he did recognize them. They are abstract things." See Taylor, pp. 113–14, n. 7 above.

(GMS 436/79). In a further passage, Kant explains the “dignity and sublimity” of man in an even more precise manner:

That without any further end or advantage to be attained the mere dignity of humanity, that is, of rational nature in man—and consequently that reverence for a mere Idea—should function as an inflexible precept for the will; and that it is just this freedom from dependence on interested motives which constitutes the sublimity of a maxim and the worthiness of every rational subject to be a law making member in the kingdom of ends; for otherwise he would have to be regarded as subject only to the law of nature—the law of his own needs. [GMS 439/84–85]

It is this inner freedom, self-mastery, transcendence, and status as legislator that mark human beings sharply from all other beings in this world. That is the very reason why Kant regards rational nature as having such an absolute value that it should be adopted as an objective end of human conduct.

III

Now, given that the corresponding end of the Categorical Imperative is rational nature, the Categorical Imperative is formulated again in this way: “*act in such a way that you can always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end*” (GMS 429/66–67).

Obviously enough, CI.2, is “teleological” in nature in the literal sense. It directs our actions for the sake of an already existing “telos” or end. Yet someone may still wonder precisely how such a special “teleological” criterion works. Is it practicable? Can both obligatory and prohibitory duties be derived from it? How does it differ from a hypothetical imperative?

It is a pity that Kant does not explain these clearly enough in the *Groundwork*. He only gives four vague illustrations without further explanations and clarifications. It is only twelve years later, in the second part of the *Metaphysic of Morals*, that he shows us how this special teleological criterion is systematically applied.¹⁷

There are two aspects to CI.2, one negative, the other positive. The negative aspect is: Since humanity is a self-existent end in itself, to act for its own sake means to refrain from ignoring this fact, that is, to refrain from simply treating it as a means for producing some subjective ends. Or, in other words, we should always remember that rational nature has an absolute value and this should never be violated. Its existence imposes a “limiting condition” on our actions (GMS 430–31/69–70, 436/80). No human being should be “manipulated” or “used” as if he were merely a

17. In his lectures on ethics between the years 1775 and 1781, Kant occasionally has already shown how our duties can be derived from such a “teleological” moral criterion. See Immanuel Kant, “Duties to Oneself,” *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Louis Infield (1963; reprint ed., Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), pp. 116–26.

"thing," but should always be respected as a "person" (GMS 428/65). Or, roughly speaking, in the famous terminologies of Martin Buber, every rational being is always a "Thou," never an "it."

Hence, in enumerating one's major prohibitory duties to oneself as an animal being, suicide, carnal self-defilement, self-stupefaction by immoderate use of food and drink are all forbidden; and as a moral being, lying, avarice, and false humility are all prohibited. The reasons are the following. Suicide is prohibited because it is a complete wiping out of the existence of the self-existent end, and this shows one's indifference to the infinite value of his own person (MS 423). Carnal self-defilement and self-stupefaction by the immoderate use of food and drink are forbidden because these are treating oneself merely as a means to the end of satisfying the animal instincts for their own sake (MS 425, 427).¹⁸ Lying, that is, a conveyance of a deliberate untruth, is an action which contradicts the natural purpose of man's power of communication—conveying what is in one's mind through language or other means. Hence in lying, one is ignoring a natural purpose of one's personhood and is thus disrespecting one's humanity as such (MS 429). Miserly avarice or stinginess makes one a slave to his desire for wealth and thus degrades one's rational nature merely as a means to that end of one's inclinations (MS 434). False humility is an abasement of one's dignity for the sake of acquiring the favor of someone else. In such an arbitrary degradation of the absolute worth of one's person to an exchangeable price, disrespect is again exhibited (MS 435–36).

As to the prohibitory duties to others, pride, calumny, and mockery are all condemned because they clearly are manifestations of contempt or disrespect to others and thus are abasements of the dignity of other persons (MS 465–67). In all these cases, just the disrespect or contempt shown in the actions themselves is sufficient to establish the impermissibility of such actions. Such actions should be omitted just for the sake of the absolute intrinsic value of each individual, but not for the sake of some

18. An explication has to be made here. One may protest, Why are carnal self-defilement, self-stupefaction by the immoderate use of food and drink, and miserly avarice (to be mentioned below) regarded as treating oneself merely as a means? When we say that we use a certain person as a mere means, what we signify is that we make that person serve an end which is not shared by him. Is this the case here? Is the pursuit of pleasures derived from sex, food, drink, and wealth not also one of our ends? In order to see why the deductions made against carnal self-defilement, self-stupefaction by the immoderate use of food and drink, and miserly avarice are valid here, we have to understand another premise of his inference which is raised in the introduction and elucidated in the latter part of the book (MS, *Einkl.*, secs. 3, 4, 5, 8; pt. 1, bk. 2). To him, the pursuit of pleasures derived from sex, food, drink, and wealth is an arbitrary end of our inclination only (see GMS 436/80). Even though they are not evil in themselves, they in themselves are also by no means the proper end for us such that we should strive to bring it about by all means. The proper end prescribed by reason which one should promote for oneself is moral perfection (see p. 192 below). Since this "dutiful end" is disregarded in those activities, one's rational nature is made to serve an end which is not his own—an arbitrary end of the inclination. This is obviously treating one's own rational nature as a mere means, and a disrespect is shown.

further consequences for the sake of the welfare or interests that can be produced for that individual.

Duties derived from the negative aspect of CI.2 are called by Kant perfect or narrow duties. They bid us to omit certain kinds of actions for the sake of the self-existent end. But CI.2 does not have only a negative aspect, it prescribes something positive too. As Kant himself explains, "it is not enough that he has no title to use either himself or others merely as means (since according to this he can still be indifferent to them): it is in itself his duty to make man as such his end" (MS, *Einkl.*, sec. 9, p. 395). In other words, CI.2 also commands us positively to perform certain kinds of actions for the sake of the self-existent end. But what kinds of actions? Actions that can "promote" the self-existent end.¹⁹ These prescribed obligatory actions are called imperfect or wide duties.

As to oneself, the promotion of the self-existent end means that we should let our rational nature be completely realized. No doubt, rational nature in my person is self-existent. Nevertheless its full potentiality is never completely actualized. Hence if it really has an infinite worth at all, apart from preserving its existence and status as an end in itself, we should also cultivate and perfect its state of existence (MS 419). Hence, "man has a duty of striving to raise himself from the crude state of his nature, from his animality and to realize ever more fully in himself the humanity" (MS, *Einkl.*, sec. 5, p. 387). Therefore the imperfect duty to oneself primarily is to strive for moral perfection (purity of motive and performance of all duties), a state in which our reason has complete domination over our inclinations. Since the dignity and sublimity of humanity lies precisely in its ability of inner freedom, self-mastery, self-legislation, and transcendence, naturally enough we should strive to exercise this ability to the highest degree. In view of this, our natural perfection (of mind, soul, and body) should also be sought so as to facilitate our acquisition of virtue. To oneself, "the highest, unconditioned end of pure practical reason (which is still always duty) consists in this: that virtue should be its own end. . . . The worth of virtue itself, as its own end, far exceeds the value of any utility and any empirical ends and advantages that virtue may, after all, bring about" (MS, *Einkl.*, sec. 10, pp. 396-97).

As to others, acting for the sake of, or promotion of, the self-existent end means "the duty of making others' ends my own (in so far as these ends are only not immoral)" (MS 449). In other words, we are enjoined to adopt the subjective ends of the other objective ends in themselves as my subjective ends and to realize them, in so far as they are not prohibited by the negative aspect of CI.2. How is this precept derived? Kant's reasoning in the *Groundwork* is: "For the ends of a subject who is an end in himself must, if this conception is to have its full effect in me, be also, as far as

19. Although this term "promote" is only mentioned in the third illustration of CI.2 in GMS 430/69, but not in the *Doctrine of Virtue*, yet it is very important and is different from "produce." The latter corresponds to a subjective end which has not yet come into being, whereas the former corresponds to an already existing objective end.

possible, my ends" (GMS 430/69).²⁰ In other words, Kant seems to argue that if rational nature in each person really has such an infinite value, we should express our appreciation of this value by adopting the ends of others (insofar as they are not immoral) as our own and strive to realize them.²¹ This is called by Kant the "duty of love" (in the sense of benevolence), as contrasted to the "duty of respect" (perfect duties to others). It includes beneficence (making another's happiness one's end), gratitude, and sympathy (sympathetic joy and sorrow) (MS 448-61). Love and respect are the two great forces governing human relationships; they are analogous to the forces of attraction and repulsion in the physical world. The former draws us to come nearer to each other, whereas the latter keeps us at a distance (MS 449, 470, 488).

In view of the above exposition, it is clear that both obligatory and prohibitory duties can plausibly be derived from CI.2 by taking it as a major premise in conjunction with a nonmoral minor premise. This "teleological" supreme principle of morality really works, and the fertility, rather than the barrenness, of the Kantian Moral Law is revealed.

However, I have to stress that this moral principle is "teleological" only in the literal sense, that is, directed toward an end. It is not teleological in the ordinary ethics-textbook sense in which "teleological ethical theories" are contrasted with "deontological ethical theories." The ethical theory of Kant outlined above is still deontological rather than teleological because the "telos" in this case is not something to be brought about, but is some already existing, rational nature. We are obliged to respect its existence and to promote its state of existence, but not to bring it from nonexistence into existence. A teleological ethical theory says that "the basic or ultimate criterion or standard of what is morally right, wrong, obligatory, etc. is the nonmoral value that is brought into being."²² But I think it is clear from my exposition above that all our perfect duties derived from the negative aspect of CI.2 are not to be abided by simply because of any foreseeable overall good consequence. Instead, they should be performed just for the sake of the existence of the intrinsic absolute value of humanity in each person. Any disrespect or contempt toward oneself or others is strictly forbidden, not because it will bring about a greater balance of bad over good consequences, but simply because such an attitude or action toward the self-existent end in itself is wrong in

20. To my astonishment, every duty in the *Doctrine of Virtue* is derived from CI.2, except this one. Therein Kant tries to justify benevolence by appealing to CI.1 (MS, *Einl.*, sec. 8, pp. 393; p. 453).

21. Kant adds that the imperfect duty to oneself cannot be the fulfillment of one's own purposes, while that to the others cannot be the attainment of their perfection. This is because every one of us naturally seeks to fulfill his subjective ends and is thus incapable of being under obligation (i.e., unwillingly under necessitation) to adopt them as our duty. As for the attainment of the perfection of others, this is mainly within their power, and is beyond our capability. Hence it cannot be our duty (MS, *Einl.*, sec. 4, pp. 385-86).

22. William K. Frankena, *Ethics*, 2d ed., Foundation of Philosophy Series (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 14.

itself, as our moral intuition would agree. That is the very reason why we would regard cherishing contempt or disrespects in one's mind without explicit actions (and hence without overall harmful effects) still as impermissible. It seems to me that in CI.2 Kant has taken "disrespect to your own person and others" as the essence of immorality, and every action prohibited by the negative aspect of CI.2 is but an instance of it. Since each of us would recognize that disrespect or contempt is prohibited on nonconsequentialist grounds, every perfect duty enjoined in CI.2 also rests on nonconsequentialist grounds and is therefore deontological.

Nonetheless, I am ready to concede that duties derived from the positive aspect of CI.2 are teleological in the full ethics-textbook sense. This is because one is enjoined to bring about one's own moral perfection, and to adopt the ends of others as one's own and to strive to realize them as far as one can and as far as is permissible. These actions are right actions in virtue of the greater balance of good over bad consequences that will follow.

Yet in spite of this, speaking overall, CI.2—though "teleological" in the literal sense—is still deontological rather than teleological in the textbook sense of describing the nature of an ethical theory. This is because the negative aspect of CI.2 is still deontological, as I have argued above. In other other words, Kant would deny that the comparative amount of good that can be brought about by an action is the *sole* criterion by which the rightness or wrongness of any action is to be evaluated. And deontological ethical theories are precisely those which "deny that the right, the obligatory, and the morally good are wholly, whether directly or indirectly, a function of what is nonmorally good or of what promotes the greatest balance of good over evil for self, one's society, or the world as a whole."²³

Before leaving this exposition, I would like to take up a possible objection from critics.²⁴ Since CI.2 has two aspects, positive and negative, one and the same action may be enjoined by one aspect but forbidden by the other, and conflicts of duties may thereby arise. For example, in adopting a subjective end of another person as my own and trying to realize it, I may violate the respect which is due to him or to some other persons. Which one should I choose? If CI.2 is really a fertile guide for human conduct, how can it deal with such a possibility of internal inconsistency?

Kant's answer here is clear: the duty of love is a conditioned one. It is "making others' *ends* my own (in so far as these ends are only not immoral)" (MS 449). In other words, the positive aspect of CI.2 is always conditioned by its negative aspect—one should not do anything prohibited by it. Whenever an apparent conflict of duties due to derivation from different aspects of CI.2 arises, the prohibitory duty from the negative aspect of CI.2 must prevail. No real conflict of duties can therefore ever

23. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

24. R. P. Wolff has raised this objection in a rudimentary form in his commentary. See Wolff, p. 176.

arise.²⁵ It is more important to "preserve" than to promote the self-existent end. "To neglect mere duties of love is *lack of virtue (peccatum)*, but to neglect duty that proceeds from the *respect* due to every man as such is *vice (vitium)*. For no one is wronged when we neglect duties of love; but if we fail in a duty of respect, then a man is deprived of his lawful claim" (MS 464).²⁶

In short, CI.2 provides a moral criterion that is not only practicable but also consistent, so that specific duties (Both obligatory and prohibitory) can be derived from it without conflicts.²⁷ This is the best answer that can be offered to meet the accusation that the Kantian Categorical Imperative is empty and is thus useless as a guide for human conduct.

IV

In addition to what has been said above, I would like to justify further my interpretation of Kantian ethics, first by clarifying some more misunderstood passages in the *Groundwork* and then by discussing Kant's moral teleology as contained in the *Critique of Judgement* and other writings.

Many people, following Hegel, think that Kant is a stern believer in "duty for duty's sake." In other words, they think that Kant insists that there is no specific end in doing one's duties. This is my duty, simply because it is my duty.²⁸ Hence, any kind of "teleological" ethics is directly contrary to Kant's own view. I admit that there are several passages in the *Groundwork* (especially in chap. 1) which might easily lead one to think in this way. Nevertheless, by bearing in mind the two kinds of ends that Kant later differentiates, a careful reading of these passages will show that this alleged Kantian view of duty is completely un-Kantian.

Misunderstanding arises chiefly from the passages discussing the three propositions of morality in chapter 1, and the nature of the Categorical Imperative and moral autonomy in chapter 2. In discussing those three propositions of morality, Kant's topic is: "Wherein lies the moral worth of an action?" No doubt, as many people know, Kant asserts that an action has moral value only if it is done from the motive of duty (proposition 1, GMS 397-99/8-13), or only if it is done out of reverence for the moral law (proposition 3, GMS 400-1/14-16). In other words, the moral worth lies in the form of the a priori principle (proposition 2, GMS 399-400/13-14). In contrast to this, he maintains that an action done from inclinations or self-interests, even if it conforms to duty, does not have any

25. Cf. MS 224.

26. This is completely in line with the so-called Pauline Principle in Christian ethics: "Evil is not to be done that good may come of it." See the Epistle to the Romans 3:7-8; Donagan, pp. 154-55, 157. Once again the Christian flavor of Kantian ethics is exhibited.

27. Some moral problems of contemporary society, it seems to me, can also be fruitfully solved by appealing to CI.2. Again see Donagan, chaps. 3, 5-6, pp. 75-111, 143-209.

28. Richard Taylor has made a contemporary restatement of this charge. "But in Kant's system, duties are sundered from particular commands, and Duty becomes something singular and metaphysical. We are, according to this system, to do always what Duty requires, for no other reason than that Duty does require it." See Taylor, p. 110, n. 7 above.

moral worth at all. What he opposes is the idea that the moral value of an action lies in the “consequences” (GMS 416/43), “results” (GMS 402/18), “purposes to be attained” (GMS 400/13), “the effect hoped for from the action” (GMS 400/14), or the “ends which can be brought about by such an action (GMS 400/14). By bearing in mind the distinction made by Kant between subjective, producible ends and an objective, self-existent end,²⁹ it is obvious that it is only the former that are rejected by Kant here. Duties should by no means be performed for the sake of bringing about some subjective ends.

Nonetheless, this does not imply that duties should be performed in view of nothing, as Sir David Ross suggests: “Clearly we must not, as Kant does, choose between describing a good action as done from duty and as done with a purpose; a true account of the moral act must include both elements. . . . Kant must be wrong, then, in saying that we should act from a principle and not from a purpose.”³⁰ Surely “purposes” should be excluded from duties, if we stick to the Kantian usage of the term “purpose” (*die Absicht*), which is regarded as a subjective and arbitrary producible end of our inclination. However, this by no means implies that a duty is performed for the sake of nothing. In the previous section I have already tried to show that, according to Kant, the Categorical Imperative enjoins us to observe our duties because they either exhibit respect or contribute to the promotion of the objective self-existent end—rational nature. Therefore we can interpret Kant in this way and say that in performing our duties, we should perform them for the sake of rational nature or humanity. In other words, “duty for the sake of humanity,” rather than duty for duty’s sake, is the real Kantian view of duty.³¹

In addition to these clarifications, let us now go to the moral teleology of Kant as contained in his other works. Anyone who has some knowledge of Kantian philosophy in every important aspect will not find

29. Cf. pp. 185–86 above.

30. Sir David Ross, *Kant’s Ethical Theory: A Commentary on the Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), pp. 20, 22.

31. Kant never says anything like “performing a duty for duty’s own sake” in the *Groundwork*. In chap. 1 he only reiterates that we should perform an action from (the sense of) duty (*eine Handlung aus Pflicht zu tun*). It is Hegel who carelessly interprets this view of Kant as “duty should be done for duty’s sake” (“*soll die Pflicht um der Pflicht willen getan werden*”); “I should do my duty for duty’s sake” (“*Die Pflicht soll ich um ihrer selbst willen tun*”); “duty is to be willed simply for duty’s sake and not for the sake of some content” (“*die Pflicht, welche nur als solche, nicht um eines Inhalts willen, gewollt werden soll*”) and then attacks this view as an empty preaching. As a matter of fact, in the first chapter of the *Groundwork*, Kant is talking about the motive of performing a duty, whereas Hegel misinterprets it to mean the end in view of which a duty is performed. See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, pars. 133–35 and their additions, pp. 89–90, 253–54. It is a pity that in H. J. Paton’s translation of the *Grundlegung*, “*aus Pflicht*” is translated differently in different passages as “for the sake of duty,” “from the motive of duty,” and “from duty.” L. W. Beck translates it consistently as “from duty,” which is better in this case. In light of this interpretation, Taylor’s view that, according to Kant, duty is a kind of “Duty in the abstract” and “it is not a duty to anyone” seems to me to be mistaken again. Duty for the sake of humanity is a duty to everyone! See Taylor, *good and evil*, p. 110, n. 7 above.

teleology essentially incompatible with Kantianism. This is because the second half of the third *Critique*, the *Critique of Judgement*, is completely devoted to establishing Kant's own teleological framework. Three distinct kinds of teleology are employed in this book: the organic teleology in nature, the physical teleology of the world, and the moral teleology of the universe. It is the third kind of teleology that interests us here. In section 84, "Of the ultimate end of the existence of a world, i.e., of creation itself," Kant declares, "Now of man (and so of every rational creature in the world as a moral being it can no longer be asked: why (*quem in finem*) he exists? His existence involves the highest end to which, as far as is in his power, he can subject the whole of nature; . . . man is the ultimate end of creation."³² Once again Kant tells us that man is a self-existent end in himself. He is not only the objective end of human conduct, as it is said in the *Groundwork* and *The Doctrine of Virtue*, but also the ultimate end of the whole creation. The precise reason for this, again, is said to lie in his capability of unconditional moral self-legislation.³³

Again, in his various writings on history, the assumption of such a moral teleology is more than obvious. It has already been succinctly epitomized in his last lecture on ethics in his earlier years (1775–81): "The ultimate destiny of the human race is the greatest moral perfection, provided that it is achieved through human freedom. . . . The universal end of mankind is the highest moral perfection."³⁴

So I think my teleological interpretation of Kantian ethics is not only logically consistent with his *Weltanschauung* but is in fact quite harmonious with it. This is another reason why I think understanding Kantian ethics through CI.2 is really very important.

V

After such a long exposition and clarification, I would like to point out that the Kantian moral law has both a formal and a material aspect. This is stated explicitly by Kant himself in the *Groundwork* after integrating CI.1 and CI.2 into CI.3. He says that CI.1 is the form of the moral law which concerns its universality, CI.2 is the *matter* of it which concerns its *end*, whereas CI.3 is the "determination" of combination of these two (GMS 436/80). Those philosophers who keep on charging Kantian ethics with "empty formalism" only pay attention to CI.1 and brush aside CI.2 and CI.3 as though they were unworthy of consideration.³⁵ This is com-

32. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* trans. J. H. Bernard, 2d ed. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1914), pp. 360–61. This theme is reiterated again and again in this and the following sections. Bernard translates "*Endzweck*" as "final purpose." Yet in order to distinguish between "*Zweck*" and "*Absicht*," which is crucial, I change it to "the ultimate end."

33. *Ibid.*, p. 361.

34. Kant, "The Ultimate Destiny of the Human Race," in *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 252, see n. 17 above.

35. A. R. C. Duncan, though defending rather than attacking Kant, even put forward a strange theory to dismiss CI.2 and CI.3. He thinks that they were taken from Christian

pletely un-Kantian because CI.2 is straightforwardly formulated in the *Groundwork* and is carefully applied in *The Doctrine of Virtue*. It seems clear to me that CI.2 is a practicable criterion for determining moral rightness or wrongness of our actions, and is by no means barren.³⁶ In the *Philosophy of Right*, again, Hegel tries to teach his predecessor fundamental moral reasoning, after charging that his universalizability principle is empty, for “a contradiction must be a contradiction of something, i.e. of some content presupposed from the start as a fixed principle.”³⁷ Alas, it is exactly this kind of contradiction that is provided by CI.2. He is so careless in understanding his predecessor that he does not even know that Kant completely agrees with his statement that “every action explicitly calls for a particular content and a specific end.”³⁸ It is also due to this fundamental blunder of neglecting CI.2 that he tries to teach his predecessor that duty is “for the sake of some content”³⁹ instead of for the sake of the abstract concept of “duty” itself, without realizing that his predecessor is an advocate of duty for the sake of humanity.

Richard Taylor seems to me clearly to have committed the same mistake of neglecting CI.2. Therefore it is to be regretted, indeed, that he has described the Kantian Categorical Imperative in the following way: “And unlike what one would ordinarily think of as a command, this one has no definite content. It is simply the form, Kant says, not of any actual laws, but of The Law, which is again, of course, something abstract. It has, unlike any other imperative of which one has ever heard, no purpose or end. . . . This imperative does not, in fact, bid us to do anything at all.”⁴⁰

It is indeed a pity that very few philosophers take the *Doctrine of Virtue* seriously. It is in this book alone that the Moral Law, which is valid for both divine beings and human beings, is systematically applied to the particular nature of man. Specific duties are thus generated. The content of the Moral Law and its definite implications to human conduct are thereby manifestly disclosed. The nature of CI.2 is also explicated. If Hegel and Taylor had had a scan of this work, they would never have made, I believe, the above remarks at all.

Having pointed out the role played by critics in the misinterpretation of Kantian ethics, I have to admit that Kant himself also contributes to this misunderstanding. First of all, he thinks that the three formulations of the Categorical Imperative are “at bottom the same” (GMS 437/82).

Garve's translation and commentary on Cicero's *De Officiis* and they mistakenly led Kant to deviate from his main theme of providing a definition of what morality is. See Duncan, chap. 11, esp. pp. 174–79, n. 5 above.

36. Even with regard to CI.1 itself, the accusations of emptiness and barrenness are still far from indisputable. Onora Nell has argued a strong case against this. See Nell, chaps. 4–5, n. 6 above.

37. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, par. 135, p. 90.

38. *Ibid.*, par. 134, p. 89.

39. *Ibid.*, par. 135, p. 90.

40. Taylor, p. 112.

The only difference between them is "subjectively rather than objectively practical" (GMS 436/79). I cannot see how this is so.⁴¹ And then he goes on to advise us better to employ CI.1 in general moral-judgment making, and CI.2 is thus ignored (GMS 436-37/80-81). Furthermore, in the first chapter of the *Groundwork* he uses CI.1 instead of CI.2 as the moral law out of reverence for which a duty should be performed, and this has led people to accept the Hegelian interpretation of his view of duty. But I cannot see any reason to stick to CI.1 exclusively, a policy which Kant himself abandoned in the *Doctrine of Virtue*. Second, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, an ethical treatise which is supposed by many to be as important as the *Groundwork*, Kant mentions only CI.1 as the "Fundamental Law of Pure Practical Reason."⁴² He does not tell us that CI.2 is also a formulation of the Moral Law, but only mentions it briefly elsewhere without special emphasis.⁴³ Third, in a notorious essay which was published in the same year as the *Metaphysic of Morals* ("On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives"),⁴⁴ Kant insists on the strict impermissibility of lying, and does so by adhering rigidly to CI.1. It seems to me and to some others that in that unusual case, lying can be justified by appealing to CI.2. Nevertheless Kant does not consider that alternative, and the label of "rigid formalism" thus unfortunately becomes inseparable from his moral philosophy.

VI

To conclude, I would like to point out that my aim is only to attempt to show the true Kantian theory of obligation, but not to argue that it is the true theory of obligation in moral philosophy. I have defended his view somewhat, but only in the form of explication and clarification. In order to make this Kantian theory *the* true ethical theory, one still has to meet the following challenges.

First of all, is Kant's justification of CI.2 unassailable? On what ground are we entitled to say that human beings are capable of moral autonomy, inner freedom, self-mastery, and transcending the mechanical, deterministic universe? Is such a view true even in light of today's knowledge in other fields? Even if it is true for normal adults, is it true for small children and idiots? Moreover, one may ask, Why is such an ability so valuable? Has Kant been limited by his age in seeing such an ability constitute the "dignity and sublimity" of man? No doubt, one might say, human beings deserve respect and love. However, is it simply because they

41. H. J. Paton rightly argues that CI.1 is only equivalent to the negative side of CI.2. The positive command of promoting the self-existent end is not even hinted at in CI.1. See H. J. Paton, *The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 177-78.

42. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 30.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 90, 114, 136.

44. Immanuel Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives," in *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings*, pp. 346-50.

are sentient beings, or because of some other reasons other than that they are rational beings who are capable of moral autonomy?

Second, only a limited number of duties have been derived in the *Doctrine of Virtue*. Can other important duties that our moral intuition recognizes as indispensable—for example, duty of justice, duty of promise keeping, duty of obeying law, duty of gratitude, and so on—be derived from CI.2 too? If some of them cannot be derived from it, then CI.2 alone will not be a sufficient criterion for human conduct. Furthermore, can it be demonstrated that by appealing to CI.2, many contemporary moral problems can be satisfactorily solved, so that the “fertility” of CI.2 can be confirmed?

Third, even with regard to the duties derived in that work, are the derivations flawless? Kant has assumed that moral perfection is the proper end for one to promote for oneself, so that actions which have not taken this as the ultimate end are condemned as treating one’s personhood as merely a means to the satisfaction of the inclinations. Is this assumption justified?

Fourth, according to Kant’s built-in principle, all the perfect duties should have priority over the imperfect ones. On the one hand, we have to notice that in holding this Kant is not as rigoristic as one supposes. After each discussion on the perfect duties to oneself in the *Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant brings in a section of “Casuistical Question,” “in which he raises queries about possible exceptions to moral rules. He does not give us answers since the answers must be left to the judgment of the individual; but the questions themselves could hardly have been raised at all if Kant had been quite so rigorous as he is commonly supposed to be.”⁴⁵ On the other hand, however, if Kant would allow certain reasonable exceptions in perfect duties (e.g., to commit suicide in order to save one’s country),⁴⁶ how could he qualify these negative moral precepts so that they might not become merely rules of thumb?

Last, even after the negative moral rules have been suitably qualified, is it morally sensible to hold that they should be abided by unconditionally, irrespective of all kinds of possible consequences? Suppose there is a certain action—say, holding an innocent person in slavery—which would be maintained by Kant as impermissible without exception. This is because the action itself violates the respect which is due to that person. However, suppose in doing that action in a certain situation a large amount of good can be produced or a huge disaster can be avoided, say, a hundred lives can be saved. If so, should Kant make certain consequentialist concessions and allow the breaking of the nonconsequentialist precept against holding an innocent person in slavery?

45. Kant, *Doctrine of Virtue*. See Paton’s foreword, p. xii.

46. This is because in such a case it is neither manipulating oneself merely as a means for the satisfaction of one’s inclination, nor is it an arbitrary disrespect to the intrinsic value of one’s humanity.

To present answers and arguments in defending Kant against these challenges is a work much more than a mere exposition of what Kant has actually said. It is a reconstruction of Kantian moral philosophy, which is beyond both the scope of this paper and my present ability. For those who are interested in this, I would gladly recommend them to read Alan Donagan's *The Theory of Morality*, to which I have frequently referred throughout this paper.