

KANT’S DIFFERENT BUT SIMILAR WARNINGS ABOUT NOT ALLOWING EXPERIENCE TO BE TAKEN AS A BASIS OF MORALITY

A. (Section 1, 65-66): although ordinary moral judgment is in some ways more reliable than philosophical theories of morality, at the same time it can be “seduced” by the pull of inclination, which tempts us to rationalize, that is to convince ourselves that something which is in accord with inclination but against duty is actually in accord with duty. We are tempted to let or make ourselves think that what duty requires is consistent with our inclinations.

So we have to avoid this moral error by stepping into “practical philosophy” or “metaphysics,” which tells us the true foundation of morality, so we do not get confused in the ways just mentioned.

B. (Section 2, 67-68): We can not draw morality from experience, in that we cannot be sure that any specific example of someone acting in accordance with duty involves acting *from* duty. We may look inside ourselves and not be able to see any specific motive *other than* (sense of) duty. But even then we cannot be sure there is not some “secret impulse of self-love” at work.

C. (Section 2, 69): We cannot avoid giving final moral authority to our own reason by looking to “moral exemplars,” that is, persons who appear to be exemplifying a morally good life or action. Even Jesus Christ must be compared to our own ideal of morality in reason in order to know that he is a moral exemplar.

Kant goes in a similar direction with all three of these observations—that morality cannot have anything empirical in it but must be based on pure (practical) reason.

Kant thinks the following 4 things. But what is the relationship between them:

1. It is the purity of morality’s origin (i.e. having nothing empirical in it) that makes it worthy to serve as the supreme practical principle (72).
2. Morality is grounded only in purely rational concepts.
3. Morality applies to human beings solely in virtue of their rationality, and not their specifically *human* nature (stated often, but see 70, bottom).
4. Morality is applicable to all rational beings, not only human beings. That is, all rational beings are governed by the demands of morality.

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IMPERATIVES

Objective moral principles, applicable to all rational beings, are expressed as imperatives (using “ought,” but idea of imperative involves sense of a command: a command of reason)

A. **Hypothetical** (“You must do X in order to achieve goal/end A.”)

1. “rules of skill” (75, 77): If you will the end, you will the necessary means to achieve that end.

2. “counsels of prudence” (75-76, 77-78): as a rational but dependent being, human beings necessarily seek happiness. But happiness is too indeterminate an end for there to be a definite means to it. So principles relating particular ends to be sought in action to happiness can not be more than “counsels” based on experience that such ends have some probability of giving us happiness.

Both 1 and 2 are “analytic”—if you will an end, then you necessarily will the only means to it is simply part of what it means to “will an end.”

B. **Categorical**: the imperative is necessary of itself, not dependent on any end you might have. How are these possible? Kant will explain!