

# TRANSCENDENTALISM, NOMICITY AND MODAL THOUGHT

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**ABSTRACT:** The main purpose of this paper is to show that Kant's transcendental philosophy is tacitly laden with the structures of modern modal thought. More exactly, the surprising parallelism which seems to exist between Kant's manner of defining *necessity* (and, on this basis, *nomicity*) and the modern approaches of the same concepts in the frame of "possible worlds philosophy" is stressed. A new interpretation of the Categorical Imperative is also offered on this basis.

**Keywords:** Transcendentalism, Kant, Nomicity, categorical imperative.

The main purpose of this paper is to show that Kant's transcendental philosophy is tacitly laden with the structures of modern modal thought. More exactly, I shall stress the surprising parallelism which seems to exist between Kant's manner of defining *necessity* (and, on this basis, *nomicity*) and the modern approaches of the same concepts in the frame of "possible worlds philosophy".

The nomicity theme is one of the *central* topics in Kant's *Critiques*. The main aim of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to explain the nature of "necessary universal knowledge" (i.e. nomic knowledge) as it is represented not only by metaphysical principles but also by physical laws: the conservation law, the inertia law, the equality of action and reaction law, etc. (1, p. 34, 36); all these examples are instances of "synthetic a priori judgements". How are these judgments possible? -this is the "proper problem of pure reason". Moreover, the very "existence or downfall of Metaphysics" depends on solving such a problem (1, p. 35). In this respect, the main purpose of the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* is to "establish the supreme principle of morality", the "moral law" (2, p. 8). The whole effort in the *Foundations* and *The Critique of Practical Reason* is devoted to finding an answer to the question: how is the categorical imperative possible, i.e. how are synthetic a priori practical judgments possible? (3, p. 105). So Kant's natural and practical philosophy seem to be unitary from this point of view.

I propose here to consider the Kantian "a priori synthesis" as a tentative to *define* the objective necessity of the nomic statements (how are the synthetic a priori judgments *conceptually* possible?). This is not the same thing as giving identification criteria for necessary statements -just as the nowadays set-theoretical definition of "physical necessity" is not useful for identifying physical laws (and just as the

Aristotelian-Tarskian definition of truth is not useful for identifying true statements).

### Hume's Challenge

The central place played by the problem of (natural and practical) objective necessity in Kant's works was determined by Hume's challenge. In Kant's opinion Hume was the philosopher who came "the nearest of all to this (central) problem of Metaphysics" (i.e. the nomicity problem), by offering it a negative answer: it is absolutely impossible to have a priori synthetic judgments (1, p. 35).

The criticism addressed by Hume to the traditional metaphysics had as a first consequence the *dissolution of nomicity*: the "objective necessary connection" between two events became an illusion. There is only a "subjective necessity" given by mind's habits. But this is only an "apparent necessity": "he (i.e. Hume) did not wish, admittedly, anything else than to establish a subjective meaning of necessity in the concept of cause, not an objective one, and this is habit". But, Kant adds, "such an empiricism is hardly tenable in our philosophical and critical century" (4, p. 99, 90).

Hume's thesis may be formulated as follows: the sentence expressing "natural laws" *may be explained without any appeal to the concept of objective natural (physical) necessity*. (A parallel subjectivistic approach is present in his conception of moral judgments).

The criticisms addressed to Hume aimed at *rehabilitating the idea of objective natural (physical) necessity* in the process of explaining nomicity. Kant was the main representative of this current<sup>1</sup>.

Kant's distinction between (universal) "judgments of perception" and "judgments of experience" is parallel to the modern epistemological distinction between "universals per accident" and "nomic universals". The latter are not only *universal*, but also *necessary* truths<sup>2</sup>. The "judgments of perception" contingently connect perceptual terms, having only a "subjective validity"; they may be particular or universal (for the later case, e.g. "The sugar is sweet" i.e.  $\forall x (x \text{ is sugar} \rightarrow x \text{ is sweet})$ ). In contrast, the "judgments of experience" have an *objective* necessity; they have a "necessary and universal validity" (5, p. 110). They are "empirical laws of nature" as, for example, the Newtonian laws (5, p. 95-97, 119), having as a general form the structure of a (necessary) causal conditional. The problem of Kant is then: how are the "judgments of experience" possible? What is the meaning of their *objective necessity*? Are they *logically* -necessary? Of course not -because their negation is not self-contradictory. So they are *synthetic* (non-analytic) and still *necessary*, i.e. *a priori*<sup>3</sup>. But how is this fact conceivable?

### Necessity and Possible Worlds

The contemporary semantic approach of modal concepts is wellknown. I shall not enter in the vast and intricate debates on this topic. I'll dogmatically propose a

particular approach, saying that Kant's thinking is, perhaps, more similar to a *conceptualist* interpretation of worlds and a *de dicto* interpretation of modality.

Possible worlds are counterfactual situations *stipulated* by the mind, not observed somewhere. They form a conceptual universe which transgresses all possible experience (see the limit-concept of "all possible worlds"), somehow very similar to Kant's Ideas. They are "supposed" by our reason as a methodological instrument of solving problems (e.g. of understanding probability, of clarifying modal concepts, causality etc.).

D. Lewis uses, instead of the customary "accessibility relations", the equivalent notion of *sphere of accessibility* around the actual world  $w_0$  and considers various examples of accessibility spheres for various sorts of necessity (6, p. 7-8). Corresponding to *logical necessity* the sphere is formed from the set of *all* possible worlds without restriction. Corresponding to *physical necessity* we assign to each world  $w_0$  as its sphere of accessibility the set  $W$  of all worlds where the laws of nature prevailing at  $w_0$  hold. Corresponding to *deontic* (or *moral*) *necessity* we assign to each  $w_0$  as its sphere of accessibility the set of all morally perfect worlds (i.e. the worlds in which all obligations are fulfilled). A morally imperfect world such as ours does not belong to its own sphere of accessibility.

On this basis Lewis defines various concepts of "necessity": in a general way,  $\Box p$  is true at  $w_0$  iff  $p$  is true in *all* the worlds belonging to the sphere around  $w_0$ . Of course, to use this concept of necessity for defining nomicity would be a vicious circle. We'll see if Kant avoids such a difficulty.

### The Modal Sense of Transcendentalism

Kant's arguments for *physical and practical necessity* are parallel. I shall not insist on physical necessity here. As concerns practical necessity or *Sollen* or *Obligation* ("Obligation is the necessity of a free action" -*Metaphysics of Morals*, Introduction IV), the effort of Kant is directed towards distinguishing between "empirical maxims" and "moral laws", the latter having an "objective necessity which must be a priori recognized". Kant is somehow ambiguous on this point, because he speaks of "moral laws" in the case of human (imperfect) agents (i.e. the "categorical imperative") as well as of "moral laws" of an ideal agent (or a "perfectly good will", a "saint will" etc.) which are not imperatives, but *descriptive* statements, the first being a "representation" of the second (2, p. 30-32). Of course we'll discuss here the laws in the first sense (the "oughtness") and we'll see what's the role played by the laws in the second sense in the whole discussion.

But this *necessity* of the "categorical imperatives" cannot be understood as relative only to the *actual* world, to *our* moral world:

It is evident that it is of the greatest necessity in a theoretical point of view (...) to derive the concepts and laws of morals from pure reason and to present them pure and unmixed and to determine the scope of this entire practical but pure rational knowledge without making the principles depend upon the particular nature of human reason as speculative philosophy may permit and sometimes find necessary. But since moral laws should hold for every rational being as such, the principles must be derived from the universal concept of a rational being generally (2, p. 28).

The empiricist intention was to define such concepts by using only empirical notions borrowed from the domain of the *actual*. The anti-empiricist propensity of transcendentalism consisted in evading into a universe of *possible non-actual worlds* which "transcend any experience". This is the reason why Kant introduces a set of queer notions such as "pure will", "absolute good will", "empirical will", "intelligible world", "the kingdom of purposes" etc. aiming finally at an adequate "definition of the objectivity and universality of moral truth" (Paton).

The source of an empirical maxim like "I do action X for the purpose of being happy (i.e. for satisfying my needs Y)" is reason *and* inclinations. This maxim is a "subjective principle of the will" belonging to concrete subjects, conditions Y being variable from person to person. This maxim may be conceived as *general* i.e. applicable in different circumstances and by different person. But this "validity for all" -says Kant- is not yet "necessity": suppose that all human persons have the same needs Y; this is the case of the "imperatives of prudence" and in such a case we shall still have only a universality per accidens, because in such a case the determinant principle of the will is still an empirical one. The "imperative of happiness" is Kant's example of a "contingent universal":

(HI) To be happy (to be able to satisfy your needs Y during the whole span of life) you ought to do X.

Here conditions Y are variable: "In what consists ones happiness depends on the diversity of needs" (4, p. 112). But even if Y were "the same for all", even if all people in  $w_0$  conceive their own happiness in the same way, we' ll have only a "contingent unanimity" (4, p. 113), a contingent universality, analogous to the empirical generalizations from natural philosophy and not a *necessary* law, because the determinant principle of the will is, in this case, contingent:

(HIU) To be happy (to be able to satisfy your needs Y -which *happen to be* the same for every *human* being-) you ought to do X.

Such a hypothetical imperative is valid for every human being given only that *facts are such as they are* (i.e. that *it happens* that all people have the same needs and X is, in the circumstances, the only available means to Y); (HIU) is defined (and definable) only relative to  $w_0$ . The reason for doing X lies in its causal connection with the desired end Y. The *oughtness* is here *contingent* upon the desire. But "practical laws must be known through reason and *a priori*, not through experience -no matter how empirically universal is it" (4, p. 112). To be *objectively necessary* the imperative "must include in all cases and for any rational being (not only for *human* beings -V.M.) the same determinant principle of the will", i.e. the law itself, not an external motive (4, p. 112). The above happiness principle could become a "universal practical law" only if it were true not only if circumstances Y happen to be such as they are in  $w_0$ , but *no matter how they could be* (2, p. 24-25).

To define this "objective necessity" Kant introduces the already mentioned strange concepts of "free will", "pure will", "holly will", "intelligible world" etc. These are Ideas of reason, limit-concepts: "The concept of a world of understanding is only a

*standpoint* which reason sees itself forced to take outside of appearances, in order to think of itself as practical" (2, p. 78). Their stipulation is made necessary by the need to speak about moral *laws* <sup>4</sup>. But man is not a pure will, he only asymptotically tends to such a hypostasis. This ideal "order and legislation" i.e. "the whole rational beings as things in themselves" (2, p. 78), the world of "all pure wills" (2, p. 73) is called the "intelligible world" -a Kantian Idea representing *the analogue of the accessibility sphere around human moral world*. It represents a set of perfect moral worlds, i.e. worlds ( $w_i$ ) in which all that *ought* to be (in  $w_0$ ) *is* effectively (in  $w_i$ ), in accordance with the mechanism described by the Categorical Imperative (CI): "As a mere member of the intelligible world all my actions would completely accord with the principle of the autonomy of the pure will" (2, p. 72). The set of all possible rational beings is governed by the principle of the autonomy of the will called also "the principle of the causality through liberty" (4, p. 136). Using this set of concepts we can define now the *Sollen* (or the "practical necessity" or " $\square_{pr.}$ " or "the obligation" or the "oughtness"):

- (D) *You ought to do X* is true in  $w_0$  (our moral imperfect world) if "intentionally doing X" is true for *every* member of the "intelligible world" ( $\forall w_i \in W$ ) i.e. in every perfect moral world.

In other words, X is practically-necessary in  $w_0$  if the action described by the maxim X is intentionally fulfilled by *every* rational being belonging to the "intelligible world" i.e. to the set of all rational beings whose pure wills are governed by the "principle of causality through liberty"<sup>5</sup>. An empirical maxim may become a moral *law* only if it can be so consistently universalized. We can see now the difference between the two senses of moral law mentioned above: Kant is discussing in fact the concept of moral law for a *human* agent (i.e. the concept of a "categorical imperative in  $w_0$ ) and the "practical necessity" defined in (D) is a modal characteristic of such a law -"You ought to do X". The so called "laws" of the pure will ( $w_i$ ) are not *oughts*, but true *descriptions* of such actions, X, which are prefixed by an *ought* only in  $w_0$ . The whole domain  $W$ ,  $w_0 \notin W$  (i.e. "the intelligible world") is governed by the "principle of the autonomy of the will" or "the principle of causality through liberty" or "the principle of the categorical imperative".

Although what I propose here is a "rational reconstruction" of Kant' doctrine of practical nomicity, my approach seems to me very near to some other interpretations more akin to Kant's text. For example, H. Allison's interpretation of this point runs as follows: "The nerve of this argument lies in the complex claim that since the intelligible world is (in general) the ground of the sensible world and its laws and since the will as member of the intelligible world is subject to its laws, it (the will) must also be conceived as a ground of the sensible world and its laws. From this it supposedly follows that sensibly affected and therefore phenomenal beings such as ourselves who are likewise conscious of possessing a will experience the law stemming from this noumenal will as an unconditional command, that is, a categorical imperative addressed to them in their phenomenal nature. As Kant summarily puts it at the conclusion of this segment of his analysis:

The moral 'I ought' is thus an 'I will' for man as a member of the intelligible world; and it is conceived by him as an 'I ought' only insofar as he considers himself at the same time to be a member of the sensible world (Gr. 4: 455, 123) (11, p. 225).

### Normative and Descriptive Practical Laws

I must remember at this point that Kant's Categorical Imperative was usually interpreted as a *regulative* principle, as a "guide" to action. There are also *descriptive* interpretations of it -as an "explicative principle" of pure practical reason's internal mechanisms. A.R.C.Duncan, for example, believes that CI "represents a *descriptive* proposition stating the truth which gives the explanation of a thing's working" -in this case, the explanation of the working of the pure moral will.

The dispute between the "traditional interpretation" (Schopenhauer, Mill, Bradley, Ross, etc.) and the "critical interpretation" (Duncan, Field, Broad etc.) of the Categorical Imperative may be settled by recognizing that the principle of the autonomy of the will has both a descriptive and a normative form. Let begin with the *descriptive* aspect.

In his second *Critique* (Chap. One, I) Kant considers that the so-called "supersensible nature" (i.e.  $W, w_0 \notin W$ ) "is nothing more than a nature under the autonomy of pure practical reason" and "the law of this autonomy is the moral law", i.e. the unique "principle of a supersensible nature and of the world of pure reason". But -Kant stresses- this law is *not* the empirical (normative) guide, the "compass" of action, but something "a priori and independent of empirical principles"; it does not involve "the knowledge of the nature of objects which can be presented to reason from outside", but "a knowledge (...) such that pure reason can be considered as a faculty which immediately determines the will". This "supreme principle of practical reason" is given as a "fact of pure reason which is apodictically certain and of which we are a priori conscious" even if no empirical application of it can be found. This is a "causality law governing the intelligible world", a law of "causality through liberty"; the causality mentioned here is an "atemporal" one, a noumenal one, it is the causality of reason which "directly determines the will" by its pure laws without any empirical interference. This Kantian distinction between a natural causal order and a noumenal atemporal causality is still a subject of dispute in which I shall not enter here. For the purpose of this discussion it seems clear that the Principle of Morality must have a descriptive form because, as O'Neill stresses, "The will of a non-finite rational being would not be 'exposed to subjective limitations and obstacles'; for such a will nothing could count as an imperative or as an obligation, and morality would be redundant" (10, p. 71). The form of this principle could be:

(DCI) For every fully rational being (for every inhabitant of the intelligible world) "I will is already of itself *necessarily* in harmony with the law" (2, II, 15).

What such a principle *describe*? It describes the mechanism of the pure moral will, "the element that is common to every action that has moral worth", the functioning of

*the moral motive*" (3, p. 86). It is the analogue of the principle of natural causality which governs the "sensible world"<sup>6</sup>. The "necessity" here is not practical necessity (oughtness), but *noumenal necessity*, which looks very similar in the approach of some commentators to logical necessity (see 11, p. 48).

As can be seen, (DCI) is tacitly contained in the definiens of (D). So, we can say that the concept of practical necessity (the oughtness) is defined (in  $w_0$ ) by using the *descriptive* principle of CI and that is why saying that a "moral law" (in the *normative* sense of the "categorical imperative") is a special sentence prefixed by  $\square_{pr.}$ , is not a vicious circle: it does not presuppose the same (normative) concept of "law", but the concept of law in a *descriptive* form.

Now Kant's question "How is a categorical imperative possible?" refers to the *constraint of an imperfect will* by a categorical "ought", by a law in the normative sense of the word. What we have to explain is how the moral law *obligates*? I shall explain this in four steps:

1) The imperfect rational beings belong both to the sensible and to the intelligible world, although they *know* themselves only as members of the sensible world (and *presuppose* themselves as members of the intelligible world).

2) If one adopts only the standpoint of the sensible world, the rational imperfect being exists only as an object governed by natural laws.

3) If one adopts only the standpoint of the intelligible world, then *if* the rational imperfect being *were* (although he *is not*) an inhabitant of the intelligible world, then all his actions *would be* conformable to the Categorical Imperative, i.e. to the "law of causality through liberty", tacitly contained in the Idea of freedom.

4) Given that the sensible world is a *phenomenal manifestation of the intelligible world* (which represents its foundation) and given that imperfect rational beings belong to both worlds, the *intelligible will* must be conceived as the ground of the *sensible will* in the sense of the relation noumenon -phenomenon<sup>7</sup>. A sensible will (a human will) will consider the laws of the intelligible world as obligatory for it, i.e. as *imperatives*, and the corresponding actions as *duties*. The laws of the intelligible world are the "*ground*" (the "*principle*") of the "laws" proper to the sensible domain, i.e. the concrete categorical imperatives<sup>8</sup>. The synthetic *a priori* Categorical Imperative is:

(NCI) A partially good will is (*characterially*) *constrained* ("ought") to choose only actions which are the empirical counterparts of the noumenal actions which,,would it be a perfect will, were conformable to the principle of the autonomy of the will.

Or, in Kant's condensed formulation:

(KCI) "Always act according to that maxim whose universality as a law can at the same time will" (2, p. 55).

The distinction and connection between these two forms of the Categorical Imperative, (DCI) and (NCI), is made clear by Kant himself: "For a being who is not governed only

by reason (i.e. for a being belonging to  $w_0$ , for a *human* being -V.M.), the practical rule which determines the will is an imperative, an *ought*"; this *ought* "means that if reason would completely determine the will (the case of "pure wills" in the "intelligible world" -V.M.), the action should take place according to that rule" (4, p. 106). It is easy to see how the (KCI) is a kind of paraphrase of definition (D), more exactly a sublimation of the *definition* into a *criterion* of right/wrong empirical actions. This sublimation seems to be a misleading one (and from here all the difficulties of applying to concrete cases Kant's "compass").

It is time now to explain why I used in (D) the expression "*intentionally* doing X" and in (NCI) "characterially constrained". For this purpose I'll refer to Bernard Williams' considerations in (7, p. 11-12) and (8, cap. 10) where "practical necessity" is seen as a "deliberative modality": i.e. statements containing it express the agent's intentions and does not merely report facts about his actions. Because it is evident that "N ought to do X" has no predictive implications about what N will in fact do: he is obviously able to do something else. But he is although restricted by certain "incapacity" -that of not doing X *intentionally*. It's an "incapacity of character", not an instrumental one. So, the alternative worlds,  $w_i$ , can be worlds in which X is *not* performed -but only *unintentionally*. So, what we *simply* can do sets the limits to deliberation; but what we *morally* can do (within these limits) reveals our character.

I shall say in the end that my rational reconstruction of the Categorical Imperative looks, in its simplest form, like this:

(MIC)  $O\alpha$  is true in  $w_0$  if and only if  $\alpha$  is true in every  $w_i \in W$  where  $O\alpha$  is a moral law in  $w_0$  and  $\alpha$  in the definiens is the "noumenal law" of a perfectly rational being. In other words:

(MCI')  $O\alpha$  is true in  $w_0$  iff  $\alpha$  is true in the whole accessibility sphere,  $W$ , of  $w_0$  (although it is possible that  $\alpha$  is never true in  $w_0$  because  $w_0 \notin W$ ).

(MCI') says that you *ought* to do (as an empirical agent in  $w_0$ ) only those actions (even if you never do them in  $w_0$ ) which have a form which is valuable for every perfectly rational being, human or non-human.

### Some Consequences

If we accept such an interpretation, a number of obscure points of Kant's text become transparent:

(i) The critics observed that Kant says, on the one hand, that the CI applies to concrete (empirical) actions as a criterion of good actions (see the four applications given by Kant himself in (2, p. 39-41)) and, on the other hand, that CI is contained in the (completely non-empirical) Idea of liberty or "autonomy of the will", that it governs the intelligible world and that as such it cannot be empirically applied<sup>9</sup>.

This contradiction disappears if we distinguish between the two interpretations of CI, the *descriptive* and the *normative* one. The Idea of liberty and the descriptive principle of CI (or "the principle of causality through liberty") really applies



"constitutively" to the "intelligible world", but not to the empirical one ( $w_0$  does not belong to its own sphere of accessibility,  $W$ ). On the other hand, "CI formula" (the *Sollen*) normatively applies to  $w_0$ : it is the prescriptive reformulation of the descriptive principle, capturing the idea of "legality in general".

The critics of Kant's theory agree that the "formula" of CI failed to offer an adequate criterion of moral good (e.g. G.C. Field). Is this practical failure a consequence of a subjacent definitional failure? I think that the failure derives from Kant's error to mix up the "definition" and the "practical criterion". The definition of "practical necessity" is not a criterion of application: it helps us to *understand* necessity, not to *verify* necessity<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, a descriptive principle, even if considered as a certain truth, does not simply imply a normative principle<sup>11</sup>.

(ii) Kant defines the "objective practical laws" in a strange way:

In the practical philosophy it is not a question of assuming grounds for what happens but of assuming laws of what ought to happen *even though it may never happen* -that is to say, objective, practical laws (2, p. 44-45).

But what the underlined counterintuitive sentence means? Laws which never happen? Our definition illuminates this obscurity too:

(MCI")  $\square_{pr.} X$  in  $w_0$  iff  $X$  is fulfilled everywhere in the sphere of accessibility ( $W$ ) of  $w_0$  (although it is possible that  $X$  is never fulfilled in  $w_0$  because  $w_0 \notin W$ )

So, *you ought to do X* is a truth, a "moral law", not in the sense that all people *actually* do  $X$ , but in the sense that, *even if no people are doing X*, the sentence "you ought to do  $X$ " is true in the sense that  $X$  *would be done* in all circumstances in which people had complete (rational) control upon their inclinations. As we can see, the (practical) nomic judgments imply such counterfactual statements -a situation which represents their distinctive characteristic, in some philosophers' opinion.

## Notes

- 1 "To extract *necessity* from empirical principle (as Hume did) is an evident self-contradiction. To substitute subjective necessity i.e. mental habit, to *objective necessity* which belongs only to *a priori* statements, is to deny reason's power to judge the object, i.e. to know it". "Empiricism is based on a *sensed* necessity; rationalism on a *conceptual* one" (4, p. 98, 99).
- 2 Nomicity is also called by Kant "objective validity" or "necessary universality" (5,p. 95,96).
- 3 "Any knowledge which pretends to be *a priori* is, by this fact itself, stated as *necessary*" (5, p. 73).
- 4 Here I am in agreement with O'Neill's *methodological* interpretation of the "two standpoints": "The two standpoints are to be thought of not as ontologically distinct realms between which human agents must switch, but as distinct, indispensable, yet mutually irreducible *frameworks of thought*." (10, p. 68).
- 5 "The objectively practical law" is the "relation of a will to itself so far as it determines itself only by reason, for everything which has a relation to the empirical falls away,

- because if reason itself alone determines conduct it must necessarily do so *a priori* " (2, p. 45).
- 6 "The concept of autonomy is inseparably connected with the idea of freedom and with the former there is inseparably bound the universal principle of morality which ideally is the ground of all actions of rational beings, *just as natural law is the ground of all appearances* " (2, p. 71).
  - 7 The principle of pure reason "must have a counterpart in the sensible world" (4, p. 132).
  - 8 "On this view, the intelligible character is the noumenal cause and the empirical character its phenomenal effect". "Sometimes, however, apparently without noticing the difference, Kant also speaks of the empirical character as the appearance or sensible schema of the intelligible character" (11, p. 32).
  - 9 "It seems that the moral law, i.e. the principle of the autonomy of the will is, properly speaking, only presupposed in the idea of freedom as if we could not prove its reality and objective necessity by itself". "Freedom is a mere Idea, the objective reality of which can in no way be shown (...) in any possible experience since *no example* (...) can support it; it can never be comprehended or even imagined. It holds only as a necessary presupposition of reason" (2, p. 68, 78).
  - 10 "It is in fact absolutely impossible by experience to discern with complete certainty a single case in which the maxim of an action, however much it may conform to duty, rested solely on moral grounds and on the conception of one's duty". It can "in no way be shown in any possible experience" (2, p. 23, 78).
  - 11 This is partly similar to Mackie's second stage of universalization and as in that case, "the logical thesis (i.e. our "descriptive principle" -V.M.) has little bearing on the substantive practical principle: we could adopt, or reject, the later whether the former was true or false". "A logical or semantic truth is no real constraint to belief; nor, analogously, can one be any real constraints upon action or prescription or evaluation or choice of policy" (9, p. 92, 98).

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