

Four Perspectives on Moral Judgement the Rational Principles of Jesus and Kant

PALMQUIST, Stephen R

Published in:
The Heythrop Journal

DOI:
[10.1111/j.1468-2265.1991.tb00154.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2265.1991.tb00154.x)

Published: 01/04/1991

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

PALMQUIST, S. R. (1991). Four Perspectives on Moral Judgement the Rational Principles of Jesus and Kant. *The Heythrop Journal*, 32(2), 216-232. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2265.1991.tb00154.x>

General rights

Copyright and intellectual property rights for the publications made accessible in HKBU Scholars are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners. In addition to the restrictions prescribed by the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, all users and readers must also observe the following terms of use:

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from HKBU Scholars for the purpose of private study or research
- Users cannot further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- To share publications in HKBU Scholars with others, users are welcome to freely distribute the permanent publication URLs

FOUR PERSPECTIVES ON MORAL JUDGEMENT: THE RATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF JESUS AND KANT

STEPHEN PALMQUIST
Hong Kong Baptist College

I. FOUR MORAL PRINCIPLES

Jesus' well-known admonition 'Do not judge lest you be judged yourselves' (Matt 7:1) is sometimes interpreted as a radical principle requiring people not to make moral judgements at all.¹ Jesus apparently puts in the place of all moral 'absolutes' (such as the rules found in the Old Testament and Jewish tradition) a pragmatic principle which can be applied more flexibly to each particular situation (viz. the so-called 'Golden Rule'): 'whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets' (Matt 7:12). Similarly, his summary of 'the whole Law and the Prophets' (Matt 22:40) in terms of the Great Commandments, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart...' and 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Matt 22:37,39; cf. Lev 19:18), seems to imply that fixed (and apparently objective) rules to guide our moral judgement are not as important as the more subjective principle that our actions be performed in a spirit of love.

These three principles seem at first sight to stand in sharp contrast to Kant's principle of moral judgement (viz. the 'Categorical Imperative'): 'So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle establishing universal law'.² S.B. Thomas, for example, regards Kant's principle as implicitly contradicting the first of the above-mentioned admonitions of Jesus, because one requires, while the other forbids, 'the stance of being the moral-judge of' ('JK' 191). If regarded as a strict moral principle, the Golden Rule seems to render morality completely subjective, to the extent that it could border on hedonism ('what *pleases* you is what you should do to others') – two tendencies which are clearly contrary to the emphasis on universality and formalism in Kant's moral philosophy. In *CPrR* 83-85 Kant himself acknowledges the difference between the Categorical Imperative and Jesus' summary of the Law in terms of the two Great Commandments (which I will refer to as the single principle, 'Love God and man'): he warns against the danger of the latter principle giving rise to 'a narrow moral fanaticism', which is *immoral* because it involves the 'overstepping of limits which practical pure reason sets to mankind' (*CPrR* 84,85).

These prima-facie differences between the moral principles of Jesus and Kant should not, however, lead us to conclude that their viewpoints are incompatible. On the contrary,

Kant in his writings on religion shows the deepest respect for Jesus (to the extent that he always avoids using his name by referring to him indirectly, with descriptions), and particularly for his teachings. He goes so far as to argue that true Christianity (i.e., the teaching of Jesus, properly interpreted) is virtually identical with the ‘universal religion of mankind’, towards which he believes his own moral philosophy points.³ It seems very unlikely, therefore, that Kant himself would want to deny the validity of such key teachings of Jesus as the three mentioned above. In this article I will argue that if we properly understand these four principles, (1) Jesus’ ‘Do not judge’, (2) Kant’s Categorical Imperative, (3) Jesus’ Golden Rule, and (4) Jesus’ ‘Love God and man’, then we can regard them not as mutually exclusive, but as expressing four complementary *perspectives* on the nature of moral judgement⁴.

II. THE TRANSCENDENTAL AND THE LOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Let us begin by looking more closely at Thomas’s treatment of this matter, because his way of resolving the conflict between (1) and (2) is quite similar to the method I will adopt for understanding the relationship between all four principles. He points out, quite rightly, that there is a perspectival difference between the standpoints (or as he calls them, ‘stances’) assumed by these two principles. Jesus adopts a ‘religious’ standpoint, or ‘a *way of being*’, whereas the moral judgement involved in Kant’s ‘rational’ standpoint ‘appears to belong to a wholly different sphere of thought’ (‘JK’ 194). ‘The “judge not” of Jesus’ applies only ‘at the religious level’ (196). Thomas points out that ‘the Christian... is at a great advantage [over the rational moralist] by virtue of having existential access to the solution to the moral problem’ (196). He argues that ‘the apparent discrepancy can be reconciled if one *first* adopts the existential standpoint of Jesus, and then only secondarily takes up the rational position of Kant as expressing the requirements of his [i.e., Jesus’] religion stripped of their religiosity, so to speak’ (194).

Kant would agree that religiosity and rational moral principles belong to entirely different standpoints. Yet Thomas ignores the fact that Kant himself not only recognized this difference, but developed his system of religion with precisely this perspectival distinction in mind. Thomas’s conclusion is therefore not entirely fair to Kant (except as a statement about his *practical* system on its own), though its main thrust is unobjectionable:

Kant and the Kantians need Jesus and the Jesusians far more than the latter need the former; for it is far more important for the Kantian [i.e., for a proponent of Kant’s *practical* system] to allow his incipient

moral dogmatism to be tempered with the quality of love and acceptance... than it is for a follower of Jesus to be able to give rational stability to his external actions (199).

If Jesus' religion is what he (and Kant!) claim it to be, then this is certainly true; but it ignores the fact that Kant would *agree* that his moral theory on its own is too narrow to encompass religion. In *RBBR* 12(11) Kant explains that the historical and revelatory elements of a real (empirical) religion compose 'the *wider* sphere of faith, which includes within itself the [sphere consisting of the practical or moral essence of pure religion], as a *narrower* one (not like two circles external to one another, but like concentric circles)'. Indeed, Kant tries to make room for the wider sphere in his Critical System by expounding what man can 'hope' in his third, 'judicial' system, which *includes* his theory of religion.⁵

Thomas has, I believe, hit upon the right method for explaining the relationship between the moral principles of Jesus and Kant, yet he has applied that method in the wrong way. Although it is true that much of Jesus' teaching could be called 'existential', and that nearly all of it is intended primarily to encourage a certain type of religiosity (i.e., a certain way of life), this does not mean that his teaching is devoid of rational principles. On the contrary, all three of Jesus' admonitions listed in section I ought to be regarded as fundamental rational principles for moral judgement. This, of course, means that Jesus and Kant are adopting the same standpoint after all (*viz.* the standpoint of 'practical reason', as Kant calls it). Nevertheless, the apparent conflict between their respective principles can be resolved once we recognize that different perspectives can operate within the same standpoint.⁶ In other words, even though Kant and Jesus are trying to do roughly the same thing (*viz.* establish rational principles for moral judgement), moral judgement itself can be viewed in different ways, and the character of the principle is determined by the perspective it assumes.

When Jesus commands 'Do not judge', he is not denying the legitimacy of all moral judgement (which would, in fact, contradict what he goes on to say in Matthew 7:3-11 [see note I above]); on the contrary, he is laying down what we can call a *transcendental* principle for (i.e., a necessary condition for the possibility of) all moral judgement. The implications of the condition Jesus lays down are completely consistent with the transcendental condition of moral judgement in Kant's practical system – *viz.* *freedom*. For Kant the moral law itself, as expressed in the Categorical Imperative, would be impossible were it not for the fact that each individual person starts with a fundamental (though inexplicable [see *CPrR* 72].) freedom of the will. To *judge* another person (i.e., to impose one's own moral maxims on

someone else [see note 1]) deprives that person of their right to be judged according to their own maxims, so it implies that one wills that the other not be free. To do this is to fail to *respect* the other person.⁷ When Jesus adds to his ‘Do not judge’ the explanation ‘For in the way you judge, you will be judged ...’ (Matt 7:2), he is warning that our own moral freedom depends on our mutual willingness to give moral freedom to other people. However, the full force of his claim is rarely acknowledged: he appears to be saying that God will judge us according to the way we judge others, so that, for example, if we leave others to determine what is right for them, God will leave us to determine what is right for us. In any case, the implication of Jesus’ claim is that our ability to make free moral judgements concerning our own actions depends on the extent to which we give that same freedom to others. In this sense, then, his ‘Do not judge’ is not just a piece of good, ‘existential’ advice; it is the very foundation of the possibility of any real moral judgement (and hence, can be called transcendental).

When Kant sets forth his Categorical Imperative, by contrast, he is assuming the freedom of the individual and trying to explain in logical terms just what the self-legislating freedom of the moral law implies for the moral agent. In other words, he is asking: On what basis can we analyse our own moral maxims in order to determine whether or not they provide us with proper rules for the right course of action? Kant’s suggestion that we make such judgements on the logical basis of a consideration of whether or not our maxim can be universalized does not imply that we have to defy the commandment ‘Do not judge’ in order to understand the difference between right and wrong courses of action. Rather it indicates that we have to *judge ourselves* by *our own* internal and self-legislative moral law before we act, and that the proper way of doing so is to test each maxim by considering whether or not it would be rational to make it a universal law (i.e., to conceive of it as being a maxim which all people legislate to themselves).

We can avoid Thomas’s problematic assumption that Jesus and Kant are speaking on entirely different levels as long as we recognize that Jesus’ ‘Do not judge’ lays down a transcendental requirement for moral freedom (viz. that moral judgement is first and foremost an individual matter), whereas Kant’s Categorical Imperative explicates a logical means of analysing one’s own moral maxims (viz. that we must be able to conceive of them as universal). It may seem as if Kant’s criterion of universality contradicts Jesus’ requirement of not judging others, since the former requires us to determine what maxims others ‘ought’ to hold. However, this is a misunderstanding of Kant’s principle. Kant is not suggesting that the Categorical Imperative justifies us in forcing everyone else to abide by our maxims, or in

condemning them for not so abiding; he is suggesting instead that it enables us to understand what we ourselves are commanded to do.⁸ In other words, the moral law presents its imperatives to *me* as categorical (I ought to...'), yet it can never give me anything more than hypothetical knowledge about anyone else's duties ('If you were me, you ought to...'): the moral law does not give *me* commands about what *you* ought to do! Hence, it is fully compatible with Jesus' 'Do not judge', though each assumes a different perspective. With this perspectival distinction in mind, we can therefore turn now to the third and fourth principles of moral judgement in order to consider their relationship with each other and with the two discussed in this section.

III. THE EMPIRICAL AND THE HYPOTHETICAL⁹ PERSPECTIVES

The perspectival interpretation of these four principles of moral judgement, as interacting within the standpoint of practical reason, has several benefits: it not only clarifies the compatibility between the principles of Jesus and Kant, but also provides the basis for a reconstruction of Kant's moral philosophy which will render it more credible than on more traditional interpretations. A good example can be seen by considering Kant's claim that the human will, as subject to the moral law, cannot contradict itself (e.g., *FMM* 424). This doctrine is often regarded as evidence of the inadequacy of his moral philosophy, since in ordinary experience it is not unusual for us to come face to face with apparently unresolvable conflicts. Nevertheless, if we place this doctrine in its proper, perspectival context, then the difficulty can be resolved. When Kant says that duties cannot contradict each other, it is best to interpret him as meaning that the moral law is a *logical* law, a law which defines moral worth and in so doing commands us to do one thing and not its opposite. Kant would admit, though, that in real human situations we are often simply incapable of reasoning clearly enough (or perhaps, of being open enough to the law of freedom) to 'hear' the voice of conscience clearly. As a result we are often torn between two or more options and left more or less empty-handed in difficult moral situations. Kant's moral philosophy is not meant to suggest that all moral decisions are straightforward, but only that if we could open ourselves completely to the voice of the moral law in each situation, then the way would be clear. That human weakness often prevents us from achieving such clarity should not detract from the fact that morality is inherently rational (and thus, not self-contradictory).

The Golden Rule is a principle designed to help people cope with such human weakness. In contrast to the apparently 'iron' rigidity of the moral law, the Golden Rule, like pure gold, is pliable and readily applicable to virtually any situation. This principle can

therefore be regarded as offering an ‘empirical’ or ‘existential’ guideline. Regardless of what Kant himself may have thought about the Golden Rule,¹⁰ it is quite consistent with a perspectival interpretation of his moral system. For the command ‘whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them’ really boils down to something quite similar to Kant’s emphasis on *respect*.

Kant describes respect for the moral law as an unpleasant feeling, or even a ‘pain’, which arises because the moral law ‘humiliates’ our ‘self-conceit’ (or ‘self-love’) by disciplining us to subordinate our desire to be happy (by fulfilling our inclinations) to our obligation to do our duty (by following the moral law) (*CPPrR* 73-82). Such respect makes us aware of the fact that ‘the idea of the moral law deprives self-love of its influence and self-conceit of its delusions’ (75). This ‘moral feeling’ of respect ‘does not serve for an estimation of [the moral worth of] actions or as a basis of the objective moral law itself but only as an incentive to make this law itself a maxim’ (76). Nevertheless, it is not merely an ‘incentive to morality; it is morality itself, regarded subjectively as an incentive’ (76). In other words, respect for the moral law is not identical with the moral law (which, as we have seen, is primarily logical), but can be regarded as the moral law *viewed from the empirical perspective* of its effects on our life.

The Golden Rule, properly interpreted, actually functions in much the same way as Kant’s doctrine of respect. It tells us that, if we want something, the right course of action is to respect the rights of others by giving up our self-centered inclinations and humbly showing someone else the generosity we wish they would show us.¹¹ The Golden Rule is wrongly interpreted when it is regarded as a kind of ‘tit-for-tat’ principle, for it says nothing about the ‘other’ actually doing anything for us in return. If we truly follow the Golden Rule, we will discipline ourselves to give to others without ever requiring anything in return. The problem, of course, is that the things a person does for others on this basis may not actually be in their best interest – they may even be immoral – especially if ‘what you want others to do for you’ is to fulfil your inclinations! This, in fact, is why it is crucial to see the Golden Rule as an empirical principle which, in order to be truly effective, must be subordinated to, and thus informed by, some higher-level (i.e., logical and/or transcendental) moral principle(s). Thus, if a person who understands and accepts the superiority of the moral law over inclinations attempts to follow the Golden Rule in everyday (empirical) situations, then that person will, at the same time, be showing Kantian respect for the internally prescribed, categorical demands of the moral law.

Peter Charmichael¹² argues against Thomas’s perspectival interpretation by pointing

out that Jesus breaks both his own moral principles and the Categorical Imperative whenever he pronounces judgement on people such as the Pharisees ('KJ' 414). Charmichael's argument is defective, however, because he fails to consider the implications of the fact that Jesus' moral judgement is always directed against *hypocrites* – i.e., against people who condemn others for doing things which they themselves do. Jesus' harsh criticism of such people always proceeds by pointing out that they are not matching up to their own standards (e.g., 'the Law and the Prophets'). The principle 'Do not judge', as I have interpreted it (see note 1), requires that we not judge others by our standards, but allow them to obey their own conscience; it does not disallow a critical attitude towards those who do not live up to their own standards, provided the person judging is abiding by his or her own standards (see Matthew 7:5). Thus the only exception to the 'Do not judge' principle is that those who break this absolute, transcendental standard for all morality – e.g., by imposing their own moral maxims on other people, as the Pharisees did – are themselves worthy to be judged.

Likewise, the Categorical Imperative bids us to judge *ourselves* (not others) according to the form of universal law. Judging hypocrites would transgress this imperative only for someone who believes that people should not be judged by their own standards, but solely on the basis of some absolute empirical standard, such as a set of fixed, written laws. Yet this is contrary to the moral theories of both Jesus and Kant, because it takes away the freedom of the individual, and thus breaks the fundamental condition for all truly moral judgement. If the point of Jesus' 'Do no judge' is indeed that people should judge (and be judged) only according to their own standards, then his judgement of hypocrites is entirely consistent with the Categorical Imperative. In fact, Jesus' criticism of hypocrites does not even break the Golden Rule (adapted in the form 'in whatever types of situation you would want others to criticize you, criticize them when they are in such situations'), since those who strive to live consistently with their conscience would welcome criticism from someone who can awaken them to a situation in which they are living inconsistently with their own rules.

Jesus' summary of all morality in the commandment 'Love God and man' is related to Kant's Categorical Imperative in much the same way as is the Golden Rule: both stand in danger of being misused, but can have a very important proper use if employed in conjunction with their complementary moral principles. Thus, in *CPrR* 83-85, where Kant discusses the relationship between his moral theory and Jesus' 'Love God and man', he not only warns, as mentioned in section I, against the misuse of this principle, but goes on to claim that, if properly employed, it is entirely consistent with his own moral theory (see also *RBBR* 160-161 [148]). He claims that this 'law of all laws... presents the moral disposition in

its complete perfection' (*CPrR* 83). Hence this 'kernel of all laws' is an 'ideal' principle (83), a principle which is properly considered not as a law of morality or virtue (which implies human limitation), but rather as a law of 'holiness' (84). The real danger, according to Kant, is that some people misinterpret this principle as meaning that we should obey God *by inclination* ('pathological love'), rather than out of respect for the moral law which he has put in our hearts ('practical love') (cf. *FMM* 399). Not only is it 'self-contradictory' to 'command that one do something gladly' (*CPrR* 83), but such an assumption can lead to a fanatical devotion to inclination which ends up choking out morality itself (84-85). 'To Jove God means in [its proper, *practical*] sense to like to do His commandments, and to love one's neighbour means to like to practice all duties towards him' (83). The problem is that only a *holy* being can be so free from inclinations contrary to the moral law that such obedience always results in *pleasure*. Because man's natural self-conceit is humbled by the respect for the moral law which accompanies human obedience, all such obedience is not holiness, but *virtue* (84).

Kant's rather cautious attitude towards Jesus' 'Love God and man' command should not be regarded as outright scepticism. If we recall that for Kant 'ideal' does not mean 'impossible', but rather, something transcendent which can 'regulate', but does not 'constitute' our action (or knowledge) (see *CPR* 595-599, 675), then we can see how even this command has its proper place in Kant's practical system. Kant is not joking when he calls the Great Commandment the 'kernel of all laws'; rather he is alluding to the fact that it is so great that we must view it as a *hypothetical* moral principle – i.e., as a principle which cannot constitute the difference between right and wrong in any given situation, but which should nevertheless regulate the way we go about performing all our moral actions. We should aim for the ideal of a holy will by acting *as if* our disposition is perfect, so that our acts tend more and more to display a holy inclination to love God, an enjoyment arising out of our obedience to, and respect for, the moral law. Kant emphasizes the role of happiness in his moral theory *only* in its final stage for the same type of reason: although our own happiness cannot serve as a motivation for virtuous action, it can (and should) be introduced hypothetically by anyone who is already obeying the moral law in order for morality to reach its 'final end' in 'the highest good'.¹³ In same way, love of God and of the duties he commands us to perform (via the moral law he puts in our hearts) should not be regarded as a logical principle with which we can define the difference between right and wrong; yet those who seek to act morally can (and should) work towards perfecting that action by subsuming it under what might be called an 'irrational rational principle' of morality – i.e., by

regarding it in the idealized context of their love for God and man.

IV. AN ANALYTIC MAP OF THE FOUR PERSPECTIVES

Kant's doctrine of the moral law and its application in the Categorical Imperative has traditionally been interpreted as requiring a rigid formalism in ethics, according to which particular ethical rights and wrongs are, and can be known to be, absolute. Indeed, Kant's reason for stressing the *categorical* character of the moral law's prescription of duties is to bring home precisely this point: our knowledge of moral rights and wrongs comes first and foremost in a rational and necessary (or absolute) form, rather than in the form of hypotheses (if-clauses) regarding the particular situations we may or may not be in. This fact about Kant's doctrine of moral judgement (i.e., that it is possible because the moral law within us commands duties categorically) may seem to render invalid everything I have said so far about the relation between the moral principles of Kant and Jesus. In other words, it may look as if I have taken Kant's doctrine so far out of its original context that it no longer remains Kantian. The best way of replying to such an objection is to lay more explicit stress on the perspectival character of all Kant's thought,¹⁴ and to show how an appreciation of the perspectival character of the particular relation between the four moral principles we have been considering reveals that such a treatment of the Categorical Imperative does not involve, after all, a compromise with regard to its categorical nature (which would indeed be an untenable interpretation of Kant). Let us therefore look briefly at the logic which lies behind Kant's various perspectives.

Each of the four moral principles we have been examining provides quite a different answer to the question 'How should we make moral judgements?' Yet they do not contradict each other, because each views the question from a different perspective. Together they constitute an example of what is probably the most interesting (and certainly the most common) of all logical distinctions – viz. what I have called a 'perfect second-level analytic division'. As I have explained elsewhere,¹⁵ an 'analytic division' is any distinction between 2^n opposing components (where $n > 0$); a 'second-level' analytic division is one in which $n=2$, so that there are four components ($2^2 = 4$) set in mutual opposition; and a 'perfect' division is one for which all of the *logical* options represented by the components can be exemplified by some *real* example or situation. (Thus, for example, the fourfold distinction between 'cloudy/raining', 'cloudy/not raining', 'not cloudy/raining' and 'not cloudy/not raining' is imperfect as long as the third option is regarded as describing an impossible situation.)

Kant himself was a great lover of second-level analytic divisions. Such a division

forms the backbone not only of his famous Tables of Judgements, Categories and Principles (see *CPR* 95, 106, 200), but also of numerous other less famous tables, diagrams and distinctions.¹⁶ Indeed, in *CPrR* 39-40 Kant not only makes such a fourfold distinction between different types of ‘material determining grounds in the principle of morality’ (which his formal ground – the Categorical Imperative – is intended to supersede), but also specifies the two *first-level* distinctions (viz. between ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ and between ‘external’ and ‘internal’) which give rise to the second-level analytic division he has in mind. Then, as he often does, he constructs a table which ‘visually’ represents ‘all possible cases’ of material principles.

The four moral principles we have been examining can themselves be regarded as composing a perfect second-level analytic division. Thus, their perspectival relationship has the same form as all such fourfold distinctions, each of which runs parallel to Kant’s fundamental distinction between the four perspectives on knowledge (viz. ‘synthetic a priori’, ‘analytic a priori’, ‘synthetic a posteriori’ and ‘analytic a posteriori’ [see ‘KE’ 196-200]). This can be made clear by describing each of these four principles as either an ‘objective’ or a ‘subjective’ principle (i.e., as either valid independent of the individual judging *person* or valid only as applied individually to oneself), and as either ‘absolute’ or ‘relative’ (i.e., as giving rise to maxims which are either independent of the context, or dependent upon it).¹⁷ So the subjective/objective and absolute/relative distinctions correspond (but are not identical) to Kant’s analytic/synthetic and a priori/a posteriori distinctions, respectively: both sets contain two first-level (i.e., twofold) distinctions which combine together to form a single second-level (i.e., fourfold) distinction. We can now summarize the discussion in sections II and III in terms of these two sets of underlying distinctions.

Moral judgement is a complex human activity with many facets. Its four primary facets are governed by the principles we have been considering, each of which answers the question of the nature of moral judgement from a different perspective. We can describe these four perspectives on moral judgement in concise terms, as follows:

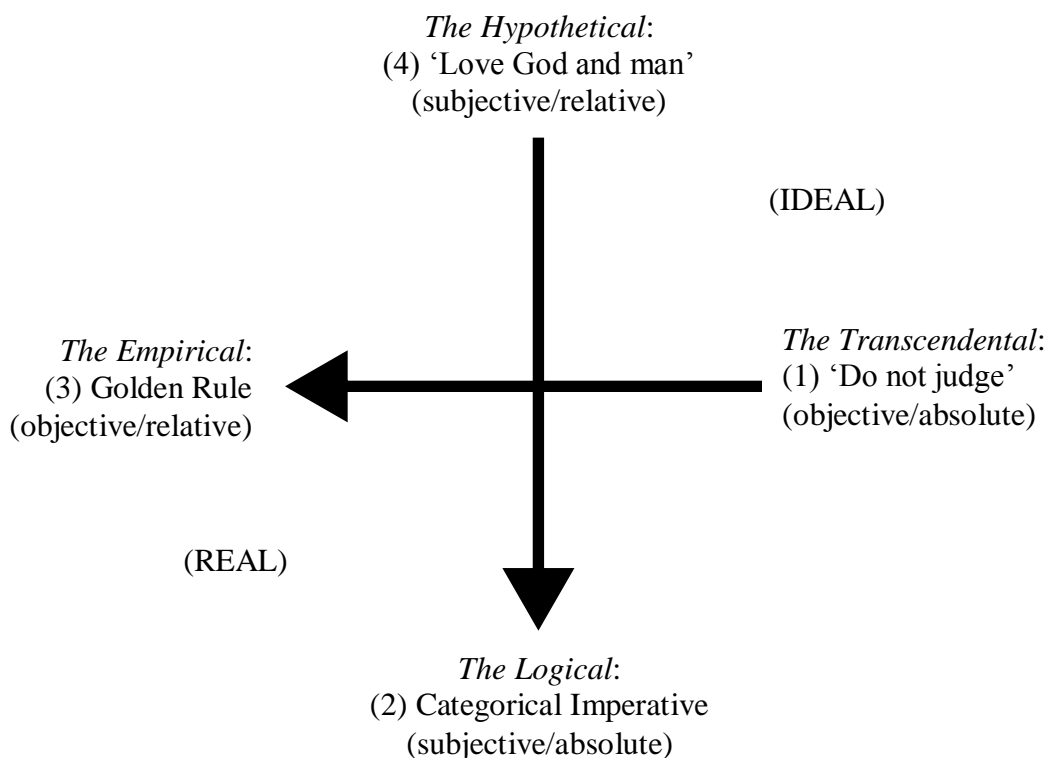
- (1) *Transcendental*. ‘Do not judge’ is an *objectively absolute* principle establishing the very possibility of moral Judgement. It is ‘absolute’ in the ‘objective’ sense that without It (and the freedom it implies) the boundaries of what can be included as ‘moral judgement’ will be drawn incorrectly. It establishes that truly moral judgement must be prescribed freely – i.e., only by individuals and only to themselves.
- (2) *Logical*. The Categorical Imperative defines all such moral judgment as the placing of individuals (by themselves) under a universal law, so that all their moral maxims (not those of others) can be regarded as *subjectively absolute*.¹⁸ Such maxims are categorical because they speak to our innermost being, which is abstracted (as much as any theoretically logical law) from the empirical (and largely hypothetical) world of our everyday situations. Because they are absolute (and hence, abstract), (1) and

(2) are necessary, but not sufficient, principles to guide a person in making concrete moral judgements in actual human situations.

(3) *Empirical*. The Golden Rule provides what could be regarded (loosely, on analogy with respect for the moral law) as a schematization of the moral law: like (1), it is an *objective* principle; and like (2), it gives rise to real moral judgements. Yet it has a pragmatic advantage over both (1) and (2) because it is not absolute (in the sense of being abstracted from particular situations): rather, it gives rise more directly to concrete moral judgements, the precise nature of which is entirely *relative* to the situation.

(4) *Hypothetical*. The principle ‘Love God and man’ unites all these in an ideal picture of the ‘holistic’ moral life, i.e., the one which presses on from virtue towards ‘holiness’, in which the nature of one’s moral judgement in each situation is regarded as *relative* to (i.e., regulated by) the *absolute* task of continually learning more and more about how to enjoy pleasing God (i.e., obeying his moral law).¹⁹

Picturing an analytic division in the form of a ‘map’ (i.e., a diagram, table, etc.) is often a helpful way of clarifying the perspectival relationship between its components, because in such cases a map (if properly understood) can lay bare at a single glance the logic which governs the distinction. From the above summary of the four principles of moral judgement, the following map can therefore be constructed, using the subjective/objective and absolute/relative distinctions as a guideline:²⁰



This diagram enables us to see at a glance all the fundamental relationships (similarities and differences) between the principles arising from the four perspectives on moral judgement.²¹ Thus, if we assume the above discussion has established the connection between each moral principle and the description given to it in the above diagram, then all the

interrelationships between these principles can be stated as follows:

1. Both (1) and (2) are absolute conditions for moral judgement (i.e., both concern the formal conditions which apply to moral rules universally). but (1) prescribes an objective principle whereas (2) prescribes a subjective principle.
2. Both (1) and (3) are concerned with objective moral judgements, but (1) is itself an absolute rule whereas the rules derived from (3) will be relative to each situation.
3. (1) and (4) rest on opposite defining characteristics, yet they share a similar (and complementary) function: they are both ideal principles which give rise to corresponding real principles (see note 20).
4. (2) and (3) rest on opposite defining characteristics, yet they share a similar (and complementary) function: both principles enable us to tell the difference between right and wrong in the real world.
5. Both (2) and (4) are subjective principles, in the sense that they define rules which are primarily internal to the human subject; but (2) prescribes its rules in an absolute form, whereas (4) prescribes its rules in a form which is relative to the situational context.
6. Both (3) and (4) are principles the character of which is relative to the situational context, but the rules derived from (3) will be objective, whereas those derived from (4) will be subjective.

I am not arguing that this diagram of the four perspectives on moral judgement exhausts all possible fundamental moral principles, nor would I claim that the foregoing discussion has succeeded in making their interrelationships entirely clear. However, I do believe I have demonstrated that these four principles are related, and that (viewed perspectively, as answering different sorts of questions about the nature of moral judgement) they can be regarded as mutually compatible without straying from a basically Kantian and Christian framework.

A possible objection to this whole project is that *any* talk of moral ‘principles’ seems out of date these days when nearly everyone thinks (or at least, acts as if) morality is nothing but a matter of personal preference. If ‘right and wrong’ is something which is entirely determined by each individual, then are we not forced to do away with all absolutes? Perhaps not. On the contrary, my interpretation of Jesus’ ‘Judge not’ reveals it to be in a sense a fundamental principle which itself establishes a kind of relativism! But the resulting relativism is not one which replaces the dogmatic absolutes of traditional religio-cultural systems of ‘Thou shalt nots’ with the opposite extreme of an unprincipled chaos of sceptical rule-lessness (i.e., ‘anything goes’). Rather, it offers a balanced, ‘critical relativism’ which recognizes that there is an absolute foundation for moral judgements, even though the validity of each particular judgement we make may be properly described as relative. Thus, when viewed together, as constituting a system of principles, the four perspectives on moral judgement discussed above, far from being outdated, may establish a much-needed standpoint from which to criticize and evaluate our own situation in the modern age of relativism.

Notes

1 The next verse reads: 'For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you'. The Old Testament contains a text which is similar to Matthew 7: 1. In Ezekiel 7:27 God is reported as saying: 'According to their conduct I shall deal with them, and by their judgments I shall judge them'. (Quotes from biblical texts are taken from *The New American Standard Bible*, Carol Stream, Ill., Creation House, Inc., 1960.) – When read in conjunction with the parallel passage in Luke 6:37 ('do not pass judgment and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you shall not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned'), Jesus' principle is often regarded simply as a specific warning not to *condemn* others. However, his statement can also be interpreted more generally as laying down an absolute principle banning all moral judgement whatsoever. Thus, for example, Schweizer suggests that Matthew 7: 1-2 asks us 'to forgo judging entirely', because 'we are lost as long as we live at all by the categories of weighing, measuring, and classifying' (Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, translated by D.E. Green [Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1975], pp.168-169). On page 170 he continues: 'When we realize that we no longer have to judge, that is, assign people to higher or lower positions, then we will no longer judge ourselves – no longer be judged, and we will be able to stand confidently and fully before the judgment of God' (S.B. Thomas, in 'Jesus and Kant: A Problem In Reconciling Two Different Points of View' [hereafter 'JK'], *Mind* 79 [1970], pp.188-199, adopts an interpretation similar to Schweizer's, which I will criticize below.)

In this article I adopt a position midway between these two traditional interpretations by treating Jesus' words as putting forward a moral principle which primarily requires us not to impose *our own* moral maxims on other people. The context clearly supports such a moderate interpretation, since Jesus goes on to talk about paying attention to 'the log that is in your own eye' (i.e., your own inability to follow your own moral maxims) before presuming to 'take the speck out of your brother's eye' (Matt 7:3-5), Schweizer (p.168) notes (but glosses over the fact) that the strict interpretation of 'Do not judge' actually contradicts the implication in Matthew 7:2 that *some* kind of moral judgement is permissible. But he fails to mention the even clearer implications here in verses 3-5, which seem to require that *if* we have cleansed our own eye, then we ought to help our peers to cleanse theirs. Just how the 'Do not judge' can be consistent with the moral judgement needed to do the latter is one of the main issues to be discussed below.

2 *Critique of Practical Reason* (hereafter *CPrR*), translated by L.W. Beck (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), p.30. References to Kant's works will cite the *Akademie* page numbering. When this number is not specified in the translation, the translation's pagination will be added in brackets. The only exception is Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (hereafter *CPR*), translated by N. Kemp Smith (London, Macmillan, 1929), references to which will cite the original pagination of the second (B) edition.

3 In the Preface to *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (hereafter *RBBR*), translated by T.M. Greene and H.H. Hudson as *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (New York, Harper & Row, 1960), p.6(5), Kant proclaims: 'Morality thus leads ineluctably to religion' (see also pp.8n [7n] and 155 [143]). In *The Conflict of the Faculties*, translated by M.J. Gregor (New York, Abaris Books, 1979), p.9, Kant describes quite clearly his attitude towards Christianity: 'I have evidenced my great respect for Christianity in many ways... Its best and most lasting eulogy is its harmony, which I demonstrated in [*RBBR*], with the purest moral belief of religion'. Chapter XI of my forthcoming book, *Kant's System of Perspectives* (hereafter *KSP*) is an attempt to demonstrate in detail that Kant's system of religion is primarily an attempt to portray Christianity as 'the universal religion of mankind'. I have outlined the main points of my argument in 'Does Kant Reduce Religion to Morality?' (forthcoming). For a brief account of the generally affirmative religious implications of Kant's philosophy, see S. Palmquist, 'Immanuel Kant: A Christian Philosopher?' *Faith and Philosophy* 6.1 (January 1989), pp.65-75.

4 Throughout the remainder of this article I will presuppose the 'perspectival' method of interpreting Kant which I have developed in a number of other articles (see notes 3, 6 and 14), and in *KSP*. The basis of this method is Kant's distinction between 'transcendental'; 'logical', 'empirical' and 'hypothetical' perspectives (i.e., ways of asking philosophical questions), which I will use here as the key to determining the relationships between the four moral principles under consideration. In so doing, I do not wish to imply that the three statements of Jesus under consideration here represent the entirety of his ethical outlook. On the contrary, the Gospels contain numerous other admonitions and principles which could be regarded as equally (or even more) important (see, e.g., note 8 below). – For example, some biblical scholars would argue that Jesus' 'Love God and man' does not represent anything new or innovative in the Jewish tradition. The truly revolutionary aspects of his ethical outlook, it could be argued, are to be found in his admonition 'love your enemies' (Matt 5:44) and in his *explanation* of the Great Commandment in terms of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), which stretches the meaning of 'neighbour' beyond its former connotations. Jesus employs such admonitions and parables, however, in order to fill out the implications and applications of the basic 'Love God and man' principle, which he obviously accepts. Examining these and other innovative ways in which Jesus applies this principle is beyond the scope of the present study.

5 Kant explains on several occasions that the topic of the third division of his Critical System is 'What may I hope?' (see, e.g., *CPR* 832-833). (That his theory of religion is a crucial part of this third division, and not a mere appendage to his practical system, is defended at length in *KSP*, ch.XI; see also 'Does Kant Reduce Religion to Morality?', note 3 above.) In previous publications I have referred to the standpoint of this third division as the 'empirical' standpoint, because it deals with particular aspects of man's *experience* (e.g., its aesthetic or religious aspects) much more fully than either the theoretical or practical stand-points. This can be rather misleading, however, since (1) its use in this context is different from its use in the important transcendental-empirical distinction, (2) it could be confused with the empirical perspective within each standpoint (a potential confusion Kant himself recognizes in the third *Critique*, pp.178-179), and (3) Kant states explicitly in *CPR* 739: 'There is no need of a critique of reason in its empirical employment', I now refer to the standpoint of the third division of Kant's System as 'judicial' (i.e., relative to judgement) in the hope of clarifying that its transcendental status is preserved, and that its scope is broader than the empirical perspective within each system.

6 I have explained the difference between a 'standpoint' and a 'perspective' in Kant's System on several previous occasions. For the best summary, see S. Palmquist, 'Is Duty Kant's "Motive" for Moral Action?', *Ratio* 28.2 (December 1986), pp.168-74, here p.169. Each of the three *Critiques* assumes a different standpoint; but within each the same four perspectives operate. These four perspectives are described in detail in S. Palmquist, 'Knowledge and Experience: An Examination of the Four Reflective "Perspectives" in Kant's Critical Philosophy' (hereafter 'KE'), *Kant-Studien* 78.2 (1987), pp.170-200.

7 Respect, of course, is also an important element in Kant's moral theory. It applies not only to our attitude towards the moral law (see below), but also to our attitude towards persons. Thus, Kant's second formulation of the Categorical Imperative incorporates this factor: 'Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only' (*Foundations of*

the Metaphysics of Morals [hereafter *FMM*], translated by L.W. Beck [New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959], p.429).

8 Kant does assume that the moral law will appear to each individual in the same way, so that ethical absolutes (such as 'Do not lie') can be established. Establishing such guidelines is possible, he maintains, only if the negation of the maxim in question (e.g., 'sometimes it is right to lie') gives rise to an irrational conception of the world. Kant's views on the application of his moral philosophy to the determination of such ethical absolutes have given rise to considerable debate. For our present purposes, however, this debate is irrelevant, because within the confines of Kant's practical system (as opposed to his view of its application to real situations) the moral law is strictly intended to be applied only by individuals to make moral judgements for themselves.

In this connection it is worth noting that Jesus offers a *fourth* moral principle which can be taken as performing the same function in the Sermon on the Mount as Kant's Categorical Imperative performs in his moral system. After showing with several examples how the 'letter' of the Law must be intensified by attending to its true 'spirit', Matthew 5 concludes with Jesus' summary of his message in the form of a principle: 'Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matt 5:48). Most of Chapter 6 then deals with the proper relationship between external actions and internal motivations. Seen in this context, the point of Jesus' statement is very similar to Kant's point in arguing that duty must be done only for the sake of the moral law, not in order to fulfil one's inclinations. Indeed, Kant would fully accept Jesus' repeated warning to those who follow the latter way: 'Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full' (Matt 6:2, 5, 16).

9 In previous publications I have always referred to the fourth perspective in each of Kant's three systems as the 'practical' perspective. However, this tends to cause confusion between it and the practical *standpoint*, as adopted in *CPrR*. Moreover, it is slightly misleading because Kant normally equates 'practical' with 'moral', whereas the fourth perspective of the theoretical and judicial standpoints is not necessarily limited to morality. The word 'hypothetical' is an appropriate replacement because it implies the 'as if' character of all conclusions established from this perspective. (This is especially obvious in the Dialectic in *CPR*.)

10 In *FMM* 430n Kant calls the negative form of the Golden Rule (i.e., 'quod tibi non vis fieri, etc.') a 'banal' principle which 'cannot be a universal law'. Peter Charmichael, in his article 'Kant and Jesus' (hereafter 'KJ'), *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 33.3 (March 1973), pp.412-416, cites this text (though he incorrectly claims it comes from *CPrR* 48) as the primary evidence for rejecting Thomas's claim (discussed above) that 'the Categorical Imperative and the Golden Rule are two sides of the same coin' ('JK' 199). Unfortunately, by not quoting the entire footnote, Charmichael hides the important fact that Kant is here referring only to the negative form of the Golden Rule (sometimes called the 'Silver Rule'), whereas the form Thomas is interested in is the quite different positive form used by Jesus (see note 11 below). Charmichael also fails to consider the possibility that the Golden Rule might have its proper place as one basic principle in a rational system of moral principles which contains the Categorical Imperative as a necessary precondition. Kant's criticism of the Golden Rule is directed only against those who believe it is a principle which can *replace* the Categorical Imperative.

11 Confucius's negative form of the Golden Rule, 'Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you' (*Analec*ts 12:2), comes closer in form and function to Jesus' 'Do not judge' than to the positive form of the Golden Rule, with its implied emphasis on self-giving. Schweizer (*Good News* [see note 1 above], pp.174-175) points out that the negative form of the Golden Rule can also be found in Greek tradition as early as the fourth century B.C., but adds that Jesus seems to be the first to put it in the 'terse and universal form' found in Matthew 7:12, where it 'represents the most radical of summons to love one's neighbour'.

12 In 'KJ' Charmichael criticizes Thomas's interpretation (discussed in section II above) on the basis of two mistaken assumptions. The first is that the 'Judge not' of Jesus is identical to 'the Golden Rule' ('KJ' 412), which, as we have seen, it is not. (The fact that Kant criticizes the Golden Rule [see note 10] is therefore irrelevant to Thomas's point.) Charmichael's second assumption is that Jesus' teaching 'is a formalization of [the same kind as] ... the Categorical Imperative' (413). Yet Thomas never says the two positions are supposed to 'match' (413) or to be 'virtually identical' (415), as Charmichael assumes, but only that they represent different *standpoints*, the latter being the rational formalization of the former. The sense in which these two principles do 'match' has been outlined in section II.

13 These doctrines, which are too complex to describe in detail here, are developed by Kant in the Dialectic of *CPrR*, which establishes the fourth and final stage in his practical system. (The three chapters of the Analytic establish the first three stages [see *KSP*, ch.VIII].) The 'highest good' is the ideal of a perfect correspondence between virtue and happiness.

14 I will not attempt to do this here, because I have already done so in *KSP* and in my other essays on Kant (see especially: 'KE'; 'Six Perspectives on the Object in Kant's Theory of Knowledge', *Dialectica* 40.2[1986], pp.121-151; and 'The Architectonic Form of Kant's Copernican Logic', *Metaphilosophy* 17.4 [October 1986], pp.266-288).

15 Chapter Two of my *The Geometry of Logic* (unpublished manuscript) describes and analyses the first four levels of analytic division. An early, and at times rather unclear, description of the structure of such divisions can be found in 'The Architectonic Form' (see note 14).

16 See, e.g., *CPR* 348; *Prolegomena* 303; *CPrR* 66; *Critique of Judgment* 197; *Metaphysics of Morals* 397,412. Kant uses other types of diagrams in *Logic*, translated by R. Hartman and W. Schwarz (New York, Bobbs-Merrill, 1974), pp.103(109), 108(114), 126(130). His most common use of diagrams, however, remains implicit: he uses metaphors such as 'line', 'circle', 'sphere', 'horizon', etc. on many occasions (see *KSP*, ch.1).

17 The precise meaning of 'absolute' and 'relative' is discussed in notes 18 and 19 below. This distinction could also be formulated as a distinction between the 'formal' and the 'material' principles (i.e., those which in themselves define a necessary condition for all moral judgement as opposed to those which require the individual to supply some additional content from the situation at hand). According to Kant's terminology in the second *Critique*, the former would be 'categorical' and the latter would be 'hypothetical'. Kant pays little attention to the latter (material, or hypothetical) type because his search in *CPrR* is for the one principle which is 'universal' in the sense of being (subjectively) absolute (see below). However, by distinguishing carefully between the perspectives to which they belong, we can see that, as long as we do not confuse one type of fundamental principle with another, it will be possible to view both types as working together to form one coherent system of moral principles.

18 The word 'absolute' here has the logical meaning: 'Of such a kind that I can *conceive of* (and therefore *will*) that my maxims be applicable to everyone' (cf. *FMM* 424). It does not mean I can *actually* judge that they are empirically applicable to everyone. (Kant sometimes seems to lean towards the latter view [see note 8], but in his best moments I believe he plants himself firmly in the former position.)

19 The 'relative' nature of both (3) and (4) is suggested by the fact that Jesus refers to both of these principles as summing up the essential content of 'the Law and the Prophets' (cf. Matt 7:12 and 22:40). These two are 'relative' not in the sense that they apply only to some cultures or certain individuals, but in the sense that they directly give rise to the particular laws which are relative in this (ordinary)

sense – laws such as those in the Law and the Prophets which the Jews used as practical guides to everyday living. The same distinction could be made by using the terms ‘absolute’ and ‘concrete’ in place of ‘absolute’ and ‘relative’, since in one respect all four principles are absolute (i.e., universally applicable to all human beings).

20 The arrows in this diagram suggest that not judging our neighbours by our own self-set standards leads to (or implies) doing to them what we would have them do to us, and that the ideal of loving God first and our neighbour as ourselves leads to (or implies) acting in such a way that we could will our maxims to be universalized. These are interesting suggestions, but this is not the place to argue either for or against them.

21 I should also point out that this diagram actually supports Thomas’s real point (though his terminology is misleading), that Jesus’ ‘Do not judge’ is experiential (horizontal), while Kant’s Categorical Imperative is rational (vertical). Thomas’s shortcoming was to separate these principles from each other too radically by neglecting the fact that Jesus’ principles have to do with practical reason just as much as Kant’s.