

Do Hypothetical Imperatives Require Categorical Imperatives?

Let us define instrumentalism to be the position that claims that the only valid sort of practical reasoning is reasoning that originates with an agent's ends and arrives at some means appropriate to these ends. In Kantian terms, an instrumentalist would then be someone who believes that the only valid imperatives are hypothetical imperatives. The *locus classicus* for anti-instrumentalism is Kant's constructive argument for the existence and authority of the Categorical Imperative in which he claims that this principle is valid independently of the contingent ends of individual agents. Unfortunately, understanding the constructive argument usually depends upon the resolution of unsolved exegetical problem within Kant's practical philosophy such as the possibility of transcendental freedom, the meaning of the fact of reason, and the unity of theoretical and practical reason. Recently, however, Korsgaard and other neo-Kantians have attempted to understand Kant's attacks on instrumentalism in a way that relies on none of these thorny issues.¹ Bypassing Kant's constructive argument, these neo-Kantians have argued that instrumentalism can be criticized on its own terms. According to them, instrumentalism is not only false, it is internally incoherent.² Claiming Kant as their inspiration the *incoherentists* argue that *every* hypothetical imperative actually presupposes categorical imperatives and that each of these seemingly simple hypothetical imperatives has a categorical imperative which supports it and backs it up. Instrumentalism fails not because *some* practical reasons are categorical, but because *every* practical reason ultimately rests on categorical imperatives. Instrumentalism is incoherent because categorical imperatives are required to make sense of even the simplest hypothetical imperatives. At the broadest level, the purpose of this paper is to cast doubt upon this recent neo-Kantian argument for the incoherence of instrumentalism. Instrumentalism may well be false, but it is not incoherent.³

My strategy for casting doubt upon incoherentism will be to attack one of the arguments that often supports it. The argument, which I call the *formalist argument*, goes like this: all sides agree that when we reason hypothetically, our reasoning has the schematic form: ‘if I will X, I ought to will Y, the means to X’. For the formalist, however, this schematic form must itself be a premise within the reasoning. That is, every practical inference based on a hypothetical imperative, when fully articulated has the premise ‘if I will X, I ought to will Y, the means to X.’⁴ When the schematic form of instrumental reasoning occurs as a premise within the reasoning, it must be interpreted as a command to take the means to our ends. But since this premise commands us independently of what we may happen to desire, it commands us categorically, and is therefore a categorical imperative. This suggests that every hypothetical imperative must indeed be backed up by a categorical imperative. In fact, every hypothetical imperative must be backed up by the very same categorical imperative, ‘take the means to your ends.’ Incoherentism follows from this formalist argument once it is seen that the formalist premise is in fact a categorical imperative.

At the narrowest level, this paper seeks to criticize the formalist assumption and therefore weaken our confidence in incoherentism. The formalist assumption will be criticized both as an interpretation of Kant and as a thesis about practical reason. This does not amount to a refutation of incoherentism. At best it defeats one type of argument in favor of incoherentism. There could be other such arguments, and indeed other such arguments have been suggested.⁵ However, I will also suggest that the rejection of the formalist assumption and the accompanying direct argument for incoherentism will have consequences that go beyond the direct arguments for incoherentism that I specifically attack in this paper. In particular, I will argue that the formalist assumption operates as a background assumption even in arguments that seem to have nothing to do with formalism. It will be a secondary

purpose of this paper to point out some common arguments, seemingly independent of the formalist argument, that actually rely on the formalist premise. While this will still not amount to a refutation of a sufficiently determined incoherentist, I hope that clarifying the extent to which formalism plays a role in many of these key arguments will place the burden of proof squarely back on the incoherentists.

This paper will be divided into two main parts. In the first part, I will explain more clearly what the formalist assumption is, and how the formalist assumption leads directly to incoherentism. The formalist assumption will be contrasted with what I call the inferentialist model. The inferentialist restricts the role that the instrumental principle (IP) plays in practical reasoning to that of a rule of inference. As a rule of inference, IP cannot be something on which an agent acts. In the second part, I will try to undermine the formalist assumption both textually and philosophically. Textually, I will show that Kant himself was quite careful not to talk in formalist terms. I will also argue that Kant is committed to denying incoherentism which follows from the formalist assumption.⁶ Philosophically, I will argue that the inferentialist picture is more appealing than the formalist picture because it alone can explain how a willing can be a product of practical reason.

I. The Formalist Assumption and its Consequences

a. The formalist assumption

When we go to the bank in order to deposit a check, flirt with a customer in order to get a better tip, or keep silent in order to avoid a confrontation, our actions all seem to embody the same type of means/end, or instrumental reasoning. The pattern of inference could be captured in the following principle: ‘If a person wills an end X and a certain means, Y, is necessary to achieve that end, then she ought to Y’. I will call the pattern of inference

that is embodied in this principle, the Instrumental Principle (IP) since it is supposed to be a general or schematic representation of instrumental reasoning. In Kantian terms, IP is the general expression of the *form* of all hypothetical imperatives, and its truth is captured in Kant's famous dictum that 'he who wills the ends wills the means in so far as reason has decisive influence over his actions'.⁷ The seeming simplicity and ubiquity of this sort of practical reasoning makes its explanation an important first step in any theory of practical reason.

A formalist, however, believes that more is going on in these cases of hypothetical reasoning than meets the eye. In particular, a formalist believes that IP itself is a suppressed premise in these inferences. Following Hill's terminology, who is the earliest and most explicit formalist, when IP is interpreted as a premise in a practical inference, I will call it *the* Hypothetical Imperative or HI. HI therefore is just IP when it is given an active role as a premise in the inference itself. Hill puts the point this way 'the Hypothetical Imperative serves as a general, though rarely articulated, premise in arguments for various non-moral "ought" judgments.'⁸ When the reasoning behind seemingly simple hypothetical imperatives is articulated, it must contain HI, and Hill goes on to explain how this articulation must take place. Consider the following ordinary non-moral 'ought' judgment:

- (a₁) Remaining silent is the only means to keeping the peace.
- (b₁) Imogen wills that she keep the peace.
- Therefore,
- (c₁) Imogen ought to will that she remain silent.⁹

According to Hill's corrected account, this inference should really be as follows:¹⁰

- (a₂) If Imogen wills an end and certain means are necessary to achieve that end then she ought to will those means.
- (b₂) Remaining silent is the only means to keeping the peace.
- (c₂) Imogen wills that she keep the peace.
-
- (d₂) Imogen ought to will that she stay silent.

Thus, (a₂)-(d₂), unlike (a₁)-(c₁), contains an explicit reference to HI. Notice also that HI has the form of an imperative. In a moment we will see why this imperative form is necessary.

Hill's motive for adding HI as a premise is that without it (c₁) does not follow as a matter of logical inference from (a₁) and (b₁). (a₁) is an empirical fact about causes and effects, and (b₁) is a fact about Imogen. Neither of these, however, has anything to do with what Imogen *ought* to will, and since the conclusion is certainly a fact about what Imogen ought to will to do, there can be no question of (c₁) validly following from (a₁) and (b₁). To fix this problem, Hill suggests that we add HI as a premise. Indeed, from a logical point of view, (a₂)—(d₂) fares much better than (a₁)—(c₁). (c₂) supplies precisely the connection between empirical facts and 'ought' judgments that is required.

For Hill, the situation is no different really from the following piece of clearly incomplete reasoning:

(a₃) God commands Imogen to remain silent.
Therefore,
(c₃) Imogen ought to remain silent.

This reasoning is clearly incomplete, but it is not hard to supply a premise which would make it valid. What is required is the following:

(b₃) Imogen ought to do whatever God commands her to do.

(b₃) represents the simplest way of making (a₃)—(c₃) valid. We have simply connected the empirical fact of God's command with a universal rule that these commands yield 'ought' judgments.¹¹ But this is all that Hill has really done in the means/ends example. The minimum required in order to get the 'ought' judgment that 'Imogen ought to will that she stay silent.' from the premises that 'remaining silent is the only means to keeping the peace' and 'Imogen wills that she keep the peace' is the premise 'whenever X is a means to Y, and Imogen wills Y, then Imogen ought to will X'. This is just a statement of HI. The formalist assumption is the simplest premise possible to make means/end inferences valid.

While I will suggest an alternative to this position in a moment, I would like to first draw attention to some of its features. As a premise of a practical inference on which we actually act, HI must be something about which we can become conscious and the consciousness of which can make a difference in our actions. In order for a practical conclusion to follow from its premises, not only must the premises be logically sufficient for the conclusion, but these premises must be the ones that were active in the agent's decision. No matter how compelling Imogen's reasons for silence may be, if Imogen is silent for some other reason (for example out of fear or a mistaken belief that silence will invoke peaceful spirits), her willing that she remain silent cannot be viewed as the conclusion of a practical inference. A valid practical inference requires that the validity of the inference be what motivated the agent to adopt the conclusion. But if the validity of the inference is itself what motivates the agent, then the agent must be aware of each of the premises and how they contribute to the conclusion.¹² Consequently, in so far as HI is necessary for the validity of our inference, this necessity must be part of the motivation of our practical conclusion. It follows that HI must be something about which we can become conscious.¹³

This leads to the second feature of HI. HI is itself an imperative. On the one hand, HI is neither a causal law nor a desire, but a rule about what we should do. On the other hand, as a premise in a practical inference, this rule must be something the knowledge of which could contribute to our decision. An 'ought' judgment the knowledge of which is supposed to change our behavior is a rule that is addressed to us. Kant calls such 'ought' judgments *imperatives*.¹⁴ In other words, on the formalist view, HI not only justifies every specific hypothetical imperative but is itself an imperative.¹⁵ Ordinarily imperatives are the expressions of a practical inference, rather than a premise within the inference.¹⁶ It is not difficult, however, to see how a general imperative could also serve as a premise in practical reasoning. If the proposed action is a specific instance of a more general imperative that we

already accept, then the proposed action would count as a conclusion of a practical inference in which the general imperative is the premise. Suppose, for example, that Viola accepts the general imperative, 'when in Rome do as the Romans.' Suppose further that Viola notices that 'the Romans bribe their border guards.' Viola's decision to bribe the border guard is justified and explained by a practical inference with 'when in Rome, do as the Romans' as a premise. Similarly, since HI is itself an imperative that serves as a premise in a practical inference, it plays a role analogous to Viola's imperatival premise, 'when in Rome, do as the Romans'. It justifies the conclusion of the practical inference by serving as a more general rule of which the conclusion is an instance. HI is a separate, more general imperative that justifies individual imperatives as instances of itself.

Following the formalists in thinking that every particular hypothetical imperative must be supplemented by HI leads to the following picture. Whenever we act on a hypothetical imperative, we implicitly invoke a separate and more general imperative, HI, which justifies the specific imperative as an instance of itself. Moreover, when we adopt the conclusion of the specific hypothetical imperative, HI itself is the ultimate principle on which we are acting. This may seem counter intuitive. After all, when Imogen remains silent in order to keep the peace, it seems as though what is motivating her decision is the connection between silence, confrontations, and her desire to avoid them. It does not seem to have anything to do with a more general principle of adopting the means to her ends. The formalist response to this worry is to point out that most of the time our reasoning flows from ends to means without any sort of effort or help from us. It is only in cases of irrationality or strong temptation that the principle which stands behind this flow from ends to means must be made explicit. Thus, Korsgaard says:

it is only that the means are difficult, or scary, or dull, and I am having trouble screwing myself to the task. That's when I am guided by the imperative [i.e. HI] -- that's when I say to myself -- 'since you will this end, you must take these means'.¹⁷

The situation is no different from other general imperatives which justify specific instances. Suppose that Viola from our previous example accepts an even more general imperative to 'respect the culture of others', and this more general imperative is what stands behind and justifies the imperative, 'when in Rome do as the Romans'. We might reasonably suppose that the background imperative about cultures will only be made explicit when the intermediate imperative about Rome is challenged or in some way comes into question. If, for example, Viola's travel companion challenges her on the immorality of bribing a border guard, Viola might appeal first to the imperative 'when in Rome do as the Romans', but finally, appeal to the broader principle about cultures. So too, with HI. As long as I am having no difficulty 'screwing myself to the task' the lower-level specific imperatives count as a justification of my action. It is only in cases of irrationality or great temptation that HI must be invoked.

b. A non-formalist interpretation

Even if we find the formalist picture of hypothetical reasoning unattractive, the picture is forced on us once we accept the seemingly innocuous assumption that HI is a necessary premise in any valid hypothetical imperative. To combat the picture, we must first see that this assumption is not forced on us. To do that, we must propose an alternative. Hill argues that it is necessary to postulate some premise like HI because otherwise instrumental reasoning would not be valid. According to the alternative outlined here, the validity of instrumental reasoning is preserved not by adding another premise (HI) but by interpreting IP as a *rule of inference*. On this view, IP is still the generic form of hypothetical imperatives 'If a person wills an end Y and a certain means, X, is necessary to achieve that end, then she ought to X', but its role in specific hypothetical imperatives is no longer that of a separate premise (HI) but that of a rule of inference. When the role of IP is interpreted as a rule of inference, I will call it M/E. M/E plays the same role in practical inference that modus ponens

plays in theoretical inference. It is the rule through which conclusions are inferred from premises. The theoretical case:

- (a₄) Things that are equal to the same are equal to each other.
- (b₄) The two sides of this triangle are things that are equal to the same.
- ← by modus ponens
- (c₄) The two sides of this triangle are equal to each other.

The practical case:

- (a₅) Remaining silent is the only means to keeping the peace.
- (b₅) Imogen wills that she keep the peace.
- ← by M/E
- (c₅) Imogen wills that she remain silent.¹⁸

In both cases, the rule of inference is that through which conclusions are inferred from premises. It is represented by a dashed line in the above inferences.

The most obvious difference between the reasoning in (a₅)–(c₅) and the reasoning in (a₂)–(d₂) is that in (a₅)–(c₅) the instrumental principle is a rule of inference rather than a premise. If the inferentialist account is accepted, the formalist has fallen prey to a classic confusion in that she has included as a premise what is properly a rule of inference. Lewis Carroll made this confusion famous in the theoretical sphere in his ‘What the Tortoise Said to Achilles’.¹⁹ The tortoise claims to be someone who does not draw inferences according to modus ponens. In order to get him to draw the proper inferences, Achilles tries to insert modus ponens as a premise. Thus, (a₄)–(c₄) becomes the following:

- (a₆) Things that are equal to the same are equal to each other.
- (b₆) The two sides of this triangle are things that are equal to the same.
- (c₆) If (a₆) and (b₆) are true, then the two sides of this triangle are equal to each other.
-
- (d₆) The two sides of this triangle are equal to each other.

But, at the end of the day (d₆) only follows from (a₆)–(c₆) by modus ponens. Someone who does not draw inferences according to modus ponens has no more reason to conclude (d₆) than she had to conclude (c₅). The tortoise, therefore demands yet another premise to justify the inference to (d₆), and a clear infinite regress has begun.

The lesson of Carroll's parable is that the refusal to accept a rule of inference cannot be compensated for by the addition of any number of premises—not even if one of these premises is an articulation of this rule of inference itself. Carroll reminds us that believing the *proposition*: 'if (a & a-> b) then b' is no substitute for and therefore must be sharply distinguished from accepting modus ponens as a rule of inference. But to say that modus ponens cannot be a premise in an inference is to say that modus ponens is not something on which an agent acts. It is not something the consciousness of which plays any role in the explanation of the knower's inference. Achilles' inference that 'the two sides of this triangle are equal to each other' is explained by his belief in (a₅) and (b₅). Neither modus ponens nor any of its articulations plays any role in this explanation. One final implication of this view is that modus ponens is not an imperative. Since imperatives are things on which we are supposed to act, they are rules that could occur as a premise in a practical syllogism. Modus ponens, or any rule of inference, could never serve as a premise, and is therefore not an imperative.

The analogy back to practical reason is direct.²⁰ If the instrumental principle is a rule of inference, as the inferentialist picture requires, then Hill's attempt to fix hypothetical reasoning by inserting a formalist premise is a clear mistake. Hill points out that there is a gap between the premises of a hypothetical imperative and its conclusion. The inferentialist agrees. But the inferentialist insists that this gap is properly filled by a rule of inference not by additional premises. Once the proper nature of the gap is understood, not only is Hill's formalist premise unnecessary, it is also wrongheaded in that it attempts to fill the gap with the wrong sort of object. A practical tortoise who refused to draw inferences according to M/E, could never be made to do so by the addition of a premise, not even if the premise was an articulation of M/E itself. According to the inferentialist, Hill is guilty of confusing a rule of inference with its articulation.

Another important difference between an inferentialist syllogism and a formalist syllogism is that they arrive at different conclusions. The conclusion of the inference in (a₅)—(c₅) is not the judgment that ‘Imogen *ought to* will that she remain silent.’ but simply that ‘Imogen wills that she remain silent.’ This is forced on us by our analogy to theoretical inference. The conclusion of the theoretical inference is not that ‘we ought to believe that the two sides of the triangle are equal to each other’ but simply that ‘the two sides of the triangle are equal to each other’. Note that ‘ought’ appears neither in the premises nor the conclusion of this inference. ‘Ought to believe’ expresses the relationship that a rational being has to the conclusion given the fact that she believes the premises.²¹ If the inference is valid a rational being is subject to an ‘ought’ judgment, but the ‘ought’ judgment itself plays no role in establishing the validity of the inference. If M/E functions in the same way as modus ponens, then ‘ought’ judgments will appear neither in the premises nor the conclusions of the practical inference. ‘Ought to do’ will express the relationship that a rational agent has to the conclusion given the fact that she believes the premises. The conclusion itself will not be an ‘ought’ judgment.

c. The formalist assumption leads to incoherentism

I have just outlined many differences between the formalist and the inferentialist pictures. But for my purposes, the most important difference is that on the formalist model every hypothetical imperative requires a categorical imperative in order to be valid, whereas on the inferentialist picture, it does not. According to the inferentialist, M/E is a rule of inference. As a rule of inference, it is not the sort of thing that could occur as a premise in a practical syllogism. It follows that M/E is not an imperative at all, let alone a categorical imperative. If we are subject to a rule to adopt the means to our ends, we are not subject to it in virtue of acknowledging its authority. It is not something that we can acknowledge and therefore follow.

For the formalist, on the other hand, HI is precisely something the knowledge of which can make a difference in our practical reasoning. As a premise in our practical reasoning, it must be something that we can be guided by, and guiding rules are imperative. But what kind of imperative is HI? Since it stems from hypothetical imperatives, we might initially think that it too was hypothetical, but this initial impression is wrong. Hill makes the relevant points:

[The Hypothetical Imperative] seems to share the most striking features of Kant's conception of the Categorical Imperative: it is a principle that any fully rational person would follow, it expresses a stringent rather than a *prima facie* requirement of reason, and to establish its rationality we do not need any contingent premises about what human beings desire. Moreover, the Hypothetical Imperative does not, like particular hypothetical imperatives, 'declare a possible action to be practically necessary as a means to the attainment of something else that one wills (or that one may will)' (GW: 414). The Hypothetical Imperative is a general principle that does not mention particular ends or means; it tells us only that we ought to will the means to our ends, whatever these may be.²²

HI demands obedience from all rational agents, it commands us to take the necessary means to our ends regardless of what we happen to want, and it seems to apply to us not because of our specific desires, but because of our rational capacity. In other words, HI seems to be categorical. Hill himself tries, unsuccessfully, to save the hypothetical character of HI by distinguishing a different sense of hypothetical according to which HI does turn out to be hypothetical.²³ But, according to the formalist picture, HI is something that all rational agents are committed to in virtue of constructing hypothetical imperatives at all, and it does not apply to them as the means to attaining some previous end that they want. We are not committed to HI because we want to appear to be a stable and rational person, or because we want to lead a long and healthy life, but in virtue of being a rational agent.

This means that it is a straight shot from the formalist assumption to incoherentism. Recall that incoherentism is the position that argues that instrumentalism is incoherent because every hypothetical imperative must be backed up by categorical imperatives. If the

formalist is correct to assume that hypothetical imperatives must be backed up by HI, and if HI is itself categorical then the incoherence of instrumentalism follows immediately. In fact, we know that all hypothetical imperatives must be backed up by the specific categorical imperative, HI.

d. The formalist picture is an assumption of other attacks on instrumentalism

While my main concern is with the formalist argument, I believe that a formalist picture is implicitly assumed in other criticisms of instrumentalism. Consider for example, Korsgaard's complaint that someone who believes that the instrumental principle is the only principle of practical rationality (that is an instrumentalist) is committed to arguing that an 'ought' can be derived from an 'is'.²⁴ Her reasoning is simply that from premises which combine an agent's desires with empirical facts about means and ends, we can never derive a conclusion of the form 'X ought to do Y'. We can now see that this complaint assumes a formalist picture of hypothetical inference. For only on the formalist model is the conclusion of an inference an 'ought' judgment. On the inferentialist model, the conclusion of a practical syllogism is a willing, and 'ought' is a relation that holds between a rational agent and the conclusion of the inference so long as the rational agent accepts the premises. It is not properly part of the inference at all.

Another seemingly independent objection against instrumentalism takes as its point of departure a tension in IP itself. As many have noticed, IP has trouble distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable means. Thus, if the only way Blythe can get a good night's sleep is if she smothers her annoying roommate, it seems like IP requires that she smother her roommate provided she really does want to get a good night's sleep. Failing to smother her roommate is as irrational for Blythe as failing to remain silent was irrational for Imogen. While there are many attempted solutions to this tension, Jonathan Broome offers an important and influential solution which seems, at first glance, to be incompatible with

instrumentalism.²⁵ For those persuaded that Broome's resolution is correct, or even those who think that Broome's resolution is interesting, this inability of instrumentalism to accommodate such a view can be a decisive objection. Once again, I will try to show that this objection against instrumentalism assumes a formalist picture. An inferentialist who adopts Broome's response to the problem of unacceptable means has no reason to abandon instrumentalism.

Broome's solution, which is thought to be incompatible with instrumentalism, is to point out that there is a scope ambiguity within IP. Once this scope ambiguity is resolved the tension of unacceptable means is also resolved. Given a *wide scope interpretation*, IP says that Blythe ought (if she wills the end, will the means). On the other hand, IP can also be given a narrow scope interpretation. With a *narrow scope interpretation*, IP says that *if* Blythe wills an end, ought (she wills the means). Under a wide scope interpretation there are two ways of fulfilling the requirement that is expressed by the 'ought': either to adopt the means *or* to give up the end. Narrow scope, on the other hand, has only one way of fulfilling the requirement, provided the conditional applies to you: adopting the means. Thus, once Blythe has willed the end of a restful sleep, narrow scope seems to demand that she smother her roommate, whereas wide scope demands only that she *either* smother her roommate *or* give up her end of a restful sleep. Presumably, in this case, Blythe ought to reconcile herself to not getting a good night's sleep. Giving the 'ought' that is contained in IP a wide rather a narrow scope resolves the tension of unacceptable means since IP never requires us to take a specific means, it only requires us not to have any ends whose means we are not willing to take. The superiority of a wide scope interpretation of IP in handling cases like Blythe's is one of the primary motivations for adopting wide over narrow scope.

But Broome's wide scope interpretation of IP as a means of resolving the tension of unacceptable means seems incompatible with instrumentalism. Since the 'ought' in a wide

scope interpretation occurs before Blythe's end is mentioned, she seems to be subject to at least one 'ought' that does not reference anything she wills, viz. the command to either drop her end or take the means. But for a formalist, an 'ought' that applies to us independently of anything we desire can only be a categorical imperative. It follows that IP, itself, demands the existence of a categorical imperative, and that therefore instrumentalism is incoherent.

For an inferentialist, on the other hand, there is another alternative. Just because we are subject to an 'ought' that applies to us independently of anything we desire, it does not follow that we are subject to a categorical imperative. This 'ought' could also be the 'ought' that is expressed in a rule of inference, and a rule of inference is not a categorical imperative or any other kind of imperative. Since, a rule of inference plays no role in Blythe's reasoning, it is not a separate categorical imperative to which Blythe is subject and does not in any way count against instrumentalism. An inferentialist is perfectly free to accept either a wide or a narrow scope interpretation of IP—she simply insists that neither of these interpretations occurs *within* the agent's reasoning and therefore *cannot* be a command on which the agent acts. The complaint that since an instrumentalist cannot avail herself of a wide scope interpretation of IP, she runs into special problems when it comes to resolving the tension of unacceptable means can now be seen to overlook the inferentialist alternative. As such, it assumes formalism.²⁶ The above examples suggest that formalism plays a role even in arguments that do not seem to rest explicitly on the formalist argument. Even arguments that do not start from the invalidity of hypothetical reasoning and the necessity of postulating an intermediate and more general imperative, may still be depend upon a formalist picture of practical reason in so far as the inferentialist alternative is tacitly overlooked.

II. A Criticism of Formalism

The purpose of this next section is to undermine the formalist assumption first as an interpretation of Kant and then as a philosophical position in its own right. The criticism based on Kant will itself be divided into two parts. In the first part, I will argue that Kant was careful to avoid formalist language. In the second part, I will show that Kant could not have shared the formalist assumption because he could not have accepted incoherentism which follows directly from this assumption.

a. Kant was not a formalist

According to the formalist, every specific hypothetical imperative implicitly requires a more general imperative which justifies it. But Kant himself never talks about a general imperative to adopt the means to our ends. This fact is even more striking because it contrasts with Kant's language about the Categorical Imperative. Whereas *the* Categorical Imperative is spoken of as a separate master imperative which justifies specific categorical imperatives that fall under it, Kant makes no mention of a Hypothetical Imperative which plays the same role. In fact, when Kant discusses hypothetical imperatives, it is always as a specific hypothetical imperative or as many hypothetical imperatives. He never talks of a master imperative, general in its application, which commands us to adopt the means to our ends.

Hill notices this fact but justifies his use of the Hypothetical Imperative by remarking that Kant does talk of 'the imperative which commands willing the means to him who wills the end' (GW: 419).²⁷ Hill suggests that this sentence should be read as implying the existence of an imperative whose content expresses the command to will the means to our ends. However, Kant's full text reveals that Kant does not commit himself here to the existence of such an imperative. Consider the actual passage:

In spite of this difference [between imperatives of skill and imperatives of prudence], since both command solely the means to something assumed to be willed as an end, the imperative which commands him who wills the end to

will the means is in both cases analytic. (GW: 419)

Since there are two imperatives under discussion, the context makes clear that the phrase ‘the imperative which’ is not serving to pick out a unique imperative which satisfies the properties that are expressed in the ‘which’ clause, as would be the case in a phrase like ‘the book which I lent you two weeks ago’. Rather, the phrase ‘the imperative which’ along with the following ‘in both cases’ serves to introduce a property that the imperative in each case possess. If Mary were to borrow one book on Friday and another on Saturday, Natasha might well complain, ‘In both cases, the book, which Mary made off with, was rare and expensive.’ But surely, therefore, Kant’s use of ‘the imperative which’ no more serves to pick out a unique imperative than Natasha’s use of ‘the book’ serves to pick out a unique book. Kant’s point is not to say that there is a hypothetical imperative which prescriptively commands us to take the means to our ends, but rather to say that all particular hypothetical imperatives (both technical and prudential) in fact do command us to take the means to our ends. This should not be immediately read to imply that there is a separate general command to adopt the means to our ends.

Rather than there being one master Hypothetical Imperative from which all other hypothetical imperatives gain their authority, Kant says:

As a consequence, the principles of action thought of as necessary to attain a possible end in view which can be achieved by them, are in reality infinitely numerous. (GW: 415)

The fact that there are as many practical principles as there are means to various ends suggests an inferentialist picture rather than a formalist one. The authority of a hypothetical imperative rests in the specific connection between the end and the means that it requires. There is no one principle which justifies all of the various principles that come underneath it. The principle on which we act when we flirt with a customer in order to get a better tip is quite different from the principle on which we act when we keep silent in order to avoid a

confrontation. The principles have the same form ('if I will X, I ought to will Y, the means to X'), but they are not each instances of a higher imperative to take the means to our ends.

Consider Kant's famous claim that 'it is an analytical proposition that, if I fully will the effect, I must also will the actions necessary to produce it' (GW: 417). Here it sounds as if Kant is surely talking generally about a relation that holds between effects that are fully willed and actions necessary to produce these effects.²⁸ But even here such a general reading is not forced on us. Since Kant is talking about the specific example of willing the bisection of a line and being required thereby to will the description of intersecting arcs, it is possible that Kant's analytic principle is only meant to apply to this example. In particular, when Kant talks about 'the effect' and 'the action required for it' he could be referring back to the specific means/end relationship under discussion. Rather than postulating an analytic connection between 'willing means' and 'willing ends,' Kant might only be postulating an analytic connection between willing the bisection of a line and being required thereby to will the description of intersecting arcs.

While this reading may seem forced, Kant suggests precisely this reading by making it clear in the surrounding context that the connection between these willings is only *conditionally* analytic. Thus, Kant claims that it is only '*if* I know the proposed result [i.e. bisecting a line] can be obtained only by such an action [i.e. describing intersecting arcs],' (GW: 417) that there is an analytic connection between the willing of my proposed means and my ends. This suggests precisely the reading I am offering. Kant is not discussing here a general relationship between means and ends, which would not be conditional on anything at all, but is only asserting an analytic connection between the specific ends and means under discussion. There is not one analytic truth that commands us to take the means to our ends, but indefinitely many analytic truths connecting all of our various purposes and the means to attain them. It follows that each individual instance of hypothetical reasoning is connected to

other instances only in virtue of a shared form. They are not connected as specific instances of a master rule to take the means to our ends.

So far, I have only argued negatively that Kant does not commit himself to the formalist thesis. But Kant's text also shows that he *could not* have agreed with the incoherentists who think that every hypothetical imperative must be backed up by a categorical imperative. Kant could not, therefore, have accepted the formalist assumption which directly leads to incoherentism. In the *Groundwork*, Kant claims that hypothetical imperatives are analytic whereas categorical imperatives are synthetic practical propositions. If, as proponents of incoherentism suppose, every hypothetical imperative must be backed up by a categorical imperative, it would follow that each of these analytic judgment contains a practical synthetic judgment. But how could this be? An analytic judgment is one in which the predicate is contained in the subject, whereas in a synthetic judgment the predicate is connected to the subject by some third term. To say that an analytic judgment depends upon or must be backed up by a synthetic judgment, is just to say that the predicate requires a third term after all in order to be connected with the subject. In other words, it is to say that the analytic judgment is synthetic. It seems then that incoherentism is in tension with Kant's claim that hypothetical imperatives are analytic.

Is the tension between incoherentism and the analytic nature of hypothetical imperatives an irresolvable one? Korsgaard 1997 offers a solution in which willing an end is both a normative act requiring the support of categorical imperatives and analytically involves a commitment to adopting the means to these ends. According to Korsgaard,²⁹ to adopt an end is to commit oneself to the law: 'realize this end'. This act of commitment involves categorical imperatives because I must view my end as good 'in some sense that goes beyond the locally desirable'.³⁰ But, this act of commitment also involves a commitment to taking the means to this end and is to that extent analytic. As Schroeder

2005b: 366 has pointed out, this account depends on an alternative, practical sense of analytic in which it is a practical contradiction to will the ends without willing the means, rather than a logical or theoretical contradiction. But whatever the merits of Korsgaard's resolution,³¹ it cannot ultimately be Kant's.

What Korsgaard's argument shows is that adopting the means follows analytically from adopting the end. But recall that, for Korsgaard, this is not yet a hypothetical imperative. A hypothetical imperative also involves categorically adopting the end, and if we are to believe Kant, then this part of a hypothetical imperative is synthetic. It would seem that if she is to save the analytic character of hypothetical imperatives, she must give up the synthetic character of the categorical imperatives that she believes are necessarily involved in these hypothetical imperatives. Korsgaard herself admits that her argument tends to break down the distinction between analytic and synthetic:

In fact, on my reading, it may seem unclear what distinction is marked by those terms [analytic/synthetic]. In one way, I make it sound as if both the moral principle and the instrumental principle are analytic, for both are, if Kant's arguments succeed, constitutive of rational agency. In another way, I make it sound as if both the moral principle and the instrumental principle are synthetic, for both depend on the of freedom inherent in the deliberative standpoint... I am not certain what to say on this point, I am inclined to think that my argument shows the distinction to be less important than Kant thought.³²

Korsgaard's defense of incoherentism seeks to break down the distinction between hypothetical imperatives and categorical imperatives. But Kant himself thought each type of imperative was based upon a completely different type of practical proposition. Any attempt to break down the distinction, hypothetical/categorical, will inevitably lead to breaking down the second type of distinction, analytic/synthetic. To her credit, Korsgaard recognizes that she is departing from Kant on this point. I suggest that once we let go of the formalist assumption, we are much more likely to accept Kant at his word that hypothetical imperatives are analytic whereas categorical imperatives are synthetic.

b. *The formalist assumption is based on a mistake*

If Kant's text is incompatible with the formalist assumption, what has led Korsgaard, Hill, and others Kantians to adopt it and to claim Kant as their inspiration? Kant put practical inferences at the center of his philosophy of action,³³ but, as we saw in part one, these practical inferences seem to require the formalist assumption as a premise in order to be valid. Recall that the formalist assumption was the simplest premise which made the following reasoning valid:

- (a₁) Remaining silent is the only means to keeping the peace.
- (b₁) Imogen wills that she keep the peace.
- Therefore,
- (c₁) Imogen ought to will that she remain silent.

If we include the formalist premise, we get the following *valid* inference:

- (a₂) If Imogen wills an end and certain means are necessary to achieve that end then she ought to will those means.
- (b₂) Remaining silent is the only means to keeping the peace.
- (c₂) Imogen wills that she keep the peace.
-
- (d₂) Imogen ought to will that she remain silent.

As I also have argued in part one, however, this was not the only way to get a valid inference out of hypothetical imperatives. There, I suggested the following:

- (a₅) Remaining silent is the only means to keeping the peace.
- (b₅) Imogen wills that she keep the peace.
- ← by M/E
- (c₅) Imogen wills that she remain silent.

In what follows, I would like to offer considerations for accepting (a₅)—(c₅) rather than (a₂)—(d₂) as the correct manner of interpreting the reasoning in (a₁)—(c₁).

The first point to make is that (a₁)—(c₁) is only invalid from the standpoint of theoretical deductive inference. It is because (a₁)—(c₁) does not follow from modus ponens, modus tollens, or any of the other theoretical rules of inference that it strikes us as invalid in the first place. But why, it might be asked, should practical reason need to be valid from the point of view of theoretical reason? In fact, to say that the practical syllogism is governed by

the same rules of inference that the theoretical syllogism is governed by seems to make practical reason a *species* of theoretical reason rather than an independent *genus* of reasoning in its own right.

Moreover, since the laws of theoretical inference are supposed to preserve truth among beliefs, if (a₂)—(d₂) is going to see any improvement in validity over (a₁)—(c₁), then each of the premises (a₂)—(c₂) must not only be propositions, but they must be propositions that are held to be true. But this means that (a₂) is not really a practical object at all. In so far as it is placed in a theoretical syllogism it is held up for us as something believed to be true. This means that the validity of (a₂)—(d₂) is purchased at the cost of transforming (c₂) (and consequently (d₂)) from a proposition that is willed into a proposition that is believed. When Imogen wills that she keep the peace, the proposition, as it figures in the theoretical syllogism is no longer something that Imogen wills, but something that Imogen believes that she wills—it is an observation about Imogen.

But if both the premises and the conclusions of a practical syllogism are propositions that are to be believed, in what sense is the practical syllogism *practical*? If one of the desiderata of an account of practical reasoning is that it can explain how reasoning can result in a willing, then the formalist account of practical reason resolutely denies that this desideratum can be satisfied. That Imogen *believes* X to be true can be explained by a syllogism that starts with something else Imogen believes and concludes in X, but that Imogen *wills* X to be true can never be explained by any syllogism. This means that as far as reasoning is concerned there is a gap between believing that we ought to X and the actual willing of X. Reasoning can justify Imogen's belief that she ought to remain silent, but it cannot justify her silence. But this means that, for a formalist, there is no sense in which we are *rationally* required to will the things that we believe we ought to do. The formalists seem

to come surprisingly close to agreeing with Hume when he says that “reason alone can never produce any action, or give rise to volition.”³⁴

Although neither Korsgaard, Hampton, or Hill have dealt with this objection explicitly, I suspect that they might answer as follows. The formalist practical syllogism is not practical because it concludes in willings, but is practical because it concludes in judgments about what to do. These judgments about what to do are indeed beliefs, but they are beliefs that have practice as their subject matter. The practicality of the syllogism is not revealed in a different set of inference rules but in a different subject matter. Practical reason, like every other type of reasoning is a specific domain within theoretical reasoning—its rules of inference are just the very same rules of inference as theoretical reasoning, viz. modus ponens, universalization introduction, conjunction, etc. and its objects are the very same objects as theoretical reasoning, viz. beliefs. Theoretical reason, on this view, is reason applied without specification of its object; practical reason is reason applied to a specific type of object.³⁵ On this view, IP could be thought of, not as a separate rule of inference, but as a discipline defining axiom. We know certain things about rational agents and willings that we don’t know about other objects about which we reason, viz. “A rational agent that wills the ends, wills the means.” This axiom allows us to draw theoretically valid inferences about rational agents and willings that we would not be able to draw without the discipline defining axiom. On the formalist response, it should come as no surprise, nor should it count as an objection against their theory, if the practical syllogism results in judgments *about* what to do rather than willings themselves. This is just what it means for practical reason to be a species of theoretical reason with an extra added axiom that helps to specify its objects.

I think that the formalist’s attempt to defend the practicality of practical reason by seeing the practical syllogism as reasoning about, rather than reasoning toward action, ought to be rejected. In their hopes of explaining the necessitation that comes with practical

reasoning as a species of theoretical necessitation, they introduce another sense of 'necessitation' which has no explanation at all. Consider HI itself which tells us to take the means to our ends. As many commentators have noted, this thesis is false if it is asserting that everyone who has an end will *in fact* take the means to this end. Rather, the thesis should be read to contain a hidden claim of necessitation expressed by Kant in his qualification that 'Whoever wills the end wills the means' is only true in 'so far as reason has decisive influence on his action.' (GW 417) The qualification makes clear that for those of us for whom reason does not have decisive influence on our actions (that is all finite rational agents), HI expresses a necessitation of the will rather than an inevitability. But what sort of necessitation is at work here? In the formalist premise, 'Imogen ought to take the means to her ends' the 'ought' can be a matter neither of theoretical nor practical logical necessity. It cannot be a matter of theoretical logical necessity since ends are not logically connected to means (this was the point of adding the formalist premise in the first place). But it cannot be a matter of practical logical necessity either because, on the formalist account, there is no such thing as a separate practical necessity. It follows that the 'ought' that occurs within the premise is not a matter of rational necessity at all. But then what sort of necessity does the 'ought' express? The formalists have interpreted the 'ought' of practical necessity as a species of theoretical necessity but have done so at the cost of introducing a different type of practical necessity as a central premise. The formalist account itself leaves unexplained how this practical 'ought' is supposed to work.³⁶

I would like to conclude by considering what happens if my attack on the formalist assumption successfully undermines the view that instrumentalism is incoherent, especially as it relates to the task of interpreting Kant. If Kant thinks that hypothetical imperatives do not require categorical imperatives but are understandable independently and in their own right, then he is not interested in the so-called 'companions in guilt' defense of morality.³⁷

Humeans have long argued that while hypothetical imperatives are transparent and obvious, categorical imperatives go beyond this transparent sort of practical reasoning and involve special and strange difficulties. The ‘companions in guilt’ theorist responds to this criticism by arguing that any difficulties that attach to categorical imperative apply equally to hypothetical imperatives. If a Humean claims that the Categorical Imperative is mysterious or queer³⁸ or accuses the Categorical Imperative of violating the internalism requirement,³⁹ then a formalist can respond by saying that the Categorical Imperative is no queerer than the Hypothetical Imperative,⁴⁰ and if the Categorical Imperative violates the internalism requirement so does the Hypothetical Imperative.⁴¹ If I am correct about Kant then all of this is irrelevant to Kant’s defense of morality. In fact, Kant agrees with the Humeans: hypothetical imperatives are transparent and obvious whereas categorical imperatives *do* involve special and strange difficulties. The difference between Kant and the Humeans lies in the fact that Kant thinks that he has a solution to these special and strange difficulties. I believe that Kant’s solution to these difficulties is an interesting one, and we do Kant’s position no favors by attributing to him this ‘companions in guilt’ argument.

Kant is famous for attempting to ground morality in our practical agency. Many Kantians have thought that a promising way of accomplishing this grounding would be to show that categorical imperatives were built into rational agency itself. An important step in this direction is to show that hypothetical imperatives already presuppose categorical imperatives. According to this promising argument, if we put these simple imperatives under the microscope, we will understand moral/categorical imperatives also. Understanding and thereby grounding moral/categorical imperatives is therefore only a matter of looking closely at familiar cases of hypothetical reasoning. If the arguments presented in this paper successfully undermine incoherentism, then hypothetical imperatives can coherently be understood without categorical imperatives. Morality may be connected to rational agency,

but this connection is not revealed by close inspection of hypothetical imperatives. This manner of grounding morality is not in the cards. I suggest that this connection is only revealed through an analysis of our freedom, a freedom that is not fully revealed in our capacity to construct and obey hypothetical imperatives.

¹ The position has its exegetical roots in Hill's article 'The Hypothetical Imperative' Hill 1973, and it will be his account that I most directly criticize. But the position is not restricted to him. Beck 1960 makes a similar assumption when he discusses the 'tacit premise or rule of practical inference' which he includes as part of the practical syllogism (pp. 85 - 87). Wood 1999: p. 60-65 commits himself similarly when he discusses the status of his HI which is thought to be an imperative on which we act. Among ethicists influenced by Kant, the clearest expressions are Korsgaard 1997 and Hampton 1998. But also, Darwall 1983.

² Christine Korsgaard, puts it this way: 'The familiar view that the instrumental principle is the *only* requirement of practical reason is incoherent. (Korsgaard 97: 220)

³ Tenenbaum 2003 argues similarly that Kant believes that instrumentalism is false but coherent. Tenenbaum, however, does not see the dependence of these neo-Kantian arguments on what I will shortly label the formalist assumption.

⁴ Hill denies this implication of the formalist assumption (see footnote 23 for a criticism of Hill on this point). The implication is most clearly spelled out in Hampton 1998: 165. 'Note that this norm, [the norm to take the means to your ends], which is implicitly involved in what it means to be instrumentally rational, is stated in a way that makes it categorical rather than hypothetical... I have argued that the force of hypothetical imperatives is dependent on, and *is at least in part constituted by*, the force of some antecedent categorical imperative that is in part definitive of instrumental rationality.'

⁵ In comments on this paper, Mark Schroeder convinced me to take more seriously the parts of Korsgaard 1997 that seem to be independent of such arguments. Below I will criticize these arguments and explain why I think they ultimately depend on a formalist picture.

⁶ Much of what I say about Kant in section II agrees with the interpretation offered in Schroeder 2005b. Schroeder and I agree that 1) many contemporary interpretations of Kant assume that hypothetical reasoning requires an 'independent and fundamental objective principle,' the Hypothetical Imperative 'capital-H, capital-I' (p. 371). We further agree that 2) these interpretations conflict with Kant's claim that hypothetical imperatives are analytic and therefore that 3) 'Kant never seriously took there to be a Hypothetical Imperative, capital-H, capital-I, an independent and fundamental objective principle of practical reason of which hypothetical imperatives are the expression, in the way that categorical imperatives are expressions of the Categorical Imperative'. (p. 359) For an explanation of where and how I disagree with Schroeder see footnote 26.

⁷ The Kantian phrase 'willing an end' can be approximated by the contemporary phrase 'intending an end'. Both are distinguished from desires in that they involve normative commitments to adopt the means to these willed/intended ends, whereas an end can be desired without any such commitment.

⁸ Hill 1973: 19.

⁹ I accept the minor grammatical infelicity of following the verb 'to will' with a proposition rather than a noun in order to emphasize that willing an end implies that the end must not simply come about but must be brought about by your action. In this sense, 'Imogen willing peace' cannot be satisfied by peace occurring through no effort of Imogen's.

¹⁰ I have altered Hill's correction in unimportant details, and I have supplied a concrete example where Hill used variables. Hill 1973: 19-20. But see also, Hill 1989: 126.

¹¹ In a comment on a previous version of this paper, Schroeder suggested that the formalist might be motivated to postulate an intermediate explanatory premise. He links this to Cudworth's argument against voluntarism which he discusses in 2005a. Cudworth argues that 'X ought to do Y because God commands it' requires an additional *explanatory* premise 'you ought to do what God commands'. This explanatory premise is required to explain what is special about God's commands as opposed to other commands, that they require my obedience. Schroeder 2005a criticizes this 'Cudworthy' argument. On my account however, formalists are not motivated by a desire to *explain* hypothetical reasoning but are motivated to validate it. The intermediate assumption is logical rather than explanatory.

¹² It is possible, of course, to be motivated by *reasons* of which we are unaware. It is more difficult to imagine, however, being motivated by *reasoning* of which we are unaware. We can imagine that our seemingly noble generosity is actually motivated by a shrewd and almost instinctual awareness that our acts are making a good impression. But the more calculating we make our baser motives, the less plausible seems to be the claim that we are unaware of these motives. It seems unlikely, for example, that we would be unaware that our noble generosity is really motivated by a shrewd calculation to just barely fall into a lower tax bracket.

¹³ Cf. GW 412.

¹⁴ ‘They [imperatives] say that something would be good to do or to leave undone; only they say it to a will which does not always do a thing because it has been informed that this is a good thing to do.’ (GW 413)

¹⁵ Hill 1973 makes this point explicitly and spends quite a bit of time showing that the Hypothetical Imperative is a ‘principle of conduct’. Korsgaard 1997: 236 clearly assumes that her instrumental principle is an imperative: ‘in other words, imperatives are addressed to being who may follow them or not. And this is true of the instrumental principle as well as of the others’. Hampton 1998: 125-166 also clearly commits herself to this.

¹⁶ I will return to this issue later (footnote 33). Ultimately, I will argue that imperatives themselves are less important in Kant’s thought than is commonly supposed.

¹⁷ Korsgaard 1996: 230. For a similar account see Hill 1973: 20 – 21.

¹⁸ In making the conclusion of the practical syllogism be a willing rather than an action, I am departing from a tradition going back to Aristotle that demands that the conclusion of a practical syllogism be an action. On this view, the conclusion of the syllogism would be Imogen’s actual silence, rather than her willing of silence. I have my reservations about this departure. Nevertheless, since I will eventually criticize the formalists for making practical reasoning insufficiently practical, it seems best to adopt the more conservative position that practical reasoning concludes just short of action in a willing. If the formalists cannot even give practical reason this much practicality then they will *a fortiori* fail to show that reasoning can end in an action. See Broome 2001 for an argument that Aristotle ought to be corrected and Vogler 2002:133-146 for an argument that intention should not be understood as a primitive but is itself dependent on an antecedent idea of intentional action.

¹⁹ Carroll 1895: 278-80.

²⁰ The application of Carroll’s tortoise to the practical sphere has become quite common. It started with Blackburn 1995 and Schueler 1995, but see also Searle 2001, Dreier 1997. My own understanding of the implications of Carroll’s article on practical reason comes closest to Searle 2001: 18-22.

²¹ For a contrary view see Kolodny 2005, who argues that rational necessity points out existing reasons rather than giving rise to its own type of reasons.

²² Hill 1973: 28.

²³ Hill points out that HI does not issue in a specific action unless the ends of the agent are consulted (Hill 1973: 30 ff.) The problem with this is that the categorical imperative is in no better shape than HI in this regard. For the categorical imperative seems equally unable to issue in a specific action without the benefit of consulting the agent’s ends. The most promising interpretations of the categorical imperative start with the agent’s maxims and only then apply the categorical imperative in order to come up with a decision as to whether or not the maxim is universalizable. According to these views, it is impossible to apply the categorical imperative without taking as a starting point the agent’s individual maxims. Since maxims reference the ends of the agent, even the categorical imperative cannot come to decision about what is to be done independently of reference to an agent’s ends. Hills defense of the analytic nature of ‘the hypothetical imperative’ is equally unconvincing.

²⁴ Korsgaard 1997: 223, 229, 245. Hill 1973: 19 makes a similar point about the hypothetical imperatives which do not contain his formalist premise.

²⁵ The account is outlined over the course of a series of papers. See especially, Broome 1999 and Broome 2005. I do not mean to imply that an inferentialist must adopt Broome’s solution to this problem, only that she can do so if she wants.

²⁶ It is now possible to state my disagreement with Schroeder 2005b. Schroeder agrees with the interpretation offered here that: pace Kant himself, Neo-Kantians have tended to make the (formalist) assumption that there is a "Hypothetical Imperative, capital-H, capital-I, an independent and fundamental objective principle of practical reason of which hypothetical imperatives are the expression... (Schroeder 2005b: 359)" Moreover, Schroeder notices that this formalist assumption figures in neo-Kantian attacks on instrumentalism. However, Schroeder confuses the issue by identifying this formalist assumption with a wide scope interpretation of IP. If what I have been arguing is correct, then it is quite possible to reject the formalist assumption and still accept a wide scope interpretation of IP. Furthermore, it is also perfectly possible to accept both a wide scope interpretation of IP and accept instrumentalism provided that formalism is rejected. Since formalism leads directly to a critique of instrumentalism, and since a wide scope interpretation of IP leads to a critique of instrumentalism only when accompanied by the assumption of formalism, I conclude that it is formalism rather than a wide scope interpretation of IP that is the important assumption of neo-Kantian attacks on instrumentalism. Much of Schroeder’s evidence that Kant did not believe in a narrow scope interpretation of IP is better understood as

evidence that Kant was not a formalist. Schroeder's Kantian inspired defense of a narrow scope interpretation of IP and its ability to resolve the tension of unacceptable means is therefore besides the point.

²⁷ Hill 1973: 18.

²⁸ Kant's example is carefully chosen. Since Kant thinks that geometric truths are only synthetically connected to each other, he is emphasizing that the analytic connection is between our *willing* the ends and *willing* the necessary means. The ends and the means themselves will usually be synthetically connected.

²⁹ See especially Korsgaard 1997: 245-7.

³⁰ Korsgaard 1997: 250.

³¹ See Schroeder 2005b: 266 for a criticism of this view.

³² Korsgaard 1997: 250.

³³ An anonymous reviewer objected that on my account, hypothetical imperatives seem to have little to no role in practical reasoning. Aren't hypothetical imperatives as we ordinarily understand them precisely judgments about what to do? But, on the inferentialist account, the practical syllogism neither starts nor ends with judgments about what to do. In fact, hypothetical imperatives as rules that figure in our reasoning seem to have very little place in an inferentialist account and certainly not the center place that Kant gave them. I admit that my account gives hypothetical imperatives less of a role in our reasoning than is conventionally given them. It is important, however, to notice that imperatives are not the cornerstones of Kant's account. Instead, imperatives are only explained after Kant has explained his more primitive concept of necessitation (*Nötigung*) (GW 412-413). Necessitation is the constraint that a rational agent has when the agent is acting on a principle. It is only after the idea of necessitation is in place that Kant introduces the idea of a command (*Gebot*) which express this necessitation and an imperative (*Imperativ*) which gives a formula for the expression of this necessitation. (GW 413) But imperatives, therefore, are only manners of expressing this necessitation of the will. (That Kant thinks that formulas are manners of expressing a principle is shown by his belief that the supreme principle of morality has various different *formulations* which are supposed to vary in presentation but express the same content. (GW 436) For the importance of formulae, see Kant 1788: 8). But if necessitation is the central concept and imperatives are only expressions of this necessitation, in what does this necessitation consist? For an inferentialist, this necessitation is *rational* necessity, and it is the same sort of necessity that a rational being has for believing B, if she already believes A and $A \rightarrow B$. If this account is accepted then imperatives are only convenient ways of expressing the necessitation that is more fully captured in practical syllogisms. To say that 'If Imogen wants to keep the peace, she ought to remain silent' is a formula that expresses the necessitation captured in the reasoning (a₁)—(c₁).

³⁴ Hume T414. I agree with Millgram 95, Hampton 95 and Korsgaard 96 who argue that this passage should be understood to express Hume's skepticism about practical reason rather than his endorsement of instrumentalism.

³⁵ I have in mind a distinction similar to the one that Kant draws between general logic and transcendental logic. Kant 1781/1787: A50/B74-A57/B82.

³⁶ It might seem that Korsgaard 1997: 249 contains an answer to this objection in her account of internal norms. As Korsgaard explains, an internal norm is a norm that applies to a thing in virtue of the kind of thing that it is, whereas an external norm applies to thing for some other reason. Taking one of Korsgaard's examples, it is an internal norm for a cake that it taste good, but it is an external norm for the cake that it be 10 feet high. Tasting good is part of what it means to be a cake and a cake that does not taste good is failing as a cake. There is evidence to think that Korsgaard thinks that HI expresses the necessity of an internal norm of rational agency. On this understanding, the 'ought' that occurs in HI as the premise of the formalists practical syllogism could be understood as the 'ought' of internal normativity. Imogen *ought* to take the means to her ends in the same way that a cake *ought* to taste good or a chess player *ought* to avoid moving her rook diagonally. Ultimately, however, the 'ought' of practical reason, expressed by the formalists in HI, cannot be the same thing as the 'ought' of an internal norm. A chess player who follows the rules of chess and does not move her rook diagonally does not do so *because* it is an internal norm of being a chess player. As a rule directed to the chess player, she 'ought' not to move her rook diagonally because it is illegal to do so NOT because she would fail to be a chess player if she violated this rule. The 'ought' of an internal norm applies to things regardless of whether they are capable of heeding the rules. The practical ought is one that demands that they heed the rules.

³⁷ In this context, the phrase belongs to J. L. Mackie 1977. Harold 2003 discusses the history of this position and identifies G. F. Schueler 1995, Korsgaard 1997 and Jean Hampton 1992 as participants in this 'companions in guilt' strategy. I would add Wood 1999: 65, 'Those who reject the idea of a categorical imperative on the ground that it is an a priori principle must therefore be equally prepared to reject the idea of a hypothetical imperative and instrumental rationality, too.'

³⁸ Mackie 1977: 15-49.

³⁹ Williams 1981: 101-114.

⁴⁰ This is the strategy in Hampton 1998.

⁴¹ This is the strategy in Korsgaard 1986.