

Merely a New Formula? G.A. Tittel on Kant's 'Reform' of Moral Science

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*Penultimate version. Final version published in:

Studi Kantiani 33, 2020, pg. 49–64.

<http://dx.medra.org/10.19272/202002901004>

Abstract. In the first ever commentary on the *Groundwork*, one of Kant's earliest critics, Gottlob August Tittel, argues that the categorical imperative is not a new principle of morality, but merely a new formula. This objection has been unjustly neglected in the secondary literature, despite the fact that Kant explicitly responds to it in a footnote in the second *Critique*. In this paper I seek to offer a thorough explanation of both Tittel's 'new formula' objection and Kant's response to it, as well as illustrate its significance. I argue that the objection is in fact the third step in a line of argument that Tittel presents in his commentary, and that the objection is best understood within this context. I analyze Kant's response in the second *Critique* footnote line-by-line so as to show that Kant both clarifies that it was never his aim to offer a new principle, but only 'establish' the principle that common human reason already implicitly employs. Furthermore, I show that Kant uses the opportunity to clarify the sense in which the categorical imperative is a 'formula [*Formel*]', namely as a representation of a complicated and abstract principle, like the moral law, in a way that is easier to understand and apply. I conclude by illustrating the fourth step in Tittel's line of argument, which makes the overall significance of the 'new formula' objection clear: for Tittel, the problem is not that Kant seems to be offering merely a new formula, but that the categorical imperative lacks a foundation.

Keywords: empty formalism, deduction of morality, common human reason

Kant's first critics, reviewers, and commentators were profoundly important for the subsequent development and presentation of his Critical philosophy. To cite just one important example of the immediate reception of Kant's *theoretical* philosophy, the first substantial review of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was the infamous Göttingen review, written by Christian Garve and then heavily edited by J.G.H. Feder, which subsequently encouraged Kant to clarify the ways in which his

transcendental idealism differed from Berkeleyan idealism in the Appendix to the *Prolegomena*.¹ The immediate reception of Kant's *moral* philosophy was equally important for its later shape and presentation. Heiner Klemme has argued, for example, that «in none of the other critical writings does he [Kant] deal with his critics to such an extent as in the *Critique of Practical Reason*.»² Klemme even goes on to suggest that Kant may not have written the second *Critique* (KpV) at all, were it not for these early criticisms and replies.³ Given the importance of the first criticisms and responses to the moral philosophy and related doctrines that Kant presents in both the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (GMS) and the first *Critique*, it is surprising that these criticisms are only very rarely and marginally discussed in the secondary literature. My aim in this paper is to help remedy this situation by clarifying the nature and significance of one central objection made by one of Kant's earliest critics who has been especially, but to my mind unjustly, neglected in the secondary literature, namely Gottlob August Tittel (1739-1816).

As Jens Timmermann points out, Tittel is «the *Groundwork's* first commentator».⁴ Just one year after the GMS first appeared in 1785, Tittel published the first book-length commentary on it entitled: *On Kant's Reform of Moral Science [Über Herrn Kants Moralreform]* (hereafter: *Reform*).⁵ Many of the criticisms presented in this book would go on to be extraordinarily important for Kant's aims in the second *Critique* and beyond. Although I also discuss some of Tittel's auxiliary objections in this paper, my primary focus is the most famous objection in the book, because Kant responds to it directly in the Preface to the second *Critique*, namely the claim that «the entire Kantian reform of moral science [...] confine[s] itself to a new formula».⁶ Kant's response seems to have sealed Tittel

¹ For a helpful discussion of this and many of the other first reviews and criticisms of Kant's theoretical philosophy, see B. Sassen, *Introduction*, in *Kant's Early Critics: The Empiricist Critique of the Theoretical Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 1-52.

² H. Klemme, *The Origin and Aim of Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason: A Critical Guide*, edited by A. Reath and J. Timmermann, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 17.

³ Ibid.

⁴ J. Timmermann, *Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: A Commentary*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 56.

⁵ A note on the translation of *Moral* in the title: I adopt Timmermann's suggestion (see Kant, I. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Edited and Translated by Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, 161) that 'moral science' is the best translation for *Moral* in order to preserve a distinction between it and related terms like *Sittlichkeit*, *Moralität*, *Sitten*, *Ethik* and *Moralphilosophie*. See also the entry in J. and W. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 16 Bde. in 32 Teilbänden, Leipzig, 1854-1961. Quellenverzeichnis Leipzig 1971, pp. 2526-2528, which points out that *Moral* was sometimes used interchangeably with *Sittenlehre*, as was done by Christian Wolff for example, which confirms that 'moral science' is a fitting translation.

⁶ G.A. Tittel, *Über Herrn Kants Moralreform*, Frankfurt and Leipzig, Pfähler, 1786, p. 35 and see KpV, AA V 8n for Kant's reference to this objection. There is no modern edition of Tittel's commentary. All citations therefore reference the original edition of 1786 and all translations are my own. A translation of the most important passages

an unfortunate fate: just as Kant does in the second *Critique*, nearly all of the discussions of Kant's response to Tittel in the secondary literature are barely more than a few sentences long, and occur almost exclusively in footnotes. This has resulted in an incomplete understanding of both Tittel's objection and Kant's response to it. Accordingly, I have two main aims in the following: first, to offer a thorough account of both Tittel's 'new formula' objection and Kant's response to it, and second, to accurately describe the significance of Tittel's objection.

The following paper has three sections. In the first section (1.) I illustrate that Tittel's 'new formula' objection is in fact the third step of a broader line of thought that he presents in the *Reform*. I begin this section by describing Tittel's more general empiricist philosophical commitments, which lead him to argue that the categorical imperative is empty (step one). I then show that it is on the basis of the categorical imperative's alleged emptiness that, *in the spirit of charity*, Tittel suggests that we interpret the categorical imperative as an empiricist principle in order to give it meaning (step two). But if the categorical imperative is an empiricist principle, then Kant's supposedly new moral principle is in fact only a new formulation of a moral principle we are already familiar with (step three). In section two (2.) I turn to Kant's response to this objection. I analyze the second *Critique* footnote, wherein Kant responds to Tittel directly, line-by-line so as to illustrate that there is more to Kant's response than commentators have suggested in the past. Kant responds to Tittel by admitting that his aim was never to 'discover' a new principle of morality for the very first time, but only to 'establish' the principle that common human reason already implicitly employs. I then illustrate that Kant uses the opportunity to clarify his understanding of the concept of a formula [*Formel*]: for Kant, a formula is a way of representing a complex principle, like the moral law, that makes it easier to understand and apply. In the third and final section (3.) I return to Tittel and discuss the significance of the 'new formula' objection. The literature on Kant's response to Tittel is ambiguous and wavers between the suggestion that the new formula objection is shallow and insignificant, which is why it warrants only a footnote-length response by Kant, to claims that Tittel is actually addressing foundational issues in Kant's moral philosophy. Although at first glance the objection seems quite superficial, I argue that it does in fact reach into the heart of the *Groundwork*'s project, namely the grounding of morality. This is only clear, however, once one understands the fourth and final step of the line of thought that Tittel presents the *Reform*: if the categorical imperative is empty

from Tittel's commentary will be included in *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason: Backgrounds Source Materials*. Edited with an Introduction by Michael Walschots. Under contract with Cambridge University Press.

but also not an empiricist principle, and thus not merely a new formula, then Tittel argues it is not binding on human beings.

1. Empiricism, Emptiness, and the New Formula Objection

1.1 – Tittel’s Empiricism

Gottlob August Tittel (1739-1816) first taught philosophy as a lecturer in Jena (1760-64) and later as professor in Karlsruhe from 1764 where he also eventually became rector.⁷ One of his achievements during his lifetime was a series of six textbooks entitled *Explanations of Theoretical and Practical Philosophy According to Feder’s Arrangement* [*Erläuterungen der theoretischen und praktischen Philosophie nach Herrn Feder’s Ordnung*], published between 1783 and 1786.⁸ As the title of these textbooks indicates, Tittel was an open supporter of Johann Georg Heinrich Feder (1740-1821), professor of philosophy in Göttingen, one of the most well-known ‘popular philosophers’ of the period, and editor of the famous Garve/Feder review.⁹ Tittel modelled the content and style of his works on Feder, and both figures were adherents of Locke’s philosophy. Indeed, one of Tittel’s other achievements is producing a book of extracts from Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in German translation in 1791.¹⁰

In line with his empiricist commitments, Tittel is perhaps best known in the history of philosophy as an outspoken critic of Kant. Tittel produced two short, book-length reactions to Kant’s philosophy. After publishing his response and commentary on the *Groundwork* in 1786, he published a response to the first *Critique* in 1787 under the title: *Kantian Forms of Thought or Categories* [*Kantische Denkformen oder Kategorien*]. Tittel’s empiricism is obvious even in the *Reform*, however. Early on in the book, for example, Tittel makes a statement reminiscent of Locke’s blank slate hypothesis:

⁷ For biographical information on Tittel see A. Thomas 2010, *Gottlob August Tittel (1739-1816)*, in *The Bloomsbury Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century German Philosophers*, edited by H. Klemme and M. Kuehn, London, Bloomsbury, 2016, pp. 792-793.; and especially W. Kühlmann, *Facetten der Aufklärung in Baden*, Freiburg, Rombach, 2009, pp. 15-23.

⁸ G.A. Tittel, *Erläuterungen der theoretischen und praktischen Philosophie nach Herrn Feders Ordnung*, Vol. 1: Logik (1783); Vol. 2 Metaphysik (1784); Vol. 3: Allgemeine Praktische Philosophie (1785); Vol. 4: Moral (1785); Vol. 5: Natur – und Völkerrecht (1786); Vol. 6: Abhandlungen über Einzelne wichtige Materien (1786).

⁹ On Feder see U. Thiel, *Johann Georg Heinrich Feder (1749-1821)*, in *The Bloomsbury Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century German Philosophers*, edited by H. Klemme and M. Kuehn, London, Bloomsbury, 2016, pp. 204-207; and H.P. Nowitzki, U. Roth, and G. Stiening (Editors), *Johann Georg Heinrich Feder (1740-1821): Empirismus und Popularphilosophie Zwischen Wolff und Kant*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2018.

¹⁰ *Locke vom menschlichen Verstande, zu leichtem und fruchtbarem Gebrauche zergliedert und geordnet*, Mannheim, 1791.

Without having received the initial material from the senses, the entire operation of thought would suddenly stand still. The soul must climb from this most foundational level up to the highest, by means of the course that nature has set for it. From the material of experience the highest and most dignified concepts are built by means of processing and development. This developmental and processing power is reason.¹¹

Tittel goes on to explain how even a concept like God is created merely by reflecting and expanding upon our idea of human capacities, which we know through experience.¹² For Tittel, *all* concepts must necessarily lead back to experience, because «every abstraction that is not built on this foundation is a chimera.»¹³ Indeed, Tittel indicates that he favours Locke's «historical, plain method»¹⁴ of the «empirical origin» of our ideas in experience, as opposed the «unfortunate [*missliche*]» method of those who claim ideas can have an abstract origin.¹⁵

Tittel's empiricist epistemological commitments form the background of his critique of Kant's moral philosophy. Given his claim that ideas must have their origin in experience if they are not 'chimeras', even the concepts of morality and duty must eventually come back to experience in the sense that they must be «composites» formed from various experiential components.¹⁶ Moral rules have their origin in experience as well:

The law is just the general expression, or the abstract entity, wherein what is common to certain actions and their consequences is summarized and described out of a multitude of singular cases. The general expression, as a formula, both in the theoretical and practical sense (axiom or law), always breaks down into the singular concepts and cases, from which they were abstracted; and the former reaches not a hair further than the latter.¹⁷

From this passage, which suggests that Tittel would be sympathetic to aspects of moral particularism, we can start to see the position from which Tittel is approaching Kant's moral

¹¹ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 19.

¹² Tittel, *Reform*, p. 19.

¹³ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 20.

¹⁴ J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by P. Nidditch, Oxford, Clarendon, 1975, I.1.2.

¹⁵ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 27.

¹⁶ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 20.

¹⁷ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 14.

philosophy. Sceptical, to say the least, of any concept or idea whose origin cannot be traced back to experience, and believing that any moral rule or principle is only the abstraction or generalization of particular cases, Tittel would have many questions to ask about «a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything that might be in some way empirical and belongs to anthropology» (*GMS*, AA IV 389) and the idea of a purely a priori moral law.

In the *Reform*, a major part of Tittel's critique of and reaction to Kant's moral philosophy can be characterized by a line of argument that has four main steps, and the new formula objection is made only in the third step of this argument. In the remainder of this section I describe the first three steps, before discussing Kant's response to the new formula objection in the following section. I present the fourth and final step of Tittel's argument in the third section of this paper, which illustrates that the overall significance of the new formula objection concerns the ultimate foundation of morals.

1.2 – Step One: Empty Formalism

One of Tittel's main arguments against Kant's moral philosophy in the *Reform* is that, without reference to experience, the categorical imperative is meaningless and empty. In an important section of the commentary where Tittel discusses Kant's classification of imperatives¹⁸, Tittel has the following to say about the categorical imperative:

this law itself, which Herr Kant believes to have found in pure reason, if it is not an entirely empty and sterile expression but is to be capable of some application, is entirely empirical with respect to its content, i.e. it immediately refers to the consequences and effects that we know from experience.¹⁹

Tittel's point in this passage, as he goes on to explain, is that without bringing in experience, which tells us what the consequences of making the law universal would be, the categorical imperative does not provide us with a usable criterion of moral evaluation and therefore cannot decide the morality of maxims. In a passage that is likely the first instance of what has come to be called the 'logical

¹⁸ Tittel, *Reform*, pp. 30-37.

¹⁹ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 33.

contradiction' interpretation of Kant's formula of universal law²⁰, Tittel argues that contradiction is unhelpful in determining the morality of maxims:

Just as I come not a step further once I have learned the formula that something cannot simultaneously both exist and not exist (as the wise Locke has already noted), so am I not brought any further when one says to me – “act in such a way that you can also will that your maxim may become universal.”²¹

Tittel therefore charges Kant with empty formalism: «Therefore only the form is purely rational; but the materials are empirical. However! Without the materials I cannot even imagine myself under an empty form.»²² Without reference to experience, the categorical imperative is a purely formal and rational principle that cannot decide the morality of maxims, unless we bring in information gained by experience.

As Fabian Freyenhagen notes, «Hegel is often credited with having formulated this objection [i.e. of empty formalism] in its most incisive way.»²³ In the *Philosophy of Right*, for example, Hegel makes some remarks that are extremely similar to those of Tittel. From the point of view of Kant's moral philosophy, Hegel argues that

no immanent doctrine of duties is possible. One might indeed bring in material *from outside* and thereby arrive at *particular* duties, but it is impossible to make the transition to the determination of particular duties from the above determination of duty as *absence of contradiction*, as *formal correspondence with itself*, which is no different from the specification of *abstract indeterminacy*; and even if such a particular content for action is taken into consideration, there is no criterion within the principle for deciding whether or not this content is a duty.²⁴

²⁰ See e.g. C. Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp.81-2.

²¹ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 14-15.

²² Tittel, *Reform*, p. 88.

²³ F. Freyenhagen, *Empty, Useless, and Dangerous? Recent Kantian Replies to the Empty Formalism Objection*, in «Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain», 63, 2011, pp. 163-186: 163.

²⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, edited by Allen W. Wood, translated by H.B. Nisbet, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, §135 Remark.

Freyenhagen has very accurately remarked that Hegel's version of the empty formalism objection, taken in its entirety, actually captures a cluster of interrelated objections,²⁵ but that the objection can be summarized by three main points: 1) the categorical imperative cannot arrive at a doctrine of duties, 2) there is no criterion to test candidate duties, i.e. consistency or contradiction is not a helpful criterion for testing duties, and 3) the test that Kant proposes would lead to false positives.²⁶ As is clear in the passages from the *Reform* cited above, Tittel's own early version of the empty formalism objection focuses on the second point, i.e. that the categorical imperative, with its proposed criterion of absence of contradiction and rational consistency, cannot help us determine which candidate maxims are moral and which are not.²⁷

1.3 - Step Two: The Empiricist Interpretation of the Categorical Imperative

The empty formalism objection is just one of many problems that Tittel sees with Kant's moral philosophy. The empty formalism objection is special, however, because it is the first step in a line of argument that leads Tittel to make a number of other significant remarks about the categorical imperative. The second step of this line of argument is to suggest that, because the categorical imperative faces issues like the empty formalism objection, Kant must have had something else in mind as a criterion for moral evaluation, as opposed to the formal and rational moral law that uses something similar to the principle of contradiction as such a criterion. In other words, because the face-value interpretation of the categorical imperative is problematic, *in the spirit of charity* Tittel proceeds to offer an interpretation of the categorical imperative that gives it meaning.

Not surprisingly, the meaning that Tittel reads into Kant's categorical imperative is empirical. With respect to the example of false promising, for example, Tittel claims: «But does this law not immediately refer to the consequences, which such a maxim, according to its universalization, would have for myself and others? *Only* from the consequences can I first decide whether I can wish and will that it [my maxim] become universal or not.»²⁸ Tittel makes similar remarks on Kant's other examples: the example of suicide refers to the anthropological desire of self-love; the example of

²⁵ Freyenhagen, *Empty, Useless, and Dangerous?*, p. 165.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ It should be mentioned, however, that Tittel touches on both of the other points as well. First, it is a consequence of there being no criterion of moral judgement (point 2) that the categorical imperative cannot arrive at a doctrine of duties (point 1) (see Tittel, *Reform*, pp. 33-6, 46, 65, 88). Tittel also occasionally discusses how the categorical imperatives would yield false positives (point 3) (see Tittel, *Reform*, p. 47).

²⁸ Tittel, *Reform*, p.14, my emphasis.

developing one's talents requires consideration of the many purposes that developing such talents would serve; and the example of indifference refers, again, to human needs.²⁹ Tittel's overall point is the same: it is only by referring to information we gain through experience, whether about the consequences of acting in certain ways or the empirical nature of human beings, that we can see why any of Kant's examples are immoral. The criterion Kant is using must therefore be something other than what he claims it to be. The following passage nicely summarizes Tittel's line of thought here:

The categorical imperative (so that I say it once and for all), with all of the telltale signs of pure reason, seems to me to be a true work of fancy [*Spielwerk*]. "Act in such a way that you can will that your maxim becomes universal" sounds indeed nice and new. However! If one wants meaning and not words, then it can mean nothing other than: act in such a way, as you can consider it good and beneficial, if all other beings (who could also so act) also in fact so acted. An antecedent concept of goodness and benefit, determined from somewhere else, is thereby necessarily presupposed, or the entire formula has no meaning. By means of the formula I do not therefore learn what is good; rather the formula only tells me in general: "Do that which is good (generally useful)." I am not brought a step further by that altered, new-seeming formula: "act in such a way that you can also will, that your maxim becomes universal", than by one of the most well-known principles: "act in such a way that through your action and maxim of action perfection is promoted (on the whole and taken in general)."³⁰

Tittel makes a number of points in this passage, including the claim that Kant does not define, but rather presupposes a conception of the good,³¹ but the main purpose is to suggest that the categorical imperative must be interpreted in empiricist fashion if it is to have any meaning. In particular, Tittel suggests that the categorical imperative says nothing other than that we should act

²⁹ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 32-35.

³⁰ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 36.

³¹ This objection, which we might call the 'priority of the good' objection, has been raised by many others, but most notably by another of Kant's early critics, namely Herman Andreas Pistorius in his very early review of the *Groundwork*, see A. Landau, *Rezensionen zur Kantischen Philosophie: 1781-87*, Bebra, Landau, 1991, pp. 354-367; and B. Gesang (Editor), *Kants vergessener Rezensent*, Hamburg, Meiner, 2007, pp. 26-38. Kant explicitly responds to Pistorius's formulation of the priority of the good objection directly in the second chapter of the *Analytic of the second Critique*, as he states in the Preface at 5:8-9. For a discussion of this objection and Kant's response, see M. Walschots. *Kant and Consequentialism in Context: The Second Critique's Response to Pistorius*, in «Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie», forthcoming.

in such a way that, if all other beings acted similarly, it would be generally good and beneficial.³² Tittel is of course aware that Kant explicitly denies that the categorical imperative takes beneficial consequences into account.³³ His point is rather that, despite what Kant may say to the contrary, the categorical imperative must nevertheless refer to beneficial consequences if it is to have meaning.³⁴

1.4 - Step Three: Merely a New Formula

It is at this point that Tittel makes the ‘new formula’ objection. If we are forced to interpret the categorical imperative along empiricist lines in order to give it meaning, then Kant seems to be saying something similar to moral principles we already know. In the passage above, Tittel suggests that the categorical imperative is strikingly similar to «one of the most well-known principles», namely Christian Wolff’s principle of perfection: «Do that which makes your condition of that of others more perfect; omit what makes it less perfect.»³⁵ But if this is all the categorical imperative amounts to, then all Kant is offering is merely a new formula, or new formulation, of an old, familiar principle, and nothing new:

if Herr Kant wishes to give his supreme principle of morality only the least applicability, he himself must consider purposes and consequences, and needs of human beings, and take all of this from the world of experience. How might the astute man, with his pure principle of reason, with which no human being – not even himself – could make any progress without the help of experience, nevertheless raise himself so far above all experiential philosophers, and dare to make so many bitter

³² A plausible way in which to read this is that Tittel believes Kant must be interpreted as a consequentialist of the utilitarian variety if the categorical imperative is to have any meaning. Indeed, Tittel argues against ethical egoism in many places (see Tittel, *Reform*, p. 22) but it is clear that he gives the categorical imperative a consequentialist interpretation. For the argument that both Tittel and Pistorius interpret Kant as an implicit utilitarian and the suggestion that Kant responds to this mistaken allegation in the second Critique, see M. Walschots. *Kant and Consequentialism in Context: The Second Critique’s Response to Pistorius*, in «Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie», forthcoming.

³³ See for example Tittel, *Reform*, p. 7 and 17.

³⁴ It should be mentioned that Tittel would likely want to interpret *any* non-empirical principle, not just Kant’s, in this way. Eventually, Tittel lays his cards on the table and says that what is absolutely good and desire-worthy as a «final end» in itself is «the common world best – human happiness and the highest possible sum of perfections for sensing and thinking beings». (*Reform*, 38) Accordingly, Tittel says that if there were a foundational principle of morality it would be: “act in such a way that through your action and disposition, the common world best, the well-being of sensible and thinking natures, thus also your own happiness – is preserved and promoted.” (*Reform* 38-9)

³⁵ C. Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedanken von der Menschen Thun und Lassen, zu Beförderung ihrer Glückseligkeit*, Hildesheim, Olms, 2006, §12.

objections against them? *Should then the entire Kantian reform of moral science thus confine itself to a new formula?* How can an empty formula help, which one wishes to give the appearance of pure rationality, but which is entirely unsuitable for use insofar as one does not bolster it with the material of experience?³⁶

In order to make sense of the categorical imperative and lend it ‘applicability’, i.e. in order for it to possess a usable criterion of moral evaluation and thus enable it to decide the morality of maxims, we need to refer to knowledge from experience, such as the needs of human beings, intentions, and consequences. But if we do this, then, according to Tittel, the categorical imperative is nothing new, special, or interesting, but is only a new *formula*, i.e. a new way of expressing a principle we have long been familiar with.

In summary, Tittel’s ‘new formula’ objection is actually the third step of a line of argument that he presents in the *Reform*. First, Tittel argues, among other things, that Kant’s categorical imperative is a merely formal and therefore empty rational principle that is meaningless in the sense of being incapable of deciding the morality maxims. In a second step, Tittel suggests, in the spirit of charity, that the categorical imperative must be interpreted along empiricist lines if it is meaningful. If this is what Kant’s principle of morality amounts to, however, then Tittel argues it is only a new ‘formula’, i.e. a new version of principle we are already familiar with.

2. Kant’s Response to Tittel

Kant sent the text of the *Groundwork* to his publisher in September 1784, and the book was published eight months later in April of 1785.³⁷ As we learn from the Foreword to Tittel’s *Reform*, the commentary was completed around March of 1786 and published soon thereafter, as is confirmed by the publication of the first review of Tittel’s commentary, which appeared in May of that same year.³⁸ When the *Reform* appeared in the Spring of 1786, Kant was working on the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. As we learn from an early advertisement for the B edition, published on 21. November 1786, Kant initially intended for it to contain

³⁶ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 35, emphasis added.

³⁷ M. Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 277.

³⁸ See Landau, *Rezensionen*, pp. 378-80. There were in fact no fewer than seven (!) reviews of Tittel’s *Reform* itself. These have all been reprinted in Landau, *Rezensionen*, see pp. 378-80; 398-99; 403; 405-6; 407-9; 450-69; and 472-3.

a *Critique of Pure Practical Reason* as an addition to the Critique of Pure Speculative Reason in the first edition, which will, on the one hand, secure the principle of morality against the objections that have been raised or will be raised in the future, and on the other hand, is capable of accomplishing the whole of the critical investigations that precede the system of the philosophy of pure reason.³⁹

The ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’ never made its way into the B edition of the first *Critique*, of course, which was completed in April of 1787, but instead became the *Critique of Practical Reason*, which appeared in December of 1787 with the year 1788 on the title page.⁴⁰ There is some controversy concerning the exact point in time at which Kant decided to turn the ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’ into a separate book, and why⁴¹, but it is uncontroversial that it was the early critics of both the *Groundwork* and the A edition of the first *Critique* that contributed to Kant wanting to expand upon and clarify his principle of morality.

Tittel was without a doubt one of these critics. If Kant did not discover Tittel’s commentary on his own, we have evidence from Kant’s correspondence that his contemporaries made him aware of it. In a letter to Kant from Johann Erich Biester dated June 11, 1786, for example, we learn that Kant was planning to defend himself against the objections of both Tittel and Feder:

You write to me of a defense that you want to make against the attacks of Herren Feder and Tittel. Like everything from your pen, it will be instructive and useful to the public. [...] Every sensible person shrugs his shoulders when he sees that a Feder (and Tittel is really only a weak shadow of a weak Feder) hopes to educate a Kant. (*Br*, AA X 457)

Similarly, in a letter dated 17. July, 1786 Ludwig Heinrich Jakob writes to Kant that

The misunderstanding concerning your Metaphysics of Morals seems to be even larger than about your Critique. I do not know if the brochure of a certain Tittel is known to you, who wagers to judge your Metaphysics, but without understanding, at what your investigation aims. (*Br*, AA X 462)

³⁹ Landau, *Rezensionen*, pp. 471-2.

⁴⁰ For more details see Klemme, *The Origin and Aim of Kant’s Critique of Pure Practical Reason*.

⁴¹ See Klemme *Origin and Aim*, pp. 17-18 for a discussion.

As these letters from Kant's fans indicate, in one way or another Kant was aware of Tittel's commentary soon after it was published, and precisely at the time when he was revising «the system of the philosophy of pure reason.» It is thus no surprise that the second *Critique* contains an explicit response to Tittel.⁴²

Kant addresses Tittel, without mentioning him by name, in one of the footnotes in the Preface over the course of Kant's efforts to explain how the second *Critique* responds to his critics. After clarifying that the second *Critique* only presupposes the *Groundwork* «insofar as this constitutes preliminary acquaintance with the principle of duty and provides and justifies a determinate formula of it» (*KpV*, AA V 8) Kant says the following in a footnote:

[1] A reviewer who wanted to say something censuring this work hit the mark better than he himself may have intended when he said that no new principle of morality is set forth in it but only a new formula. [2] But who would even want to introduce a new principle of all morality and, as it were, first invent it? [3] Just as if, before him, the world had been ignorant of what duty is or in thoroughgoing error about it. [4] But whoever knows what a formula means to a mathematician, which determines quite precisely what is to be done to solve a problem and does not let him miss it, will not take a formula that does this with respect to all duty in general as something that is insignificant and can be dispensed with. (*KpV*, AA V 8n)

⁴² There is actually some disagreement over whether it is Tittel that Kant is responding to in the second *Critique*, or someone else. Mary Gregor, for example, claims that Kant is responding to Johann Friedrich Flatt's early review of the *Groundwork* in the *Tübingsche gelehrte Anzeigen*, 14. Stück, 16. Feb. 1786 105-122 (see also Landau, *Rezensionen*, 277-282). Although Flatt mentions Kant's «new formula of the supreme principle of morality [neue Formel des obersten Grundsatzes der Sittlichkeit]» (Flatt, p. 111) in this review, the essence of Flatt's objection at this point does not concern the categorical imperative as a new formula, but rather with the idea that rational beings are the only things that have value in and of themselves, from which Flatt claims that Kant deduces the principle of morality. It is therefore unlikely that Kant has Flatt in mind in second *Critique* footnote at 5:8n. (It should also be noted here that Gregor, and almost every modern edition of Gregor's translation, lists the publication details of Flatt's review incorrectly. The information I have listed above is correct.) Alternatively, Heiner Klemme claims that Kant is not referring to Tittel himself, but to a review of Tittel's *Reform* (see H. Klemme, *Sachanmerkungen*, in I. Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, edited by H. Klemme and H.D. Brandt, Hamburg, Meiner, 2003, pp. 219-242: 222-3) Klemme presumably makes this claim because Kant refers to a «reviewer» in the footnote that addresses the new formula objection. Both Gregor and Klemme acknowledge, however, that it is Tittel who most precisely formulated the 'new formula' objection. Given that Kant was aware of Tittel's *Reform*, and the fact that it is in this book that we find the most thorough description of the objection, it is very unlikely that Kant has anyone other than Tittel himself in mind in the second *Critique* footnote. Indeed, although the *Reform* is not a 'review' in the strict sense of the term, as a commentary it is in the spirit of a review of the *Groundwork*. Tittel himself even describes his approach in the *Reform* as similar to that of many reviews of the time, i.e. as having «followed» Kant «step by step» (see Tittel, *Reform*, pp. 4-5), which might explain why Kant refers to Tittel as a 'reviewer.'

The existing interpretations of this footnote are very incomplete and largely focus on Kant's response in the second sentence only.⁴³ In the remainder of this section I offer an interpretation of this footnote in an effort to clarify Kant's response to Tittel's 'new formula' objection.

In the first sentence of the footnote [1] Kant describes the objection, namely that the *Groundwork* did not set forth a new principle of morality, but only a new formula. The way in which Kant understands this objection will only be clear once we have analysed the rest of the footnote. In the second sentence [2], Kant begins his response by admitting that his aim in the *Groundwork* was not to «introduce [*einführen*]]» or «invent [*erfinden*]]» a new principle of all morality. At first glance, this might strike readers as odd given that Kant claims in both the *Groundwork* (see e.g. *GMS*, AA IV 441-3) and the second *Critique* that there is something novel about the categorical imperative that «distinguishes it from all other practical principles» (*KpV* AA V 46), namely autonomy as opposed to the heteronomy of all previous practical principles. If we take a closer look at how Kant describes his aims in the *Groundwork*, however, the second sentence is not as odd as it initially appears. In the Preface to the *Groundwork* Kant describes the aim of the book in the following way:

The present groundwork, however, is nothing more than the identification [*die Aufsuchung*] and corroboration [*Festssetzung*] of the supreme principle of morality, which by itself constitutes a business that is complete in its purpose and to be separated from every other moral investigation. (*GMS*, AA IV 392.3-6)

The first step of Kant's response to Tittel is therefore to clarify that the aim of the book was never to invent or discover a new principle of morality. On the contrary, as Kant clarifies towards the end of the *Groundwork*'s First Section, aptly entitled «Transition from common to philosophical moral rational cognition» (*GMS*, AA IV 393), the categorical imperative is the principle that «common human reason [...] always actually has before its eyes and uses as the standard of its judging.» (*GMS*, AA IV 403.34-37) As Kant goes on to argue: «there is thus no need of science and philosophy to know what one has to do in order to be honest and good, indeed even to be wise and virtuous.» (*GMS*, AA IV 404.5-7) Common human reason, i.e. pre-philosophical cognition, does not need to

⁴³ See L.W. Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1960, p. 57 and 165; G.B. Sala, *Kants «Kritik der praktischen Vernunft»: Ein Kommentar*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004, p. 65 and 94. Exceptions that offer an interpretation that was formative for what I offer in this paper are Bacin, *Kant and Feder*, pp. 244-7 and Timmermann, *Commentary*, pp. xii-xiii.

be taught anything new, philosophy merely «makes it aware of its own principle» (*GMS*, AA IV 404.4-5), i.e. identifies [*aufsuchen*] and establishes or corroborates [*festsetzen*] the principle it already implicitly employs. This explains Kant's remark in the third sentence [3]: if his aim were to discover and invent a new principle of morality for the very first time, he would be implying that the principle is completely unfamiliar to everyone, whether on the level of pre-philosophical cognition or otherwise.

In the fourth sentence [4] Kant raises the question of the correct definition of a 'formula [*Formel*]' and seems to suggest that Tittel might have misunderstood the meaning of this concept. In the *Reform*, Tittel does not have a technical understanding of the concept of a formula, rather he uses it as a synonym for a law, rule, or principle. For example, he refers to the principle of non-contradiction in Locke's philosophy as a «formula [*Formel*]». ⁴⁴ Perhaps most clearly, Tittel states in a passage already quoted above that a formula, in the sense of a moral rule or law, is just the general expression of how we judge in particular cases:

The law is just the general expression, or the abstract entity, wherein what is common to certain actions and their consequences is summarized and described out of a multitude of singular cases. The general expression, as a formula, both in the theoretical and practical sense (axiom or law), always breaks down into the singular concepts and cases, from which they were abstracted; and the former reaches not a hair further than the latter. ⁴⁵

Tittel calls the categorical imperative a rule [*Regel*]⁴⁶, a law [*Gesetz*]⁴⁷ and also a formula [*Formel*],⁴⁸ and refers to the three main formulations of the categorical imperative in the *Groundwork* as three different formulas [*Formeln*],⁴⁹ as Kant does. Thus, for Tittel, a formula is no different from an axiom, law, or rule in the sense of a general expression and summarization of particular cases.

The fourth sentence of Kant's response to Tittel in the second *Critique* footnote seems to suggest that Kant has a different definition of a formula [*Formel*] in mind. In this footnote Kant

⁴⁴ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 15.

⁴⁵ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 14.

⁴⁶ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 33.

⁴⁸ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 39.

⁴⁹ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 49.

offers one of his clearest definitions of the concept of a formula,⁵⁰ and seems to assign it a relatively technical meaning: he claims that a formula, for a mathematician, is something that «determines quite precisely what is to be done to solve a problem and does not let one miss it.» (5:8n) This definition suggests that the strict definition of a formula is to be understood along the same lines as a hypothetical imperative, namely as representing «the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to achieving something else that one wants.» (*GMS*, AA IV 414.13-15) This might be how formulas operate for mathematicians, but we are not concerned about the meaning of formula for mathematicians. We want to know what a formula means for moral philosophers, and the categorical imperative is meant to be different in kind from hypothetical imperatives, so Kant must have something else in mind here.

Luckily, Kant has other definitions of the concept of a formula than the one presented in the footnote under discussion, which make his point in sentence far more clear. In Kant's lectures on logic, for example, he defines a formula as «a rule whose expression serves as a model for application» (*V-Lo/Wiener*, AA XXIV 867). Similarly, in the *Jäsche* logic formulas are defined as «rules whose expression serves as a model for imitation. They are uncommonly useful, by the way, for making complicated propositions easier.» (*Log*, AA IX 77) Kant also offers an extremely clear definition in a reflection: «Formula: a rule, whose expression makes application easier and serves as an example (model).» (*Refl*, AA XVI 405) As we can gather from these definitions, generally speaking a formula is an abstract expression, or rule, which makes understanding something complicated much easier. Appropriately, this is exactly how Kant describes the function of the three main «formulae [*Formeln*]» of the categorical imperative in the *Groundwork*, namely as «three ways of representing the principle of morality», i.e. they «are fundamentally only so many formulae of the selfsame law.» (*GMS*, AA IV 436.8-10) Furthermore, these formulae «obtain *access* for the moral law» and «bring it closer to intuition.» (*GMS*, AA IV 437.1-4) A formula can make a more complicated proposition easier to understand and can enable it to serve as an example or model for imitation and application in many ways, and *one* way of doing so is if a formula «determines quite precisely what is to be done to solve a problem and does not let one miss it.» (*KpV*, AA V 8n) But, again, this is not the only way a formula can accomplish this. More generally, then, a formula is just a way of

⁵⁰ The definition offered in this footnote appears prominently in most Lexica of Kant's terminology. See e.g. S. Bacin, *Formel*, in *Kant-Lexikon*, edited by M Willaschek, J Stolzenberg, G Mohr, and S Bacin, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2015, pg. 621-622

representing something more complicated, like a purely formal law, in a way that makes it more accessible to intuition.

Kant's definition of a formula in the fourth sentence of the second *Critique* footnote does not therefore make his point very clear, but we are now in a position to understand his overall response. In the fourth sentence of the footnote Kant merely reinforces the idea that the categorical imperative, or rather its three formulae, are simply three ways of representing the moral law that serve as models or examples in order to make this complicated law accessible and closer to intuition. Let us now return to the first sentence of the footnote: «A reviewer who wanted to say something censuring this work hit the mark better than he himself may have intended when he said that no new principle of morality is set forth in it but only a new formula.» (*KpV* AA V, 8n) Kant is claiming here that, in his attempt to raise an objection, Tittel has pointed out and perhaps clarified an important aspect of his aim in the *Groundwork*. The categorical imperative is not meant to be a newly discovered moral principle, rather the three formulae of the categorical imperative are simply ways of representing the purely rational and formal moral law that make this law more accessible to intuition and capable of application.

3. If Not a New Formula, Then Not Binding

At the beginning of this paper I stated that Tittel presents a line of argument in the *Reform* that has four steps. In the above, I illustrated the first three of these steps: step one is that the categorical imperative is empty in the sense that it contains no criterion for deciding the morality of maxims; step two claims that in order for the categorical imperative to have a meaningful criterion, we have to interpret it in an empiricist way; and step three infers that, if this is the case, then Kant's seemingly new principle of morality is merely a new formula of an empirical principle we have been familiar with for a long time. Despite the above-mentioned insults that some of Kant's fans made against Tittel's intellectual abilities, Tittel is aware that the empiricist interpretation of the categorical imperative is not the meaning Kant intended it to have. On the contrary, in the final step of Tittel's line of thought Tittel argues that if the categorical imperative is *not* an implicitly empiricist principle, then the much more serious problem that Kant faces is not emptiness, but the absence of a binding force. The existing secondary literature does not offer a consistent picture of the significance of Tittel's objection. Lewis White Beck, for example, argues that Tittel's objection is not particularly serious and falls into the category of criticisms that were «repeatedly made which permitted no

specific answer because of their blanket character.»⁵¹ Stefano Bacin, on the other hand, suggests that Tittel's 'new formula' objection points to a more «serious weakness.»⁵² In this final section of the paper I explain the fourth step in the Tittel's line of argument in order to illustrate the overall significance of the new formula objection. I side with Bacin and argue that the new formula objection points to a much more serious issue with Kant's moral philosophy, namely the bindingness of morality.

Although Tittel's aim in the *Reform* is not to describe his own philosophical commitments, we learn a lot about them from his criticisms of Kant's moral philosophy. We have seen above that Tittel makes it clear in the *Reform* that he is an empiricist with respect to knowledge. Another commitment that he is not shy to advertise is his *eudaimonism* in ethics.⁵³ Tittel subscribes to two views that mark him out as an ethical eudaimonist. First and most importantly, Tittel believes that all human motivation is rooted in the pursuit of happiness: «Without a view to well-being and benefit the human being cannot act at all.»⁵⁴ This eudaimonist, but not egoist,⁵⁵ conception of human motivation is extremely important, because for Tittel this conditions the kind of moral principle that can apply to human beings: «What is required of the human being, what it should love, must be attainable for it.»⁵⁶ In other words, 'ought implies can': if a human being is only capable of acting with a view to well-being and benefit, they cannot be required to act in any way other than what promotes these ends. Accordingly, the second eudaimonist view that Tittel subscribes to concerns the principle of moral appraisal. In the Foreword to the reform, Tittel states that the principle he subscribes to is that of «happiness as the principle of morality.»⁵⁷ Tittel's eudaimonism therefore amounts to general well-being functioning as both the criterion of moral appraisal and as the foundation of human action.

On the basis of these eudaimonist commitments, Tittel believes that Kant's moral philosophy is not binding on human beings. From the perspective of the eudaimonist, Tittel argues that a morality that commands human beings to act without considering their «benefit and

⁵¹ See Beck, *Commentary*, p. 57.

⁵² See Bacin, *Kant and Feder*, p. 247.

⁵³ See S. Bacin, *Kant and Feder on the Will, Happiness and the Aim of Moral Philosophy*, in *Kant and His German Contemporaries: Volume 1: Logic, Mind, Epistemology, Science and Ethics*, Edited by Corey Dyck and Falk Wunderlich, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 232-249: 233, for a brief discussion of both Tittel and Feder's eudaimonism.

⁵⁴ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 21.

⁵⁵ See Tittel, *Reform*, p. 22.

⁵⁶ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 22.

⁵⁷ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 6.

happiness, pleasure and enjoyment» is «impossible»,⁵⁸ a «non-thing»⁵⁹ for human beings, and «superhuman.»⁶⁰ He even says it is «moral slavery»⁶¹ to be required to act from duty without involving inclination. As a result, Tittel argues that the categorical imperative, which demands that we act for the sake of duty alone, is not *binding* on human beings who necessarily care about both their own happiness and that of others. Tittel argues that a pure moral law may be valid for pure spirits, like God, but for finite human beings who need happiness, or even for angels who are also not pure spirits, the moral law is not valid.⁶² If a principle is to have application and be valid for human beings, it needs to consider their nature.⁶³ For Tittel, the law is only binding on human beings if it promotes their well-being and benefit.

In the end, Tittel argues that the *Groundwork* puts moral science in a bad spot: «Nothing else was to be expected from the entire construction and course of the investigation than that, in the end, the whole doctrine of morals must be placed in this unfortunate position.»⁶⁴ This is because Tittel believes Kant's moral philosophy lacks a foundation:

At the conclusion of this deduction it must admittedly result that the most supreme concept of the whole doctrine of morals, connected to absolutely nothing and supported by nothing, must thoroughly lack support; and that for the person who wishes to know 'for what?' and 'why?' something is duty, only this single and final answer remains: because it is duty – that is why it is duty.⁶⁵

For this reason, Tittel charges Kant with mysticism: «it is obvious that within its boundaries, pure duty (pure virtue) for Herr Kant is nothing other than a surrogate for what (in the mystical sense) is the pure love of God.»⁶⁶ For Tittel, mysticism is characterized by the belief that one «should love God for his own sake, without thinking that he is well-meaning towards me.»⁶⁷ «Kantian

⁵⁸ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 39.

⁵⁹ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 26.

⁶⁰ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 22; see also 23, 26, 40-42.

⁶¹ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 13.

⁶² Tittel, *Reform*, p. 79.

⁶³ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 41.

⁶⁴ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 91.

⁶⁵ Tittel, *Reform*, pp. 92-3.

⁶⁶ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 6.

⁶⁷ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 24.

mysticism»⁶⁸ is similar: «Duty, as duty, I am supposed to love, because it is duty, without a view to contentment and happiness.»⁶⁹ But for Tittel, this means that moral obligation has no foundation. Tittel closes his commentary with a scathing remark:

It must of course be entirely incomprehensible how this barren, withered down, skeletal concept of duty – separated from all influence on happiness, from everything that could give it appeal, interest, something worthy of loving, and completely stripped – how this concept could ever become an effective determining ground for human beings.⁷⁰

Accordingly, at the end of his line of reasoning, and at the end of the commentary, Tittel claims that Kant's alleged 'reform' of moral science, i.e. his attempt at an «improvement of moral science»⁷¹ fails. The last line of the commentary reads: «And that is supposed to be the Groundwork of Morals?»⁷² That Tittel penetrated so deeply into the foundation of Kant's moral philosophy certainly suggests that Tittel was not merely a «weak shadow of a weak Feder», as Biester suggested (*Br*, AA X 457).

Conclusion

Kant's brief response to Tittel's new formula objection in the second *Critique* footnote is not his only, nor is it his entire response to all of the issues that Tittel raises in the *Reform*. Indeed, the response Kant offers in the footnote is incomplete for a number of reasons. First and foremost, Kant still needs to show *how* the formulas of the categorical imperative are not empty and can decide the morality of maxims. Second, it would be in Kant's interest to clarify the way in which the categorical imperative cannot be given an empiricist interpretation, as Tittel has suggested. As it turns out, Kant addresses both of these concerns in the second *Critique*. First, and with respect to empty formalism, in the 'Typic' section of the *Analytic*, Kant explains that thinking of the moral law

⁶⁸ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 6.

⁶⁹ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 24. In the second *Critique*, Kant argues that the 'Typic' «guards against», i.e. prevents the categorical imperative from being interpreted as «mysticism of practical reason» (*KpV*, AA V 70), but Kant doesn't seem to have Tittel in mind here. The mysticism Kant is concerned with in the 'Typic' is rather the view that «real but not sensible intuitions (of an invisible kingdom of God)» (*KpV*, AA V 71) are the source of moral knowledge.

⁷⁰ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 93.

⁷¹ Tittel, *Reform*, p. 8.

⁷² Tittel, *Reform*, p. 93.

as a law of nature is the only way we can use a purely formal law to make judgements about empirical cases. In this section Kant attempts to explain how the law of nature is «a *type* for the appraisal of maxims in accordance with moral principle» (*KpV*, AA V 69), i.e. he argues that thinking of the moral law as a law of nature can be used as an effective criterion of moral evaluation. In this same section, Kant also explains how his principle is different from an «*empiricism* of practical reason» (*KpV*, AA V 70), i.e. a theory according to which deciding the morality of maxims is based on their empirical consequences. Perhaps most importantly, however, it would be in Kant's interest to clarify the bindingness of the moral law, as this is the most serious of Tittel's objections. It is well known that there is something new, or at the very least different, about Kant's 'deduction' of the moral law in the second *Critique* as opposed to the *Groundwork*. It might very well be that Tittel encouraged Kant to rethink or at least reformulate his attempt to ground the categorical imperative. Owen Ware has recently suggested this very point, namely that «Kant's motive for making the doctrine of the Fact of Reason prominent in the second *Critique* was perhaps a reaction to Tittel's (1786) [*Reform*].»⁷³ With the above account of the line of thought that Tittel presents in the *Reform* now in hand, we are in a better position to undertake the investigation of this question, but it will have to wait for another occasion.⁷⁴

⁷³ O. Ware, *Kant's deductions of morality and freedom*, in «Canadian Journal of Philosophy», 47, 1, pp.116-147: 140.

⁷⁴ I would like to thank those in attendance at 'The Early Critique of Kant's Moral Philosophy', a conference held in St. Andrews in 2019, for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. Special thanks are due to Luca Fonnesu, Pauline Kleingeld, Heiner Klemme, Jens Timmermann, John Walsh, and an anonymous referee at *Studi Kantiani* for their helpful feedback. Thanks also to Antonino Falduto for inviting me to participate in the conference and for encouraging me to submit to this special issue.