

## Happiness as a Natural End

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To have any end of action whatsoever is an act of *freedom* on the part of the acting subject, not an effect of *nature*.<sup>1</sup>

It is unavoidable for human nature to wish for and seek happiness.<sup>2</sup>

Assuming that we do not freely do what we unavoidably do, and that to wish for and seek something is to have it as an end of action, these two claims from the *Doctrine of Virtue* seem inconsistent.<sup>3</sup> The inconsistency, if genuine, is not harmless. The first claim (hereafter, 'E'), and equivalent statements elsewhere express the extent of Kant's belief in free will, as well as feature in his arguments that there are ends that are duties, and that such duties cannot be constrained by others but only *self*-constrained.<sup>4</sup> The second claim (hereafter, 'H') and equivalent statements elsewhere feature in Kant's arguments that we can have no direct duty to pursue our own happiness, that prudential rationality is distinct from mere skillfulness, and that, unlike the Categorical Imperative (CI), the problem of the 'possibility' of a hypothetical imperative needs no solution.<sup>5</sup> This is, in other words, an inconsistency between basic premises of Kant's moral philosophy.

I am not confident that there *is* any way of squaring E and H, given the uses to which Kant puts them. I *am* confident that the most plausible ways that Kantians have tried to put

them together fail, and in what follows, I show why. I argue that no interpretation of E and H renders them consistent without making one or the other claim useless to Kant. Although this makes my project a negative one, my justification is that, as will become apparent, I do not think Kant's readers have appreciated the gravity of the problem, and progress on it cannot be made until the issue is faced squarely. The first step to recovery, after all, is admitting that you have a problem.

Some, of course, may already think that E and H are *obviously* inconsistent, and that I am merely banging my head against a wall by seriously considering ways of rendering them consistent. But I do not, nor do those who find plausible the interpretations I will discuss, assume simplemindedly that, merely because of his intellectual stature, Kant could not have held inconsistent views. That is clearly ridiculous. Anyone who sets out to develop a systematic and complete philosophy runs the risk of coming to conclusions in one area that are inconsistent with positions espoused in others, if for no other reasons than having too little time and too many details to work out. Indeed, I am happy to admit that Kant may have held inconsistent views in some *single* area of inquiry. What I find unacceptable, however, is the idea that Kant should have, without openly acknowledging it, *repeatedly* put forth propositions in a *single* area of inquiry that he himself could see were utterly inconsistent. With regard to E and H, the idea is all but incredible. The claims are found a page apart in the *Doctrine of Virtue*, and Kant adhered to both over many years of thinking about these issues, years during which his views were subjected to scrutiny by numerous and capable minds. So it seems safe to assume that Kant himself did not believe E and H, more or less literally construed, were inconsistent. Hence, I do not regard the

charitable attempts to extricate him from inconsistency in what follows to be, from the outset, futile or misguided. Naturally, none of this implies that, at the end of the day, they will not turn out to be genuinely inconsistent. It only implies that, if they do (as I fear) turn out to be inconsistent, it will not be obvious why. As for the thought that Kant could give up either proposition and still maintain many distinctive elements of his moral view, it will become clear in what follows that I do not believe that he can.

There are some otherwise important issues that I will set aside or only deal with briefly for present purposes. First, as is well known, Kant changed his views several times concerning the role and importance of happiness in human life and, more specifically, in morality.<sup>6</sup> I am not, however, locating the following discussion within those changes, though I discuss views that are clearly present in and central to not only the *Doctrine of Virtue*, but also the *Groundwork*, the second *Critique*, and *Religion*. Second, in some places Kant gives judgement a central role in practical reasoning.<sup>7</sup> But since I focus on ethical texts in which judgement is not emphasized, and since its role is not strictly relevant to the issue here, I do not discuss it.<sup>8</sup> Third, commentators have long pointed out that Kant had at least two conceptions of happiness at work both within and across several texts: a maximum amount of pleasure, and a systematic integration of ends over one's entire life.<sup>9</sup> Fortunately, though I favor emphasizing the latter, my project does not require me to take sides on which is primary, nor to consider the relationship between them. Fourth, it is nonetheless worth pointing out that here I assume the standard view that for Kant happiness it is a subjective state of satisfaction rather than the achievement of some objective ideal. For the most part, what happiness is, in the final analysis, is for each to decide for herself.

Several more brief comments. When Kant claims that happiness is our natural end, I take him to mean that it is our *final* end in the traditional sense of that term (i.e. happiness is something pursued for its own sake, rather than for the sake of something else). That, of course, makes the position that we freely adopt happiness as our end distinctive, not only in the sense that it is our own *happiness* that is freely adopted, but also in the sense that it is as a *final* end that we freely adopt it.<sup>10</sup> Further, I take it that final ends can nevertheless be *conditional* ends, or ends that *are* ends only on the condition that something else is an end. Hence, Kant's claim that the only unconditioned good is a good will doesn't entail that a good will is the only final end.<sup>11</sup> Happiness can be rationally pursued for its own sake and yet be so pursued only on the condition that we preserve and respect our own good will in pursuing it. Finally, even if we take H and like statements to be about ends in a purely descriptive sense—as what we *do* as opposed to *should* adopt as an end—E should be taken to cover both descriptive and normative ends. For E does not mean that any end we *ought* to have we ought freely to will to have, still less that any end we *do* have we ought freely to will to have. It is clear enough that, in E, Kant's position is that any end we do have we have only because we freely willed to have it, whether it is an end we *ought* to have, and whether we *ought* to have willed to have it.

## I

Initially it may not seem that H has anything to do with our ends. It may instead seem to concern only what we desire. And because it need not follow from the fact that we desire something that it is our end, accepting E might not seem to force us to the problematic conclusion

that we must have freely adopted happiness as our end. Making something one's end requires binding oneself to it as one's aim or purpose; desiring something is being bound, not by oneself, but by the thing desired. Given this, H may appear only to concern a natural desire for happiness and so may not appear to be inconsistent with E.

Clearly, Kant often *does* talk about a natural 'impulse'[*ein Antrieb der Natur*]<sup>12</sup> toward happiness, and says, roughly, that this impulse is a constant and inescapable source of temptation rooted in human psychology. This impulse even explains in part why we adopt happiness as our end by providing, as it were, the target at which the will aims. So Kant's claim that ends are *objects of free choice* should be taken to mean that they are *that at which one freely aims one's choice*. Having an end is, after all, not like having an apple, and adopting ends is not like collecting apples in a basket. Just as the fact that I am pointing my finger at you does not entail that I exercise any control over you, the *object* of my pointing, so the fact that my choosing aims at something doesn't entail that I exercise control over the object of my choosing.<sup>13</sup> One's freedom is exercised over one's finger, not necessarily over the things at which it aims, and in this sense to *aim* one's finger at anything 'is an act of freedom on the part of the [aiming] subject'. Ends, in the sense of *that at which we aim our choices*, are presented by natural impulses (or, in the case of the moral law, by reason), and so we need not be able to exercise freedom over them for ends to be the objects of our freely determined choices.

Even so, Kant repeatedly goes further than this to insist (1) that happiness naturally *is* our end, not merely something that *could* be our end, or is merely presented by human nature as a possible target for our choices, and even (2) that we naturally *will* happiness as our end.<sup>14</sup>

This is why I think H and like claims really do mean more than just that we naturally *desire* happiness. Indeed, they must mean more. Consider, for instance, the use he makes of H in his discussion of imperatives of prudence in the *Groundwork*:

There is, however, *one* end that can be presupposed as actual in the case of all rational beings (insofar as imperatives apply to them, namely as dependent beings), and therefore one purpose that they not merely *could* have but that we can safely presuppose they all actually *do have* by a natural necessity, and that purpose is *happiness*. The hypothetical imperative ... may be set forth not merely as necessary to some uncertain, merely possible purpose but to a purpose that can be presupposed surely and a priori in the case of every human being, because it belongs to his essence.<sup>15</sup>

This passage makes it clear that nature does more than merely present happiness as a *potential* target of the human will. The human will actually aims at happiness, actually has it as its end by a natural necessity (*Naturnotwendigkeit*) because this ‘belongs to his essence’ (*zu seinem Wesen gehört*).<sup>16</sup> Of course, E implies that this could not be so, that it *could not* belong to a human being's essence to have happiness as an end, since any end he has he must have freely adopted himself.

The further point (2), that it belongs to our essence not merely to have but to *will* happiness as an end follows from the context. For this passage comes from Kant’s discussion of how imperatives of various sorts are possible. The possibility of a hypothetical imperative, unlike that of the CI, needs no ‘solution’ [*Auflösung*] for two reasons.<sup>17</sup> First, it is analytic that ‘who wills the end also wills (necessarily in conformity with reason) the sole means to it that are

within his control'.<sup>18</sup> Call this principle 'HI'. Notice that HI is *not* the principle that 'who *desires* the end also wills the means', a principle that, given our many varied and conflicting desires, would make rational action impossible. HI asserts instead that it is irrational to *will* an end and yet refuse to will the necessary means to realize it, where 'willing' involves setting oneself actually to pursue the end.<sup>19</sup> HI thus explicitly derives the binding power of a particular imperative from the prior *willing of an end* by the agent, not from his merely *desiring* it.

Second, since where no end is willed, no hypothetical rational requirement applies, the possibility of a hypothetical imperative requires that we assume that some end is willed. In the case of imperatives of skill, we assume a possible willed end. In the case of prudence, however, we (supposedly) know that we all actually do will the end in question, namely, our happiness. Indeed, as H and like claims state, it is by natural necessity—again, because it belongs to our essence—that we will our own happiness as our end. Thus, suppose prudential imperatives (or 'counsels') carry the force of rational recommendations. Given HI, that requires that we *will* our own happiness as an end (and not merely that we *desire* it), the possibility of prudential imperatives, then, is in no need of solution *only if we know that we actually will this end*. Hence, Kant's position regarding the possibility of a hypothetical imperative clearly and unequivocally entails that we will our own happiness by a natural necessity, rather than, as E and like claims imply, by an act of freedom on our part. Notice that, by contrast, *nothing at all* would follow about the rationality of willing the means to happiness from the claim that nature implants in us a mere desire, impulse, or craving for it.

## II

When Kant speaks of ‘necessity’ in his practical philosophy, he is often referring to the rational necessitation of the will, or the ‘ought’ of rationality. For this reason, H and like claims that happiness is a ‘necessary end’ might be taken to mean that we rationally *ought* to make happiness our end, where ‘happiness’ is some normative ideal such as a coherent life plan, and making it our end involves developing such a plan and then willing it.<sup>20</sup> After all, there are cases in which we go willy-nilly for the present pleasure (e.g. a cigarette) instead of pursuing what we know deep-down is our ‘real’ happiness (e.g. long-term health). In such cases, we seem to be irrational, and our irrationality may seem to be in our not willing an end we rationally ought to be willing (i.e. some coherent conception of our own happiness), rather than in simply failing to will a means to an end that we have willed. Kant’s claim that we adopt the end by natural necessity, then, would not be interpreted as following from the fact that it belongs to our *sensible* natures to will happiness. Rather, it would be the claim that it belongs to our *rational* essence, to the nature of rationality itself, to will happiness (as a coherent ideal), in much the way that it is supposed to belong to the nature of rationality to conform to the CI. Since any fully rational agent necessarily follows the CI, we imperfectly rational agents *ought* to follow it. Just so, since any fully rational agent necessarily adopts her own happiness as an end, as *imperfectly* rational agents we *ought* to do so. This imperative would clearly be distinct from HI, that requires only that we will the necessary *means* to our (willed) ends. One does not violate HI when one fails to will the end connected to a means one fails to will in a given case. Here, by contrast, we are talking of the rational necessity of willing an end.

Happiness as a *rationally* necessary end also offers as an alternative to my interpretation its own "solution" to the possibility of a hypothetical imperative. In my interpretation of this, it is by natural necessity that we will our own happiness. In the current interpretation, by contrast, it would be by rational necessity that we do so. Hence, it would interpret Kant as holding that the possibility of a hypothetical imperative requires no solution because we can assume that we *rationally ought* to will our own happiness.

To be sure, this alters the meaning of HI, which now will read, Who *rationally ought* to will the end *rationally ought* to will the necessary means to it. That would leave us no way of rationally criticizing the refusal to will necessary means to ends that you will *independently* of whether you ought to will those ends. But is a relatively minor issue. What is much more worrisome is that the assumption that we already rationally ought to will our own happiness does not solve *any* problem about the possibility of the hypothetical imperative that Kant might be interested in. In fact, it raises a far more serious problem about the possibility of a rational imperative to pursue happiness. For while it is surely plausible to hold that the possibility of hypothetical imperatives needs no solution because HI as standardly understood is analytic, the claim that we rationally ought to pursue some coherent conception of happiness makes the possibility of hypothetical imperatives suddenly quite controversial. This is one strike against the rational necessity interpretation.

Admittedly, we do seem irrational in failing to pursue happiness when we go for a present pleasure that endangers it. But there is no irrationality beyond violating the HI (or CI). Where we are not being merely stupid or immoral (e.g. in not developing our natural potential),

we are simply failing to take necessary means to our own happiness, where the means require refusing a present pleasure. Or so I believe. Let me explain.

Suppose someone merely goes for whatever presently seems most pleasing to him. Such a person, let's say, holds that his happiness consists simply in the pursuit of the present pleasure, one after another. This seems to be a limiting case of having a conception of happiness. Without knowing anything else, one might think this is an irrational conception, on its face. But it is hard to see how one could continue to claim this once one adds that he pursues this policy in conformity to the CI and HI—that is, takes means necessary to achieve the present pleasure and doesn't act immorally. For included in not acting immorally is conforming to duties of self-development and of insulating oneself against future temptations. Hence, even if his only conception of happiness is the pursuit of the present pleasure, still, on moral grounds, he cannot forsake his future happiness altogether, and, again on moral grounds, he cannot ignore the development of his talents and abilities. Once we add the moral contours that restrict any permissible conception of happiness, once we determine that he does not fail to take the means to his ends, and really has no ends other than pursuing present pleasures, where is the irrationality?

By contrast, if he constructs some long-term conception of his own happiness spread over his entire life, and really *wills* it, but goes for some fleeting pleasure instead, he is indeed being irrational. But this is a clear-cut case of failing to take means that are necessary to make his long-term plan succeed. It just so happens in this case the necessary means involve refusing a present pleasure. There is no need to suppose that, in going for the present pleasure, he has

thrown over a *rationaly acceptable* conception of happiness for a *rationaly unacceptable* conception.

The pursuit of fleeting present pleasures, even if in conformity with HI, and even if within moral bounds (including duties of self-development, etc.), may still seem to many not to constitute a rational life-plan at all. They will insist that rational persons have, not merely *some* conception of their happiness, but a conception of a certain shape. Failing to have that shape, and to will it, would be *making a mistake* of some sort, failing to see that this is what our *real* happiness consists of. But I don't see how this judgement can be defended on Kantian grounds. I can see how a person might have as ends, say, 'smoking whenever and however much I want' and 'being healthy throughout my life', thinking that there is no real incompatibility between these, and refusing to give up either. This is surely a rational failing; you can achieve one, but not both, of these ends. Failing to render one's ends consistent with one another, however, is for the most part just failing conform to the HI: You cannot achieve long-term health (or present pleasure of smoking) unless you give up the present pleasure of smoking (long-term health). Where this isn't a failure to conform to HI, it is merely a failure of our theoretical reasoning capacities to work out the causal and other natural connections between the elements we count as parts of our happiness (i.e. mere stupidity or obtuseness). Moreover, often, rather than willing inconsistent ends, one is not really willing one of the ends at all: If I can see that smoking and long-term health are utterly incompatible, and yet continue to smoke with impunity, not because of physical addiction or a weak will, then it might be that I really don't will long-term health at all. None of these failures resolve themselves into forms of practical irrationality that go beyond violating HI.

If we cannot accept some person's conception of happiness, even though it conforms to HI and is not in any way immoral, it seems to me that this is nothing more than a difference in taste, that, though important in many ways, is not grounds of objective rational assessment. Distaste for such a life-plan instead of a long-term ideal of some sort (given it is within moral bounds) is compatible with regarding it as within rational bounds, and, I think, respecting such a life-plan is precisely what Kant believes is required if we are to respect others as persons.<sup>21</sup> What makes another's permissible ends valuable is simply that they chose them. To refuse to acknowledge any value in a person's permissible chosen ends, even if they are not to our liking, is to refuse to acknowledge their choices as rational agents, and hence to fail fully to respect them as ends.

Thus, that there is no irrationality beyond violating the HI or CI in pursuing irrational ends I take to be a second strike against the rational necessity interpretation. But I will not rest my case on either of the above two points. For even if there weren't these difficulties with a rational requirement to pursue happiness, the very idea of such a requirement is inconsistent with Kant's account of why there can be no direct duty to pursue it.<sup>22</sup> There can be none, not because there can be no *moral* 'ought' to pursue one's own happiness, but rather because there can be no 'ought' of any kind to do so. 'Ought' implies constraint, and that in turn requires some basis for voluntary *reluctance*.<sup>23</sup> In Kant's view, there is no basis for reluctance in the case of our pursuit of happiness because nature has already determined that we shall will happiness as our end. Kant's entire line of argument here would make no sense on the supposition that H and like claims concern the *rational necessity* of pursuing happiness.

I suspect that many will object that ‘ought’ implies *involuntary* resistance from *non-rational* and *unwilled* sensible impulses, rather than resistance from our will. And it follows from this that there *could* be a source of reluctance to willing happiness that is not itself grounded in our naturally willing happiness. And indeed, Kant sometimes claims that our natural impulses hinder the force of practical reason. This is not Kant’s fundamental message concerning the concept of an ‘ought’, however. Consider two examples of areas in which our natural resistance to the moral law is clearly made out to be voluntary.

First, Kant claims that a ‘holy will’ is *not* under any rational imperatives, yet *is* nevertheless under the moral law. The law is simply not an ‘ought’ for such a will. And the reason it is not, he argues, is that such a will ‘would not be capable of any maxim conflicting with the moral law’.<sup>24</sup> It is thus the capacity of *voluntary* action against the moral law, the capacity *to adopt maxims* that conflict with it, that a holy will lacks and hence that serves as the basis of the reluctance that in turn makes the moral law into a constraint. It is not merely that a holy will lacks non-voluntary sensible impulses that makes its reluctance to the moral law impossible.

Second, Kant’s interpretation of the religious doctrine of the ‘radical evil in human nature’ requires that our reluctance to the moral law be voluntary. The possible positions one might hold regarding our natural goodness or iniquity are, according to Kant, that man is by nature good, by nature evil, both or neither. He rules out all intermediate positions, arguing that

If the moral law in us were not an incentive of the power of choice, the morally good (the agreement of the power of choice with the law) would be = a [the good], and the not-good, =0 [the mere lack of a ground of the good]; the latter, however, would be just the

consequence of the lack of a moral incentive, = a ( 0. In us, however, the law is incentive, =a. Hence, the lack of the agreement of the power of choice with it (=0) is possible *only as the consequence of a real and opposite determination of the power of choice, i.e., of a resistance on its part, = -a* [nur als Folge von einer realiter entgegengesetzten Bestimmung der Willkür, d.i. einer Widerstrebung derselben].<sup>25</sup>

The ‘on its part’ here means ‘on the part of the power of choice’. Hence, any resistance to the moral law is a ‘real and opposite determination of the power of choice’, and must be if the law is to be an ‘incentive’ for us. It is indeed an incentive for us, so the resistance to the moral law that makes it into an ‘ought’ is a ‘real and opposite determination of the power of choice’ as well. Therefore, it is *not* the existence of involuntary non-rational tugs toward pleasure that explains the rational ‘ought’. It is our voluntary willing of the end of happiness. But, if there is already present in us a voluntary willing of our happiness, then there can be no rational ‘ought’ to will it.

This is strike three against the rational necessity interpretation of H. The natural necessity of willing happiness cannot in any way be made out to be some rational imperative to will happiness.

### III

I have been putting a lot of emphasis on the point that the rational ‘counsels’ of prudence are normative for us only if we *will* our own happiness as an end. One might think this leaves open the possibility that merely *having* happiness as an end, and not necessarily willing it as an end, is what nature implants in us.<sup>26</sup> But it does not. E, as do statements elsewhere of the same

ilk, concerns the *having* of ends, not their adoption, making it clear that any having of an end must be the result of its free adoption by the agent.<sup>27</sup> Hence, even if we only "have" happiness as our end, it still follows, according to E, that we must therefore have freely willed it as our end. H of course is inconsistent with this: *We* have not made happiness our end; *nature* has.

Moreover, and more importantly, the weaker position that we only *have* happiness as our end by a natural necessity again leaves the possibility of prudential imperatives without solution. For nothing follows from conjoining the principle that whoever wills an end wills the means with the claim that we necessarily *have* happiness as an end. Nothing follows because, *ex hypothesi*, having happiness as an end does not entail willing it as an end. We are left, then, with no explanation of why the counsels of prudence have rational weight with us. Of course, if they do, it could only be because we go on to will our own happiness, given that we have it as an end by nature. But then we need to explain the gap between *having* and *willing* happiness as an end in order to solve the 'problem' of the possibility of prudential imperatives. Their rational grip on us—pace Kant—would create a problem in need a solution after all, indeed no less a problem than the possibility of the CI.

Notice that the gap cannot be filled by a rational imperative that we ought to will any natural ends we have, since that would just raise the problem of the possibility of this further imperative. What, after all, is irrational about refusing to will an end one has but needn't will by nature? On the other hand, one might claim that in this case, nature gives us the end of happiness as a means to self-preservation. Hence, if we *have* an end by nature, and we assume that any natural end is a means to self-preservation, then perhaps we rationally *should* will those means.

But this obviously just appeals to the HI again, raising a further problem about why the HI should hold in this case independently of whether we will our own self-preservation. And the last ditch move of claiming that we just *naturally* will self-preservation merely re-introduces the original problematic idea that we will *anything* by nature. We might as well admit the mysterious idea that we will our own happiness at the outset.

Hence, it must be not merely that we *have* happiness as an end by nature, but that we *will* it as our end, by nature.

#### IV

But does Kant really need a claim as strong as E? Wouldn't the weaker position that we freely adopt all of our *ethical* ends be sufficient? That would allow that, by contrast, nature determines that we shall will the end of happiness. And, after all, E features in the *Doctrine of Virtue* almost entirely in an argument meant to exclude the possibility of coercing ends that are duties. And while Kant may contend that *ethical* ends are non-coercible on the grounds that they must be freely adopted, perhaps he is assuming that the end of *happiness* is obviously non-coercible on different grounds, namely, that we cannot avoid adopting it, by nature, in the first place.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, Kant really does need the stronger claim—the claim that having *any* end is an act of freedom—in order to argue that *ethical* ends in particular cannot be coerced. For he argues that ethical ends in particular cannot be coerced on the grounds that *the very concept of an end* precludes it:

An *end* is an object of the choice (of a rational being), through the representation of which choice is determined to an action to bring this object about.—Now, I can indeed be constrained by others to perform *actions* that are directed as means to an end, but I can never be constrained by others *to have an end*: only I myself can *make* something my end.—But if I am under obligation to make my end something that lies in concepts of practical reason ... this would be the concept of an *end that is in itself a duty*.... That ethics contains duties that one cannot be constrained by others (through natural means) to fulfill follows merely from its being a doctrine of *ends*, since *coercion* to ends (to have them) is self-contradictory.<sup>29</sup>

Kant not only intends to hold E as a conceptual truth, but thinks he needs it to argue for the central claim of the *Doctrine of Virtue*, that there are ends that are duties. Notice, in particular, that it is only *after* his claim about ends in general, that ‘I can indeed be constrained by others ...’, that he goes on to establish his point about the case of constraint to particular kind of end, namely, a moral end. And also it is *merely* from the fact that it is a doctrine of ends that it follows that ethics contains duties that cannot be constrained by others. This makes it clear that E is and must be a claim that covers *all* ends, not merely ethical ends.

## V

Still, the fact that ‘happiness’ is an ‘indeterminate’ concept of imagination might seem to lessen the conflict between E and H.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the concept is empty (it is the ‘general name’ for subjective determining grounds) and because of the subjective variability of what brings pleasure

or fulfilment, it is not a source of practical laws.<sup>31</sup> Further, the constituents of happiness cannot be extrapolated from experience of what has brought us or others fulfilment in the past. This means, among other things, that we cannot determine which set of *particular* ends, once achieved, will constitute happiness for us.<sup>32</sup> Will riches do it? Kant asks. Health? It is unclear, since these bring their own risks to happiness, such as envy and excess. The most that can be said is that ‘happiness’ is the *formal* or *second-order* end of fulfilling some or other of the agent’s particular non-moral ends in some or other coherent manner.<sup>33</sup> One might thus think Kant can hold (consonant with E) that although the adoption of the *particular* ends that will constitute an agent’s conception of happiness, as well as the way those ends are arranged over an entire life, is always an act of freedom, *that* the agent has such a second-order end to so realize is not (again, consonant with H). As we make decisions guided by the counsels of prudence we freely pursue particular aims that, when ordered appropriately, constitute our own conceptions of happiness.

Strictly speaking, of course, Kant’s position in E is that having *any* end, and so even a formal or second-order end, is an act of freedom. So the particular inconsistency in maintaining E together with H, where ‘happiness’ is understood only as a second-order end, would remain. That is a picky problem. A problem that is not picky concerns the use Kant must make of H. For assume that the particular ends that constitute a person’s (indeterminate) conception of happiness are not given by nature but are adopted freely. Then Kant’s argument that we cannot have our own happiness as an obligatory end would establish a claim that is so hollow and uninteresting as to make it hard to see why he thought it important. Although it would then be true that we cannot be obligated to adopt the second-order end of having some end or other, it

would be false that we could not be obligated to pursue the *particular* ends that realize our formal end of happiness, since we do *not*, so far as H is concerned, already will those ends by nature. H would thus become the trivial claim that it is naturally unavoidable for us to have the end of having some end or other.

Although I think there is more to Kant's position than merely that the end of happiness in this mere formal or second-order sense is naturally necessary, I don't think that, therefore, his view is that the *particular* constitutive ends we desire *themselves* are necessary either. His main idea seems to be just that, given that we aren't 'gods', we have needs that cannot be met by pure thought alone, with no effort or intention on our parts. Kant says that

satisfaction with one's whole existence is not, as it were, an original possession and a beatitude, which would presuppose a consciousness of one's independent self-sufficiency, but is instead a problem imposed upon him by his finite nature itself, because he is needy and this need is directed to the matter of his faculty of desire, that is, something related to a subjective feeling of pleasure or displeasure underlying it by which is determined what he needs in order to be satisfied with his condition.<sup>34</sup>

We are naturally designed in such a way that we must use our wills to meet our needs. But the conception guiding our will of what will meet those (real) needs, must be based on our own subjective relationship to those needs, through pleasures and pains. Thus happiness is 'a problem imposed' on us by our 'finite nature'. So H is not an uninteresting claim about a 'formal' sense of happiness, nor an interesting but far more controversial claim that we have 'by nature'

all of our particular constitutive ends, but the interesting yet not overly controversial position that, given we are limited beings with rational wills and physical needs, we are designed in such a way that we *must* meet our needs through our own rational agency, and that requires a connection between those needs and our own agency represented in a conception, however indeterminate, of our own happiness. This is, one could say, a deeper explanation of why we must, because of our natures, have our own happiness as an end. It does not render H consistent with E, however.

## VI

I am not ready to say that I have decisively refuted all of the above ways of rendering E and H consistent. But I do take myself to have shown that there are sufficient difficulties with them to show that the problem has not been solved.<sup>35</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> *MS* 6:385.

<sup>2</sup> *MS* 6:388.

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<sup>3</sup> The apparent inconsistency is featured in contemporary debates among Kantians, for instance, see Hannah Ginsborg, ‘Korsgaard on Choosing Non-moral Ends’, *Ethics*, 109.1 (October 1998), 5–21; and Christine Korsgaard, ‘Motivation, Metaphysics, and the Value of the Self: A Reply to Ginsborg, Guyer, and Schneewind’, *Ethics*, 109.1 (October 1998), 49–66.

<sup>4</sup> For example, *MS* 6:3805.

<sup>5</sup> For example, *MS* 6:386, 387–8; *G* 4:417; *KpV* 5:25; *R* 6:6n.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g. Reinhard Brandt, ‘The Deductions in the *Critique of Judgment*: Comments on Hampshire and Horstmann’, in E. Förster, *Kant’s Transcendental Deductions* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989), 177–90.

<sup>7</sup> For example, CJ ‘First Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*’, 20:200–1, and 200n.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g. op. cit. Ginsborg, for an interpreter who claims that the role of judgement is crucial in prudential reasoning. Her reading does not, however, try to square the inconsistency between E and H.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *KpV* 5:22, 73; *G* 4:405, 418; *R* 6:5, 36–7. For example, the two conceptions are discussed by H. J. Paton in his analysis of the argument in his translation of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1964), 29, and, more fully in his *The Categorical Imperative*; and Mary Gregor, *The Laws of Freedom* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1963), 78, 177.

<sup>10</sup> A possible exception is his view that insuring our happiness is a means to protecting our moral integrity.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Korsgaard, ‘Two distinctions in goodness’, in her *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 249–74.

<sup>12</sup> E.g., at *MS* 6:380.

<sup>13</sup> *R* 6:6n.

<sup>14</sup> *MS* 6:382; Notice it is not merely the ‘interiority’ of having ends that puts them beyond coercion, but it is something about ends in particular—their essential tie to voluntariness—that underlies Kant’s claim here. Also, see the *Groundwork*, where he speaks of ‘the ends that a rational being proposes *at his discretion* as effects of his actions (material ends)’.

<sup>15</sup> *G* 4:415–16.

<sup>16</sup> Although Kant uses different words, ‘Absicht’ and ‘Zweck’, in this and other passages, it is abundantly clear that, in these contexts, his is using them as synonyms.

<sup>17</sup> *G* 4:419.

<sup>18</sup> *G* 4:417.

<sup>19</sup> Here I draw on Thomas E. Hill, Jr.’s, ‘The Hypothetical Imperative’, in his *Dignity and Practical Reason* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 17–37.

<sup>20</sup> The following, I believe, is part of what Allen Wood has in mind, in *Kant’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 65 ff.

<sup>21</sup> See Hill, Thomas E., Jr, ‘Happiness and Human flourishing in Kant’s Ethics’, *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 16:1 (Winter 1999), 143–75.

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<sup>22</sup> *MS* 6:388. There is, of course, an *indirect* duty to insure our happiness, but in this case, Kant claims, our happiness is a mere means to fulfilling our duty to preserve our own ‘morality’ or ‘moral integrity’.

<sup>23</sup> E.g., see *MS* 6:386 ""eine Nötigung zu einem ungerne genommenen Zweck".

<sup>24</sup> *KpV* 5:32.

<sup>25</sup> *R* 6:23n, my italics; also see 6:24.

<sup>26</sup> This is Hill’s position in *op. cit.* Hill, 1992, 25n3.

<sup>27</sup> Notice this in, e.g. *R* 6:6n.

<sup>28</sup> In support, one could avert to Kant’s claim, at *R* 6:6n that because nature determines this end, it is ‘therefore otiose to say of that end that one *ought* to have it’.

<sup>29</sup> *MS* 6:381.

<sup>30</sup> *G* 4:415–18.

<sup>31</sup> *KpV* 5:25.

<sup>32</sup> By ‘constitute’ here I mean something like J. L. Ackrill’s idea of a constitutive end, in ‘Aristotle on Eudaimonia’, in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, A. O. Rorty, ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 15–34.

<sup>33</sup> This needs some refining, since Kant includes the *moral* happiness of having done one’s duty from duty in his account of happiness.

<sup>34</sup> *KpV* 5:25.

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<sup>35</sup> Thanks to Jack Kultgen, Andrew Melnyk, Alex von Schönborn, Mark Timmons, and Allen Wood for valuable criticisms and suggestions.