

THE
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THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF OBLIGATION.

THE limitations of this occasion¹ make it impossible to do more than touch on one or two of the many problems of which one would have a right to expect a treatment in an article bearing such a general title. The distinction made by Kant between two types of the consciousness of obligation is accepted as justified by introspective analysis.² Corresponding to Kant's hypothetical imperative is the consciousness of conditional obligation, and corresponding to his categorical imperative is the consciousness of absolute obligation. Because the hypothetical imperative is conditioned upon the existence of a desire for a certain end, it may be called teleological. On the other hand, the categorical imperative, which to use Kant's words "declares an action to be necessary³ in itself without reference to any purpose, *i. e.* without any other end,"⁴ is non-teleological.

¹ This paper was read in part at the first meeting of the American Philosophical Association, on April 1, 1902.

² To avoid misunderstanding, it should be said at the outset that while this paper accepts the distinction between the conditional and the categorical imperative, it does not accept Kant's definition of the latter. Kant's categorical imperative, as is well known, is not only one which is accepted by the agent as binding without any reference to any end to be attained by acting in accordance with it; but it is also one which is *objectively* necessary, *i. e.*, valid for all rational creatures generally. In this article this latter characteristic is not included in the definition of the categorical imperative, as will be seen below, pp. 340 ff.

³ Kant says "objectively necessary." The reason for the omission of the qualifier is stated in the immediately preceding foot-note.

⁴ *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, tr. by Abbott in *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and other Works on the Theory of Ethics*, 5th Ed., p. 32. Subsequent quotations from Kant are taken from this volume of translations.