Kant and Kantians have often been accused of rigorism: of failing do justice to the fact that our moral obligations vary with circumstances. When trying to respond to this criticism, Kantians face a trilemma: if they want to evade the problem of rigorism, they have to either deny that principles of duty are universally valid, or posit rather cumbersome principles with countless unless-clauses. Existing attempts to escape this trilemma are fraught with inconsistencies, as a critical discussion of Korsgaard’s and Herman’s accounts confirms. My aim is to tackle the problem at its root by correcting the misunderstanding of Kant’s notion of practical universality on which the trilemma is based.

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