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# Moral Sense Theory and the Development of Kant's Ethics

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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MORAL SENSE THEORY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF KANT'S ETHICS

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Michael H. Walschots

Graduate Program in Philosophy

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

This dissertation investigates a number of ways in which an eighteenth century British philosophical movement known as “moral sense theory” influenced the development of German philosopher Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) moral theory. “Moral sense theory,” as presented in the works of Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), and Francis Hutcheson (1694-1747), can be captured by two related claims: (1) morally good actions are motivated by benevolence, i.e. the disinterested desire for the happiness of others, and (2) we judge benevolent actions as morally good on the basis of “the moral sense,” a capacity that allows us to feel a particular kind of pleasure when we perceive such actions. I illustrate that Kant found both of these claims appealing during the earliest stage of his philosophical development, but eventually came to reject moral sense theory’s conception of moral judgement. However, I illustrate that even after this rejection Kant preserves certain features of moral sense theory’s conception of moral motivation. In the mature presentation of his moral philosophy Kant offers detailed objections to moral sense theory’s conception of moral judgement, but I illustrate that, in opposition to the claims of many recent interpreters, the considered presentation of his conception of moral motivation has only a few superficial features in common with the view presented by Hutcheson in particular. Nonetheless, this comparison helps illuminate Kant’s complex position on moral motivation. Important for an understanding of Kant’s mature conception of motivation is also the thought of Adam Smith (1723-1790), a thinker who is not part of but was highly influenced by moral sense theory. I illustrate that Smith’s notion of the attitude of “regard” for what he calls the “general rules of conduct,” as well as his conception of the “sense of duty,” influenced Kant’s conception of “respect [*Achtung*]” for the moral law. Finally, I illustrate that Kant’s understanding of the pleasure associated with acting morally, what he calls “self-contentment [*Selbstzufriedenheit*],” can be clarified in light of how Hutcheson solves a problem related to the pleasure of the moral sense.

## Keywords

Kant, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Adam Smith, moral sense, moral judgement, motivation, respect, duty, pleasure, virtue.

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## List of Abbreviations

### Works by Kant

Kant's works are cited according the volume and page number of his *Gesammelte Schriften* (see Kant 1900). An exception is the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is cited according to the first (A) and/or second (B) editions. When citing Kant's various reflections, I cite both the volume and page number of his collected works as well as the reflection (R) number. In general, I have used the translations of Kant's texts available in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, and I have indicated when I have modified these translations.

- AA* Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften* (Kant 1900ff.)  
*Ann* 'M. Immanuel Kant's Announcement of the Program of his Lectures for the Winter Semester, 1765-1766.' (*AA* 2:303-314)  
*Anth* *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (*AA* 7:119-333)  
*Dr* *Dreams of A Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics* (*AA* 2:315-374)  
*GMS* *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (*AA* 4:387-463)  
*H* *Practical Philosophy Herder* (*AA* 27:3-89)  
*ID* *Inaugural Dissertation* (*AA* 2:385-420)  
*Kae* *Kaehler Lecture Notes* (Kant 2004)  
*KrV* *Critique of Pure Reason* (*AA* 3 and 4:1-252)  
*KpV* *Critique of Practical Reason* (*AA* 5:1-164)  
*KdU* *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (*AA* 5:165-485)  
*MdS* *Metaphysics of Morals* (*AA* 6:203-493)  
*ML* *Metaphysik L<sub>1</sub>* (*AA* 28:195-301)  
*NF* *Naturrecht Feyerabend* (*AA* 27:1319-94)  
*NM* *Negative Magnitudes* (*AA* 2:165-204)  
*O* *Observations* (*AA* 2:205-256)  
*Rel* *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (*AA* 6:1-202)  
*PE* *Prize Essay – Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality* (*AA* 2:273-302)

### Works by Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Smith

- C* Shaftesbury: *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1999)  
*E4* Hutcheson: *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (1756).  
*I4* Hutcheson: *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (1738).  
*TMS* Smith: *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (1767).  
*GTMS* Smith: *Theorie der moralischen Empfindungen* (1770).

## Introduction

After more than 200 years since its initial presentation, Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) moral philosophy continues to attract a significant amount of attention. Especially over the course of the last fifty years, the amount of scholarship devoted to nearly every aspect of Kant's moral philosophy has steadily increased. Despite this large and growing body of scholarship, however, comparatively little attention has been paid to two topics: 1. the way in which Kant's moral philosophy was influenced by his contemporaries and predecessors, and 2. the development of Kant's moral philosophy over the course of his philosophical career. The following dissertation aims to help remedy this situation by exploring one of the most important influences on the development of Kant's moral philosophy: British moral sense theory, as reflected in the thought of Anthony Ashley Cooper (a.k.a. Shaftesbury) (1671-1713) and Francis Hutcheson (1694-1747).

The works of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and many other eighteenth century British philosophers were widely discussed in Germany in second half of the eighteenth century, and this was made possible in large part by the, in some cases rapid, translation of their texts into German. With respect to Shaftesbury's works, for example, his *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author* (originally published in 1710) was first translated into German in 1738 by Georg Venzki and seems to have been so popular that it received a second, anonymous translation in 1746. Shaftesbury's two most important works on moral philosophy, *The Moralists* (1709) and *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit* (1699), were both translated by Johann Joachim Spalding in 1745 and 1747 respectively.

With respect to Hutcheson's reception in eighteenth century Germany, in the first instance this was made possible by a 1756 translation of Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy* (originally published just one year earlier in 1755) by the German author Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. A translation of Hutcheson's *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions* (1728) appeared in 1760, by Johann Gottfried Gellius, and one of *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) in 1762, by Johann Heinrich Merck. Although these translations would have attracted attention on their own in virtue of the fact that they were among the works of a number of English language philosophers who were being discussed in Germany at the time (see Kuehn 2001, 183-4), it

certainly did not hurt their reception that they were translated by individuals (Spalding and Lessing) who were important figures in eighteenth century German academic life themselves.

To be sure, above all else it was the general content of their philosophical positions that would have made the works of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson attractive to many eighteenth century German philosophers and writers. In his biography of Kant, for example, Manfred Kuehn states the following:

The works of Locke, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, Smith, Ferguson, and almost every other British philosopher of note were full of problems that needed solutions and observations that needed to be explained, if German philosophy of the traditional sort was to succeed. (Kuehn 2001, 183-4)

One such problem was in fact the existence and nature of a “moral sense” introduced by Shaftesbury and then given a more systematic treatment by Hutcheson. As Jan Engbers explains in detail, the German authors who were among the first to discuss the idea of a moral sense and the thought of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson in general were Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715-1769)<sup>1</sup>, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81), Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813)<sup>2</sup>, and also Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86)<sup>3</sup>, among others (see Engbers 2001, esp. 59-66). While not always positive<sup>4</sup>, the extent to which moral sense theory was discussed at the time at least makes it unsurprising that we find Kant mentioning Shaftesbury and Hutcheson as well. As will become clear in the following, however, in the case of Kant it

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<sup>1</sup> See esp. the tenth lecture of Gellert’s *Moralische Vorlesungen* (Gellert 1989, Vol. 6, pg. 119ff.). See also Kuehn (2009) for a discussion of how these lectures may have played an important role in Kant’s early development.

<sup>2</sup> See Wieland’s 1755 *Ankündigung einer Dunciade für die Deutschen*. (Wieland 1916, Vol. 4, esp. pg. 81)

<sup>3</sup> See Mendelssohn’s *Verwandschaft des Schönen und Guten* (see Mendelssohn 1844, Vol. 4, pg. 78-82), wherein he contrasts his view with that of Hutcheson (see Engbers 2001, 86ff.). Furthermore, Kuehn argues (see 1987, pg. 41n) that Mendelssohn’s *Philosophische Gespräche* are patterned off of a dialogue of Shaftesbury’s, that other of his works show Shaftesbury’s influence, and that Mendelssohn even began a translation of Shaftesbury’s *Sensus Communis*.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Engbers claims that the reception of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson in Germany falls into two stages: (1) the period between 1750-56 wherein Shaftesbury’s ideas are discussed and processed, and (2) the ten-year period after 1756 wherein Hutcheson’s thought is largely criticized (see Engbers 2001, 8).

is largely Hutcheson's thought that is the topic of discussion, while Shaftesbury comes into play only marginally and as the originator of moral sense theory.

It is of course no new discovery that British philosophers like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson had an influence on Kant's thought. In his early 1804 biography of Kant, for example, Ludwig Borowski states the following: "In the years when I belonged among his [Kant's] students, Hutcheson and Hume were of exceptional worth, the former in subjects of morals, the latter in his deepest philosophical investigations. ... He recommended both of these writers to us for a most careful study" (1804, 170). Serious scholarship on both Kant's development and on the influence of British moral philosophy on his thought did not begin for quite some time, however. German scholarship on the development of Kant's philosophy began with Paul Menzer's studies in the late 1800s (see Menzer 1897, 1898, 1899), and culminated with the studies produced by Josef Schmucker (1961) and Dieter Henrich (1957/8 and 1963) in the middle of the twentieth century. In English, only the studies by Paul Arthur Schilpp (1938) and Keith Ward (1972) exist. Clemens Schwaiger makes three claims about scholarship on the development of Kant's moral philosophy: (1) it reached a high point with the studies by Schmucker and Henrich, (2) research into this development has not been deepened nor superseded since the publication of the studies by Henrich and Schmucker, and (3) research into this topic was stagnant for three decades thereafter (see Schwaiger 1999, 14-16). The most important event that took place after the studies by Henrich and Schmucker is of course the publication in the latter half of the 1970s of the various lecture notes from Kant's courses on moral philosophy, anthropology, and natural law, among others. Since the material from Kant's lectures has been available, only Schwaiger's 1999 study has appeared and it is only concerned with Kant's development up until the publication of his first work on moral philosophy (the *Groundwork*) in 1785, and indeed his focus is quite narrow in this study, namely on Kant's understanding of imperatives.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, this focus on Kant's pre-critical writings and the absence of a detailed account of the relation between his early

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Menzer published a small selection of notes from Kant's lectures on moral philosophy in 1924 (see Kant 1924 and 1963) and at least Henrich seems to have used them. I should also note here that I do not wish to imply that Kant scholars did not read his lecture notes before their official publication in the Academy edition. At the same time, none of the studies produced before the official publication of the lectures notes make extensive use of this material and, as mentioned, only a few studies exist that were published afterwards.

influences and his later, mature positions is common to almost all scholarship on the development of Kant's moral philosophy (Henrich's 1957/8 article is an exception). In light of the fact that the many lecture notes are now easily accessible, there is a justified need to revisit many of the conclusions of previous scholarship concerning the development of Kant's pre-Critical moral philosophy, to say nothing about the development of his thought in general. As mentioned, there is also a particular need to use this material to determine how Kant's thought develops during his mature period as well. The following project is intended to, at least in part, satisfy these needs.

Not only is there need to revisit the development of Kant's ethics, but there is also need to revisit the influence of the moral sense theorists in particular. In the literature that currently exists, the extent to which the moral sense theorists in fact influenced Kant is a matter of debate. Some claim that Kant himself belonged to the moral sense school early in his development (MacBeath 1973, 283), others that the moral sense theorists only made Kant realize that there is an emotional factor to ethical consciousness (Schilpp 1938, 39). Schmucker claims that, prior to his study, the influence of the moral sense theorists has been overestimated compared to the influence of Crusius and Wolff (Schmucker 1961, 21-2) and others go as far as to say that Kant was in fact *never* really impressed with these writers and that the early Kant was not influenced by them (see Henrich 2009, 31, although Henrich does not share this view). Now that the lecture notes are easily accessible, we are in a position to better determine the precise nature of the influence of moral sense theory on Kant's thought, both during his earlier and later periods of development.<sup>6</sup> Above all else, this is what I hope to accomplish in the five chapters of this dissertation.

I do not pretend to provide an exhaustive discussion of the many ways in which moral sense theory influenced the development of Kant's thinking on moral philosophy. This would be an enormous undertaking beyond the scope of a single dissertation. Instead, I focus on the topics that stand at the center of moral sense theory and which are also the ones with which

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<sup>6</sup> At the same time, throughout my dissertation I am careful when using Kant's lecture notes and, wherever possible, rely on Kant's published position first and use the lectures notes only to confirm what we can with good reason attribute to Kant. At the same time, especially in the case of the pre-Critical period, the lectures notes are often our only source to rely on (especially during Kant's "silent decade"). Even here, however, it is important to exercise caution, especially since Kant himself expressed doubt about the reliability of the note takers in his classes (see *AA* 10:242 as well as Loudon 2000, 188 and 2011, 67).

Kant engages the most extensively, namely (1) the foundation of moral judgement and (2) the nature of moral motivation.

In chapter one, I set the stage for the later discussion of Kant's engagement with moral sense theory by explaining Shaftesbury's and Hutcheson's version of moral sense theory in detail. First, I discuss some of Shaftesbury's key positions on his conception of motivation and the moral sense. I then deal with Hutcheson, the moral sense theorist who had the biggest influence on Kant. This part of the chapter is more substantial, although in general I restrict myself to three questions that are the most important for the following chapters, namely moral motivation, the moral sense, as well as Hutcheson's answer to what I will call the "pleasure problem," i.e. the problem of how acting morally can be both pleasurable but not performed for the sake of this pleasure. In this chapter I illustrate that while Shaftesbury and Hutcheson are often lumped together as proponents of the same "moral sense theory," there are in fact significant differences between their views, especially with respect to the nature of the foundation of moral judgement. This is important, for this makes clear that the version of moral sense theory with which Kant engages is Hutcheson's rather than Shaftesbury's.

In chapter two, I turn to the focus of my dissertation and discuss the role of moral sense theory in Kant's moral philosophy, focusing in this chapter on Kant's pre-Critical writings (i.e. those written before the 1781 publication of the first *Critique*). More specifically, in this chapter I explain Kant's various discussions of "moral feeling" during the pre-Critical period and use this as a way to gauge the extent to which the moral sense theorists influenced Kant early on in his development. I illustrate that Kant uses moral feeling to refer to both a capacity for moral judgement as well as a motivational force. With this distinction in mind I show that the nature of moral sense theory's influence changes during this period, taking distinct forms before and after Kant's so-called "great light" that took place around 1769. Whereas Kant finds moral sense theory's conception of moral judgement attractive before 1769, after 1770 he rejects this element of the theory entirely. At the same time, I illustrate that Kant nonetheless preserves a place for moral feeling as a motivational force even after 1769.

In chapter three I turn to Kant's Critical period and investigate the way in which moral sense theory's conceptions of moral judgement and motivation influenced Kant's mature moral philosophy. Given the rational character of his mature moral theory, Kant's

opinion of Hutcheson's conception of moral judgement in particular is largely negative during the Critical period, and in the first part of this chapter I outline six main criticisms Kant makes against moral sense theory on this issue. My main focus in this chapter, however, is on the extent to which moral sense theory's conception of moral motivation influences Kant into the Critical period. In the past, interpreters have suggested that Kant adopts elements of the conception of motivation common to his English and Scottish predecessors, largely because of the role he assigns to feeling in moral action. Thus, the bulk of this chapter is devoted to presenting my interpretation of Kant's conception of moral motivation, paying particular attention to the role of both feeling and desire therein. I then survey what I take to be the dominant secondary interpretations of Kant's conception of moral motivation, including those that claim that Kant's view shares features in common with the "empiricist" view of action presented by Hume and others. I argue that while Kant's conception of motivation shares certain superficial features with Hutcheson's understanding of the issue, there are ultimately more differences than similarities. In this chapter I therefore hope to not only clarify Kant's engagement with moral sense theory during his Critical period, but I also hope to shed light on Kant's mature conception of motivation by illustrating how it is both similar to and different from the view presented by Hutcheson.

In chapter four I continue discussing Kant's conception of moral motivation, but I seek to clarify certain aspects of it by placing it in the context of the thought of a thinker who is not a moral sense theorist himself, but who is nonetheless intimately linked to moral sense theory, namely Adam Smith. In particular, I argue that understanding Smith's notion of "regard" for the general rules of conduct can help clarify Kant's conception of "respect [*Achtung*]" for the moral law. I explain how Smith's notion of regard embodies both a recognition of the validity and authority of the general rules, as well as a motive to action that Smith refers to as the "sense of duty." Similar to Smith, I then show that Kant's notion of "respect" in his mature moral philosophy refers to both an attitude (our consciousness of the validity and supreme authority of the moral law) as well as a feeling (that of respect) which functions as a motive. I argue that both the nature of this attitude and the relation between the attitude and the feeling of respect in Kant can be clarified by placing it in context with Smith. I conclude by suggesting that it is only once Kant came to re-think the nature of the faculty of desire that he incorporated Smith's notion of *Achtung*, and he did so because it supplied a

necessary piece to his conception of moral motivation, something he was still unsure about during the time when he would have read Smith.

In the fifth and final chapter I turn my attention to Kant's notion of the satisfaction involved in the performance of virtuous action, what he calls *self-contentment* [*Selbstzufriedenheit*]. I explain this concept in detail and outline an objection this concept invites that was raised by Kant's contemporary, Christian Garve. Garve's objection is similar to a problem Hutcheson anticipated in relation to the pleasure felt by the moral sense, what I called in chapter one the "pleasure problem." I argue that, with his concept of self-contentment, Kant offers a better solution to the problem than the one offered by Hutcheson. I conclude the chapter by distinguishing self-contentment from a number of other terms, with which Kant scholars have equated it in the past.

My project ends with a short concluding chapter, wherein I survey the results of the previous chapters and assess what they say about the influence that Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and also Smith had on the development of Kant's moral philosophy. I also briefly discuss a few avenues of future research by illustrating a few additional ways in which eighteenth century British moral philosophy may have influenced Kant and which could be addressed in a future project. As a whole, I hope to illustrate in this project that the relation between Kant and eighteenth century British moral philosophy is an underappreciated but rich area of research that can greatly enhance our understanding of both Kant as well as the British philosophers I discuss in this project.



## Chapter 1

### 1 Moral Sense Theory

Before turning to the focus of this project directly, in this chapter I introduce and explain the ideas of two moral sense theorists that will be essential for understanding Kant's engagement with them in the following chapters. In the first part of this chapter (1.1), I discuss some key positions of Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury. I focus on Shaftesbury's conception of motivation and the moral sense. In the second part of this chapter (1.2) I deal with Francis Hutcheson, the moral sense theorist who had the biggest influence on Kant. This second part is more substantial, although in general I restrict myself to three topics that will figure most prominently in the following chapters, namely Hutcheson's understanding of moral motivation and the moral sense, as well as his solution to what I will call the "pleasure problem."

#### 1.1 Shaftesbury

Although Kant does not engage with Shaftesbury's moral philosophy extensively, it will be helpful for the remainder of my project to discuss a few core aspects of Shaftesbury's philosophy. First, I discuss Shaftesbury's conception of motivation. His understanding of motivation is a broadly "empirical" one, according to which human beings are only moved by passions and desires. This conception of motivation is one that influenced Hutcheson and, as we will see later, it is a view of motivation that influenced Kant as well. Second, Shaftesbury is largely regarded as the originator of the idea of a "moral sense," but his understanding of this capacity is very different from Hutcheson's. In this section I therefore discuss how Shaftesbury understands this idea in order to determine later on which version Kant had in mind when engaging with moral sense theory. I begin with Shaftesbury's understanding of motivation.

##### 1.1.1 Motivation

According to Shaftesbury, there are many ways in which a creature can be moved. On the one hand there are the cases of "convulsive fits" or when "a creature strikes itself" (C 195) where, according to Shaftesbury, "it is a simple mechanism" that acts and "not

the animal” (C 195). Shaftesbury therefore makes an initial distinction between cases where an animal *moves* but does not *act*, i.e. where only mechanism operates, and cases where we *can* say that it is the animal that acts and not something else. For Shaftesbury, whatever “is done or acted by any animal as such is done only through some affection or passion” (C 195).<sup>7</sup> When an action can appropriately be attributed to an animal, the action is caused by passion or affection, and for this reason Shaftesbury claims that “no animal can be said properly to act otherwise than through affections or passions, such are proper to an animal” (C 195). All creatures, therefore, humans included, only act from passion or affection. Above all, this means that Shaftesbury rules out reason as a potential motivator.<sup>8</sup>

In that acting from passion and affection allows us to say a creature is properly the actor, rather than something else, Shaftesbury also believes that it is through passion or affection that good or ill is brought about by a creature. As Shaftesbury says:

in a sensible creature, that which is not done through any affection at all makes neither good nor ill in the nature of that creature, who then only is supposed good when the good or ill of the system to which he has relation is the immediate object of some passion or affection moving him. (C 169)

In order to say that a creature has brought about a good, then, two conditions must be satisfied: first, that creature has to have acted from some passion or affection; and second, the immediate or intended object of this creature’s passion or affection must be the good or ill of a system to which it belongs in order to say that this creature is good in relation to that system. Two things deserve discussion here: first is Shaftesbury’s conception of goodness, and second is his categorization of the affections passions and his discussion of which of these can be considered good or ill. I deal with each of these topics in turn.

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<sup>7</sup> Voitle (1955) states that “affection” has a meaning for Shaftesbury that is not obvious in “emotion” or any other term with which we might equate it. According to Voitle, “affection” in Shaftesbury simply means an “inclination of the soul toward the object” (1955, 20). Furthermore, Gill (2011) claims that for Shaftesbury “passion” and “affection” are at times used interchangeably, such that there is no strong distinction between the two. As such, when discussing Shaftesbury in the following I also use these two terms interchangeably.

<sup>8</sup> See Gill (2006, 91).

A central element of Shaftesbury's moral theory as presented in his *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit* is his conception of the good. Shaftesbury distinguishes between private interest and goodness. Every creature, says Shaftesbury, has a private good and interest, and this is defined as the "right state" of a creature that is forwarded and sought by its nature (C 167). A creature is good, however, only in relation to others. According to Shaftesbury, we can never say that a creature is good, even if it is perfectly happy in itself, so long as this creature is in complete isolation from other creatures (see C 168). "Good" is therefore a relative term, for Shaftesbury, such that a creature can be called good or bad only in relation to the "system," to which it belongs. This system can be anything that "points beyond" a creature, and a creature is part of a system when it is "discovered to have relation to some other being or nature besides his own" (C 168). Shaftesbury gives the examples of belonging to "a particular race or species of living creatures" (C 168), and if such a species or race is also part of another system, the animal kingdom as a whole, for example, then a creature can be said to belong to a number of systems of various levels of generality, and can be considered good or bad in relation to each of them. Shaftesbury believes, however, that no matter what other systems a creature may belong to, every creature can be considered as part of "a system of all things and a universal nature" such that "there can be no particular being or system which is not either good or ill in that general one [system] of the universe, for, if it be insignificant and of no use, it is a fault or imperfection and consequently ill in the general system" (C 169). Given that a creature is therefore often a part of many systems, a creature can be considered bad for one system but good for another, and arguably the most important judgement of all is if a creature is good or ill in relation to the most general system of all things, i.e. the universe. In such a case, Shaftesbury says, a creature can be called "wholly and absolutely" (C 169) good or ill. Despite this, however, it is clear that Shaftesbury mainly discusses goodness in the context of the relation of a creature to its species (see Gill 2006, 90 and Darwall 1995, 183), and in the following when I speak of Shaftesbury's concept of goodness I restrict myself to this situation as well. Now that we have a grasp of Shaftesbury's understanding of goodness and we have seen that goodness is brought about by passions and affections, we are now in a position to see which affections and

passions are good, for Shaftesbury. This will become clear after taking a look at Shaftesbury's distinction between three kinds of affections and passions.

According to Shaftesbury, there are three types of affections that can move a creature. First there are the *self-affections* "which lead only to the good of the private" (C 196). In contrast to these there are the *natural affections* "which lead to the good of the public" (C 196) or more generally to the good of a system. Distinct from both of these are the *unnatural affections*, which do not tend "either to any good of the public or private, but contrariwise" (C 196). As we saw above, goodness must be brought about by a passion or affection, and a passion or affection is good when it has the good of a system as its *immediate* object. Shaftesbury therefore believes it is the natural affections that are good, given they have the good of the system as their immediate or intended object. This implies that the unnatural affections are "wholly vicious" (C 196) in that they necessarily and always intend the ill of a system. It should be mentioned, however, that the unnatural and the self-affections do not necessarily and always bring about ill, nor do the natural affections necessarily and always bring about the good of the system. Shaftesbury says that each of these can at least be compatible with the good in moderation. The self-affections, for example, are not necessarily ill, but only when they are so strong or are given preference so as to not be compatible with the public good. As such, acting on them is not incompatible with bringing about the public good. At the same time, however, these affections cannot be considered "good" themselves because they do not have the public good as their "immediate" object. Rather, their immediate object is private good and at the most they therefore bring about the public good only mediately. This also implies that the lack of the self-affections is not necessarily good in itself, for a complete absence of these affections, for example, would be injurious to the species (in that the species would not survive without the survival of each individual). As such, a moderate degree of this affection seems necessary and at least compatible with the good. Although, as mentioned, the unnatural affections are "wholly vicious" (C 196), because they necessarily and always intend the ill of a system it could be said that a moderate amount of them is compatible with the good of a system as well. Shaftesbury would surely want to admit that affections such as vengeance or even hatred in moderation might be required for self-preservation or to deter others from meddling in my affairs, and thus,

again at least in moderation, might be compatible with the good of a system. At the same time, it should be stressed here that these affections cannot be good in themselves, and indeed should be considered vicious because they do not immediately intend the good of a system.

The same can be said of the natural affections in that too strong an affection towards the care of one's children, for example (see *C* 169), can be injurious to the good of the child and to public good. Thus although the natural affections by nature intend the good of a system, they also need to be of a moderate degree in order to be compatible with the good of such a system. Indeed, Shaftesbury's general view is that only a proper balance of all of the affections together is good, a creature only being good if their "natural temper" (*C* 171), i.e. their character or the balance of their passions and affections, is primarily ruled by passions and affections directed immediately towards the public good. Shaftesbury details what this "natural temper" looks like and consists in, but discussing this would take me too far afield for my purposes. What is essential here is, first, that Shaftesbury believes creatures, human beings included, are moved by a variety of different affections and passions (not just self affection, for example). Second, Shaftesbury believes it is the natural affections that are good because they immediately intend the public good. Third, the self-affections, and perhaps even the unnatural affections, are not incompatible with public good. What is even more essential, however, is Shaftesbury's distinction between goodness and virtue, the discussion of which will bring us to the next major theme important for the rest of my project: Shaftesbury's conception of the moral sense.

### 1.1.2 The Moral Sense and the Origin of Right and Wrong

In contrast to "mere" goodness and what "lies within the reach and capacity of all sensible creatures," Shaftesbury claims that "virtue or merit ... is allowed to man only" (*C* 172). According to Shaftesbury, human beings have a kind of "reflected sense" such that "not only the outward beings which offer themselves to the sense are the objects of the affection, but the very actions themselves and the affections of pity, kindness, gratitude and their contraries, being brought into the mind by reflection, become objects"

(C 172). It is this latter kind of reflection in particular that makes human beings capable of virtue. For Shaftesbury:

if a creature be generous, kind, constant, compassionate, yet if he cannot reflect on what he himself does or sees others do so as to take notice of what is worthy or honest and make that notice or conception of worth and honesty to be an object of his affection, he has not the character of being virtuous. For, thus and no otherwise, he is capable of having a sense of right or wrong, a sentiment or judgement of what is done through just, equal and good affection or the contrary. (C 173)

Shaftesbury's mention here of a "sense of right and wrong" is what might be called his conception of the moral sense.<sup>9</sup> Because it will be important for the discussion in later chapters, it will be important to look closer at what this amounts to for Shaftesbury.

If a creature is capable of reflection, then it is capable of sensing not only "the ordinary bodies or common subjects of sense" but also "the mental or moral subjects" (C 172). In other words, reflection allows a creature to sense its own thoughts, affections, passions, and even actions. With respect to what might be called the internal objects of reflection and the ordinary outer objects of sense, Shaftesbury says the following:

The shapes, motions, colours and proportions of these latter being presented to our eye, there necessarily results a beauty or deformity, according to the different measure, arrangement, and disposition of their several parts. So in behaviour and actions, when presented to our understanding, there must be found, of necessity, an apparent difference, according to the regularity or irregularity of the subjects. (C 172)

Shaftesbury therefore compares our appraisal of behaviour and action to our appraisal of beauty, such that we necessarily view some outer objects as beautiful or deformed, and so do we judge of behaviour and actions.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Shaftesbury has a strong view of the

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<sup>9</sup> Although it is true that Shaftesbury is generally thought to have invented this expression, there are other historical precursors to Shaftesbury as well. See Tuveson (1948) for a discussion as well as Darwall (1995, 185 note 21), Gill (2006, 89), and Schneewind (1998, 301 note 28). It is interesting to note that Shaftesbury's use of the expression "moral sense" is extremely limited. As Schneewind points out (1998, 301 note 28), the expression is absent from the original (1699) edition of the *Inquiry*, is present in the first edition of *Characteristics* (1711), but is absent again in the second edition of *Characteristics* (1714).

<sup>10</sup> As we will see, the analogy between aesthetic and moral judgement is important for Hutcheson, as well.

extent to which we judge the beauty of objects in general. As he says: “The mind ... cannot be without its eye and ear so as to discern proportion, distinguish sound and scan each sentiment or thought which comes before it. It can let nothing escape its censure” (C 172). Even in sleep Shaftesbury claims we are judging what comes before our mind (see C 173). Because we are constantly judging when we reflect on our actions, behaviour, passions, or affections, we necessarily judge them and can have certain affections or passions in relation to them. As Shaftesbury states: “by means of this reflected sense, there arises another kind of affection towards those very affections themselves, which have been already felt and have now become the subject of a new liking or dislike” (C 172). One has to be careful here, however, for if one already has a rudimentary understanding of Hutcheson’s conception of the moral sense and interprets Shaftesbury’s conception of it in light of Hutcheson’s, one is likely to misinterpret what exactly Shaftesbury’s view is. It isn’t clear, for example, that our “affections of affections” are what ground moral judgement, i.e. it is not clear in Shaftesbury that we call an action good or virtuous *because* we have an approving affection of an affection. Shaftesbury’s view of the origin of our moral ideas is in fact much more complex than one might first expect.

Before turning to look at what the ultimate ground of moral judgement is, for Shaftesbury, it is worth asking how he uses the term “virtue” in contrast to goodness. Goodness, as we saw above, can be used in numerous ways. A passion or affection is good if it is a natural affection, and similarly an action based on such a passion or affection is good. A creature is good in a particular instance if it acts on a natural affection, a creature can be good or ill “in general” if it acts on natural affections more often than not, and a creature can even be “wholly and absolutely” good if it tends to bring about the good of the universal system in general. The question is: can virtue be used in a similar way and, if so, what would that mean? According to Lawrence Klein, “Shaftesbury’s account seems to imply a distinction between the “goodness” of acts and the “virtue” of actors” (1994, 54n, see also Grean 1967, 226ff.). Michael Gill, however, disagrees and claims there is such a thing as virtuous action in contrast to merely good actions, the former being those that are motivated by what he calls the “second-order

affections” (2006, 91ff.) of the moral sense.<sup>11</sup> It is important for Kant’s reception of moral sense theory to acknowledge that, at least on one reading, the moral sense itself plays a role in motivation. As we will see, such an interpretation makes sense for Hutcheson’s moral theory, but Gill’s attribution of this view to Shaftesbury is not convincing for a number of reasons.

First, if Shaftesbury considered these second-order affections, an expression he himself does not use, as capable of moving humans to action like the other affections, it is curious that he did not include this kind of affection in his taxonomy of affections explicitly. Second, even if he only implicitly thought these second-order affections were capable of motivating to action, it isn’t clear how this would be the case since the object of these affections is not something that can be brought about through action, as is the case with all the other affections. The “object” of these affections, i.e. first-order affections, is rather an affection itself, and indeed these objects *already exist* and are therefore not objects that can or need to be brought about through action. Indeed, it therefore seems that second-order affections have “objects” in a different, unspecified sense than first-order affections. Third, if second-order affections are capable of moving humans to action, then presumably they would fall into one of the three categories listed by Shaftesbury, i.e. self-affections, natural affections, or unnatural affections. Because virtue seems to be a kind of higher-order goodness, for Shaftesbury (and as such perhaps a subset of goodness, see Gill 2006, 93), presumably second-order affections would have to be reducible to the natural affections. Gill suggests as much (see 2006, 92) but he isn’t clear about how he thinks this is the case. Again, it isn’t clear how this would be possible because the natural affections have a particular immediate object, public goodness, and the second-order affections have a different object, i.e. first-order affections, which, again, seem to be a different kind of object altogether given they already exist. In light of these reasons it does not seem appropriate to say that virtuous actions are produced by second-order affections, and furthermore it isn’t clear that it makes sense, for Shaftesbury, to say that *actions* can be virtuous in contrast to merely good; it is an *actor*

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<sup>11</sup> Voitle (1955, 21) similarly calls these “secondary affection.”



that is virtuous, not its actions. In order to further see why it might make more sense to say that only agents are virtuous and not actions, we should turn to a further quality that makes humans capable of virtue.

According to Shaftesbury, the possession of a power of reflection is not the only thing that makes a creature capable of virtue. In addition to this power of reflection, Shaftesbury claims that human beings, in contrast to other sensible creatures, are “capable of forming general notions of things” (C 172). More specifically, human beings “can have the *notion* of a public interest and can attain the speculation or science of what is morally good or ill, admirable or blameable, right or wrong” and it is “in this case alone ... we call any creature worthy or virtuous” (C 173, my emphasis). Not only reflection, therefore, but the cognitive capacity to have knowledge or understanding of what is in the public good, of what is morally right or wrong, is necessary to be capable of virtue. More specifically, for Shaftesbury there is such a thing as “*the eternal measures and immutable independent nature of worth and virtue*” (C 175). What this appears to mean, at the very least, is that Shaftesbury believes in some sort of objective moral rightness and wrongness. According to Shaftesbury, our “knowledge of right and wrong” is gained by “a use of reason,” and this is done for the following purpose:

to secure a right application of the affections, that nothing horrid or unnatural, nothing unexemplary, nothing destructive of that natural affection by which the species or society is upheld, may on any account or through any principle or notion of honour or religion be at any time affected or prosecuted as a good and proper object of esteem. (C 175)

For Shaftesbury, therefore, we “know” right and wrong through reason, and this knowledge of right and wrong concerns what is “truly” or “objectively” good for a system. This knowledge needs to be objective in order to prevent fake standards of right and wrong from gaining authority.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in contrast to such knowledge there is also much “opinion, belief or speculation” (C 174) concerning what is right and wrong. It is the job of reason to determine if such opinion, belief or speculation concerning what is

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<sup>12</sup> Gill (see 2006, 93) plausibly suggests that Shaftesbury included this element into virtue in order to preserve the possibility of rationally resolving moral disagreement.

good is in fact true knowledge or is at odds with the eternal and immutable truths of what is good for a system. For Shaftesbury, it is our ability to have knowledge or the “notion” of such things that is a central part of what it means to be capable of virtue.

With this in hand it might be easier to make sense of what it means to say an *agent* is “virtuous” but not her actions. What makes humans different from other creatures is, first, that they can have second-order affections, and second, that they can know or have a notion of what is in the public interest. An agent, therefore, is virtuous when she performs “good” actions knowingly, i.e. when she both acts on a natural affection and knows that acting on such an affection is what brings about public good. An agent is also virtuous when she has second-order affections for those affections that truly do bring about public good. It is unclear, of course, if an agent needs to satisfy both of these conditions or just one, and which one, in order to be virtuous but this is at least perhaps one way of making sense of the claim that only actions are “good” and agents “virtuous.”

This discussion of how possessing one or both of two qualities (1. the knowledge of true right or wrong and 2. having second-order affection for what is good) makes one virtuous highlights a tension in Shaftesbury’s thought. If we “know” right and wrong through reason, for Shaftesbury, what function does the moral sense play, if any, with respect to our ideas of moral good and ill? In other words, which one of these is the ultimate criterion of moral evaluation – the moral sense or reason? This is not an easy question to resolve in Shaftesbury’s thought. In the following I will present two ways that scholars have tried to make sense of this tension in Shaftesbury’s moral philosophy.

According to J.B. Schneewind, it is ultimately feeling that is the final judge of what is objectively right and wrong. Schneewind claims it is through the moral sense, for Shaftesbury, that “we become aware of an objective order” (Schneewind 1998, 302). The moral sense is what perceives which affections and passions are harmonious with the good of the species, and our approval or disapproval of particular passions and affections is what reveals to us what is objectively good or ill. Schneewind’s interpretation gets complicated not only by the fact that, as I have explained above, Shaftesbury also seems to say that it is through reason that we are aware of objective moral truths, but also because Shaftesbury claims that the judgements of the moral sense can be wrong, i.e. the

moral sense can have a false standard and approve what is *not* good for the species (see *C* 174f.) Schneewind acknowledges that “[m]oral and aesthetic feeling can fail to reveal objective harmonies” and furthermore that “the capacity to appreciate moral harmony is as much in need of education or training as the capacity for aesthetic judgement” (Schneewind 1998, 305), but his explanation of Shaftesbury’s overall view in light of these positions is puzzling. If we and/or the moral sense need to be educated and the judgements of our moral sense can be wrong, it isn’t clear how Schneewind thinks the judgements of the moral sense can be a reliable indicator of objective good. As Schneewind claims, for Shaftesbury “[t]he moral quality of actions depends on whether the set of passions that leads the agent to do them is morally approved or disapproved. The virtuous agent is the agent whose character elicits moral approval, and the right act is simply the act the virtuous agent does” (Schneewind 1998, 305). It is difficult to make sense of what Schneewind is trying to say here, but his view appears to be that it is the judgements of the already virtuous and well-educated moral sense that are reliable indicators of objective good, for Shaftesbury. If this is the case, however, there is no way for an individual to tell if their moral sense approves what is *really* good or if their moral sense is failing. Every individual with a moral sense will approve or will have an affection for those passions and affections which *they believe* to bring about the good of the species, and in that respect every individual will believe that what their moral sense approves and disapproves reveals objective moral good and ill. But as we have seen, because Shaftesbury wishes to preserve the idea of objective moral truth and because he believes the moral sense can be wrong, there must be some other source for our standard of moral good and ill, against which we can judge the affections of the moral sense. Schneewind’s interpretation, therefore, does not seem to be consistent with Shaftesbury’s view.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> It is my impression that Schneewind is guilty of interpreting Shaftesbury in light of Hutcheson’s theory. As we will see, Hutcheson attempts to preserve the objectivity of the judgements of the moral sense in a different way from Shaftesbury, but for Hutcheson it is the judgements of the moral sense that have the final word on what is good or ill, not knowledge gained through reason.

An alternative and, in my opinion, more plausible interpretation of Shaftesbury holds that it is not feeling, but reason and knowledge that has the last word on what is morally good and ill, and the judgements of the moral sense are compared to this standard. Klein, for example, states that Shaftesbury's conception of the moral sense "was introduced *not* to elucidate the innovation ... of founding human morals on sociable affections but rather to underscore a demand for self-consciousness ... on the part of the moral actor" (Klein 1994, 57, my emphasis). The moral sense or our second-order affections, then, do not themselves ground judgements on what is objectively good and ill. This latter function is accomplished by reason. This view is shared by both Stephen Darwall and Gill, both of whom explain this interpretation in further detail. Darwall, for example, claims that Shaftesbury's view of the moral sense "is far from the empiricist moral sentimentalism of Hutcheson and Hume" (Darwall 1995, 187). On the contrary, the moral sense "unquestionably involves feeling, for Shaftesbury, but it is more accurate to think of him holding a *rationalist* theory of moral sense. Moral sense involves the creative, framing power of reason, not the passive reception of sensations" (ibid., 187, original emphasis). What Darwall means by Shaftesbury holding a "*rationalist* theory of moral sense" here, and by his claim that Shaftesbury's view is not about the passive reception of the sense, is that our moral judgements do not come, at least not solely, from our second-order affections alone, but involve a rational, "creative" component. Gill is even more clear about the nature of Shaftesbury's view on the relation between moral sense and rational moral knowledge.

According to Gill, Shaftesbury was reacting to "overzealous enthusiasts" of religion who believed that they each had "privileged, private access to the word of God" (Gill 2006, 93) and for this reason "Shaftesbury did not want his moral sense theory to collapse into the chaotic and violent subjectivism such enthusiasm induced" (ibid., 93). Shaftesbury therefore wanted to ground moral goodness in something objective, "against which we can measure everyone's moral sense" (ibid., 94). According to Gill, this standard of goodness cannot therefore be issued by the moral sense, nor even Shaftesbury's very own, presumably well-educated, moral sense (see ibid., 94). On the contrary, this standard is something "discovered through the use of reason alone" (ibid., 94 and see also Irwin 2008, 354f. and 408).

Although the above seems to be the better way of understanding Shaftesbury's view, Gill acknowledges there are problems with it. If moral judgement is ultimately grounded in reason, not second-order affection, it becomes questionable exactly what function the second-order affections of the moral sense performs. As Gill states, the problem seems to be that, even though moral judgement is ultimately grounded in reason, Shaftesbury presents his view as if people should also and at least sometimes rely on the pronouncements of their moral sense as well (see *ibid.*, 97). Klein could be correct that the idea of the moral sense is merely meant to emphasize that there is or ought to be a reflective element to moral judgement, but I do not wish to resolve this issue in Shaftesbury at this point in time. Gill also merely identifies this problem in Shaftesbury and does not come up with a clear resolution, and even mentions that it is unclear if Shaftesbury was aware of the problem (see Gill 2006, 99). What I merely wish to have illustrated here is the following: first, Shaftesbury does *not* appear to hold an empiricist, sentimentalist view of the moral sense according to which the judgements of the moral sense are thought to be a reliable indicator of moral good. On the contrary, for Shaftesbury it is reason that seems to have the final say on what is morally good and ill and, the judgements of the moral sense need to be compared to this standard. Second, I wish to have pointed out a problem with this view, namely that it makes the purpose of the moral sense unclear.

### 1.1.3 Conclusion

In this section I have discussed those views of Shaftesbury's most relevant for the remainder of my project. First, we have seen that humans are always moved by passions and affections, for Shaftesbury, and that the "good" affections are the natural affections, which have the public good or good of the system as their immediate object. Second, we saw that Shaftesbury's conception of the moral sense involves not only having an affection of an affection, but also involves our knowledge of the eternal and immutable truths of morality. In the next section I turn to a discussion of those aspects of Hutcheson's moral philosophy that will be important for the coming chapters. As we will see, Hutcheson's version of moral sense theory is both similar to and different from Shaftesbury's in important ways.

## 1.2 Hutcheson

### 1.2.1 Introduction

In this section I turn to the moral philosophy of Francis Hutcheson, the moral sense theorist who had the biggest impact on Kant's thought. I focus on what might be called a particular version of Hutcheson's moral philosophy, namely that presented in the two works that Kant owned (see Warda 1922, 50) and therefore likely read: the *Inquiry Concerning the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (first edition: 1725) and the *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (first edition: 1728). That Kant read these works is no surprise, for as William Frankena notes, "it was his [Hutcheson's] earlier books ... that were important for the time" (1955, 356). Not only do I focus on these two texts, but I focus on particular editions of these two texts, namely the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Inquiry* (1738) and the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Essay* (1756) because these are the editions that formed the basis of the translations that Kant owned.<sup>14</sup> This is significant, for it is generally acknowledged that Hutcheson's thought changed over time. One of the most significant events in Hutcheson's intellectual development was his exposure to Joseph Butler's *Sermons*, which appeared for the first time in 1726, i.e. directly between the publication of the first editions of the *Inquiry* and the *Essay*. For this reason William Scott argues that Hutcheson's thought can be divided into at least two stages: that between 1723 and 1726, and that after 1726, i.e. before and after Hutcheson's exposure to Butler (see Scott 1900, 185 and 196, and also Raphael 1947, 17). What this means is that any edition of the *Inquiry* appearing after 1726 (i.e. all of them except the first) differ significantly in that Hutcheson edited the text in light of the development of his thought after reading Butler. Indeed, some argue that this caused there to be inconsistencies in later editions of the *Inquiry* (see Scott 1900, 184-5). In any event, it is important to realize that the picture I paint of Hutcheson's moral philosophy in

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<sup>14</sup> See Klemme and Kuehn (2001, vol. 4, v) and Hutcheson (1760, 2).

this section reflects only one particular version of it, namely that present in the editions of the two texts that Kant read.<sup>15</sup>

In the following, I focus on those positions of Hutcheson's that were important for Kant's reception of it. More specifically I focus on those views that will be important for the coming chapters. In general, these correspond to the views that Hutcheson himself thought most significant in moral philosophy. In Hutcheson's first publication, the *Reflections on the Common Systems of Moral Philosophy* (see Hutcheson 1993, 95), his purpose is to discuss what will be the focus of his coming book, i.e. the *Inquiry*, namely the ideas that properly moral motivation cannot be reducible to self-interest (see *ibid.*, 98), and that morally right conduct consists in our duties to others, as opposed to our duties to our self or God (see *ibid.*, 105-6). Although he does not discuss the moral sense in this text, Hutcheson at least hints towards the idea that it is those actions that are performed to assist others that we judge to be morally correct. Hutcheson is even clearer about the issues he regards as most important in moral philosophy in the Introduction to Treatise II of the *Inquiry*. There Hutcheson claims that his intention is to argue two things: 1. that we perceive an immediate goodness and experience a particular kind of pleasure when we contemplate certain actions "by a *superior Sense*, which I call a *Moral one*" (I4 110), and 2. that what excites us to virtuous action is not the desire for pleasure, nor reward or sanction, "but an entirely different Principle of Action from *Self-Love*, or Desire of private Good" (I4 110).

Hutcheson therefore believed that two questions were central to moral philosophy: 1. the question of what qualifies as moral motivation, and 2. the question of the origin of our moral ideas and of the criterion of moral evaluation. In the following, Hutcheson's answer to these two questions will be my focus, as well as his answer to what I will call in the remainder of this project the "pleasure problem." Although I ignore some debates in the literature that are not important for my purposes (such as the question

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<sup>15</sup> This should not, of course, be taken to mean that the picture painted below is not representative of Hutcheson's view. I only mean to make the reader aware that slightly different views than those described below may be present in different editions, and that if one's aims were different from the ones I have here, one would need to take these different editions into account, not to mention Hutcheson's later thought.

of whether Hutcheson was a moral realist or not, see below note 28) I do discuss some interesting interpretive questions that arise and that are related to the positions more directly relevant to my overall project.

I begin with a discussion of Hutcheson's conception of moral motivation in the *Inquiry* and the *Essay*. In the case of this topic, Hutcheson's discussion is different and much more detailed in the *Essay*, therefore it makes sense to discuss the views expressed in each text separately. I then move on to a discussion of Hutcheson's conception of the moral sense. I describe how exactly the moral sense works for Hutcheson so as to see how it is different from Shaftesbury's understanding of the idea. As for Shaftesbury, reason interacts with the moral sense, for Hutcheson, but I illustrate that, as opposed to Shaftesbury, Hutcheson's moral sense is indeed the final criterion of moral evaluation. I take the time here to explain the role reason nonetheless plays in moral evaluation as well as the extent to which Hutcheson's conception of moral evaluation can be classified as subjectivist or objectivist. I then turn to a discussion of the relation between the moral sense and motivation, and to Hutcheson's distinction between exciting and justifying reasons before finally turning to Hutcheson's stance on the "pleasure problem." In general, this should provide a relatively comprehensive picture of Hutcheson's moral theory that will prove essential for the coming chapters.

### 1.2.2 Motivation

At the beginning of Section II of Treatise II of the *Inquiry*, Hutcheson admits that "[t]he *Motives* of human Actions, or their *immediate Causes*, would be best understood after considering the *Passions* and *Affections*" (I4 132). This is what he accomplishes in the *Essay*, but here in the *Inquiry* Hutcheson states that his task is only to "consider the *Springs* of the Actions which we call *virtuous*" (I4 132). Before moving on to the more detailed account of motivation Hutcheson presents in the *Essay*, I first discuss what he says about motivation in the *Inquiry*.

Although Hutcheson's account of motivation in the *Inquiry* is less detailed than that of the *Essay*, Hutcheson does make a general distinction similar to one Shaftesbury made. According to Hutcheson: "external Motions, when accompany'd with no Affections toward God or *Man*, or evidencing no Want of the *expected* Affections toward



either, can have no *moral Good or Evil* in them” (I4 133). Although the distinction does not become a central theme for Hutcheson, he makes a basic distinction here between mere “external motions,” and external motions accompanied by an affection toward either God or other human beings. The first point to notice about Hutcheson’s account of motivation, then, is that, just as for Shaftesbury, Hutcheson believes it is the external motions of a subject that are *intended* towards other beings that are capable of moral evaluation. Put differently, the external motions of a subject that cannot be attributed to that subject as the author of such motions are excluded from moral evaluation. With this basic distinction in hand we can now ask: what are the affections that are morally good and evil?

As I mentioned above, one of Hutcheson’s main goals in the *Inquiry* is to argue that virtuous action is motivated by something other than self-interest. What this means, of course, is that, first, self-interest is one of the central motives of human nature and, second, self-interest is not the only motive Hutcheson attributes to human beings. In general, Hutcheson believes that “[t]he Affections which are of most Importance in *Morals*, are commonly included under the Names Love and Hatred” (I4 134). On the one hand, Hutcheson distinguishes between three distinct kinds of motive: self-interest, benevolence, and malice. Self-interest or “self-love” is simply the “Desire of *private Interest*” (I4 134). Benevolence is the desire of another’s interest, but what is essential about benevolence, for Hutcheson, is that it is “disinterested” (I4 136). When we desire the good of another, such a desire is only true benevolence when we desire their good as an end in itself and not as a means to our own pleasure. Falling on the side of hatred is malice, i.e. “a sedate ultimate Desire of the Misery of others” (I4 152), and this is supposed to be disinterested as well, although Hutcheson claims that such an affection is something “*Human Nature* seems scarce capable” (I4 152). In most circumstances, our reason for hating another is self-interest, i.e. we hate others because their interests are opposed to our own, meaning our hate is usually “interested” as opposed to “disinterested.” For this reason, Hutcheson believes that human nature has two main affections: self-interest and benevolence.

As one might suspect from someone following Shaftesbury, Hutcheson claims that benevolence is the properly virtuous motive (see I4 159). Only actions flowing from

purely disinterested benevolence are virtuous, for Hutcheson, meaning self-interested actions or any seemingly benevolent actions that are actually “interested” are excluded from being moral. Hutcheson believes benevolence can take many forms. He claims, for example, that “[t]here are nearer and stronger Kinds of *Benevolence*, when the Objects stand in some nearer Relations to ourselves” (*I4* 218). Examples of these are natural affection, i.e. love towards predominantly one’s children but also towards one’s wider family (see *I4* 218-9), gratitude, and esteem.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, Hutcheson believes that natural affection extends only from parent to child and not vice versa, and that the affection of children towards the good of their parents is better understood as gratitude because it is not founded in nature (see *I4* 219). Much of the *Inquiry* is spent arguing for the existence of a disinterested motive of benevolence, i.e. that benevolence cannot be reduced to self-interest. This is because one group of Hutcheson’s main opponents in the text are authors like Mandeville (who is mentioned on the title page of the first edition of the *Inquiry*, see Klemme and Kuehn 2001, vol. 4, v) who believe all human motivation can be reduced to self-interest. In any event, of the two affections central to morals, i.e. love and hatred, it is, of course, love that is the affection of virtue and is central to morals.<sup>17</sup> It should be noted, however, that Hutcheson understands the love central to virtue in a particular way.

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<sup>16</sup> In the literature there is a lack of clarity as to whether benevolence is simply a genus of affection which includes various species, e.g. gratitude, natural affection, etc., or whether benevolence is simply one kind among many other affections included in the class of affections that are disinterestedly concerned with the good of others. Schneewind, for example, speaks as if there is only one virtuous motive, i.e. benevolence (see Schneewind 1998, 334). T.A. Roberts (1973, 10 and 15) and Gill (2006, 183), however, claim it is unclear if benevolence is a genus or a species. I do not wish to resolve this issue here, but it is worth pointing out that this issue gets slightly clarified in the *Essay* once Hutcheson goes into more detail regarding the level of generality that benevolence can have (see *E4* 29ff.). In this respect, one might speak of benevolence in general, i.e. disinterested concern for the well-being of as many possible rational agents as possible, and more particular instances of benevolence that have their focus on less general groups, e.g. family (natural affection), friends (gratitude), and individuals with whom we are not closely acquainted (compassion) (see *I4* 221). In this respect, benevolence could refer to both a genus, under which is subsumed all the more particular kinds of benevolence, as well as a species, i.e. the most general kind of disinterested concern for others.

<sup>17</sup> At the same time, there are two senses in which hatred can be considered a part of morality as well. First, it should be noted that there is a kind of hatred that is relevant to moral judgement,

As we have seen, the type of love relevant to morality is not self-love, and Hutcheson goes on to explain, neither is it sexual love that is morally relevant (see *I4* 134). Rather, it is the love of others that is central to morality. At the same time, Hutcheson makes yet another distinction between two kinds of love central to his moral theory. According to Hutcheson, our “*Love toward rational Agents*” (*I4* 134) can be of two kinds: “*Love of Complacence or Esteem, and Love of Benevolence: And Hatred is subdivided into Hatred of Displacence or Contempt, and Hatred of Malice*” (*I4* 134-5). Love of complacence or esteem Hutcheson also calls “*Good-liking*” (*I4* 135) and this, along with the hatred of displacence, is “intirely excited by some *moral Qualityys, Good or Evil*, apprehended to be in the Objects; which Qualityys the very *Frame* of our *Nature* determines us to approve or disapprove, according to the *moral Sense*” (*I4* 135). Love of complacence, therefore, is our approval and “liking” of benevolent actions, which we will see is the function of the moral sense.<sup>18</sup>

Love of benevolence, on the other hand, is a bit more complicated. According to John D. Bishop, this type of love can be called “responsive benevolence” (Bishop 1996, 3). This kind of love is our love of benevolent actions, i.e. our love of someone who has

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and this is the hatred equivalent to disapproval or disapprobation. In connection with the two kinds of love discussed below, i.e. love of complaisance and love of benevolence, Hutcheson claims there is “*Hatred of Displacence or Contempt, and Hatred of Malice*” (*I4* 134-5). Hatred of malice is disinterested hatred of others as a desire, which, again, Hutcheson believes is not possible (see *I4* 152). As I discuss below, love of complaisance is our moral approval of benevolence, therefore hatred of “displacence” is, in a similar fashion, our disapproval of non-benevolent actions. As such, it should be kept in mind that Hutcheson believes that this kind of hatred has a positive and necessary role in morality as the disapproval of vice. Second, a related question is whether Hutcheson believes certain kinds of hatred as a motive, even if reducible to self-interest, are worthy of moral approbation, such as the hatred involved in desiring the suffering of those who perform a morally vicious action. Hutcheson does not address this question directly, but insofar as he argues that degrees of self-love are compatible with benevolence, especially insofar as an agent “may be, in part, an Object of his own universal *Benevolence*” (*I4* 178-9), presumably certain types of interested hatred are compatible with benevolence in the same way.

<sup>18</sup> This understanding of Hutcheson’s notion of love of complacence is supported by Thomas Mautner’s claim that, at the time Hutcheson was writing, complacence meant “tranquil pleasure or satisfaction” (Hutcheson 1993, 100 note 13).

performed a benevolent action, and this can occur whether we are the recipient of the benevolence or not in that our approval of benevolence is disinterested. This benevolence is “responsive” because it is a kind of love that responds to performed benevolence, i.e. it is reactionary. According to Bishop, Hutcheson’s distinction between kinds of love can also be cast as a distinction between a perception and a desire: love of complacency is a perception accompanied by a feeling of pleasure and approval, whereas love of benevolence is a desire, i.e. an affection to bring about the good of another (see *ibid.*). In this sense, love of complacency is not necessarily a motive to action, but love of benevolence is. Hutcheson confirms such a reading when he claims that complacency “is rather a Perception than an Affection, tho the Affection of Good-will is ordinarily subsequent to it” (*I4* 135). Indeed, although interesting, Bishop states that “[w]hat is not clear is the connection between the two phenomena of responsive benevolence and feelings of approval” (Bishop 1996, 3). I discuss the relation between approval and motivation below, after I have discussed the moral sense directly.

Before moving on to motivation in the *Essay*, it is important to make clear what is implied by Hutcheson’s claim that the motive of virtue is disinterested benevolence and not self-interest. Most importantly, Hutcheson’s position implies that reason is not a potential source of action. As Hutcheson states, those who claim that “Virtue should wholly spring from “Reason”” speak “as if Reason or Knowledge of any true Proposition could ever move to Action where there is no *End* proposed, and no Affection or Desire toward that *End*” (*I4* 195). As such, Hutcheson denies that reason is capable of moving us to act on its own. In addition, as Henning Jensen points out, Hutcheson does not make room for the sense of duty as a permissible motive as Adam Smith, for example, will go on to argue (see Jensen 1971, 86 and *TMS* 229).<sup>19</sup>

Another essential element to Hutcheson’s theory of motivation is the following: in that self-interest and benevolence are the two central motives of human nature, i.e. in that Hutcheson considers only these to be the candidates for moral motivation, this means that we have only these two kinds of “ultimate desire,” as Hutcheson calls them (see *I4*

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<sup>19</sup> I discuss Smith’s notion of the motive of the “sense of duty” in detail in chapter four.

152).<sup>20</sup> In that one of Hutcheson's main goals is to show that benevolence cannot be reduced to self-interest, this means he wants to argue that benevolence is a fundamental or ultimate affection. In other words, Hutcheson wants to argue that benevolence is the desire for the good of others as *an end in itself*, or that we desire this end for no other reason. This is the sense in which the good of others is an "ultimate end" of ours.

The above is the core of what Hutcheson states in the *Inquiry*. As one might notice, although he speaks in terms of affections, passions, and sometimes desires, he gives no definition of these terms in the *Inquiry*. This changes in the *Essay* where Hutcheson provides a more detailed picture of his understanding of motivation, and it is to this text that we now turn.

In the *Essay* Hutcheson defines and distinguishes what Scott claims are the three types of springs of action: affection, passion, and desire (see Scott 1900, 201). On the first page of the *Essay* Hutcheson defines affections and passions collectively as "those *Modifications, or Actions of the Mind consequent upon the Apprehension of certain Objects or Events, in which the Mind generally conceives Good or Evil*" (E4 1). Affections in particular are "*Perceptions of Pleasure or Pain, not directly raised by the Presence or Operation of the Event or Object, but by our Reflection upon, or Apprehension of their present or future Existence; so that we expect or judge that the Object or Event will raise the direct Sensations in us*" (E4 28). Affections are therefore expectations of pleasure upon the attainment of an object or event. Passions, on the other hand, are "a sub-class of Affections" (Scott 1900, 201), Hutcheson's general definition of them being the following:

a strong brutal Impulse of the Will, sometimes without any distinct notions of Good, public or private, attended with "a *confused Sensation*, either of Pleasure or Pain, occasioned or attended by some violent bodily Motions, which keeps the Mind much employed upon the present Affair, to the exclusion of everything else,

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<sup>20</sup> As mentioned, Hutcheson does not seem prepared to claim that malice or disinterested hatred is in fact an ultimate end of ours. Rather, as I suggested above, he seems to believe that it is reducible to self-interest (see I4 152). It is also worth mentioning that Hutcheson seems to adopt the language of "ultimate ends" and "ultimate desires" only from the first edition of the *Essay* (1728) onwards, meaning this language appears in the *Inquiry* only in additions subsequent to 1728. See (E4 222) for a section directly on ultimate ends.

and prolongs or strengthens the Affection sometimes to such a degree, as to prevent all *deliberate Reasoning* about our Conduct.” (E4 28-9)

In contrast to affections, therefore, passions are impulsive and without forethought (see Jensen 1971, 26), and importantly they are operative without a notion of public or private good involved.

In the *Essay*, Hutcheson also discusses desire in addition to affection and passion. He defines desire as follows:

Desires arise in our Mind, from the Frame of our Nature, upon Apprehension of Good or Evil in Objects, Actions, or Events, to obtain for *ourselves* or *others* the *agreeable Sensation*, when the Object or Event is good; or to prevent the *uneasy Sensation*, when it is evil. (E4 7)

As one can see, Hutcheson understands desire as very similar, if not identical, to affection. Both seem to involve “[t]he Apprehension of Good, either to ourselves or others, as attainable” (E4 62). The only difference between them seems to be that affection is in general a positive or negative attitude towards something, whereas desire implies an inclination to obtain what is positive, and aversion to avoid what is negative. In that affection and desire are for the most part similar, this means that desire is distinct from passion for the same reason that affection is, namely because both affection and desire involve a degree of reflection or involve a notion of good or evil, whereas passion does not.

How desires work for Hutcheson is an interesting question. As we saw above, desires arise seemingly after the apprehension of a good, aversion after that of an evil. As Darwall points out, however, this does not mean that we do not already desire, for example, private and public good. We do already desire these things, even if not occurrently, but the idea is that once we apprehend wherein such goods lie, it is then that we desire the things that *lead* to such goods (see Darwall 1995, 225-6). For Hutcheson, it is reason that is responsible for determining, or inferring, wherein the goods we desire might lie. As he states in the *Essay*, for example, reason is responsible for “presenting the natures and relations of things, antecedently to any Act of *Will* or *Desire*” (E4 219). Consequent to this operation by reason, therefore, there is an act of will or desire and “[t]he *Will*, or *Appetitus Rationalis*” refers to “the disposition of Soul to pursue what is presented as good, and to shun Evil” (E4 219). Accordingly, and due to the role reason

plays here, it is important to realize that Hutcheson's theory of desire is his theory of *rational* desire and therefore his theory of the will.

Although Hutcheson claims "[t]he *Sensation* accompanying Desire is generally *uneasy*" (E4 16), he makes it clear that desires do not arise from whatever uneasiness may accompany them. He makes this claim above all because in order for this uneasiness to exist at all, the desire must already be operative, therefore this uneasiness itself cannot be responsible for raising desire (E4 16). Desires can surely arise from the experience or expectation of pain or uneasiness, i.e. a desire to avoid or be rid of uneasiness or pain can be raised by the experience of such things, but the sensation of pain to be avoided is distinct from the uneasiness accompanying desire itself, says Hutcheson. Indeed, it is only the latter that *logically* cannot raise a desire (see E4 15-16). It is also important to point out that desires cannot be raised by the expectation of the pleasure associated with the gratification of a desire (E4 16-7). Again, Hutcheson distinguishes between an apprehended good or means to pleasure (E4 16), which can bring about a desire for such things, and the pleasure associated with desire satisfaction itself, regardless of whatever object is desired (E4 16-7). Hutcheson argues that this latter kind of pleasure cannot be responsible for raising a desire that does not yet exist, especially when this pleasure has never before been experienced. If this were to happen, we would simply desire anything under the sun associated with the most intense pleasure of gratification, Hutcheson's example being "the turning of a Straw" (see E4 17). Rather than the pleasure of gratification being both what raises a desire and what constitutes the object of desire, it is rather the apprehended good or means to pleasure that is the object of a desire and only this can properly raise a desire in us.

In the secondary literature, some commentators are not clear as to whether pleasure itself is the only object of desire or whether desires can have objects other than pleasure. In Hutcheson's classification of desires and aversion,<sup>21</sup> three of these five are

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<sup>21</sup> In the *Essay* Hutcheson distinguishes between five different "classes" of desire: 1. "The Desire of *sensual Pleasure*," 2. "The Desires of the *Pleasures of Imagination*," 3. "Desires of the Pleasures arising from *Publick Happiness*, and Aversion to the Pains arising from the *Misery of others*," 4. "Desires of *Virtue*, and Aversion to *Vice*," and 5. "Desires of *Honour*, and Aversion to Shame." (E4 7-8)

explicitly directed towards pleasure, namely the desires directed towards sensual pleasure, the pleasure of the imagination, and the pleasures arising from the public sense. Interestingly, it is not clear if the “Desires of *Virtue*, and Aversion to *Vice*” (E4 8) have pleasure as an object or not. Presumably, the object of this desire is not pleasure, for as we have seen, this desire is supposed to be *disinterested*. However, it is an interesting question whether the fact that this desire has the happiness of others as its object makes it such that the object of the disinterested desire for the happiness of others is still pleasure as well, albeit the pleasure of another. Jensen, for example, argues that Hutcheson does indeed argue that desires can have objects other than pleasure in the way I have just suggested, but he also claims that Hutcheson is ambiguous on the issue (see Jensen 1971, 20-1 and 87-8, and compare Irwin 2008, 401f.). Alternatively, Darwall claims that all desire and affection is aimed at natural good, i.e. pleasure, whether it is our own or that of others, but he claims that passions are not aimed at a good at all (see Darwall 1995, 224). This is an interesting suggestion and seems to fit Hutcheson’s description of the passions, according to which they are “sometimes without any distinct notions of Good” (E4 28).<sup>22</sup> At the very least, it is clear that *private* or *personal* pleasure is not the only object of desire. Indeed, this seems to be implied by Hutcheson’s claim that one of our ultimate ends is the happiness, and therefore the pleasure, of others.

Before ending the discussion of motivation and turning to Hutcheson’s discussion of the moral sense, it is necessary to draw attention to one aspect of Hutcheson’s understanding of our “ultimate ends.” As mentioned above, in the *Essay* Hutcheson argues that our “ultimate ends” are those things we desire for their own sake and in themselves, i.e. what we desire “with no further view” (E4 222). His main argument is that “Men have many ultimate ends” (E4 222), but what this means is simply that we have more than one ultimate end, i.e. that we do not just desire our own private advantage as an end in itself. Rather, we also desire the good and happiness of others as an ultimate end. As mentioned, Hutcheson is at the very least hesitant to say human beings are

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<sup>22</sup> Due to the fact that the passions do not seem to have an object, and therefore do not seem to be aimed at pleasure, and because of the role Hutcheson assigns to reason in desire, Darwall claims that “Hutcheson’s hedonism is more a *rational* than a psychological hedonism” (Darwall 1995, 224).



capable of disinterested hatred towards either themselves or others (see *I4* 152), therefore he does not want to claim that the misery of others is an ultimate end of ours.<sup>23</sup> Our ultimate ends therefore correspond to our two foundational desires or affections, i.e. the desire for private advantage and the desire for public good. This is the case because our ends are a function of, or are dictated by, our affections, for Hutcheson. In other words, we can only have as an ultimate end that which is the object of our ultimate desires. This is significant, for this means that reason cannot assign ultimate ends. It can surely propose means and ends subordinate to our ultimate ends, but reason cannot propose an ultimate end itself. This makes it clear why Hutcheson denies that “*Reason*, or the Knowledge of the Relations of things, could excite to Action when we proposed no *End*, or as if *Ends* could be intended without *Desire* or *Affection*” (*E4* 219). This will be of importance once we turn to the differences between Kant’s and Hutcheson’s understanding of motivation in chapter three.

Now that we have covered the central aspects of Hutcheson’s theory of motivation in both the *Inquiry* and the *Essay*, I turn next to Hutcheson’s conception of the moral sense, i.e. his theory of the origin of our moral ideas and the foundation of moral judgement. As we will see, moral approval and motivation are intimately linked, for Hutcheson.

### 1.2.3 The Moral Sense

Although Hutcheson was not the first to posit the existence of a moral sense, he is the first to develop a comprehensive moral sense theory. In this section I venture to explain both what the moral sense is as well as how exactly it functions, i.e. how judgements of moral approval and disapproval are made, for Hutcheson. I also illustrate the precise role that reason plays in moral judgements and I show that it is ultimately our feelings of approval and disapproval that decide which actions are morally good and evil,

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<sup>23</sup> For this reason Gill classifies Hutcheson as a British moralist who provides a “positive answer” to the guiding question of his book, namely “Are human beings naturally good or evil?” (see Gill 2006, 1)

as opposed to, say, reason. I also discuss in what sense moral judgements are both subjective and objective for Hutcheson.

Hutcheson's conception of the moral sense is based on his more general psychological theory. In order to understand the precise nature of the moral sense, therefore, it will be beneficial to understand how Hutcheson thinks of "senses" in general. The senses are faculties responsible for the production of sensations, and how Hutcheson describes sensations reveals how he thinks of senses in general. Sensations, for Hutcheson, are perceptions or ideas that are raised in the mind involuntarily such that "the Mind in such Cases is passive, and has not Power directly to prevent the Perception or Idea, or to vary it at its Reception, as long as we continue our Bodys in a state fit to be acted upon by the external Object" (*I4 2*). As such, the senses, as the origin of sensations, are faculties that make it possible to be affected by certain external objects in particular ways, such that we cannot control the perception or idea that arises in us when we perceive such an object. Sensations do not consist in merely passively received perceptions or ideas, however. Rather, they are often accompanied by feelings of pleasure and displeasure. Hutcheson states that "[t]here is scarcely any Object which our Minds are employ'd about, which is not thus constituted the necessary Occasion of some Pleasure or Pain" (*I4 xii*). Hutcheson stresses the fact that the senses and sensations often involve pleasure when in the Preface to the *Inquiry* he defines the senses in general as "Determinations to be pleas'd with any Forms, or Ideas which occur to our Observation" (*I4 xiii*).

As one might expect, Hutcheson believes in the existence of more than the five external senses. He claims: "When two Perceptions are intirely different from each other, or agree in nothing but the general Idea of Sensation, we call the Powers of receiving those different Perceptions, different Senses" (*I4 2*). It is when perceptions are of distinct kinds, then, that we are warranted in positing an additional sense that is responsible for explaining our ability to have such perceptions. Accordingly, in addition to the external senses, Hutcheson claims that, because of the distinctness of the perceptions produced by

them, two other senses exist.<sup>24</sup> First, there is what Hutcheson calls the “Internal Sense” (*I4* xiii). This has a technical meaning for Hutcheson, for it does not simply refer to a reflective capacity to perceive the happenings of our minds. Rather, Hutcheson calls the “internal sense” our sense of beauty. He does this because the sense of beauty, i.e. our determination to be pleased by beautiful objects, can have not only external objects as its objects, but also internal ideas (see *I4* 8). Our ability to perceive beautiful objects, i.e. our ability to perceive them as “beautiful” or “harmonious” as opposed to merely brown, square, etc., as well as the fact that we experience a particular kind of pleasure when perceiving such things justifies positing the existence of a different sense, namely the internal sense, which makes such perceptions possible. In addition to the “internal sense,” in the *Inquiry* Hutcheson posits the existence of another sense which can have both external and internal objects, and this is the moral sense.

Just like the internal sense of beauty, Hutcheson believes we are warranted in positing the existence of the moral sense because of the distinctness of the perceptions we seem capable of having. According to Hutcheson, the moral sense makes us capable of perceiving moral good as opposed to natural good. A natural good is what is advantageous, i.e. is in our private advantage or is in our self-interest (*I4* 111). The attitude we take towards natural goods is that we desire to possess them (see *I4* 112). Examples that Hutcheson gives of natural goods are: a fruitful field (*I4* 111), houses, lands, gardens, strength, and wealth (see Hutcheson 2008, 89ff.). Moral good, on the other hand, is not associated with private advantage or self-interest, but is rather what is good independent of what is in our personal interest. The attitude we take towards such goods is approbation, love and admiration (see *I4* 112). Examples of moral goods are: kindness, friendship, generosity, and benevolence (see *I4* 111-2).

What is also central to this distinction is the idea that moral goods are actively produced by a rational agent, whereas natural goods are not. As Hutcheson states, we have a different way of evaluating those things which have an “Intention of Good to us”

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<sup>24</sup> In the *Inquiry* Hutcheson only introduces the two other senses I discuss here, but in the *Essay* he introduces a number of others, such as a sense of honour and the “publick” sense (see *E4* 4-6). These other senses are not important for my discussion, so I do not discuss them in this project.

(*I4* 112) and those that do not. We do not approve of, say, a fruitful field and a benevolent agent for the same reason, e.g. because they are both to our advantage. When we approve of or have a liking towards a rational agent who disinterestedly desires the happiness of some third party, for example, there does not seem to be any way in which we could benefit from this and therefore our approval of such action must have a different standard than its relation to our happiness. The goodness we see in such actions must be of a different sort. Examples like this, Hutcheson claims, are evidence that there is a “moral good” which is a good independent of the fact that it might contribute to our advantage. This moral good is something disinterestedly caused by a rational agent, and this is a main reason why Hutcheson identifies moral goodness with benevolence (see *I4* 112). Hutcheson even refers to benevolent actions as “absolutely good” (*I4* 275) in contrast to natural good, which is good only because it is in one’s personal interest. At the same time, it is important to point out that one can approve of both our own actions as well as the actions and characters of others as morally good.

As mentioned, that we perceive moral good as distinct from natural good, and indeed that we experience pleasure when we perceive such goods, is evidence, Hutcheson believes, of a distinct sense that makes it possible for us to receive such sensations. If we did not have a moral sense then we would not distinguish between the goodness of a fruitful field and a benevolent friend – they would be good for the same reason (see *I4* 111). Since this is not the case, i.e. since there seems to be something like moral good and since we seem to perceive it and have a distinct kind of idea of it, there must be a sense which makes this possible, and this is the moral sense, for Hutcheson. Accordingly, the moral sense allows us to be affected by certain objects, either external objects or internal ones, and these are benevolent actions, affections, or characters.<sup>25</sup> Sensing such things involves experiencing a particular kind of pleasure, and as a result of this experience we judge such things to be morally good. Not only this, but because the moral

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<sup>25</sup> According to Scott (1900, 190), although Hutcheson fairly clearly stresses that it is the affection or motive we approve of as morally good, he claims that Hutcheson is at times ambiguous whether it is one’s character that we approve, or the properly motivated actions. I take Hutcheson to be claiming that actions, characters, as well as affections are capable of being morally good.

sense is a sense, i.e. a passive faculty, when it is presented with and passively senses a particular kind of object, it *necessarily* approves or disapproves of it.<sup>26</sup>

Hutcheson's moral sense is "universal" (see *I4* 200) in the sense that everyone possesses this sense, meaning everyone is capable of making judgements of moral approval and disapproval. Hutcheson is committed to this, for he believes morality should be within the reach of every human being alike. As he claims in the *Inquiry*: "Unhappy would it be for *Mankind*, if a *Sense of Virtue* was of as narrow an Extent, as a Capacity for such *Metaphysics*" (*I4* 120). This passage is actually making two related claims. The first is the one already mentioned, i.e. that morality and a sense of virtue is something all human beings should possess or be capable of. The second but related claim is an argument against those who claim a "sense of virtue," i.e. a capacity for making moral judgements and acting accordingly, depends upon highly abstract philosophical thought. Hutcheson therefore believes that making moral judgements and acting accordingly does not depend on any specialized, complex knowledge. If this were the case, only a small handful of people would be capable of making correct moral judgements. Despite this claim, Hutcheson nonetheless assigns a particular role to reason in this context.

Hutcheson understands reason instrumentally, i.e. as a faculty "requisite to find the proper Means of promoting *public Good*, as *private Good*" (*I4* 196). More specifically, reason is a logical capacity to infer, for example, means to ends. At the same time, this does not deny that reason plays an essential role in moral judgement. According to Mark Strasser, for example, moral evaluations are made in the following way, for Hutcheson: 1. The moral sense perceives, i.e. is presented with and has sensations of actions, characters, and affections. 2. Reason takes this information and infers the extent to which, for example, actions tend to the public good, as well as the extent to which such actions are evidence of benevolent motives. 3. The moral sense then takes what reason has inferred (i.e. that an action was benevolently motivated and tends to the public good)

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<sup>26</sup> It is perhaps important to note here that, as Darwall points out (see 1995, 213), it is *apprehending* a quality that necessarily causes approbation; the quality itself does not cause approbation. This is an important point with respect to the question of Hutcheson's moral realism.

and either approves or disapproves (see Strasser 1990, 13 and 29).<sup>27</sup> Importantly, however, it is possible for reason to re-evaluate the inferences it previously made after the moral sense has already approved or disapproved in step 3. Indeed, as Fowler notes (see 1882, 186), reason's first inference regarding the character and tendency of an action is often quick, meaning it is often necessary for it to come back and more carefully infer so that the moral sense can make an accurate approval or disapproval.

If this is how moral evaluation works, for Hutcheson, some questions can be raised and deserve clarification. First, although on the one hand reason seems to play only an instrumental role, if reason can re-evaluate the facts after the moral sense has already approved or disapproved, we need to determine if this means that reason and not the moral sense is the final judge of what is morally good and evil. Second, that Hutcheson's conception of moral evaluation functions in the above way means that the moral sense is fallible in a certain sense, i.e. that it can be wrong with respect to what it approves or disapproves. This seems to imply that there is an objective aspect to the judgements of the moral sense. This is puzzling, however, especially if moral evaluation is done on the basis of a seemingly subjective feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Indeed, whether or not Hutcheson's theory of moral judgement is best characterized as subjective or objective depends on whether reason or sense makes the final judgement. In the following I discuss both of these questions in an effort to clarify Hutcheson's position. I begin by discussing the question of the ultimate criterion of moral evaluation in Hutcheson's moral theory,

#### 1.2.4 The Ultimate Criterion of Moral Judgement

As we saw above, for Shaftesbury it was not clear whether reason or the moral sense provided the ultimate ground of moral judgements. As has become clear in the last section, although on the one hand it seems to be the moral sense that is what I will call the ultimate criterion of morality, once one starts to think about the role Hutcheson assigns to reason in moral judgement this becomes less clear. Scholars disagree about how to read Hutcheson on this issue. Scott, Fowler, and Raphael, three of the traditionally

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<sup>27</sup> Fowler (1882, 186) also has a description of this process but is less detailed than Strasser's.

most influential writers on Hutcheson, for example, all claim that Hutcheson is ambiguous and that he seems to assign the role of providing the final criterion to both the moral sense and to reason at different times to suit his purposes (see Scott 1900, 209; Fowler 1882, 188 and 192-3; and Raphael 1947, 25). On the other hand, other interpreters argue that although he is unclear at times, ultimately it is the moral sense that is the final criterion. Schneewind, Blackstone, Frankena, Jensen, Turco, and Gill all take this line of interpretation. In the following I explain why I take this latter interpretation to be the most convincing.<sup>28</sup>

Gill and Frankena argue in a similar fashion for why the moral sense must be the final criterion of moral judgement, for Hutcheson. According to them, it is important to realize that although reason infers the tendency of actions and one can say the moral sense approves or disapproves of actions, characters, etc. on this basis, there is no reason to think this makes reason the final decision maker (see Gill 2006, 159 and Frankena 1955, 374). Gill makes this clear by drawing attention to an analogy Hutcheson makes between the moral sense and our other senses. Similar to how I have presented the issue here, Gill points out that the question of whether reason is the final criterion gets raised when we realize that reason can correct the initial judgements made by the moral sense (see Gill 2006, 159). Gill helpfully notes that Hutcheson believes “that when we correct our moral judgements we are doing something that is fundamentally the same as when we correct our color judgements” (Gill 2006, 159). Gill draws attention to the fact that, similar to how the initial judgements of the moral sense can be deceitful or mistaken, Hutcheson believes “our *Sight and Sense of Beauty* is deceitful, and does not always represent the true *Forms of Objects*” (*E4* 234), and Hutcheson says the same of our sense of taste as well (*ibid.*). In light of this, Hutcheson states the following:

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<sup>28</sup> It should also be noted that some interpreters claim that early on, i.e. in the *Inquiry*, Hutcheson believes the moral sense is the ultimate criterion of moral evaluation, but as of the first edition of the *Essay* (1728) Hutcheson starts to lean in the direction of reason being this criterion and in his later works more explicitly lands on the side of reason (Raphael makes this claim, see 1947, 16). In the following, I restrict my claim that Hutcheson believes the moral sense is the final criterion of moral evaluation to both the *Inquiry* and the *Essay*, and furthermore only to the later editions of these texts that were the basis for the translations Kant used (i.e. the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of each, published in 1738 (*Inquiry*) and 1756 (*Essay*)).

But must we not own, that we judge of all our *Senses* by our *Reason*, and often correct their *Reports* of the *Magnitude, Figure, Colour, Taste* of Objects, and pronounce them *right* or *wrong*, as they agree or disagree with *Reason*? This is true. But does it then follow, that *Extension, Figure, Colour, Taste*, are not *Sensible Ideas*, but only denote *Reasonableness*, or *Agreement with Reason*. Or that these Qualities are perceivable antecedently to any *Sense*, by our *Power of finding out Truth*? (E4 239-240)

Hutcheson's point in this passage is that, like the way reason might correct our other sense perceptions, this does not make reason into the originator of these ideas, and this is why reason cannot be regarded as the final criterion of moral judgement. As the full title of Hutcheson's first work makes clear (*Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*), one of Hutcheson's main aims is to determine the origin or original of our moral ideas. His answer to this, as he states in the introduction to the second Treatise of the *Inquiry*, is that the moral sense is that whereby we "perceive" moral goodness (see I4 110), and as such it is the moral sense that is the origin of our ideas of moral good and evil. Frankena puts this idea in a helpful way when he claims that, for Hutcheson, what the moral sense does is provide the final "proposition," as it were, at the end of the process of answering the question "why is this action good?" As Frankena states:

What he [Hutcheson] is arguing is that in the process of justification we sooner or later head up in a proposition which is the end of the road so far as justification goes ... and that this proposition is not a deliverance of reason (e.g., a self-evident truth) but a commitment of the moral sense. (Frankena 1955, 362)

The moral sense is the final criterion in the sense that the justification process ends when we come upon the proposition "the moral sense caused us to feel pleasure/displeasure upon perceiving the object in question and therefore approves/disapproves of it." For Hutcheson, therefore, an action, character, or affection is ultimately never morally good or evil because of a judgement of reason (i.e. that it accords with the principle of utility, for example), and this is because reason is not the origin of our moral ideas, just as reason is not the origin of any ideas of sense.

If it is the case that the moral sense and therefore a feeling of pleasure or pain is the ultimate criterion of moral evaluation, does this make Hutcheson's conception of moral evaluation subjectivist? In a sense, yes, but in another sense Hutcheson neither wants to be committed to such a claim, nor does he think his position commits him to



such a view. In the following section I therefore discuss the extent to which moral judgements are subjective and objective, for Hutcheson.

### 1.2.5 Subjectivity and Objectivity

As mentioned, Hutcheson believes that the moral sense is universal in the sense that all human beings possess such a sense, and he is also committed to the view that human beings judge the same things to be morally good and evil. On the one hand, this is relatively clear: according to Hutcheson, in that all human beings have the moral sense they all approve of benevolence and disapprove of its opposite, malice. In a sense, then, we all seem to have the same standard of judgement. But Hutcheson is not naïve and acknowledges that there seems to be much variation among human beings with respect to *what* they judge to be benevolent. Hutcheson makes an effort to show that this does not mean that all moral evaluation is relative to each individual's subjective feelings of approval or disapproval. According to Hutcheson, our feelings of approval and disapproval are linked to the simple ideas raised in us by various objects (see *I4 4*). What this means, for Hutcheson, is that if the same simple ideas were raised in each individual by the same objects, we would all judge these objects the exact same way. In the case of moral judgements, if the same action, character or affection always raised the same simple idea in us, we would all judge such things as either morally good or evil. However, it is often the case that many other simple ideas come to be associated with others, whether through education, custom, etc., and this causes us to judge things differently both between individuals, and even the same individual can have different judgements at different times. Hutcheson's position is therefore an interesting one in that, on the one hand, the principle moral evaluation is objective, but variation does occur given the various ways in which different ideas become associated with one another.

This picture becomes more complicated once we take into account what was discussed above, namely that both the various simple ideas and what our reason infers to be the case about the objects we are perceiving are relevant to what we judge to be morally good and evil. Things get even more complicated depending on whether one reads Hutcheson as a moral realist or not, i.e. whether or not one takes him to claim that the moral sense perceives moral qualities existing objectively and independently of the

mind in the external world.<sup>29</sup> I do not wish to weigh in on this debate here for it is not directly relevant to my project. I do, however, wish to mention how a few commentators have made sense of the way in which Hutcheson is either a subjectivist or an objectivist for it helps illustrate the way in which he thinks about moral judgements.

Scott has a relatively simplistic reading of Hutcheson, according to which the moral sense's judgements are subjective in the sense that moral evaluation is simply relative to each person's individual feelings (see Scott 1900, 187). Scott argues that while this position is not especially clear in the *Inquiry*, Hutcheson begins to lean this way in the *Essay*, and claims that in his later works Hutcheson was forced to concede this was his position given he made pleasure the mark moral evaluation. Whether this ended up being Hutcheson's mature position aside, as stated this interpretation seems to be too simplistic, especially with respect to the editions of the *Inquiry* and *Essay* I am dealing with here. This is the case because, as discussed above, Hutcheson clearly seems to think that moral judgements are at least in some sense objective. The key, I think, is to determine *in what sense* Hutcheson thinks they are objective.

I believe Gill has the most charitable and plausible interpretation of this issue. According to Gill, moral distinctions originate in the moral sense and do not correspond to anything in the external world, but there is a sense in which there is a *real* distinction between virtue and vice (see Gill 2006, 169). Gill claims that those who reject "mind – independent realism" can be either personal subjectivists or transpersonal subjectivists (see *ibid.*, 297). According to Gill, "[t]ranspersonal subjectivists hold that morality is determined by the responses of people in general" whereas personal subjectivists "hold that morality is relative to each individual" (*ibid.*, 297). Interestingly, Gill claims that Hutcheson is indeed a personal subjectivist, but that his personal subjectivism is "cognitivist" in the sense that Hutcheson still believes moral judgements can be correct or incorrect, although still without corresponding to external reality (see *ibid.*, 299-300). In that moral judgements are not grounded in anything external, against which we can judge their truth or falsity, Gill notes that in order to preserve *real* moral distinctions,

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<sup>29</sup> Some of the central articles in this debate are Kail (2001), Norton (1985), and Frankena (1955).

Hutcheson must believe, for example, that “mistake-free moral conflict is logically possible but psychologically impossible” (ibid., 174). This seems to fit well with Hutcheson’s claim that we all already do or would judge in the same way on the basis of the same moral ideas, while at the same time preserving no strong moral realism. For this reason, Gill claims that although it might be best to say Hutcheson is a subjectivist, what Hutcheson tried to accomplish was the “practical equivalent” of objective moral judgements.<sup>30</sup>

Hutcheson might therefore be a subjectivist in the sense that moral judgements rest on the feelings of each individual person, but because Hutcheson believes it is psychologically unlikely that there is much variation between the feelings of each individual he can preserve the idea that moral judgement can be right or wrong and that this distinction is *real* in some substantive sense.

### 1.2.6 The Relation Between the Moral Sense and Motivation

Now that we have seen how motivation works, for Hutcheson, as well as how the moral sense functions, it will be important for later chapters to note how the moral sense and motivation relate to one another. Most important to point out is that Hutcheson often speaks as if the moral sense itself motivates. For example, while discussing obligation, Hutcheson claims we are naturally obligated to benevolence and therefore feel bad when we do not so act. Hutcheson says here that “this *internal Sense*, and *Instinct of Benevolence*, will either influence our Actions, or make us very uneasy and dissatisfy’d” (I4 268).<sup>31</sup> Here the moral sense itself is an “instinct” and “influences our actions.” In the preface to Treatise II of the *Inquiry* as well, it is through the moral sense that we “are determin’d to love the Agent” (I4 110). In other places as well Hutcheson states that God

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<sup>30</sup> It is worth noting that, as Gill suggests (see 2006, 300-1), it seems to be unhelpful to use the terms subjectivism and objectivism when describing Hutcheson’s position because one could describe him as either depending on the meaning these terms are meant to have.

<sup>31</sup> Darwall claims that how this passage is worded in the fourth edition “allows the interpretation” that by this point Hutcheson had moved away from thinking that the moral sense itself motivates (see Darwall 1995, 222-3). He points out that the first edition is clearer on the fact that Hutcheson believes the moral sense motivates. In any event, I think it is also clear from how the passage is worded in the fourth edition that Hutcheson believes the moral sense itself might motivate.

has given us “a Moral Sense to direct our Actions” (*I4* 128-9). Although some if not all of these quotations can also be interpreted in a way such that the moral sense itself does *not* motivate but only contributes in some way to motivation, at the very least these passages are ambiguous such that it is possible to read them as stating that the moral sense motivates itself. Such a reading is strengthened, however, by the fact that Hutcheson often contrasts self-interest not with benevolence, but with the moral sense (see for example *I4* 269). In any event, I am not alone in reading Hutcheson this way,<sup>32</sup> and it seems especially true that Hutcheson thought the moral sense itself could motivate in his earlier works, even if he abandoned the idea as his thought developed.<sup>33</sup>

A different but related point is the question of how the judgements of the moral sense motivate, or in other words what the relation is between approval, on the one hand, and benevolence, on the other. In the *Inquiry*, Hutcheson discusses this issue in connection with his distinction between the love of complacency or esteem (i.e. approval) and the love of benevolence. Speaking of the love of complacency, he claims that “the Affection of Good-will is ordinarily subsequent to it” (*I4* 135) and also that complacency “raises a stronger Good-will than that we have toward indifferent Characters” (*I4* 137). Indeed, understanding the love of benevolence as “responsive” benevolence seems to imply that our approval of benevolent actions can cause us to act benevolently towards those we approve of in turn, and indeed that we are more likely to be benevolent towards the individuals we approve of than any other. Hutcheson does not provide much detail on the relation between approval and motivation in the *Inquiry*<sup>34</sup>, but this issue receives more explicit attention in the *Illustrations* where Hutcheson makes the distinction between exciting and justifying reasons.

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<sup>32</sup> See Raphael (1947, 22 and 31), Darwall (1995, 221-2), Roberts (1973, 25), Strasser (1990, 81), Frankena (1955, 358-9), and Jensen (1971, 83-6).

<sup>33</sup> On this point see Frankena (1955, 358-9) and Darwall (1995, 223 and 229-231).

<sup>34</sup> It is worth noting that in other editions of the *Inquiry*, but not in the fourth, Hutcheson discusses this issue more explicitly. See, for example, the second edition where Hutcheson has a section on how “Benevolence presupposes esteem” (Hutcheson 1726, 142f.). As Wolfgang Leidhold notes (see Hutcheson 2008, 223 note 33), this section is not in the third or fourth edition.

Acknowledging his debt to Hugo Grotius' distinction between the various reasons for war (see *E4* 218 and Grotius 2005, 389ff.), Hutcheson distinguishes between two types of reason of action. He claims that when we ask for a reason of action we sometimes mean: "*What Truth shews a Quality in the Action, exciting the Agent to do it?*" (*E4* 217). Alternatively, we might be seeking a reason that shows "*the Truth expressing a Quality engaging our Approbation*" (*E4* 217). Hutcheson calls the first kind of reason, i.e. the reason why we *perform* an action, the exciting reason, and the second kind of reason, i.e. the reason why an action is *approved*, the justifying reason (see *E4* 218 and also Irwin 2008, 411ff.). After making this distinction Hutcheson proceeds to argue that "*all exciting Reasons pre-suppose Instincts and Affections; and the justifying pre-suppose a Moral Sense*" (*E4* 218). With this distinction between exciting and justifying reasons Hutcheson is therefore describing the two views which he believes are central to his moral philosophy, and which he described as such in both his early *Reflection* and in the *Inquiry*, namely the views 1. that we are always motivated by our passions and affections (and never reason), and 2. that the moral sense provides the ultimate criterion for our approval and disapproval of actions. Once Hutcheson makes the distinction between these two types of reason of action, however, it allows him to more clearly explain how he conceives of the connection between the two.

We have already seen that, at least sometimes, our approval can motivate us, e.g. in the case where we approve of a person who themselves acts benevolently and then are benevolent to them in response. In this case, we might say that a justifying reason becomes an exciting reason, i.e. our approval is our reason for acting benevolently. As Hutcheson points out, however, "[w]e often do Actions which we do not *approve*, and *approve* actions which we *omit*" (*E4* 209). This means, therefore, that not all justifying reasons are exciting reasons, and this must be the case for, as Hutcheson also points out (see *E4* 209), we can approve of the actions of others where there is simply "no room for our Election," for example when we approve others' past actions. Part of Hutcheson's position must also be that not all exciting reasons are morally approved. As mentioned, exciting reasons are simply our motives for action, and these are the passions and affections, both the self-interested and benevolent ones. Since we only approve of the

benevolent affections, the self-interested ones are therefore those exciting reasons, of which we do not morally approve.<sup>35</sup>

Determining how exactly justifying reasons can become exciting reasons depends largely on whether one believes Hutcheson is a cognitivist or a non-cognitivist with respect to moral judgements, which is to say: whether he believes our judgements of moral good and evil are best described as propositions of some sort or as expressions of some sort of emotional state.<sup>36</sup> Engaging with this debate in the literature directly and at length will take me too far away from my main aims in this chapter and is also not essential for the remainder of my project. I do wish to make clear, however, that I agree with Frankena that Hutcheson is a non-cognitivist in this respect (see Frankena 1955, 372), i.e. that judgements of moral approbation are emotional rather than propositional states. I also believe that this follows from the reading I have provided of Hutcheson above. I have argued that the ultimate criterion of morality is the moral sense's feeling of approval or disapproval and not reason. This means, therefore, that my judgement "this is morally good" is an expression not of some cognitive state such as I "know" this to be morally good, but is rather an expression of my feeling of pleasure upon perceiving the object I judge to be morally good.<sup>37</sup> As Frankena puts it:

in passing moral approbation as such on an action I am not cognizing and ascribing any indefinable property of goodness, etc., in or to the action, and I am not cognizing or asserting any fact about the actual or possible reactions of any spectators to the action. I am simply feeling a unique sort of pleasure in contemplating the action, and I am *expressing* this feeling by my verbal utterance, perhaps also expressing (but not asserting) a conviction that others will feel this pleasure if similarly situated, and almost certainly intending to evoke similar

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<sup>35</sup> If we do in fact have disinterested malicious affections, these would of course not only be unapproved but disapproved exciting reasons.

<sup>36</sup> Although related, this use of cognitivism and non-cognitivism is distinct from the way Gill uses these terms, as mentioned above in relation to Hutcheson's subjectivity/objectivity. For the discussion of whether moral judgements are cognitive or non-cognitive for Hutcheson, see above all Frankena (1955).

<sup>37</sup> The judgement itself "this is morally good" is indeed a proposition of sorts, but it is important to distinguish between being able to express a judgement in a proposition, and the judgement itself, which may or may not be cognitive in nature.

feelings in my hearers. That is, my moral approbation as such is wholly non-cognitive. (1955, 372)

If we therefore accept that moral judgements are non-cognitive, for Hutcheson, how do such judgements move us to action? Jensen puts this question as that of asking how “morality is practical,” that is, “how the same reason which gave us knowledge of moral distinctions could also move us to action” (Jensen 1971, 6). Another way of putting this question is to ask what our exciting reason would be to perform an action we morally approve of. A problem arises here, however, once one starts to think about what exactly this would involve. We have seen that moral approval involves a feeling of pleasure upon the sensing of a morally good object. Such a view becomes problematic, therefore, because it seems to present the possibility that, upon approving an action and feeling the concomitant pleasure, our reason for acting in a similar fashion might be to experience this pleasure again once we ourselves act benevolently and, upon reflection of our own action, approve of it. This is what I will refer to as “the pleasure problem,” and it is to Hutcheson’s answer to this problem that I now turn before returning to the issue of how our approval can motivate.

### 1.2.7 The Pleasure Problem

As we have seen, the moral sense, for Hutcheson, is the faculty whereby we perceive moral objects (benevolent actions, characters, affections) and a central part of our “sensations” of moral objects is a feeling of pleasure or pain. Recall, for example, that this element of pleasure and pain is so important that Hutcheson defines senses in general as “Determinations to be pleas’d with any Forms, or Ideas which occur to our Observation” (*I4* xiii). The approval of benevolent actions, whether our own actions or those of others, is therefore accompanied by feelings of pleasure, and its opposite pain. Not only this, but Hutcheson argues both that the pleasures and pains of the moral sense are different in kind from other pleasures, and that such pleasures are the highest in kind. According to Hutcheson, the pleasures “of the *external Senses*” (*I4* 245) are short-lived and do not give us any kind of durable pleasure or satisfaction (see *I4* 245ff.). The moral sense, however, “gives us more *Pleasure* and *Pain*, than all our *other Facultys*” and the morally good objects which give “*Pleasure from Reflection*”, i.e. what he also calls

“*moral Pleasures*”, “are the *most delightful Ingredient* in the ordinary Pleasures of Life” (I4 244).<sup>38</sup> The pleasure we experience when we perceive and reflect on moral objects, i.e. moral pleasure, is therefore distinct from as well as superior in kind to the pleasures of the external senses.<sup>39</sup> As mentioned briefly above, the doctrine claiming we experience pleasure when perceiving moral objects becomes problematic, and this specifically in the case of our perceiving and approving/disapproving of our own actions.

If we experience pleasure when perceiving our own benevolent actions, this creates a problem for the possibility of acting truly disinterestedly and therefore morally, for Hutcheson. Hutcheson expresses this problem as follows:

Now the principal business of the *moral Philosopher* is to shew, from solid Reasons, “That *universal Benevolence* tends to the Happiness of the *Benevolent*, either from the Pleasures of *Reflection, Honour, natural Tendency* to engage the good Offices of Men, upon whose Aid we must depend for our Happiness in this World; or from the Sanctions of *divine Laws* discover’d to us by the Constitution of the *Universe*;” that so no apparent Views of *Interest* may counteract this *natural Inclination*: but not to attempt proving, “That Prospects of our *own Advantage* of any kind can raise in us the *virtuous Benevolence* towards others.” (I4 270)

Put simply: in that we experience pleasure when we ourselves reflect on the virtuous actions we perform, Hutcheson must show that this pleasure is not our true motivation to perform virtuous actions, thereby reducing benevolence to self-interest.

Hutcheson responds to this worry directly in two main ways. First, he points out that “*Desire* of the Good of others, which we approve as virtuous, cannot be alleged to be voluntarily raised from Prospect [sic] of any *Pleasure accompanying* the Affection itself: for ‘tis plain that our Benevolence is not always accompanied with *Pleasure*; nay, ‘tis often attended with Pain, when the Object is in Distress” (I4 140). Hutcheson’s first response is thus simply to point out that acting virtuously is sometimes accompanied by pain, for example when we are helping someone in distress, and therefore it is in fact not clear that self-interest would *always* motivate us to benevolence. Hutcheson’s second

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<sup>38</sup> Hutcheson also calls these “*nobler Pleasures*” (I4 129).

<sup>39</sup> See Scott (1900, 200) and Darwall (1995, 214) for a discussion.



response to this problem is much more interesting, however, and it will be of the most importance once when I discuss Kant's answer to this problem in chapter 5.

According to Hutcheson, the objection stating that we act benevolently out of self-interest implies that we are able to raise an affection or desire in ourselves at will, for to say that we act benevolently only so that we may experience the pleasure associated with the approval of such action implies that we can *choose* to act benevolently at will, in order to experience the concomitant pleasure. Hutcheson denies the possibility of this and states that "neither Benevolence nor any other Affection or Desire can be directly raised by *Volition*" (I4 139). In essence, Hutcheson disagrees with what this objection implies about our psychology. He claims it is simply not true that we can raise a desire or affection in ourselves at will, in this case as a means to experiencing the concomitant pleasure of its operation. Such a view would imply, for example, that we could be bribed not only to perform good acts for other people, but to *love* them as well, i.e. to praise and esteem others, for example as a means to an end. Hutcheson believes, rightly I think, that this is psychologically impossible. Hutcheson does, however, importantly qualify this answer. He states:

The Prospect of any Advantage to arise to us *from having any Affection*, may indeed turn our Attention to those *Qualities* in the object, which are naturally constituted the necessary *Causes* or *Occasions* of the advantageous Affection; and if we find such Qualitys in the Object, the Affection will certainly arise. Thus *indirectly* the Prospect of Advantage may tend to raise any Affection; but if these Qualitys be not found or apprehended in the Object, no *Volition* of ours, nor *Desire*, will ever raise any Affection in us. (I4 140)

What this means is that, in principle, it is possible to indirectly, out of self-interest, raise benevolence in ourselves by turning our attention to the objects that necessarily raise such affections in us. Remember that the love of benevolence can be understood as a kind of "responsive" benevolence such that when we view benevolence in others, for example, and experience love of complacency or esteem, i.e. approval, we then often desire the happiness of this person in turn, which would then cause us to approve of and feel the pleasure of reflection in ourselves for having such an affection. What this means is that if we were selfishly motivated, we could seek out the benevolent objects themselves as a necessary means to experiencing the pleasures attached to experience the benevolence brought into being as a result. As such, there seems to be a way in which Hutcheson

grants that self-interest can, indirectly, bring about the moral pleasures attached to benevolence. Such situations are limited, however, and because Hutcheson believes benevolence is a fundamental desire of ours, he certainly believes that benevolence can also arise when it is not indirectly raised by self-interest, and indeed it is likely that it arises in such situations primarily.

Now that we have seen Hutcheson's response to what I have called the "pleasure problem," we can return to the question of how he thinks moral approval motivates. The worry was that the nature of moral approval, for Hutcheson, as involving pleasure, could only motivate us by means of this associated pleasure. We have seen, however, that experiencing the pleasures of benevolence from self-interest implies the possibility of raising an affection in ourselves at will, something which Hutcheson denies is possible. If approval does not motivate via self-interest, then, how does it motivate? The answer to this question can be clarified if we remember that the happiness of others is an "ultimate" end of ours, i.e. we desire the happiness of others for its own sake and as an end in itself and not solely as a means to our own pleasure (although it turns out that desiring this as an end in itself also makes us more happy, thanks to God benevolently granting us a moral sense). We can say, therefore, that the moral sense, justifying reasons, or moral approval motivates simply because the things we morally approve of are things that we already desire. When we morally approve of an action, affection, or character, we are essentially at the same time becoming aware of how to satisfy our benevolent desires. Approval can motivate, therefore, in that the perceptions and reasoning involved in judgements of moral approval can also serve to help us determine how to best satisfy our desire to bring about the happiness of others. We antecedently desire what we approve, for Hutcheson, and approval shows us what this desire consists in and how we can go about satisfying it.

### 1.2.8 Conclusion

In the second section of this chapter I have presented the central ideas of Hutcheson's moral theory that will be important for the following chapters dealing with Kant's engagement with moral sense theory. We have seen that benevolence is the moral motive for Hutcheson, the moral sense is the ultimate criterion of moral evaluation

(which is different from Shaftesbury's position), and that in one sense it is *indirectly* possible to be benevolent solely for the purpose of experiencing the pleasure that accompanies acting in this way. We have also seen that reason has a role to play in both desire and moral evaluation, but that it is never reason that motivates, sets an end, or judges what is morally good or evil. Kant profoundly disagrees with Hutcheson on these points, but as we shall see, there are some aspect of Hutcheson's moral theory that are preserved in Kant's own moral philosophy. Without further delay, I turn in the next chapter to Kant's engagement with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson in the early stages of the development of his moral philosophy, i.e. during his pre-Critical period.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Adjudication and Execution: Moral Feeling in Kant's Pre-Critical Moral Philosophy

In the previous chapter I illustrated that moral sense theory, especially Hutcheson's version thereof, involves an answer to two questions seen as fundamental in moral philosophy: 1. The question of what motivates us to perform morally good actions, and 2. The question of on what basis we distinguish morally good actions from those that are morally bad. As we saw, at least on one interpretation the moral sense plays a role in the answer to both of these questions, and therefore the moral sense has a function in both judgement and in motivation. I now turn to the main question of my dissertation and discuss the role of moral sense theory in Kant's moral philosophy, focusing in this chapter on Kant's "pre-Critical" moral philosophy, i.e. his moral philosophy before the 1781 publication of the first *Critique*. More specifically, in this chapter I explain Kant's various discussions of "moral feeling" during this period and use this as a basis to determine the extent to which the moral sense theorists influenced Kant during this stage of his development.<sup>40</sup> I show that the nature of this influence changes during this period, taking distinct forms before and after Kant's so-called "great light" of 1769. This influence persists after 1769 as well, and it is my additional aim in this chapter to

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<sup>40</sup> One might reasonably ask why I focus in this chapter on moral feeling in particular, rather than focus more generally on Kant's engagement with moral sense theory during this period. First, I do not exhaustively discuss the ways in which the moral sense theorists influenced Kant during this period because this could be a book-length project on its own. The main reason why I focus on moral feeling, however, is that I will be focusing in the next chapter on how the moral sense theorists might have influenced Kant's mature conception of moral motivation, and given moral feeling plays a central role in that discussion, discussing this concept in his pre-Critical writings will clarify Kant's use of the concept later on. Also, given "moral feeling" as a concept is equivalent to the moral sense (as I discuss below, "moral feeling [*moralisches Gefühl*]" simply is how "moral sense" was first translated into German), analysing this term in particular is a good way to assess Kant's engagement with moral sense theory in general. Furthermore and as we shall see below, how the moral sense theorists approached issues of moral judgement and of moral motivation are the primary ways in which they influence Kant, and given moral feeling encompasses both of these ideas, analysing how Kant understood moral feeling is to analyse Kant's uptake of the most central elements of moral sense theory itself.

illustrate the nature of this influence from 1770 up until the beginning of Kant's "Critical" period.

## 2.1 Introduction

Kant's critical conception of "moral feeling" [*moralisches Gefühl*] has received a considerable amount of attention in the secondary literature. This is in large part due to the fact that many disagree about what sort of function moral feeling plays in moral motivation. There are two traditional approaches to take: 1. While moral feeling is the affective side of what Kant calls respect for the moral law, "it is the intellectual aspect which is active in motivating moral conduct" (Reath 1989, 287). 2. Although motivation initially arises from an intellectual recognition of the moral law, "it also depends on a peculiar moral feeling of respect for law" (McCarthy 1993, 423) and this moral feeling is therefore the decisive, active element in motivation.<sup>41</sup> Given this apparent confusion concerning the precise role of Kant's conception of moral feeling, in attempting to understand this concept it has rightly been the strategy of some scholars to carry out what Antonino Falduto describes as a "conceptual-historical analysis, dedicated to the influence of the moral sense school on Kant's ethics" (Falduto 2014, 204). This approach makes sense, for "moral feeling," i.e. *moralisches Gefühl*, is how "moral sense" was translated into German by Francis Hutcheson's early translator.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the attempt to understand this term historically, others have also turned to Kant's discussion of this term over the course of his development. As Dieter Henrich claims, for example:

the concept and the problem of moral feeling still retains a considerable, if naturally transformed, significance within the context of the later and definitive formulation of Kant's moral philosophy. This is only really intelligible if we also

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<sup>41</sup> Since the publication of these classic interpretations of Kant's conception of moral motivation, numerous attempts have been made to argue in favour of one over the other, or even to find some sort of middle ground. These various approaches will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

<sup>42</sup> For example, Hutcheson's *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* was translated as *Abhandlung über die Natur und Beherrschung der Leidenschaften und Neigungen und über **das moralische Gefühl** insonderheit* (emphasis added).

acknowledge the important role that the problem of moral feeling already played in the development of Kant's systematic thought. (Henrich 2009, 53, note 19)

Although Henrich and others discuss Kant's mention of moral feeling during his pre-Critical period, their remarks are often made for the purpose of showing that "feeling" in general was significant in Kantian ethics during the pre-Critical period, and rarely if at all are Kant's views from the 1770s discussed. This is no accident, of course, for the 1770s are often referred to as Kant's "silent years."<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, as Falduto notes, "for a better understanding of the development of Kant's ideas on feeling in general and moral feeling in particular, a study of the student's notes of Kant's lectures on anthropology ... plays a capital role" (2014, 206-7).<sup>44</sup>

Given the importance of the concept of moral feeling for Kant's Critical ethics and the usefulness of consulting Kant's pre-Critical views on moral feeling to help shed light on this concept, what I wish to do in this chapter is outline Kant's views on moral feeling during the 1760s and 1770s in order to paint a picture of how his understanding of this concept changed during the pre-Critical period. Until now, discussions of Kant's pre-Critical views of this concept have focused on the 1760s. Now that there is a relatively reliable set of student notes on moral philosophy from the 1770s, however<sup>45</sup>, together with Kant's reflections from the 1770s it is possible to reconstruct what Kant thought about "moral feeling" over the course of the pre-Critical period. As I hope will become clear during this chapter, Kant's thoughts on this concept during this period show not only that taking account of Kant's early conceptions of this concept help clarify his mature, Critical conception of it, but it also helps clarify the precise nature and extent of

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<sup>43</sup> See for example Kuehn (2001, 188ff.).

<sup>44</sup> Falduto is right to point out the importance of the lecture notes here, but as I will show in the following it is not the Anthropology notes (whether from the critical or the pre-Critical period) but the notes on moral philosophy that contain Kant's most significant remarks on moral feeling.

<sup>45</sup> The *Kaehler* lectures notes. See Stark (1999 and 2004), and below note 66 for a discussion of their reliability as a source for Kant's thought during the 1770s. Before the availability of the *Kaehler* notes, reference was usually made to the *Collins* notes stemming from this same period, but Stark (2009) has shown the superiority of *Kaehler* over all other versions of the notes stemming from the 1770s.

the influence that the moral sense theorists had on Kant during this important period of his development.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections. First (2.2), I discuss Kant's mention of moral feeling during the 1760s. During this time Kant was still developing a position of his own in moral philosophy and at the very least expresses interest in Shaftesbury's and Hutcheson's idea of the moral sense. This assessment of the concept changes in the latter half of the 1760s, and around the time of the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant's appraisal of the idea of a moral sense changes significantly. In section (2.3) I therefore discuss Kant's conception of moral philosophy both around and sooner after what has been called his "great light" of 1769. In section (2.4) I turn to Kant's understanding of moral feeling during the 1770s. Here I look at Kant's reflections and lecture notes on moral philosophy to piece together exactly how Kant altered his view of moral feeling after the *Dissertation*. I illustrate how moral feeling is no longer considered an option for what Kant now calls the "principle of adjudication," but it does play the role of the "principle of execution." In the final section (2.5) I discuss what Kant's shifting understanding of moral feeling during his pre-Critical period means for our understanding of the development of his pre-Critical moral philosophy in general. I illustrate, first, that Kant is undecided with respect to the question of how we *distinguish* moral good from evil prior to 1769/70, but in the 1770s he is convinced we do so intellectually and not based on any feeling or sense. Second, I illustrate that Kant's conception of motivation during the pre-Critical period is tied to a different use of "moral feeling," and that his understanding of motivation evolves throughout this period, getting its most detailed treatment in the 1770s. In anticipation of the next chapter, I briefly discuss what is missing from Kant's mature conception of motivation in the 1770s. In general, I conclude that the way in which Kant thinks of moral feeling during his entire pre-Critical period means the moral sense theorists had a significant influence on Kant both before *and after* the "great light" of 1769, contrary to what many commentators have claimed. I illustrate that the moral sense theorists are important for understanding not only Kant's conception of moral judgement, but of moral motivation as well. I nonetheless support the idea that the year 1769 marks a shift in Kant's thinking, as suggested by many scholars in the past, but I suggest that precisely what this shift

consists in, especially with respect to moral philosophy, can be gleaned by Kant's varying discussions of moral feeling.

## 2.2 Moral Feeling in the 1760s

### 2.2.1 The *Prize Essay*

According to Henrich, “[t]he first explicit account of ethical problems that comes down to us from Kant’s hands was written in the last months of 1762” (Henrich 2014, 15), and this is contained in Kant’s *Prize Essay or Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality*. Not only this, but Paul Menzer claims that this is the first text in which we can see the effect of English moral philosophy on Kant (1898, 302). The *Prize Essay* was written in response to a question posed by the Berlin Academy, the question being announced in June of 1761 and the deadline for submitting the essay Dec. 31 1762 (see Kant 2002, lxii). We know that Kant wrote the essay sometime in 1762, most likely towards the end of that year, given his letter to Formey dated June 28, 1763 confirms that the Academy received his submission by the deadline (see *AA* 10:41ff.), and Kant’s remarks in the essay itself suggest he wrote it hurriedly and therefore perhaps finished it close to the deadline (see *PE* 2:301).

Kant’s main purpose in the section of this essay dealing with moral philosophy is to argue that moral philosophy is currently incapable of achieving the certainty it must be capable of achieving, evidence for this being that the concept of obligation is still unclear. This leads Kant to put forward some of his own views on obligation. He claims, for example, that there is a fundamental distinction between what he calls here “the necessity of the means” and “the necessity of the ends” (*PE* 2:298), where the former is conditional necessity, i.e. the necessity of an action under condition of an assumed end one wishes to achieve, and the latter is absolute necessity of an action in itself.

In addition to this, Kant puts forward a view of which he claims to have convinced himself “after long reflection” (*PE* 2:299). At this point Kant believes that “[t]he rule: perform the most perfect action in your power, is the first *formal ground* of all obligation to act. Likewise, the proposition: abstain from doing that which will hinder the realization of the greatest possible perfection is the first *formal ground* of the duty to *abstain from acting*” (*PE* 2:299). Kant is therefore at least partially endorsing Christian



Wolff's conception of obligation here.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, he finds this principle problematic, for he states that “no specifically determinate obligation flows from these two rules of the good, unless they are combined with indemonstrable material principles of practical cognition” (*PE* 2:299). What does Kant mean by this?

Immediately following this criticism of Wolff's principle of perfection, Kant states that “[i]t is only recently, namely, that people have come to realize that the faculty of representing the *true* is *cognition*, while the faculty of experiencing the *good* is *feeling*, and that the two faculties are, on no account, to be confused with each other” (*PE* 2:299). For “feeling” to be the faculty of experiencing the good means that this faculty provides us with “an unanalyzable feeling of the good (which is never encountered in a thing absolutely but only relatively to a being endowed with sensibility)” (*PE* 2:299). Kant claims we have “simple” feelings of the good, which means that “the judgement: “This is good,” will be completely indemonstrable” (*PE* 2:299). This is so because the judgement that something is good “will be an immediate effect of the consciousness of the feeling of pleasure combined with the representation of the object” (*PE* 2:299). In other words, if representing an object immediately brings with it the feeling of pleasure, the object is judged to be good, and this judgement is indemonstrable because it is based on an unanalysable feeling. Kant claims that to immediately represent an action as good means that “the necessity of this action is an indemonstrable material principle of obligation” (*PE* 2:300). As stated above, such a principle is precisely what the Wolffian principle needed in order for “specifically determinate” obligations to flow from them. We are now in a position to understand what Kant means by this.

As stated, in this text we have Kant endorsing the idea that human beings possess a faculty of “feeling” which makes them capable of having simple feelings of the good, which in turn lead to the “immediate effect” of a judgement of the kind “This is good” (*PE* 2:299). In other words, feeling here is a faculty for *judging* what is indemonstrably good and evil. Because Kant states that obligations “cannot be called obligations as long as they are not subordinated to an end which is necessary in itself” (*PE* 2:298), feeling provides us with the information of what is indemonstrably good, i.e. good in itself. In

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<sup>46</sup> See Schneewind (2003, 335).

claiming that no determinate obligations follow from Wolff's two principles, Kant was essentially saying they were indeterminate, or as he'll later say, tautological (see esp. *Kae* 60), i.e. the principles do not specify what perfection means, and we need to know what perfection means in order to know what contributes towards our perfection and what does not. At this point in time Kant appears to think that "feeling" is a viable way of knowing what is indemonstrably good, and therefore of knowing what perfection might mean. Kant is therefore suggesting here that pairing the doctrine of feeling, according to which it is through feeling that we are made aware of what is morally good and evil, can overcome the "indeterminacy" or "tautology" problem pertaining to Wolff's principles, and by pairing the principles of perfection with "feeling" we are able to know what our determinate obligations are.

The doctrine of feeling Kant discusses here, as one according to which feeling is the source for our knowledge of what is immediately good, sounds similar to the moral sense theory espoused by Hutcheson in particular. It is for this reason that Kant claims here that, with respect to the problem of determining what is unconditionally necessary, "*Hutcheson* and others have, under the name of moral feeling [*des moralischen Gefühls*], provided us with a starting point from which to develop some excellent observations" (*PE* 2:300).<sup>47</sup> At the same time, however, it is important to point out that Kant does not seem to be outright endorsing or agreeing with Hutcheson and others that we have a moral sense. Indeed, in the final paragraph of the section just following the above statement, speaking of the fundamental principle of moral philosophy Kant claims "*it has yet to be determined* whether it is merely the faculty of cognition, or whether it is feeling (the first inner ground of the faculty of desire) which decides its first principles" (*PE* 2:300, my emphasis). Not only this, but Kant even criticizes those who claim the moral sense can tell us what is indemonstrably good in that they might be "taking for

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<sup>47</sup> Schilpp (1938, 33) claims that Kant's reference to feeling in this text as a capacity to become aware of what is immediately good should *not* be taken to "mean precisely the same thing that the British moralists meant by their "moral sense" or "sentiment,"" and furthermore that it would be "absurd" (*ibid.*, 32) to jump to this conclusion. While Schilpp might be right to say Kant is not referring to the *exact* concept of the moral sense used by Shaftesbury or Hutcheson, I think it is obvious, and therefore not absurd to say, that Kant at least has a similar idea in mind, especially given his reference to "Hutcheson and others" and "moral feeling" shortly afterwards.

indemonstrable that which in fact is capable of proof" (*PE* 2:300). What this means, therefore, is that although Kant seems to think that Hutcheson and others, with the idea of the moral sense, have provided a good option with respect to accounting for the origin of our judgements of immediate, indemonstrable goods and therefore have provided a viable conception of material principles of practical cognition (which, again, is essential for determining our concrete obligations), his mind is still not made up at this point as to whether Hutcheson and others have it right. Although it is clear to Kant at this point that we need first principles of morality that determine what is indemonstrably good and what actions are unconditionally necessary in themselves as ends, and he therefore seems interested in moral sense theory as an option, he is not fully convinced that the moral sense is the faculty that provides such information.

### 2.2.2 *Negative Magnitudes*

Although published before the *Prize Essay*, Kant's essay on *Negative Magnitudes* was likely written after the *Prize Essay*, given *Negative Magnitudes* was published in 1763 and, as stated above, the *Essay* was completed by the end of 1762. As such, this text is, chronologically speaking, the next text in which, as we will see, Kant discusses moral feeling.

As the full title of this text suggests (*Versuch den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen*), Kant's task in this text is to introduce the concept of a negative magnitude into philosophy. After a general discussion of the nature of negative magnitudes in the first section, in the second section Kant provides examples of the application of the concept within various disciplines, the third example focusing on the discipline of moral philosophy. Before turning to this example, however, it will be helpful to introduce the concept of a negative magnitude as well as two distinctions, of which Kant makes use in the section on moral philosophy, namely the distinction between logical and real opposition, on the one hand, and the distinction between a deprivation and a lack, on the other.

Kant makes the idea of a negative magnitude clear by drawing a distinction between logical opposition and real opposition. "Logical" opposition is contradiction, i.e. opposition in the sense of negation, while "real" opposition is opposition in the sense of

two forces that are positive in themselves but in conflict with one another. A negative magnitude, Kant explains, is not to be understood as a negation, i.e. it is not negative in the sense of logical opposition. A negative magnitude, rather, should be understood as negative in the sense of real opposition. This means that a negative magnitude is itself something positive, and thus the term “negative magnitude” is somewhat of a misnomer because it is not negative in itself but only in relation to another, opposing force.

As an example, take the force of attraction. The magnitude that is the negative of attraction is not rest, but repulsion. Rest is rather the absence or *lack* of both attraction and repulsion. Repulsion, on the other hand, is a positive force in itself but is opposed to attraction and is for this reason negative. Repulsion can therefore be called a negative magnitude. At the same time, a lack should be distinguished from a deprivation, according to Kant. A deprivation is a negative result of two opposed forces, for example when a negative magnitude outweighs a positive magnitude the result is a deprivation. A lack, on the other hand, is, as mentioned, simply an absence in the sense that there simply are no positive forces at work, an example being the state of rest.

When it comes to Kant’s application of the concept of a negative magnitude to moral philosophy, Kant declares that vice is not a negation in the sense of logical negation or opposition, but is rather a negative virtue in the sense that it has to do with real opposition. Kant claims that “vice can only occur in so far as there is in a being an inner law (either simply conscience or consciousness of a positive law as well) that is acted against” (*NM* 2:182, translation modified). More specifically, vice takes place when this inner law is counteracted by an opposing force or inner law. What this means, says Kant, is that vice is a deprivation-like result, i.e. it is the negative result of the positive inner law compelling a being to virtue being counteracted by a (morally) negative magnitude. It is worth noting here that this seems to result in either of two situations: 1. The inner positive law impelling humans to virtue is counteracted and simply made ineffective, or 2. The counteracting law is so strong that the positive law is both made ineffective and the counteracting law is made effective. In this sense, vice is therefore not a lack, but a deprivation.

Although vice is not a lack in humans, it is important to note that both virtue and vice are “lacking” in this technical sense in non-human animals. Kant claims that animals

are incapable of or lack virtue and vice because they do not have the inner positive law encouraging them to good action, and therefore do not partake in the struggle of forces that comprises living the moral life, nor do they partake in the results of it, i.e. virtue and vice. This means that when animals “omit” performing virtue they are not vicious. This is because, in the first place, an animal “was not driven by inner moral feeling [*inneres moralisches Gefühl*] to a good action” (NM 2:183). Humans, on the other hand, are quite different. As opposed to animals, Kant claims that “[t]here is a positive law to be found in the heart of every human being ... it commands that we love our neighbour” (NM 2:183). Although he does not say so explicitly, Kant seems to identify the positive law in human beings commanding that we love our neighbour with “inner moral feeling”; animals do not have this inner moral feeling, but humans beings do have a law leading them to good actions, i.e. humans seem to have what the animals lack, and this is inner moral feeling.

It should be mentioned here that, assuming vice is not solely a matter of resisting the positive law of moral feeling, there is presumably at least one force that could act as the “negative magnitude” impelling us to vicious action. Although Kant does not mention what kind of force or forces these might be, a likely candidate based on Kant’s later thought would be self-interested desires or inclinations. These details aside, in this text we find Kant referring to moral feeling as a force impelling human beings to good actions and as a positive law seemingly unique to humans that makes them capable of virtue and vice. This is notably quite different from the discussion of feeling in the *Prize Essay*, and indeed seems to be a different sense of the term “moral feeling.” In the *Prize Essay*, “feeling” enabled us to *judge* moral good and evil, whereas here “moral feeling” is a force impelling us to action. As we will see in the following, both of these ideas, under the term of “moral feeling,” recur in many of Kant’s pre-Critical writings.

### 2.2.3 The *Observations*

The next text in which Kant discusses moral feeling is his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, published in 1764 but completed by the end of 1763 (see Kant 2002, lxvii). Appropriately given its title, Kant begins this text with a discussion of the “feeling” of the beautiful, and it becomes clear here that Kant

understands “feeling” as a capacity to feel certain kinds of pleasure and displeasures.<sup>48</sup> In this text we also begin to see Kant thinking of morality in terms of principles. He claims, for example, that “true virtue can only be grafted upon principles” (*O* 2:217). He makes this claim in the context of discussing sympathy and complaisance as “good moral qualities that are lovable and beautiful and, to the extent that they harmonize with virtue, may also be regarded as noble, even though they cannot genuinely be counted as part of the virtuous disposition” (*O* 2:215). Kant argues that grounding virtue on sympathy and complaisance is not the most reliable way to do so, for although they often “harmonize” with virtue, they do so only contingently and not necessarily, meaning following them is no sure way to act virtuously. It is for this reason that, speaking of complaisance in particular, “unless higher principles set bounds for it and weaken it, all sorts of vices may spring from it” (*O* 2:217). For example, Kant claims that from “affectionate complaisance” one “will be a liar, an idler, a drunkard, etc., for he does not act in accordance with the rules for good conduct in general, but rather in accordance with an inclination that is beautiful in itself but which in so far as it is without self-control and without principles becomes ridiculous” (*O* 2:217). These are interesting claims, for Kant foreshadows here two aspects of his Critical moral philosophy: first, the importance he will later place on generality and universality, and how these qualities are reliable ways of determining what is necessarily and not just contingently good, and second, the idea that sympathy or benevolence is only contingently moral. This aside, it is important to specify how Kant thinks of moral principles or the “rules for good conduct in general” at this point in time.

In this text Kant claims that the rules or principles for good conduct are not speculative rules, but the consciousness of a feeling that lives in every human breast and that extends much further than to the special grounds of sympathy and complaisance. I believe that I can bring all this together if I say that it is the **feeling of the beauty and the dignity of human nature**. The first is a ground of universal affection, the second of universal respect, and if this feeling had the greatest perfection in any human heart then this human being would

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<sup>48</sup> See especially *O* 2:208: a feeling is that “which makes them [human beings] capable of enjoying gratification after their fashion.”

certainly love and value even himself, but only in so far as he is one among all to whom his widespread and noble feeling extends. (*O* 2:217)

Importantly, the feeling that Kant is talking about here is what he calls a few lines later “universal moral feeling [*das allgemeine moralische Gefühl*]” (*O* 2:217). Thus although Kant emphasizes the importance of principles in virtuous conduct, the content of the principles relies on a particular kind of feeling, namely “universal moral feeling” or the feeling of the beauty and dignity of human nature. This feeling, therefore, is at the foundation of the “rules for good conduct in general” and it seems to be the basis of acting virtuously in a reliable way.

In addition to feeling being the basis of moral principles, although it is not necessarily explicit from his discussion above, Kant is also focusing here on what moves us to perform virtuous actions. He claims that it is because this moral feeling has “little power ... over most hearts” (*O* 2:217) and human nature is weak that the drives that are “supplements for virtue”, i.e. sympathy, complaisance, honour, and shame (see *O* 2:218), are placed in us, and he speaks of sympathy and complaisance in this text as “inclination” (2:217) and also “drives ... which move some to beautiful actions” (*O* 2:217). The feeling of honour and shame, for example, “is fine and moves us” and “can also balance cruder self-interest and vulgar sensuality” (*O* 2:218) and in general is an “impulse” (*ibid.*) to action. In that these are the supplements to virtue that “providence has placed” in us due to “the weakness of human nature and the little power that the universal moral feeling exercises over most hearts” (*O* 2:217), we can conclude that universal moral feeling here is understood as a power of the human heart as well, i.e. a spring to virtue or a drive or impulse to virtuous action, and that acting on the basis of this feeling constitutes the true virtuous disposition as opposed to acting on the supplements to virtue. Indeed, it should be mentioned here that Kant states that the “adopted virtues nevertheless have a great similarity to the true virtues, since they contain the feeling of an immediate pleasure in kindly and benevolent actions” (*O* 2:218). This means that true virtue also contains this feeling of pleasure in benevolent actions and, as discussed, true virtue is acting on the basis of universal moral feeling.

As one can see, Kant’s language in this text and the way in which he seems to think of moral feeling brings in many elements of the moral theory of Shaftesbury and

Hutcheson. Interestingly, in this text we seem to have talk of moral feeling as both the source for our moral principles, i.e. as the source of what is morally good and evil and of what we ought and ought not to do, as well as mention of moral feeling as a drive or impulse to action. These are the two functions of moral feeling present in the texts already discussed and, as I will show, these functions appear in Kant's other texts prior to 1769 as well.

### 2.2.4 The *Remarks*

Kant's *Remarks* to his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, written shortly after the *Observations* in 1764-5 (see Kant 2011, ix) also contain a few references to moral feeling. He says, for example, that "[a]ll evil action would never happen if it were sensed through moral feeling with as much aversion as it deserves" (*AA* 20:85). This implies that moral feeling is, again, an important element in action, not necessarily in judging. As we will see, this remark also anticipates a view Kant develops in his lectures on moral philosophy during the 1770s, namely that although moral judgement is important, we need to *feel* aversion towards evil action if we are to actually avoid it. For example, Kant claims here that "[t]he understanding brings about no increase of the moral feeling; in this sense, he who ratiocinates only has rather cooled-off *affects* and is more cool-minded, consequently less evil and less good" (*AA* 20:135).<sup>49</sup> What this seems to imply is that even if we have a correct understanding or judgement of what is evil, because the understanding can bring about no increase of our moral feeling, evil action can only be prevented by *feeling* aversion towards what is evil. This brings about a problem that will come up again when I turn to Kant's lectures during the 1770s, namely that such a view makes moral judgement or the understanding of moral good and evil unimportant or inessential, and that being a good person only has to do with the nature of one's feelings. This problem aside for the time being, here I only wish to call

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<sup>49</sup> This quote and the interpretation I offer of it here suggest that Kant's claim earlier in the *Remarks* that "Das Gefühl, wovon ich handle ..." should be translated as "The feeling, from which I act is so constituted that I do not need to be taught (to ratiocinate) in order to feel it," and not as "The feeling I am dealing with is so constituted ..." (*AA* 20:4, and see Kant 2011, 66, note 4).



attention to the fact that moral feeling plays a decisive role in action in the *Remarks* as well, and that Kant appears to be developing a theory of motivation, whereby he is clearly starting to think about how moral knowledge and motivation are compatible with one another.

### 2.2.5 *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*<sup>50</sup>

The conception of moral feeling as a force that drives us towards good action appears again in *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* where Kant contrasts two forces that “move the human heart” (*Dr* 2:334). One force has as its objective “the advancement of self-interest or the satisfaction of private need,” an objective lying within the human being, so to speak, and the other force has its focal point outside ourselves and is located in other rational beings (*Dr* 2:334). These two forces, of egoism and altruism as Kant calls them (*Dr* 2:334), conflict and the result is that we are concerned primarily with either ourselves or with others. Interestingly, therefore, we see Kant speaking of human motivation in terms of battling forces.<sup>51</sup>

In this text, Kant talks of how, when we act to satisfy our own needs, our attention is often drawn to a kind of “alien will” that is operative within us. Kant says that “[a] secret power forces us to direct our will towards the well-being of others or regulate it [our will] with the will of another. Although this often happens contrary to our will and in strong opposition to our selfish inclination” (*Dr* 2:334). Here Kant calls “moral feeling” the sensed “constraining of our will to harmonize with the general will” and also the “*sensed dependency* of the private will on the general will” (*Dr* 2:335). Kant’s incorporation of the idea of the “general will” here clearly reflects the influence of Rousseau, according to whom the general will is, as Nicholas Dent puts it, “the will of the whole body of the people” (Dent 2005, 135). Just after making this link between the

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<sup>50</sup> Published in 1766, there is reason to believe Kant’s *Dreams* were composed during 1764/5 (see Kant 2002, xlvii).

<sup>51</sup> As I discuss in the next chapter, Kant ultimately rejects a “battle of forces” model of human action, and there is even evidence that he rejected this model later in the pre-Critical period as well.

general will and moral feeling, Kant goes on to speak of moral feeling in terms of the “moral impulses in thinking natures,” claiming that both these things, moral feeling and the moral impulses, are effects “of a genuinely active force, in virtue of which spirit-natures exercise an influence on each other” (*Dr* 2:335). The link Kant makes between the general will and moral feeling therefore makes sense, for both the general will and moral feeling represent that which is meant to move us to do what is good for, or is in the interest of, humanity as a whole. We therefore have indication in this text as well, then, that moral feeling is, perhaps as a particular feeling, a force driving us toward moral action, and understood as a capacity it could mean the capacity to experience such a force.

### 2.2.6 The ‘Announcement’

In ‘M. Immanuel Kant’s Announcement of the Program of his Lectures for the Winter Semester, 1765-1766’ we find Kant starting to explicitly criticize moral sense theory. Kant claims that moral philosophy only has the appearance of being a science and of being thoroughly grounded when in fact it is not. Part of the reason for this state of affairs is that many believe “[t]he distinction between good and evil in actions, and the judgement of moral rightness, can be known, easily and accurately, by the human heart through what is called sentiment [*Sentiment*], and that without the elaborate necessity of proofs” (*Ann* 2:311). In other words, Kant is claiming here that he thinks it is problematic to judge actions as good or evil without any proof, and presumably, therefore, that moral sense theory is mistaken in thinking it can do so. Indeed, as discussed above, Kant expressed reservations about moral sense theory in this regard when he cautioned against “taking for indemonstrable that which in fact is capable of proof” (*PE* 2:300). On the basis of this appraisal, Kant claims in the ‘Announcement’ that “[t]he attempts of *Shaftesbury*, *Hutcheson*, and *Hume*, although incomplete and defective, have nonetheless penetrated furthest in the search for the fundamental principles of all morality” (*Ann* 2:311, emphasis added). Kant adds that the attempts of these authors lack “precision” and “completeness” and that he will supplement their attempts in his lectures (see *Ann* 2:311). As such, what is new in the text in comparison to the *Prize Essay* is that Kant is explicit about the attempts of these authors being “incomplete and defective,” whereas before he

seemed to be on the fence about this. Josef Schmucker, therefore, is likely right to claim that it is wrong to think Kant shared Shaftesbury's and Hutcheson's view of the moral sense at this time (see Schmucker 1961, 154). It is important to note, however, that this is Kant's view of moral sense theory only with respect to its stance on *judging* which actions are morally good and evil. The moral sense or moral feeling as a capacity that plays a role in motivation has not been called into question.

Before moving on to the decisive turn in Kant's thinking, known as the "great light," in the remainder of this section I wish to discuss the Herder lecture notes. Originating from sometime between 1762 and 1764, i.e. the time during which Herder was enrolled as a student in Königsberg (see Irmischer 1964, 7ff.), there is much about Hutcheson and the moral sense in these notes. At the same time, one must use these notes very carefully. As J.B. Schneewind notes: "Partly because he may have allowed his own thoughts to interpret Kant's, Herder's notes are not altogether reliable. He worked them over at home, and he may have put words into Kant's mouth" (Kant 2001, xiv). Gerhard Lehmann states further that "Herder – much too independent to be a mere "copier" – gives his particular diction and indeed also intellectual re-shaping to everything that was not immediately taken down in the lecture which is to say is noted in key words" (*AA* 28:1353). More specifically, Lehmann claims that "we do not have the guarantee that the examples, possibly even the justifications, provided by him always originate from Kant" (*AA* 28:1354). At the same time Lehmann is also careful to note that "[n]othing is dispensable from Herder's records and transcriptions, not only because for this time (1762-4) aside from his published works (2:165-301) only few reflections ... are available, rather also because Herder's level is incomparably higher than that of other lecture participants" (*AA* 28:1354-5). Ultimately, what this means is that, as will be my practice in the following, what is to be found in the Herder lecture notes should be taken with a grain of salt and any conclusions drawn from the notes should be tentative, while at the same time taken seriously. Luckily, the essential point to be gleaned from these notes about Kant's understanding of moral feeling during the 1760s is expressed in his published writings as well, and which I have analysed above; the Herder notes merely confirm this. Discussing the Herder notes is nonetheless essential in order to give a complete picture of Kant's pre-Critical discussion of moral feeling.

## 2.2.7 The Herder Lecture Notes

Near the beginning of the Herder lectures notes we find statements that moral feeling is “unanalysable” and for this reason the judgements it provides regarding what is good and evil are “basic” (*H 27:5*).<sup>52</sup> These claims echo what Kant said in the *Prize Essay*, namely that the doctrine of the moral sense can provide us with the indemonstrable, unanalysable, and basic judgements concerning what is good and evil, from which specific duties and obligations can be inferred. Again, therefore, we see the idea of the moral sense as the origin of our judgements of good and evil in the notes.

In addition to the above function of moral feeling as a faculty for representing what is indemonstrably good, we find claims here that moral feeling is “universal.” Not everyone has this feeling to the same degree, but everyone nonetheless has this feeling, even if to very varying degrees (*H 27:3*).<sup>53</sup> Moral feeling is also represented here as “unequivocal” or “unanimous” [*einstimmig*] (*H 27:5*). Although he doesn’t elaborate on the meaning of this second quality, Hutcheson’s moral sense had a similar quality. Hutcheson believed the moral sense had the property of “universality” (Hutcheson 2004, 136 ff.), i.e. in every human being the moral sense finds the same things worthy of approbation and disapprobation, namely benevolent actions and malevolent actions respectively. Presumably Kant has something similar in mind with the idea of moral feeling as “unanimous.”

In these lecture notes we also find claims that moral feeling is what allows us to become aware of moral goodness as something distinct from physical goodness (*H 27:5*).<sup>54</sup> This distinction is made because “[f]ree actions may be immediately good (give pleasure), not as means to consequences, so that their value is not to be measured by the results, and they are not equivalent to the physical causes that produce the same effect” (*H 27:4*). Free actions are therefore physically good in virtue of their consequences, and

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<sup>52</sup> See Hutcheson (2004, 86).

<sup>53</sup> See (*I4 200*).

<sup>54</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, Hutcheson distinguishes between moral and natural good as well (see *I4 111ff.*).

they are morally good in virtue of their intention (*H 27:5*).<sup>55</sup> Free actions, as issuing from the intentions of the agent are for this reason immediately good, rather than mediately, e.g. good as a means to another end. Most important is that “[t]he feeling of pleasure and displeasure concerns either that with respect to which we are passive or else ourselves as an active *principium* of good and evil through freedom. The latter is moral feeling” (*AA 20:146*). In other words, moral feeling is that through which we experience pleasure or displeasure in actions that are *caused* by free agents. Moral feeling is therefore what allows us to be aware of actions that are morally good or evil, as a particular kind of action caused by an agent’s active benevolent or malevolent intentions respectively. On the other hand it is our “physical feeling” which allows us to become aware of actions that are “physically good” (*H 27:5*), i.e. actions that have good consequences.<sup>56</sup>

The above features of “moral feeling” hold true for what is called in the Herder notes our “natural” moral feeling as opposed to our “artificial” moral feeling. Our artificial moral feeling is custom or mores. The examples Kant provides are: “Spartan children went naked up to 14 years old; Indian women never cover up the breasts, in Jamaica they go stark naked . . . marriage with a sister is artificially abhorred; but sacred with the Egyptians” (*H 27:6*). Our natural moral feeling is our judgement of what is good and evil independently of custom and education, i.e. as natural, unsocialized human beings. In order to determine what our natural moral feeling is, Kant claims we would have to investigate the natural human being outside of society and socialization, and Kant claims Rousseau has looked into this (*H 27:6*). Indeed, the distinction between natural and artificial moral feeling is an important one in these notes, for it is claimed that “[m]y reason can err; my moral feeling, only when I uphold custom before natural feeling; but in that case it is merely implicit reason; and my final yardstick still remains [natural] moral feeling, not true and false; just as the capacity for true and false is the final

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<sup>55</sup> Actions are morally good by virtue of their intention for Hutcheson as well (see *I4 112*).

<sup>56</sup> It should be noted that Kant anticipates his mature moral philosophy here when he claims that what matters is our intention, not necessarily having the ability or power to realize those intentions, i.e. it is better to have a good will and never accomplish anything than it is to have a mediocre or small will and the ability to accomplish a lot (cf. *H 27:4* and *GMS 4:394*). Interestingly, this is also a view shared by Hutcheson (see 2004, 117).

yardstick of the understanding, and both are universal” (*H* 27:6). That natural and artificial moral feeling are always mixed and we may not be able to distinguish a moral judgement as coming from one or the other without “investigating the natural human being” could be problematic, but these issues are not discussed any further. Moral feeling is nonetheless presented as a reliable guide in moral matters and it is even claimed here that “[t]he sole moral rule, therefore, is this: Act according to *your moral feeling!*” (*H* 27:16)

If we take these lectures notes seriously, there is much in them that parallels Hutcheson’s discussion of the moral sense in particular. At the very least, we find mention of the moral sense as a capacity to distinguish moral good and evil, but we also see it referred to as playing a role in motivation as well, albeit only very briefly. For instance, arguments are presented for the existence of a benevolent motive in human beings in addition to self-interested ones, with Hobbes and Epicurus being named as opponents (see *H* 27:3-4). In addition to this, later in the notes moral feeling is identified with “the love of humanity” (*H* 27:74). Although the textual evidence is minimal here, there is therefore at least the small suggestion that moral feeling is present in these notes as playing a role in both judgement and motivation as well.

In this section I surveyed Kant’s various discussions of moral feeling during the 1760s, in both his published works and a set of student lecture notes. As I have shown, there are two senses of moral feeling operative during this time: 1. Moral feeling as the source of our *judgement* of moral good and evil, and 2. Moral feeling as a force, drive, or principle of action in human beings inclining them towards virtuous action. I have suggested that Kant at least shows interest in moral feeling in the first sense, paired with some reservation, but I have also illustrated that Kant seems to adopt the conception of moral feeling in the second sense and that this seems to be a part of his moral psychology at this point in his development. In the following section I show that Kant explicitly criticizes moral feeling in the first sense after 1769. What I argue later (2.4), however, is that the second sense of moral feeling is something that Kant did not abandon, and certainly not at the same time that he abandoned the idea of the moral sense as the source for moral judgements. Before making this claim and turning to Kant’s lecture notes and reflections from the 1770s, however, I first discuss the important shift or turn that took

place in Kant's thinking around 1769 and that is reflected in his reflections and the *Inaugural Dissertation*.

## 2.3 The "Great Light" of 1769

In a reflection dated between 1776 and 1778, discussing what appears to be his "discovery" of the antinomies, Kant states: "I saw this doctrine at the beginning in a twilight, as it were. I attempted quite seriously to prove propositions and their contraries, not because I wanted to institute scepticism, but because I suspected an illusion of the understanding, and I wished to discover its source. The year 69 gave me great light" (*AA* 18:69, translation from Kuehn 1995, 373). Not only did the year 1769 mark an advance of Kant's thinking on the antinomies, but it was a shift in his thinking as a whole. According to Kuehn, 1769/70 marks the important point where Kant began to reject what he calls the "continuity thesis," i.e. the thesis that holds "the sensitive and the intellectual form a kind of continuum" (1995, 376). More specifically, the continuity thesis states that "the only difference between intellectual and sensitive cognitions is their degree of distinctness" (1995, 376).<sup>57</sup> In contrast to this view, in the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant argues that sensation and intellect are two entirely different faculties, that they are independent and irreducible, i.e. that sensation and intellect are different *sources* of cognition, and that they are therefore different in *kind*, not degree. This has the consequence that sensitive cognitions can be distinct, and intellectual ones confused, rather than it being the case that intellectual cognitions are always distinct, and sensitive ones always confused. What is important for my purposes, of course, is how this change in Kant's thinking might have altered the way in which he thinks of moral concepts at the time of the *Inaugural Dissertation*.

As stated, at the time of the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant believes that cognitions are different in kind based on their origin, i.e. whether they come from the senses or whether their origin is in the intellect. In this text Kant states explicitly that moral

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<sup>57</sup> In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* Kant identifies the "Leibniz-Wolffian school" as maintaining what Kuehn calls the continuity thesis, but claims "Leibniz was actually to blame" (*Anth* 7:140-1n).

concepts “are cognised not by experiencing them but by the pure understanding itself” and furthermore that they can “belong to the understanding, even though they are confused” (*ID* 2:395). Indeed, just as metaphysics can be confused despite it being “the organon of everything which belongs to the understanding” (*ID* 2:395), just because a discipline is currently confused does not mean it is a system of sensitive concepts. Therefore even if the concepts of moral philosophy are currently confused, as Kant thought at the time of the *Prize Essay*, this does not mean these concepts originate from sensibility. The question we need to ask here is: what exactly does Kant mean by the claim that moral concepts are cognised by the understanding and why does he decide to hold this view? Answering these questions is easier once we look at Kant’s discussion of moral feeling in some reflections dating from around the time of the *Dissertation*.

The only references to moral feeling that we have around the time of this turn in Kant’s thinking are from his reflections, and in them we find Kant critical of moral feeling and of Hutcheson. In a reflection dated from the late 1760s, for example, we find Kant saying that “[t]he principle of Hutcheson is unphilosophical because it introduces a new feeling as a basis for explanation. Secondly, it views the laws of sensibility as objective reasons” (*AA* 19:120, R 6634). Among other things,<sup>58</sup> we therefore see Kant objecting to the *objectivity* of the moral sense at this time. As he states in a further reflection from around the same time: “The doctrine of moral feeling is more a hypothesis to explain the phenomenon of approval that we give to some kinds of actions than one that could determine maxims and first principles which hold objectively, how one should approve or disapprove, commit or omit something” (*AA* 20:116-7, R 6626). On the one hand this criticism is easy enough to understand: a moral sense or moral feeling as a source of moral knowledge is, as belonging to sensibility, incapable of issuing objective maxims and principles. On the other hand, however, it might seem strange that Kant calls the objectivity of sense into question here, for it is precisely at the time of the *Dissertation* that Kant explicitly develops his theory of the forms of sensibility, forms which hold objectively for all beings endowed with sensibility and

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<sup>58</sup> Kant will object to moral sense theory on the grounds that it is “unphilosophical” again during his Critical period. I discuss this in more detail in chapter 3.



therefore hold objectively at least in this sense. As we saw in the last chapter as well as briefly above, there is a sense in which the moral sense is objective in precisely this way, especially for Hutcheson. According to Hutcheson, the moral sense is “universal” (see *I4* 200) in the sense that everyone with a moral sense finds the same things worthy of approbation and disapprobation, namely benevolent and malevolent actions respectively, and Hutcheson supposes that there is no reason to suppose that human beings are so different from person to person such that one person would be able to perceive the benevolence in an action, feel pleasure, and judge it to be good yet another would not (see *I4* 4 and Hutcheson 2004, 70ff.). If Kant read Hutcheson closely, Kant surely would have been aware of this “objective” status of the “form” of the moral sense, to put it into the language of the *Dissertation*. Why, then, we might ask, does Kant claim that the moral sense or moral feeling is incapable of providing moral judgements, but sensibility in general is nonetheless objective?

This is a difficult question to answer and Kant does not discuss this issue directly. As I discuss in detail in the next chapter, what must be noticed in order to answer this question is that although for Hutcheson and others the moral sense was a proper “sense [*Sinn*],” Kant understood *das moralische Gefühl* as a *feeling*. The important difference is that sensibility, as discussed in the *Dissertation*, is a source of knowledge or cognition, and feeling is not. Kant’s division of the faculties into the faculty of cognition, the faculty of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, and the faculty of desire reflect this – feeling and pleasure is something different in kind from cognition. The important role that pleasure has to play in the judgements issued by the moral sense is likely one of the main if not *the* major reason why Kant classifies moral feeling as a “feeling” to begin with (another reason could have its roots in the translation of moral sense as *moralisches Gefühl*). Therefore perhaps Kant’s doubts concerning the objectivity of moral feeling and his trust in a kind of objectivity belonging to sensibility can be explained by Kant’s understanding of the division between the nature of the faculties in general. As Falduto explains (see 2014, 120ff.), there is both a sensible and intellectual element to each of Kant’s three faculties, but sensibility, as discussed in the *Dissertation*, is in relation to knowledge and the faculty of cognition, and only as such does sensibility have both a form and a matter, the form of sensibility being what lends it a kind of objectivity. Kant

does not speak of feeling as having a form and although it seems that his understanding of feeling as a faculty was not yet fully developed at this point in time,<sup>59</sup> he did have much to say about the faculty of cognition, and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure is not a part of it. Not only was Kant becoming clear about the fundamental distinction between sensible and intellectual cognition, but perhaps he was becoming more clear about the distinction between the faculties as well, and this may explain why sensibility can maintain a kind of objectivity but moral feeling cannot, especially as a source of moral knowledge or judgement.

It appears, therefore, that Kant's initial interest in the idea of the moral sense as the origin of moral judgement has faded by the late 1760s. Kant appears to reject the idea of a moral sense as a capacity capable of issuing *objective* judgements of approval and disapproval that could function as principles or maxims. Not only this, but we also see here the direction in which Kant's thinking is going. He says, for instance, that "[v]irtue can only be judged in accordance with concepts and therefore a priori. Empirical judgement in accordance with intuition in images or experience gives no laws, but only examples which demand a concept a priori for judging. ... All morality is based on ideas" (*AA* 19:108, R 6611). As was clear from his criticism of moral feeling, Kant is seeking a source for moral judgement that holds objectively, and we can see here that Kant therefore thinks that moral judgements must be a priori and not empirical. Indeed, this is the position we find Kant upholding in the *Dissertation*.

Kant's view in the *Dissertation* is that: "*Moral philosophy* ... in so far as it furnishes the first *principles of adjudication* [*principia diiudicandi*], is only cognised by the pure understanding and itself belongs to pure philosophy" (*ID* 2:396, translation modified). Shortly after making this claim he distances himself from those he earlier admired, claiming that "Epicurus, who reduced its [moral philosophy's] criteria to the sense of pleasure or pain, is very rightly blamed, together with certain moderns, who

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<sup>59</sup> That Kant was still thinking through his understanding of the faculties at this point in time is clear from the fact that the earliest notes we have from Kant's anthropology lectures (the notes by *Collins* from the winter semester 1772/3, see *AA* 25:1-238) do not contain sections devoted exclusively to the faculty of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure as is done in later versions of the his anthropology courses.

have followed him to a certain extent from afar, such as Shaftesbury and his supporters” (*ID* 2:396). In other words, as we saw above in Kant’s reflections, the significant turn that takes place in Kant’s thinking at this point is that he believes the attempts of Shaftesbury and his followers (i.e. Hutcheson) to furnish the first principle of judgement or adjudication empirically, i.e. from a moral sense, are misguided. Kant seems to have made up his mind about this issue at this point in his development and is no longer expressing the (reserved) interest in the idea of the moral sense as the foundation of moral judgement that is evident in his thinking during the majority of the 1760s. Indeed, Kant’s above-cited reflections explain why he changed his mind in this way and why he thinks the attempts of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson are misguided: “sense” or “feeling” is incapable of making objective, i.e. universal and necessary, judgements of moral good and evil and is therefore an inadequate source for properly moral, i.e. unconditional obligation. For this reason Kant now thinks moral concepts must be a priori, i.e. that “[a]ll morality is based on ideas” (*AA* 19:108).<sup>60</sup>

The *Dissertation* is of course the beginning of what has been called Kant’s “silent decade” where he published virtually nothing. In order to gain a more complete picture of how Kant conceives of moral feeling after this shift in his thinking, we therefore need to turn to Kant’s unpublished lectures notes and reflections from the 1770s. Luckily, there are a large number of lecture notes on moral philosophy that have been preserved. There are, in fact, 13 distinct sets of notes known to have existed at one time, all dating from the 1770s (see Stark 1999, 97-99). Research has shown, however, that all of these sets originate from one original set, and that the relatively recently published *Kaehler* notes is the most true to the original set of notes (see footnote 64 below for a fuller discussion of the details concerning the *Kaehler* notes). In addition to the reflections on moral philosophy dating from the 1770s, this set of notes is therefore the best way of determining Kant’s thinking on moral philosophy during this decade. In the following, I

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<sup>60</sup> Indeed, Kant’s new emphasis on the a priori and on the importance of intellectual ideas stressed throughout the *Dissertation* has been explained by some as having been inspired by a reading of Plato’s *Phaedo*, a translation and commentary of which was published by Mendelssohn in 1767, as discussed in detail by Klaus Reich (see 1935 and 1939). For this reason, the shift in Kant’s thinking expressed in the *Dissertation* has also been called Kant’s “Platonic turn.”

analyse what Kant says about moral feeling in this set of lecture notes as well as his in his reflections dating from this period. After explaining Kant's distinction between principles of adjudication and principle of execution, I argue that although Kant rejects the moral sense or moral feeling as a principle of adjudication, as is clear from both his reflections around 1769 and the *Dissertation*, he preserves a function for moral feeling as performing the role of the principle of execution. What exactly this means I hope to clarify in the following section, but it will show that although the influence of moral sense theory changes after Kant's "great light," it does not disappear entirely, as most commentators have claimed in the past.

## 2.4 Moral Feeling in the 1770s

### 2.4.1 Adjudication and Execution

Clemens Schwaiger claims that in "close connection" to Kant's turn towards a pure moral philosophy there stands "the distinction between an adjudication and an execution principle of moral good" (1999, 91-2). This distinction first appears in the lecture notes on moral philosophy from the 1770s and as Stark notes it is extremely important for understanding "the course of argumentation of the lecture" (2004 55, note 35). In Kant's terms this is the distinction between "the principle of the adjudication of obligation [*das principium der Diudication der Verbindlichkeit*]" and "the principle of the execution or performance of obligation [*das principium der Execution oder Leistung der Verbindlichkeit*]" (Kae 55-6).<sup>61</sup> This amounts to the distinction between "guiding principle [*Richtschnur*]" of action and the "incentive [*Triebfeder*]"<sup>62</sup> or spring of action. Kant explains this distinction by saying the following:

If the question is what is morally good or not, then that is the principle of adjudication, according to which I assess the goodness and badness of action. But if the question is, what moves me to live according to these laws, then that is the principle of incentive [*Triebfeder*]. The approval of action is the objective ground,

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<sup>61</sup> All translations from the Kaehler notes are my own.

<sup>62</sup> I discuss the difficulties with the translation of this term as well as the concept in more detail in the next chapter

but not yet the subjective ground. That which drives me to do that, concerning which the understanding says I should do it, they are the subjectively moving motives [*motiva subjective moventia*]. (*Kae* 56)

Schwaiger claims that this distinction is a “new-coinage [*Neuprägung*]” of Kant’s (1999, 92) and indeed Schwaiger is right to note that Kant himself seems conscious of this, for he offers this distinction as a way of differentiating modern groundings of ethics from those of the ancients (Schwaiger 1999, 92). As Schwaiger also notes, Kant mentions a “*principia diiudicandi*” only once in his printed writings (i.e. in the *Inaugural Dissertation* at *ID* 2:396) but never mentions a *principium executionis* in his published writings (1999, 93). It is also important to note that this distinction “is missing entirely from the writings important for moral philosophy from the 60s as well as from the *Remarks*. In this respect it is an anachronism to bring up the later distinction already when discussing these earlier texts” (1999, 93).<sup>63</sup> Schwaiger therefore claims that because Kant first makes use of this distinction in the 1770s, it must be “the result of considerations that maybe have been employed for the first time on the basis of the Platonic turn” (1999, 93).

It is important to note that, as Schwaiger and others have pointed out (see 1999, 94), this distinction likely goes back to Hutcheson’s distinction between justifying and exciting reasons discussed in the previous chapter. Stark notes, however, that Adam Smith might be another possible historical source (see *Kae* 55-6 note 35). It is possible Kant had read Smith by this point in time as well,<sup>64</sup> but there are many similarities between Hutcheson’s and Kant’s versions of this distinction.<sup>65</sup> Schwaiger argues, however, that there is reason to believe that Hutcheson is *not* the correct historical source for this distinction, namely because “the Kantian terminology is first conceived in the

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<sup>63</sup> It is for this reason that, although the distinction is important for my overall argument in this chapter, I did not employ this distinction when discussing Kant’s texts from the 1760s.

<sup>64</sup> The first German translation of Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* was published in 1770, and in chapter four I discuss the reasons we have for believing Kant read Smith soon after the publication of this translation.

<sup>65</sup> As mentioned in the last chapter, however, Hutcheson himself drew inspiration from Grotius when making this distinction. See Hutcheson (2002, 138n).

seventies, and therefore at a time when Kant's greatest enthusiasm for British moral sense theory was long passé" (1999, 94). As I hope to argue, however, Kant's interest in, or at least inspiration from Hutcheson especially, was not over after 1770, and therefore Hutcheson may indeed still be a likely historical source for the distinction. This question aside for the time being, now that I have introduced this distinction, I wish to take a closer look at the *Kaehler* lecture notes and the reflections from the 1770s in order to determine what Kant thought of moral feeling during this time. As we shall see, in these lecture notes Kant discusses the psychology of motivation for the first time, and even discusses what moral education consists in. These lecture notes therefore contain perhaps Kant's first attempt at outlining a complete moral theory.

## 2.4.2 The *Kaehler* Notes<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the first important change that is evident from this set of notes is evident in the following claim: "But since we must all have a principle of moral adjudication, according to which we can unanimously judge concerning what is morally good or not good, so do we see that there must be one principle that flows from the ground of our

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<sup>66</sup> The manuscript with the title "KANT/PHILOSOPHIAE/PRACTICA/VNA CUM ETHICA" and containing the name "Joanne Friderico/ Kaehler" (see Stark 2004, 371ff.) was acquired by the Marburg Kant Archive in 1997 from a private collection of an individual living in Münster (see *ibid.*, 372). Kaehler matriculated at the Albertina University in Königsberg on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1772, and there is a record indicating Kaehler attended Kant's lectures on metaphysics, moral philosophy, and anthropology in the winter semester of 1777/8 (Stark 1999, 75). Given there is an inscription of "Summer 1777" on the manuscript itself (Stark 2004, 372), Stark claims it is likely Kaehler either made a copy of or acquired a previously existing set of notes (Stark 1999, 75). This means that the lectures, on which the notes themselves are based, date from the winter semester of 1776/7 at the very latest (*ibid.*), i.e. the last time Kant lectured on moral philosophy before the Summer of 1777 (see Arnoldt 1909, 335). As Stark notes (2004, 378) these notes are the 13<sup>th</sup> set of notes that are based on Kant's lectures on moral philosophy from the 1770s (see Stark 1999, 97-99). The Kaehler notes are particularly important because they seem to be the most reliable set of notes (see Naragon 2015). Stark illustrates this by comparing the Kaehler notes to Menzer's 1924 attempt to reconstruct a reliable set of notes from the group of 12 (now 13) notes stemming from the 1770s, as well as the various printings of the notes in the Akademie edition (see Stark 1999, 89-97). As Stark shows, the Kaehler notes often provide meaningful alternatives to statements from these two other editions that do not seem to make much sense and they even confirm one variation over another when there are conflicting versions of statements in more than one edition. Additionally, the Kaehler notes often supply further and more detailed descriptions than any other set. For these reasons, the Kaehler notes are clearly the most reliable set to use when trying to gain a picture of Kant's thought during the 1770s.

will” (*Kae* 21). In contrast to the view of the *Prize Essay*, for example, according to which there are both formal and material principles of morality that are needed in order to determine our obligations, in the 1770s Kant believes there is only one, single principle of morality. This principle takes a particular form at this point in time and Kant contrasts what he believes the principle must consist in with various other attempts at defining such a principle. It is over the course of providing this contrast that Kant cites some problems he sees with the doctrine of the moral sense or moral feeling.

As Stark claims (*Kae* 22, note 19), Kant’s classification of other moral theories in the *Kaehler* notes is almost exactly the same as the table he provides in the second *Critique* (see *KpV* 5:40). Kant begins the classification of moral theories into those based on empirical grounds or principles, and those based on intellectual grounds or principles (*Kae* 21-2). Moral theories based on empirical grounds are, Kant states, “those that are derived from the senses, in so far as our senses are thereby gratified. Intellectual grounds are those, where all morality is derived from the agreement of our actions with the laws of reason” (*Kae* 22). With respect to empirical moral theories, they are based on inner or outer grounds, or have to do with the “objects of the inner and outer senses” (*Kae* 22). Those theories deriving moral principles from inner sense grant there to be a particular sense, namely physical or a moral feeling. According to Kant, “[p]hysical feeling consists in self-love, which is two-fold, of conceit [*Eitelkeit*] and of self-interest [*Eigennutz*]; it [self-love] aims at one’s own advantage and is a selfish principle, whereby our senses are satisfied” (*Kae* 22). Kant identifies Epicurus, Helvetius, and Mandeville as representatives of this kind of theory. The other kind of empirical moral theory that bases its principles on inner sense accepts a moral feeling rather than a physical feeling. According to such a theory, the principle of morality is based on a ground placed in moral feeling, by means of which “one can distinguish between what is good and evil” (*Kae* 23). Here Kant identifies Shaftesbury and Hutcheson as the “chief authors” (*Kae* 23).

Empirical systems can also be based on external grounds, and this can either be education or government, with Montaigne identified as a representative of the former,

and Hobbes the latter (*Kae* 24-5).<sup>67</sup> According to intellectual moral theories, on the other hand, “the philosopher judges that the principle of morality has a ground in the understanding and can be realized completely a priori” (*Kae* 26). Intellectual theories are again of two kinds. First there are those that base the principle of morality “on the inner constitution of actions, in so far as we view them through the understanding” (*Kae* 27). Second, it can be an external principle “in so far as our actions have a relation to another foreign being” (*Kae* 27). The latter is a divine command theory, according to which right and wrong are determined by God’s will. As one might guess given the discussion of Kant’s view at the time of the *Dissertation*, in these lecture notes Kant favours the first kind of intellectual theory.

Over the course of providing this classification, Kant criticizes all the approaches he feels are unsatisfactory. Whereas Kant merely asserts rather than argues, at this point, why the theological principle is “erroneous” (see *Kae* 27), he explain why a moral principle based on physical feeling is incorrect. He claims that such a principle is based on a “contingent [*zufälligen*] ground” (*Kae* 25). This principle is based on contingent, rather than necessary, grounds in the sense that it is contingent which quality of an action brings me an advantage. In other words, what is advantageous is different from person to person, or even for the same person at different times. Kant argues similarly with respect to a principle of morality based on moral feeling:

If the principle is based on a moral feeling, where one assesses actions according to the pleasure or displeasure, according to aversion or in general according to the feeling of taste, then it is also based on a contingent ground. For if someone is comforted by something, so can others have aversion for it. (*Kae* 25)

Indeed Kant makes the same claim with respect to the rest of the empirical moral theories; they are all based on contingent grounds (*Kae* 26). Interestingly enough, Kant even provides the example of the obligation not to lie to make his point (see *Kae* 26).

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<sup>67</sup> Although Stark is right to claim that Kant’s classification is “almost exactly” (*Kae* 22, note 19) like the one found in the second *Critique*, there are important differences. In *Kaehler*, Mandeville is (in one sense rightly) grouped with Epicurus as a representative of the “self-love” theory of morality. In the second *Critique*, however, Mandeville takes the position Hobbes occupies here, i.e. as a representative of a subjective, externally grounded moral theory, and is therefore not grouped with Epicurus in the later classification.



According to the doctrine of physical feeling, one should only not lie if it brings injury, but it would be allowed if it brings advantage (see *Kae* 26). According to the doctrine of moral feeling, “the person who does not have such a fine moral feeling, which brings about for him an aversion towards lying, would be allowed to lie” (*Kae* 26). When it comes to moral judgement or the principle of adjudication, therefore, Kant believes moral sense theories are inadequate because the moral sense can only provide contingent, i.e. neither necessary nor objective, reasons for judging an action to be good or evil. As one can see, this is in line with the criticism of moral sense theory Kant expressed in his reflection around the time of the *Dissertation* as well. I show in the next chapter that Kant finds moral sense theory’s conception of moral judgement problematic for the same reason during the Critical period as well.

As already discussed, even by the time of the *Prize Essay* Kant understood moral obligation to consist in absolute, unconditional necessity. By the time of the 1770s at the very latest, Kant had come to realize there is no way to get such an absolute necessity out of the doctrine of moral feeling, whether paired with the Wolffian principle of perfection or otherwise. If we possess a moral feeling, i.e. a capacity that makes it possible for us to distinguish between moral good and evil based on a particular feeling of pleasure or displeasure, we can only make such judgements and thereby be obligated to do those things, first, if we have a moral feeling, but second and more importantly only if our moral feeling enables us to feel the proper pleasure or pain for that particular action. Although it is not clear whether Kant thinks it possible for human beings to *lack* a moral feeling at this point, even if everyone were to have one, this would still make moral obligations conditional on the possession of such a feeling, and therefore not strictly necessary, and this is something Kant wants to avoid.

Although Kant believed the principle of morality must be intellectual in character by 1770, Kant does not formulate a principle of morality similar in presentation to the categorical imperative in the lecture notes. He does, however, specify that the principle must be intellectual, and one that is internal and not external, i.e. not based on the will of another being such as God (see *Kae* 27). Indeed, he spends more time saying what the principle is not rather than what it is: he claims it is not a pathological principle (*Kae* 58), it is not a rule of skill (*Kae* 59), and it is not tautological like Wolff’s and Cumberland’s

(see *Kae* 60). Kant does say that the intellectual, internal moral principle is one that commands an action ought to be done because the action is good in itself (*Kae* 64), and the inner goodness of the action must be cognized via the understanding (*Kae* 27), or by pure reason (see *Kae* 64).<sup>68</sup> This is what makes it possible for us to perform actions *because* they are good, i.e. the moral disposition is one where we perform actions simply because the inner constitution of actions is such that they are good in themselves. Kant suggests the principle must be a universally valid law of the free will (see *Kae* 65), and the closest he gets to stating an explicit principle is when he says the following: “Morality is the agreement of action with a universally valid law of the free will [*Willkür*]. All morality is the relation of action to the universal rule” (*Kae* 64-5).

It is not my intent to discuss the nature of Kant’s principle of morality during the 1770s and how it might be different from his mature moral theory – this is a task which would take me too far away from my aim in this chapter. What is most interesting for my purposes is that Kant claims that “[t]he highest principle of all moral judgement lies in the understanding, and the highest principle of all moral drive to do this action lies in the heart; this incentive is moral feeling” (*Kae* 57). Kant stresses that everything in morality would be false if one confused the principle of execution for the principle of adjudication (*Kae* 56), and he even repeats that one cannot confuse these two principles immediately after mentioning that the principle of execution is moral feeling (*Kae* 57). This is no accident. Kant just finished arguing that moral feeling cannot function as an adjudicator of moral good and evil, for its judgements would be contingent. His stress on the fact that the principles of execution and adjudication cannot be exchanged, therefore, is him explaining that his claim that moral feeling is the principle of execution should not be thought of as the principle of adjudication as well. Kant is therefore trying to preserve moral feeling as performing the function of the principle of execution, but not the principle of adjudication, and wants to make it absolutely clear that he is assigning only the one function to moral feeling and not the other. This is all well and good, but if Kant rejects moral feeling as adjudicator, what significance does him assigning a role to moral

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<sup>68</sup> As is clear here, Kant does not appear to have made a distinction between understanding and reason at this point in his development. See Klemme (2006, 124).

feeling have here, if any, and what does it say about the influence of the moral sense theorists on Kant during the 1770s? Before answering these questions it will be important to outline the precise function of moral feeling as an incentive in the 1770s.

Kant's distinction between adjudication and execution corresponds to objective and subjective grounds. This distinction amounts to reasons for action supplied by the understanding, and pathological reasons for acting, i.e. those grounds for action derived from the inclinations or from feeling (see *Kae* 57). As Kant states: "The approbation of action is the objective ground, but not yet the subjective ground" (*Kae* 56). What this means, as Kant states numerous times in these lectures (see *Kae* 57, 68, 71), is that knowing or judging what is morally good is only half the battle and is still a far cry from actually performing the action. Indeed, Kant calls it a "practical error" (*Kae* 57) if the judgement is there but the incentive is not. The decisive question, then, is the following: how do we get from judging an action to be morally good to actually performing that action?

In response to this question Kant very interestingly claims the following in the *Kaehler* notes:

nobody can or will see that the understanding is supposed to have a moving power to judge. The understanding can surely judge, but to give this judgement of the understanding force, and that it becomes an incentive to move the will to perform the action, this is the philosopher's stone. (*Kae* 68-9)

Kant's view, then, is that nobody will understand exactly how making a judgement leads to action. At the same time, he does name that which makes us *capable* of acting in accordance with such a judgement. "Moral feeling" Kant claims, "is a capacity to be affected by a moral judgement" (*Kae* 68). "If I judge via the understanding that the action is morally good, much is still missing, that I were to do this action, concerning which I have judged. But if this judgement does move me to do the action, then that is moral feeling" (*Kae* 68). Although we will never be able to explain the mechanics of how this is possible, Kant therefore appears to believe that we can give the name of "moral feeling" to the capacity that allows us to be affected by a judgement in a way that causes us to act in accordance with it. This is therefore the other half of what is required if we are to act in accordance with the understanding's/reason's adjudication.

One might say that calling the capacity to be subjectively affected by a judgement “moral feeling” does not explain much, and that it simply gives a name to that which we cannot explain. A few pages later, however, Kant says that “[t]hat sensibility, which *agrees* with the moving power of the understanding, would be moral feeling” (*Kae* 71, my emphasis). Although we do not base our judgements of what is morally good and evil based on how we feel, i.e. based on the particular pleasure or displeasure we may experience when perceiving ourselves and others, it still seems that Kant is ready to admit in the 1770s that we still do have these feelings and that they play a part in the motivational process. Indeed, what does Kant mean by these feelings “agreeing” with moral judgement?

Kant claims the understanding can oppose itself to an action if it finds the action to be against the moral rule (*Kae* 71). This opposition of the understanding can provide a *Bewegungsgrund*, i.e. a moving ground or reason for acting or refraining from acting. However, this is simply the objective ground, i.e. an objective, universally valid reason for acting or refraining from acting in a certain way and is not yet a subjective ground. As Kant states: “everyone can see that the action is abhorrent, but whoever *feels* this abhorrence has moral feeling. The understanding does not abhor, rather recognizes abhorrence and opposes itself to it, but sensibility only has to abhor, now if sensibility abhors that which the understanding recognizes to be abhorrent, this is moral feeling” (*Kae* 71, my emphasis). Moral feeling, therefore, is to *feel* a particular way about actions, namely in a way that is *consistent* or *agrees with* how the understanding judges these actions. Although Kant does not say so explicitly, it seems to be the case that it is only by virtue of also having the feelings that are consistent or agree with the understanding’s judgement that we can be moved by those judgements. The question then arises: how exactly does one gain these feelings?

In these notes Kant claims that we cannot come to feel pleasure or displeasure towards actions simply by understanding them to be morally good and evil. As he claims: “To bring human beings to feel the abhorrence of vice is completely impossible” (*Kae* 71). We can explain moral good and evil to one another and share the *reasons* why an action is abhorrent and thereby bring each other to see or recognize the abhorrence in an action, but to cause another to *feel* abhorrence for a particular action simply by explaining

or bringing them to understand the abhorrence in an action is impossible. What we can do is train ourselves to feel certain ways about particular actions: “Indeed we can only produce a habit that is not natural but stands in for nature, which becomes a habit through imitation and frequent practice” (*Kae* 72). In particular, Kant claims that from a young age onwards it should be instilled in us to feel, for example, an “immediate abhorrence” (*Kae* 72) for certain actions that are bad in themselves. This is achieved through education and religion (*Kae* 73) and the way to do this is not to punish and reward for certain actions, but to make one feel shame for having done vicious actions, for example (see *Kae* 72 and *AA* 25:727). This is done so that we come to feel a certain way about the inner constitution of the action. If we are punished, we only see an action as bad because of its consequences. But if we are shamed for performing an action that is bad in itself, Kant claims we are taught that the action is in itself vicious and this is what we need to feel. Indeed, as Kant states, we must first try to “make moral feeling lively” (*Kae* 86) before we use punishments and rewards. Punishments and rewards should therefore be used only as a last resort to make us averse to evil action.

Although Kant seems to think that our moral feeling does not make us capable of feeling pleasure and displeasure about certain actions in a way consistent with the understanding from birth onwards, he does seem to think of moral feeling as a capacity possessed by all human beings. More than once in the *Kaehler* notes (see *Kae* 286 and 357) Kant claims that even villains have moral feeling, that they are able to distinguish good from evil, and that they even have good will and therefore wish to be virtuous (*Kae* 286).<sup>69</sup> It is unclear what exactly Kant means here, but one potential way to make sense of Kant’s claims is to say that perhaps a villain has at least a small desire to be good, and knows what is good and evil, and presumably also knows what he or she does is evil. Although they might also possess the *capacity* for moral feeling, perhaps what they are lacking is the proper *education* of their feelings, such that the cause of their doing evil is that their feeling is not in agreement with their understanding. Indeed, because Kant claims “there is no villain who cannot distinguish good from evil” (*Kae* 286), the fact that

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<sup>69</sup> This is of course reminiscent of Kant’s discussion of “the most hardened scoundrel” (*GMS* 4:454) who knows examples of virtue and on some level also wishes to be virtuous himself.

he or she still commits evil might be explained by the fact that they don't *feel* pleasure or abhorrence for those actions their understanding *judges* to be good or abhorrent, and this is the real cause of their vice.

If this is the case, then educating moral feeling is decisive when it comes to becoming a virtuous person. Kant does state that, if there is an order in moral education, the beginning of becoming moral is to have the right understanding of moral good and evil, i.e. to have "a pure concept of morality" (*Kae* 357). Once one has this, "then one can first make moral feeling lively and make a start at becoming moral" (*Kae* 357). He claims that this start or beginning is a "wide field" (*Kae* 357) and furthermore that it must be negative. Making moral feeling lively is negative in the sense that becoming virtuous is about becoming "innocent" and "merely refraining from everything that happens through all sorts of activities that deter one from such an inclination" (*Kae* 357). In other words, at first moral education is about refraining from actions that prevent one from acting morally, i.e. acting according to moral feeling, rather than about positively performing good actions. If we constantly refrain from performing the actions that prevent us from acting morally, we thereby negatively clear the way for moral feeling to influence our actions.

The above has focused on what Kant says about moral feeling in the *Kaehler* notes, but the central points of the above are confirmed in Kant's reflections on moral philosophy dating from the 1770s as well. First, the reflections confirm that by the 1770s Kant had given up on whatever appeal he saw in the idea of the moral sense performing the function of the adjudication of morality: "There must never be talk of moral feeling with respect to judgement (it is not a sense, rather choice), but merely with respect to actions or participations" (*AA* 19:233, R 7042).<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the reflections also confirm that, although Kant rejects the adjudicatory function of moral feeling, he nonetheless considers there to be a use for the concept of moral feeling, and this lies in the practice of morality: "There is a moral feeling; but this is not a ground of judgement, rather of

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<sup>70</sup> See also the following anthropology reflections: *AA* 15:280, R 640 and 15:384, R 876-7.

inclination” (19:135, R 6696).<sup>71</sup> Kant even draws a distinction between the moral sense and moral feeling in the reflections on anthropology which corresponds to the principle of adjudication and of execution: “[a] moral sense is a contradiction; but moral feeling does not consists in a distinguishing power, rather in sensitive power of desire that is capable of such modifications” (*AA* 15:353).<sup>72</sup>

With respect to how Kant thinks one becomes a virtuous person at this time, in a reflection dating from the period 1776-8 Kant says that one can acquire “proficiency [*Fertigkeit*]” in virtue “through frequent practice, not merely from instructions, rather though [one’s] own impetus” (*AA* 19:266-7). He even claims that “[t]he moral feeling can be educated by nothing better than by all signs of immediate aversion towards vice in education” (*AA* 19:137, R 6707). In other words, he states in the reflections as well that teaching virtue should be about teaching *feeling* the immediate good and evil in actions and not about punishment.<sup>73</sup>

It appears, therefore, that what Kant says about moral feeling in the lecture notes from the 1770s is confirmed in the reflections of the period. In the 1770s we can see that Kant has now officially dropped whatever appeal he saw in thinking of the moral sense as a faculty of *judging* moral good and evil or, as he puts it, performing the function of a principle of adjudication. What he preserves, on the other hand, is the idea of the moral sense as a principle of execution, or in other words moral feeling still plays a role in the performance of action, i.e. in motivation. Indeed he seems to think that feeling, under the name of moral feeling, is a necessary component of performing virtuous action, and without this subjective, sensitive component it is at least not clear how our adjudication of morality can bring about action in accordance with it. Not only this, but educating moral feeling plays a decisive role in becoming a virtuous person, not simply knowing

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<sup>71</sup> Kant makes a statement of this kind more than once: “The moral feeling ... is not the condition of judgement, rather of desire or inclination to the same” (*AA* 19:198, R 6894). See also the following anthropology reflection: *AA* 15:336, R 769.

<sup>72</sup> And again: “The moral sense for distinction; moral feeling for drive [*Antriebe*]” (*AA* 15:353, R 806).

<sup>73</sup> See the following reflections on anthropology for similar claims: *AA* 19:318 and 19:719.

what is morally right and wrong. What I wish to do in the following section is draw some conclusions from the above discussion of moral feeling during the 1760s and 1770s about the development of certain aspects of Kant's pre-Critical moral philosophy.

## 2.5 Kant's Pre-Critical Development

Clemens Schwaiger mentions how some have claimed there to be the development "from an initial intellectualism through the between-phase of a quasi-empiricism onto a critical, no longer dogmatic variant of rationalism" in Kant's pre-Critical philosophy (1999, 24). Keith Ward, on the other hand, claims that "Kant's early development may be divided into four main periods – the early rationalistic period of the *Dilucidatio*; then an increasingly sceptical period, culminating in the *Dreams* of 1766; after that, a brief return to a strongly rationalist position, in the *Inaugural Dissertation*; and finally the development of the Critical view that principles of reason are formal, regulative and heuristic, and have the function of making scientific and moral knowledge possible" (1972, 31). No matter how many periods into which one divides Kant's pre-Critical development, I agree with Schwaiger that these attempts to categorize Kant's various phases are "serious simplifications" (1999, 24). Especially with respect to a period where Kant's thoughts on a number of different issues are constantly changing, it stops being helpful to make statements about his development that are too general. When discussing the development of a thinker's thought, it is perhaps best to restrict oneself to the development of a thinker's changing views on a particular topic, for if one is to mark distinct stages wherein one belief is held and not another, how one characterizes a particular stage will likely vary given the particular concept one chooses as one's focus.

The one division of Kant's pre-Critical thought that certainly does make sense is the separation of Kant's thought prior to the "great light" of 1769, and the period thereafter. The picture I have painted above seems to confirm this well-established claim that Kant's thinking underwent, at the very least, a significant turn around 1769. Not only this, but it appears that Kuehn is correct to claim that "[t]he origins of Kant's theoretical thinking are also the origins of his practical philosophy" and that "Kant's critical philosophy begins with a revolution in both theoretical and moral contexts" (1995, 374). Kuehn also goes so far as to say that "no matter what else Kant's great light of 1769



meant, it did mean the end of his doubts about the nature of moral principles” (1995, 374). While it is surely true that after 1769 Kant thinks that moral principles must be intellectual, in particular this means that Kant believes the principle of *adjudication* must be intellectual, the principle of execution being another matter entirely.

In this chapter I have limited myself to focusing on Kant’s understanding of “moral feeling” in his pre-Critical moral philosophy, and therefore not on his pre-Critical moral philosophy as a whole.<sup>74</sup> I am not, therefore, in a position to say anything about the development of Kant’s pre-Critical moral philosophy in general. But I am, I take it, capable of saying something about the development of Kant’s thinking on two particular issues: that of the adjudication of morality and that of the execution of morality.

### 2.5.1 Adjudication in Kant’s Pre-Critical Ethics

With respect to the adjudication of moral good and evil, one can recognize three stages of Kant’s thinking on this issue. First, beginning from at least around the time of the *Prize Essay*, it is clear that Kant is interested in determining not only how we are aware of what is morally good and evil, but also in determining how we are aware of what is morally good and evil *in itself*, i.e. what is unconditionally good and not good simply for a given purpose. Although Kant seems to have never wholeheartedly accepted the idea that human beings possess a moral sense understood as a capacity that makes us capable of distinguishing moral good from evil, in the early to mid 1760s he was at the very least *interested* in, albeit not fully convinced by, this idea. With his claim in the *Prize Essay* that “*Hutcheson* and others have, under the name of moral feeling, provided us with a starting point to develop some excellent observations” (*PE* 2:300), Kant appears to be saying that the idea of a moral sense is on to something with respect to explaining where our ideas of immediate, i.e. unconditional, goodness come from. The idea of unconditional goodness was important for Kant at this time because in order for certain actions to be unconditionally necessary, we need to first recognize them as

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<sup>74</sup> Such a focus would require, as has been the case in the past, a dissertation or book-length project of its own. See, for example, the studies by Schmucker (1961), Ward (1972), Schilpp (1938), and Schwaiger (1999).

unconditionally or in themselves good. Hutcheson and others, therefore, with their way of explaining the immediate goodness of actions, explained an essential element required for explaining unconditional obligation.

This initial *interest* in moral sense theory paired with some reservations was followed by a second stage where Kant was no longer interested in the idea of the moral sense and came to see the function of the moral sense as the principle of adjudication as problematic. In the late 1760s and into the early 1770s Kant is fairly convinced that distinguishing moral good and evil on the basis of feeling is undesirable. In a reflection dating from around 1772, for example, we find Kant claiming the following:

feeling is the ground of the pleasurable and the displeasurable, of the capacity to be happy or unhappy. If there were a moral feeling, we would expect it to be a means to enjoy ourselves, it would be more a sense to enjoy oneself. ... But there is something in morality previous to taste for judgement. This is because taste is something that relates to society ... and herein there is nothing permanent. (*AA* 19:149, R 6755)

Kant is therefore explicit that feeling cannot provide universally valid and necessary judgements of moral good and evil, and for this reason it is not fit to act as the principle of moral judgement. At this stage, however, as Ward rightly notes, Kant “has not yet developed a clear alternative to ‘feeling’” (1972, 32-33). This stage is therefore distinct from a third stage, where Kant both rejects moral feeling as the principle of adjudication, as well as provides an alternative, namely an intellectual principle of adjudication. According to this first attempt at an alternative, actions are cognized to be good and evil in themselves by the understanding (or pure reason, see *Kae* 27 and 64) and actions are good when performed *because* they are good in themselves. Moral feeling as a principle of adjudication, therefore, is only briefly considered by Kant and relatively quickly rejected. As discussed throughout this chapter, however, from the early 1760s onwards moral feeling played a role in Kant’s conception of moral motivation as well.

### 2.5.2 Kant’s Pre-Critical Conception of Motivation

Although at first moral feeling was a term that stood in for a positive force or principle that drives us to morally good action, after 1770 we have Kant thinking about how such a subjective principle can be *compatible* or *agree* with the intellectual recognition of moral good. In the 1770s, his answer to this question seems to be that

moral feeling simply needs to drive us towards and away from the same things the “understanding” judges to be morally good and evil respectively. In other words, our intellectual understanding of the good and our sensitive and subjective motives to the good simply need to be consistent. At the same time, Kant recognized even at this point in time that the moral disposition is pure and involves performing actions because they are in themselves good. In a reflection dating from the late 1760s Kant states the following:

We must pull out the moral motivations from the mixture of all the other (and from the agreeableness of the skill in execution); it has a pure and heavenly origin; we find ourselves right away ennobled when we notice it within us and see happiness only as a consequence of it. (*AA* 19:111, R 6615, translation from Kuehn 1995, 384)

On the basis of this reflection, Kuehn states that although Kant “still had a long way to go,” with respect to his conception of moral motivation “the beginning was made in 1769” (1995, 384). In a similar direction, Klemme states that Kant’s critical conception of moral motivation is first presented in the *Groundwork* (see Klemme 2006, 122), and therefore that “Kant seems to have first achieved final clarity concerning his ‘critical’ conception of moral motivation very late” (Klemme 2006, 123). According to Klemme, Kant’s Critical conception of motivation is inseparable from three claims: 1. Pure reason is practical on its own, 2. Pure reason effects a feeling of respect which is the incentive of moral action, and 3. The morality of action is calculated by the quality of will involved in action, i.e. an action is moral if respect is the motive of action (see *ibid.*). As we can see from the above reflection, and which is seen in the *Kaehler* notes as well (see *Kae* 74ff. and 79ff., for example), in the 1770s Kant had indeed become convinced that it was the quality of one’s will that was decisive for calling an action morally good, and that the moral disposition involves performing actions simply because they are good in themselves. Kant had therefore already started to formulate Klemme’s third point in the 1770s.

At the same time, in the reflections and lecture notes from this decade we do not see mention of pure reason being practical. Rather, as I have shown, we do not see talk of reason, but of the understanding supplying moral judgements and then our moral feeling being *in accordance with* these judgements when acting morally. Not only had Kant not

arrived at the idea of reason being practical on its own, but he also had not yet arrived at the idea that pure reason accomplishes this by *effecting* the moral feeling of respect [*Achtung*] in us. In other words, the first and second core elements of Kant's mature conception of motivation are nowhere to be found in the 1770s, and for this reason his position on motivation during the 1770s is still unrefined.

As I have shown above, Kant identifies moral feeling as the incentive of action, and claims this subjective ground is needed in addition to the objective ground if action is to be *performed* and not merely *judged* as morally good. The problem of motivation is getting from judgement to action. This is “the philosopher's stone” in the *Kaehler* lecture notes and, as I show in the next chapter, this is the form this problem takes over the course of Kant's Critical period as well.<sup>75</sup> That moral feeling is needed as an incentive in order for action and not merely judgement to occur, however, is a position present in the 1770s and, as I argue in the next chapter, remains constant in the Critical period as well. What is different, however, is that in the 1770s Kant believes one simply cultivates moral feeling separately so that it is in *accord* with the “understanding's” judgements of moral good and evil, whereas in the Critical doctrine pure reason on its own *effects* this feeling. Although Kant may not have solved the problem of explaining *how* this happens, only after the 1770s did Kant come to think *that* it happened and that this needed to be an essential part of his moral theory. If it is the case, for example, that a moral feeling is needed in addition to moral judgement in order for action in accordance with this judgement to take place, this creates the problem that moral judgement is not essential in itself, and that the decisive step towards becoming a virtuous person simply involves training moral feeling to become habituated into approving and being averse to actions that are in themselves morally good and evil. To be sure, gaining the correct principles plays a part and is the first thing one must do (see *Kae* 357), but his view implies that the role of the intellect (at this point represented by the understanding) is demoted, to a

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<sup>75</sup> As I discuss in the next chapter, in the ‘Incentives’ chapter of the second *Critique*, for example, Kant states that “how a law can be of itself an immediately a determining ground of the will ... is for human reason an insoluble problem ... What we shall have to show a priori is, therefore, not the ground from which the moral law in itself supplies an incentive but rather what it effects (or, to put it better, must effect) in the mind insofar as it is an incentive” (*KpV* 5:72).

certain extent, and even makes its judgement superfluous. If Kant wants to claim both that moral judgements are essentially a priori and that it is not simply habit but a recognition of the moral law that is decisive when one is becoming a better person, he will need to find a way to make the recognition of the moral law a central and indeed a necessary element in motivation as well. We will see in the next chapter that this is accomplished by his mature moral theory.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Based on all I have said above, I believe it is incorrect to suppose, as Schwaiger and others have done, that by the 1770s “Kant’s greatest enthusiasm for British moral sense theory was long passé” (1999, 94). This is certainly correct if one focuses on the idea of a moral sense as a principle of adjudication, but Kant did not give up on the idea of moral feeling performing a motivational function by the 1770s, nor does he abandon this sense of the term during after 1770 either. Although it might be correct to say that a shift took place around 1770 where Kant no longer thought highly of Hutcheson (see Henrich 2009, 30), one should not take this to mean that the moral sense theorists discontinued having any influence on Kant at all after this point. As I hope to have shown, in that Kant seems to preserve a place for the idea of moral feeling in his philosophy after 1770, even if he is not using this concept in the exact way Shaftesbury or Hutcheson used it, it is arguably the case that the influence of moral sense theory persisted into the 1770s as well, and therefore at least over the course of Kant’s entire pre-Critical development. In the next chapter, I explore the influence of moral sense theory on Kant’s mature moral theory. Although I discuss Kant’s Critical rejection of moral sense theory’s conception of moral judgement, my focus is on the extent to which Kant’s mature conception of motivation reflects the influence of Hutcheson’s thought in particular. I thereby continue the investigation carried out in this chapter in that I seek to determine if “moral feeling” plays a role in the execution of action in Kant’s mature moral philosophy as well.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Moral Sense Theory and Kant's Mature Moral Philosophy

In the previous chapter I illustrated how Kant's appreciation of moral sense theory changed over the course of his pre-Critical period. The most significant change was after his "great light" of 1769/70, when Kant began to think of moral concepts as rational, and thus comes to reject the possibility that moral judgement is rooted in a moral sense. However, I also illustrated that throughout the pre-Critical period and even after he understands moral philosophy as a rational enterprise, Kant nonetheless preserves a place for "moral feeling" in the execution of action. In this chapter I turn to Kant's Critical period and investigate the way in which moral sense theory's conceptions of moral judgement and motivation influenced his mature moral philosophy. In the first section (3.1) I summarize Kant's Critical discussion of moral sense theory's conception of moral judgement. Given the rational character of his mature moral philosophy, Kant's considered opinion of Hutcheson's conception of moral judgement in particular is largely negative, and in this part of the chapter I outline six main criticisms Kant makes against moral sense theory on this issue. My main focus in this chapter, however, is on the extent to which moral sense theory's conception of moral motivation had an influence on Kant. In the past, interpreters have suggested that Kant adopts elements of the conception of motivation common to his English and Scottish predecessors, largely because of the role he assigns to feeling in moral action. Thus in section two (3.2) I present my interpretation of Kant's conception of moral motivation, paying particular attention to the role of both feeling and desire therein. In section three (3.3) I survey what I take to be the dominant secondary interpretations of Kant's conception of moral motivation, including those that claim it shares features in common with the "empiricist" view of action presented by Hume and others. However, in that it is Hutcheson's view on motivation and not Hume's with which Kant himself was most familiar, in this third section I also provide a detailed discussion of what features Kant's view on motivation shares with Hutcheson's. In this chapter I therefore hope to not only clarify Kant's engagement with moral sense theory during his Critical period, but I also hope to shed light on Kant's mature conception of

motivation by illustrating how it is both similar to and different from the view presented by Hutcheson, i.e. the eighteenth century empiricist moral philosopher with whom he engaged most extensively.

### 3.1 The Mature Critique of Moral Sense Theory on Moral Judgement

Although at times exaggerated and misunderstood, Kant's mature moral philosophy is undoubtedly a rationalist one. For instance, in the *Groundwork* Kant explains that moral philosophy in general should be understood as what he calls "a *metaphysics of morals*," i.e. a kind of philosophy "which presents its doctrines solely from a priori principles" (*GMS* 4:388). Kant approaches specific topics in moral philosophy in much the same way, thus when it comes to the appraisal of action, i.e. judging whether an action is morally good or evil, he says it is required that "good and evil always be appraised by reason and hence through concepts" (*KpV* 5:58). Kant places so much importance on reason when it comes to moral judgement because he believes it is only via reason that we can achieve a proper level of objectivity and universality. For example, Kant says that we must use reason to determine moral good and evil because "[w]hat we are to call good must be an object of the faculty of desire in the judgement of every reasonable human being, and evil an object of aversion in the eyes of everyone" (*KpV* 5:61). It is because of commitments like these that Kant finds various aspects of moral sense theory problematic. In this section I outline six objections that Kant makes to moral sense theory, and specifically Hutcheson's version therefore. As we shall see, many of them are either directly or indirectly related to the issue of moral judgement. I begin with what is arguably Kant's most important objection and which is most clearly directed against Hutcheson's conception of moral judgement, namely Kant's problem with basing moral judgement upon feeling.

#### 3.1.1 Feelings Lack Universality

What Dieter Henrich has rightly claimed is Kant's most important objection to moral sense theory concerns the extent to which the moral sense can issue universal moral judgements (see Henrich 2009, 34). I briefly discussed this objection in the

previous chapter where I observed that after his “great light” of 1769/70, Kant was critical of the objectivity of the moral sense, i.e. Kant criticized the inability of the moral sense to make “objective,” i.e. universal and necessary, judgements. We saw there that one might think it strange that Kant makes this criticism, first, because Hutcheson conceived of the moral sense as capable of providing universal judgements, and second, because at least from around 1769/70 onwards Kant himself began to think of sensibility, at least the forms of sensibility, as universal and necessary. I argued that Kant’s criticism can be explained once it is made clear that it rests on the idea that the moral sense falls under the heading of the faculty of the feeling, rather than under the category of the faculty of cognition. During his Critical period, Kant both greatly clarifies why the moral sense should be understood as a feeling rather than as a sense proper, as well explains how this forms the basis of his objection that the moral sense cannot provide truly objective moral judgments.

Kant presents this objection in both the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique* during his classification of all other, i.e. heteronomous, moral theories. In the *Groundwork*, for example, Kant argues that all *empirical* moral principles, i.e. those that have a ground “taken from the *particular arrangement of human nature*, or the contingent circumstances in which it is placed,” are not fit to be moral laws because such principles cannot yield “universality,” i.e. they are principles that cannot hold “for all rational beings” (*GMS* 4:442).<sup>76</sup> Kant classifies the principle of “moral feeling” as empirical, and it is not difficult to see why. As we saw in chapter one, Hutcheson believes that moral judgements are grounded in pleasurable and displeasurable feelings of approval and disapproval (see *I4* 111). As based on feelings, i.e. a feature of human nature, Hutcheson believes that moral judgements do not apply universally to all *rational* beings but only to all *human* beings with a moral sense. At the same time, if one is familiar with Hutcheson’s belief that the moral sense is indeed capable of grounding at least a certain kind of universal moral principle, the meaning of Kant’s objection might

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<sup>76</sup> Kant makes the same argument in the second *Critique* at 5:41.



not be abundantly clear. In order to better understand this objection, then, we need to determine the precise way in which Kant understands the moral sense.

I have already observed that Kant predominantly refers to the moral sense as a *moralisches Gefühl*, i.e. literally a moral “feeling,” in line with Hutcheson’s first German translator (Johann Heinrich Merck) even though he occasionally uses an alternate expression and refers to it as a *moralischer Sinn*, i.e. more literally a moral “sense.” Although part of the explanation for Kant’s dominant usage of moral *feeling* is surely that he is remaining consistent with the accepted terminology of his day, there are in fact philosophical reasons for Kant’s usage: Kant refers to the moral sense as a *moralisches Gefühl* rather than as a *moralischer Sinn* because he believes this capacity belongs under the heading of the faculty of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure rather than the faculty of cognition, to which sensibility and the senses (both inner and outer) belong (see e.g. *Anth* 7:153ff.). This is significant, for Kant conceives of the senses and of feeling as quite distinct, as can be gleaned from a remark he makes in the *Critique of Judgement*:

If a determination of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is called sensation [*Empfindung*], then this expression means something entirely different than if I call the representation of a thing (through sense [*Sinne*], as a receptivity belonging to the faculty of cognition) sensation. For in the latter case the representation is related to the object, but in the first case it is related solely to the subject, and does not serve for any cognition at all, not even that by which the subject **cognizes** itself. (*KdU* 5:206)

In this passage we see Kant making a distinction between the kind of sensation [*Empfindung*] in which a feeling [*Gefühl*] consists, and the kind of sensation that comes through the senses [*Sinne*]. As Kant says here, the senses belong to the faculty of cognition, and as such they are representations related to an object and provide cognition of the object. As Kant says explicitly in the *Metaphysics of Morals*: “by the word “sense” is usually understood a theoretical capacity for perception directed toward an object” (*MdS* 6:400). On the other hand, representations of the faculty of feeling do not relate to objects, but refer, as Julien Wuerth aptly puts it, “merely to how an object affects the

subject” (Wuerth 2010, 15).<sup>77</sup> The essential difference between feeling and sense, for Kant, is therefore that only sense relates to objects and cognition, whereas feeling cannot ground cognition and relates only to the subject.

This basic difference between sense and feeling results in there being an important difference between a moral “sense” and a moral “feeling,” for Kant. Kant acknowledges that Hutcheson seems to have understood the moral sense as a “sense” according to Kant’s technical understanding of the term. This is accurate given the moral sense, for Hutcheson, perceives a specific “object,” namely moral good and evil in contrast to natural good and evil (see *I4* 111).<sup>78</sup> At the same time, Kant also appears to think that, whether Hutcheson realized it or not, the involvement of feelings of pleasure and displeasure in moral judgement is perhaps more essential to the nature of the moral sense than anything else. As Kant says in the *Powalski* lecture notes on moral philosophy (1782-3): “Nobody has explained the system of moral feeling more than Hutcheson. He says one can perceive many characteristics of *objects* through feeling [*Gefühl*] that one cannot cognize through the mere understanding” (*AA* 27:108, my emphasis). As is clear in this passage, Kant seems to think that, according to Hutcheson’s idea of the moral sense, it is ultimately a “feeling,” not sense, that cognizes things about *objects* that the understanding cannot.

There is an element of truth in this, of course, in that the characteristic feature of the moral sense is that it allows us to *feel* pleasure or displeasure based on what we perceive, and we make judgements of moral good and evil on the basis of these feelings (at least for Hutcheson). Although Hutcheson says that the moral “sense” as a capacity allows us to perceive morally good and evil objects in the first place (see *I4* 110), what is central to this perceptive capacity, indeed what is central to any sense, for Hutcheson, are

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<sup>77</sup> See also *AA* 25:559, 17:313, 25:1068, 28:246-7, and 15:288 for how feeling is distinct from cognition in this way. See McCarty (2009, 174-5), and Ware (2014, 734) for a discussion. Kant also explicitly says that moral feeling cannot bring about cognition of an object at *AA* 27:108.

<sup>78</sup> Indeed, that Hutcheson understood the moral sense as concerned with the cognition of objects and not only the state of the subject is why there is so much debate concerning his moral “realism.” See Frankena (1955), Norton (1985), Darwall (1995, 213), Gill (2006, 169, and 297), and Irwin (2008, 399ff.) for a discussion.

the feelings of pleasure and displeasure experienced when perceiving certain objects (see *I4* xiii). What this means is that without the feelings of pleasure and displeasure that occur when perceiving morally good and evil objects, it seems accurate to say that we would not perceive these objects as good and evil at all and there wouldn't be a moral sense. As such, one could say that it is ultimately these feelings of pleasure and displeasure that makes it possible for us to be aware of, i.e. cognize, morally good and evil objects, and thus Kant is at least in this sense correct to say that it is characteristic of Hutcheson's conception of the moral sense that "feeling" makes it possible to cognize certain things about objects.

That it is ultimately feeling that makes us aware of morally good and evil objects is problematic, however, given Kant's understanding of sense and feeling, according to which feeling can tell us nothing about the object of cognition. Perhaps for this reason, Kant claims that "[a] moral sense is a contradiction" (*AA* 15:353). If Kant is correct in thinking that Hutcheson's moral sense should more properly be understood as a moral feeling, however, such that it can only provide us with information about the subject, this is where its unsuitability as the foundation of moral principles arises. As Kant claims in the *Groundwork*: "feelings, which by nature differ infinitely in degree from one another, can do little to yield a uniform measure of good and evil, and one by his feeling cannot validly judge for others at all" (*GMS* 4:442).<sup>79</sup> Indeed, as concerned only with a given subject and not an object, feelings, for Kant, differ not only between themselves but from subject to subject. As Kant says in an early reflection on anthropology: "judgement concerning good and evil does not take place through feeling, because its [feeling's] judgements have only private validity" (*AA* 15:237, R 541). This signals an important difference between Hutcheson's and Kant's understanding of feeling and sense: whereas Hutcheson believes that feelings of, for example, approval and disapproval are uniform across human nature because they are linked to the same simple ideas commonly raised in all human beings by the same objects (see *I4* 4), it clear from the above that Kant disagrees and believes that feelings relate only to each individual subject. In contrast to

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<sup>79</sup> The same objection is made in the second *Critique* at 5:41.

Hutcheson, therefore, because Kant believes the moral sense is fundamentally based upon (subjective) feeling, the moral sense cannot issue judgements, principles, or laws valid for all human beings. Not only this, but even if the moral sense *could* issue judgements valid for all human beings, Kant disagrees with Hutcheson that the application of moral demands on all human beings is sufficient for universality. For Kant, moral laws must apply to all *rational* beings, and for this reason:

the universality with which they [moral laws] are to hold for all rational beings regardless of differences ... vanishes if their ground is taken from the *particular arrangement of human nature*, or the contingent circumstances in which it is placed. (*GMS* 4:442)

As soon as laws are grounded on feelings of any kind, the universality and necessity of such laws are compromised. In this way, Kant argues that the moral sense, as moral feeling, is incapable of issuing sufficiently universal moral judgements, i.e. ones applicable to all rational beings, and for this reason the doctrine of moral feeling fails to meet his standards for a proper moral theory.

### 3.1.2 Moral Obligation is Only Conditionally Binding

Kant's second criticism of Hutcheson's moral sense theory relates to its conception of moral obligation. It is a characteristic feature of Kant's moral philosophy that moral obligation is unconditionally binding. For example, in the previous chapter I illustrated that even very early on in his development Kant distinguishes between two sorts of obligation. As he says in the *Observations*: "every *ought* expresses a necessity of the action and is capable of two meanings ... either I ought to do something (as a *means*) if I want something else (as an *end*), or I *ought immediately* to do something else (as an *end*) and make it actual" (*PE* 2:298). These two kinds of obligation form the basis of Kant's distinction between hypothetical imperatives, which "represent the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to achieving something else that one wants," and the categorical imperative, which represents "an action as objectively necessary by itself, without reference to another end" (*GMS* 4:414). In relation to these two kinds of obligation or imperative, Kant argues that moral sense theory understands moral obligation in terms of conditional obligation only, and therefore that it is incapable of accounting for *properly* moral, i.e. unconditional, obligation (see Irwin 2009, 51f.).

In chapter one I illustrated how Hutcheson believes that all human beings have at least two “ultimate ends,” i.e. ends they desire in and of themselves and not as the means to some further end, and these are our own private advantage and the happiness of others (see *E4* 222). I also argued there that the moral sense can only motivate us to act in accordance with what it approves because what it approves (disinterestedly desiring the happiness of others) is something we already desire. In essence, moral judgements bind us, for Hutcheson, i.e. we feel compelled to do what the moral sense tells us we *ought* to do, only because we already desire to do those same things, namely increase the happiness of others. Indeed, Hutcheson distinguishes between two types of obligation based on the desires standing at their basis. Hutcheson claims in the *Inquiry*, for example, that obligation can either mean “*a Determination, without regard to our own Interest, to approve Actions, and to perform them*” (*I4* 267), or it can mean “*a Motive from Self-Interest, sufficient to determine all those who duly consider it, and pursue their own Advantage wisely, to a certain Course of Actions*” (*I4* 268-9). According to the former kind of obligation, “there is *naturally* an *Obligation* upon all Men to *Benevolence*” (*I4* 267) and what makes us act in such circumstances is the “*Instinct of Benevolence*” (*I4* 268). Thus *moral* obligation, for Hutcheson, is what we are bound to do on condition of our having a particular kind of desire, namely the ultimate desire that the moral sense approves, i.e. our disinterested desire for the happiness of others.

Although Hutcheson distinguishes between moral obligation and the obligation placed on us to do what is in our self-interest, both of these kinds of obligation are of the same type in that they are conditional upon the existence of a desire. Because Kant believes moral obligation to be not simply conditional upon a different desire, but to be a different *type* of obligation altogether, namely one that is *unconditional*, Kant finds it problematic that moral sense theory equates moral obligation with conditional obligation. As a result, he believes moral sense theory does not account for properly moral obligation. Ultimately, then, Kant finds Hutcheson’s conception of moral obligation problematic for the same reason he finds all instances of conditional obligation unsuitable for moral obligation, namely because of the degree of universality and necessity inherent to conditional obligation. As conditional upon, say, a desire, conditional obligation is only valid for those who have such a desire. For Hutcheson, this means that moral

obligations bind all human beings, for all human beings desire the happiness of others as an ultimate end. As we saw above, however, this is not sufficiently universal for moral obligations, for Kant. Moral obligations, for Kant, must apply to all *rational* beings no matter what they desire.

Kant criticizes Hutcheson's conception of obligation on this score without mentioning him by name in the following passage from the second *Critique*:

the happiness of other beings can be the object of the will of a rational being. But if it were the determining ground of the maxim, one would have to presuppose that we find not only a natural satisfaction in the well-being of others but also a need, such as a sympathetic sensibility [*sympathische Sinnesart*] brings with it in human beings. But I cannot presuppose this need in every rational being (not at all in God). Thus the matter of the maxim can indeed remain, but it must not be the condition of the maxim since the maxim would then not be fit for a law. (*KpV* 5:34)

The conditional nature of the obligation aside, Kant implies here that in order for the desire for the happiness of other beings to issue an obligation just as universal as a categorical imperative, i.e. a law, this desire would need to be attributed to all rational beings, including God. However, as Kant says in the above quotation, one “cannot presuppose this need in every rational being” and as such it cannot issue a maxim with a degree of universality sufficiently equivalent to a law.

Hutcheson would probably grant that his conception of moral obligation is “conditional” in Kant's sense, but he would also likely object to the possibility of an unconditional obligation in the first place given he seems to understand all obligation as conditional. Indeed, Hutcheson likely believed that all obligation *must* be conditional because of a problem associated with positing the possibility of unconditional obligation, namely the problem of how such an unconditional obligation can be *binding* if it does not provide the means to an end we already desire. Kant's account of unconditional obligation is faced with explaining this and as we shall later in this chapter, his account of moral motivation is intimately related to precisely this problem.

### 3.1.3 Moral Sense Theory Reduces Everything to the Desire for Happiness

I mentioned above that Kant classifies moral sense theory as an “empirical” moral theory because it grounds moral principles in experience, more specifically in the feelings

of pleasure and displeasure that accompany the perception of virtue and vice. Also falling under the heading of empirical moral theories is the principle of “physical” feeling or “the principle of *one’s own happiness*” (*GMS* 4:442), i.e. the view that virtue is equivalent to seeking one’s own happiness, and more specifically that seeking one’s true happiness brings about virtue. According to Kant, the core difference between the doctrine of physical feeling and that of moral feeling is that the principle of one’s own happiness “underpins morality with incentives that rather undermine it and annihilate all its sublimity” (*GMS* 4:442), i.e. it suggests that the incentives of virtue are self-interested incentives. On the other hand, the doctrine of moral feeling

still remains closer to morality and its dignity because it does Virtue the honour of attributing to her *immediately* the delight and high esteem we have for her, and does not, as it were, tell her to her face that it is not her beauty, but only our advantage that ties us to her. (*GMS* 4:442)

Although Kant praises moral sense theory here for insisting that virtue is good in itself and not solely because it is in our interest, he argues that the doctrine of moral feeling and that of physical feeling have something important in common and are equally problematic as a result.

Kant claims that the view of “those who assume a certain special moral sense” is problematic because “everything is still reduced to the desire for one’s own happiness” (*KpV* 5:38). At first glance this objection is perplexing, for Hutcheson especially went to great lengths to argue that the desire for the happiness of others is *disinterested* and therefore *not* reducible to the desire for one’s own happiness. However, in claiming that moral sense theory reduces everything to the desire for happiness, Kant’s point is not that benevolence can be reduced to self-interest, rather his point is that moral sense theory reduces all desires to the desire for *pleasure*. In the *Groundwork*, shortly after discussing the doctrine of one’s own happiness, Kant turns to moral sense theory and says the following in a footnote:

I class the principle of moral feeling with that of happiness because every empirical interest promises to contribute to our well-being by the agreeableness that something has to offer, whether this happens immediately and without a view to advantages, or with regard for them. (*GMS* 4:442n)

Like the principle of physical feeling, although moral sense theory claims we *disinterestedly* desire the happiness of others, and therefore that we desire it *immediately*

and not as a means to our own pleasure, Kant's claim here is that because the happiness of others is still an object we *desire*, it is still something that gives us pleasure and contributes to our happiness. For this reason, even though we desire the happiness of others disinterestedly or immediately, the happiness of others still gives us pleasure and it is in this sense that Kant believes "everything is still reduced to the desire for one's own happiness" (*KpV* 5:38).

Kant is not the only one to interpret moral sense theory in this way. As I illustrated in chapter one, interpreters in fact disagree over whether our *disinterested* desire for the happiness of others can still be construed as a desire for pleasure (see Darwall 1995, 224 and Jensen 1971, 87-8, 20-1). In chapter one I suggested that there is reason to believe that the disinterested desire for the happiness of others is *not* in fact a desire for pleasure and also that it is not even a desire for a good (see *E4* 28). I do not wish to settle this interpretive question here, nor do I wish to assess if Kant is ultimately correct in his interpretation.<sup>80</sup> At the very least, Henning Jensen is correct to say that Hutcheson is ambiguous as to whether all desires are aimed at pleasure (see Jensen 1971, 87-8 and 20-1) and for this reason Kant is at least not wrong to interpret Hutcheson as claiming that all desires aim at pleasure. For my purposes, what is most important to note is not whether Kant is correct to interpret Hutcheson in this way, rather only that he does interpret Hutcheson in this way.

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<sup>80</sup> Lewis White Beck somewhat persuasively argues that Kant's interpretation is in fact wrong. Beck says that Kant "confuses two very different things that the British philosophers had kept properly separate, viz., the disinterested pleasure we experience in doing something righteous or in contemplating a righteous action ... and the interest we have in the pleasure accruing to us if we do or contemplate certain action" (1960, 105). As I discussed in chapter one in relation to the "pleasure problem," Beck is right to point out here that although Hutcheson, for example, claims that acting benevolently gives us pleasure, our benevolent desires do not aim at the pleasure these desires cause us to feel, rather they *disinterestedly* aim at bringing about the happiness of others. As mentioned, however, I take Kant's point to be that because our benevolent desires are still desires for an object and satisfying them brings us pleasure, they can be reduced to the desire for happiness. Thus perhaps Kant believes that even if it is not our intended goal when so acting, simply because satisfying these desires causes us to feel pleasure makes it unavoidable that we act on these desires for the sake of their associated pleasure. I discuss these issues more directly in chapter five where I suggest Kant navigated the issues surrounding the pleasures associated with virtuous action better than Hutcheson.



In addition to believing that the disinterested desire for the happiness of others is reducible to the desire for pleasure as an object, Kant raises a related point that concerns how moral sense theory ultimately judges the goodness of action. Kant seems to believe that moral sense theory regards the *immediate* goodness of virtue as something we regard as good only in relation to our own pleasure or happiness. When Kant discusses “the principle of *one’s own happiness*” (*GMS* 4:442), for example, he claims it is false for a number of reasons aside from the fact that it places the moral motive in those of self-interest. Among other things, Kant argues that the doctrine of physical feeling “contributes nothing whatsoever to the grounding of morality, as making a human being happy is something entirely different from making him good” (*GMS* 4:442). Kant’s argument against the doctrine of physical feeling is therefore against its standard of judgement: according to Kant, what makes us happy is no ground or indication of what is morally good. Interestingly, Kant appears to think that the same objection applies to moral sense theory.

According to Hutcheson’s version of moral sense theory, the perception of virtue in others or ourselves gives us pleasure and therefore makes us happy. More importantly, it also claims that we rely on the pleasure and displeasure of the moral sense as an *indication* of the goodness of virtue. If this is the case, then not only does moral sense theory reduce all desires to the desire for pleasure, but the goodness of virtue, i.e. what Hutcheson called moral goodness (see *I4* 111-12), is in some sense reducible to natural goodness, i.e. the goodness of private advantage. This is problematic, for Kant, not only because it makes a feature of human nature, i.e. feelings of pleasure and pain, the criterion of moral goodness (as discussed above in relation to objection one), but such a view also results in a problematic conception of human action. As Kant states in *Naturrecht Feyerabend*:

If moral feeling is the cause for human beings that they recognize action either as good or bad; then these feelings can be of different degrees. And since the moral feeling is not stronger than all other feelings, and since this cannot be proven, so it is the same with all physical feelings, and the human being will therefore choose among all feeling what seems to it the most satisfying. (*NF* 27:1325)

What Kant therefore finds problematic here is the model of action implied by moral sense theory: if moral sense theory claims that all desires are desires for pleasure, then a human

being would only act on the desire that promises the most pleasure. Such a view implies that in order to choose what is morally good, virtue would have to promise the most pleasure. This is where Kant and Hutcheson disagree. As stated in *Feyerabend*, Kant believes it is clear that moral good does not promise the most pleasure, for if it did we would all be moral (see *NF* 27:1325 and also *GMS* 4:442). In contrast, Hutcheson believes that via the pleasures of the moral sense, acting morally does indeed promise the most pleasure (*I4* 244), although as I discussed in relation to the “pleasure problem,” the expectation of these pleasures can never be our reason for acting benevolently for this would make our motive self-interest rather than benevolence.<sup>81</sup> Thus in addition to arguing that moral sense theory reduces all desires to the desire for pleasure, Kant argues that the “battle of forces” model of human action that this view implies is incorrect. As I illustrate later in this chapter, Kant believes that this model is problematic above all because it precludes the possibility of free action.

### 3.1.4 God’s Will is an Unacceptable Source for the Standards of Morality

A fourth objection is made only rarely in student notes and reflections and concerns moral sense theory’s conception of the ultimate source of the standards of moral judgement. In *Mrongrovius II*, for example, we find the following statement: “morality cannot be felt. All rules from feeling are contingent and only for beings who have such a feeling” (*NF* 29:625). This passage calls to mind the second objection above, according to which moral obligation only binds those beings who desire the happiness of others, but Kant’s point here is in fact slightly different. In the *Naturrecht Feyerabend* notes Kant mentions Shaftesbury and Hutcheson by name and claims that, for them, “the moral

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<sup>81</sup> Hutcheson has an additional reason for denying that everyone acts morally in virtue of the fact that the moral sense promises the most pleasure. In the *Inquiry*, Hutcheson qualifies his claim that the moral sense “gives us more *Pleasures* and *Pain*, than all *other Facultys*” (*I4* 244) by saying that “the Corruption of Manner so justly complain’d of every-where” (*I4* 244) is the reason why so few human beings act benevolently. According to Hutcheson, the moral sense can be corrupted by custom, education, and habit (see *E4* xv), and this means that we often feel the pleasures of the moral sense in the wrong cases, i.e. not in relation to *truly* benevolent action. For this reason, real virtue, i.e. benevolence, is not always connected with more pleasure, and as a result the pleasures of the moral sense do not necessarily result in everyone acting *truly* benevolently.

imperative is not categorical, for it assumes that only the being, to whom this feeling is imparted, has a worth in its moral actions” (NF 27:1325). Kant’s reference to the human being, as a being to whom the moral sense is “imparted [*mitgetheilt*]” calls to mind Hutcheson’s view that it is ultimately God who has given us “a Moral Sense to direct our Actions” (I4 128-9), and thus his view that God is the ultimate source of the standards of moral good and evil. In this way, the standard of judgement operative in the moral sense is ultimately one contingent upon the will of God. This is problematic, of course, for as Kant goes on to explain in *Mrongrovius II*, if this were the case “it would be all the same if God were to have given us a pleasure for vice and he could have done so for other creatures as well. For such laws are therefore merely arbitrary and merely a child’s game [*Kinderspiel*]” (AA 29:625). Kant’s fourth objection therefore targets the ultimate contingency and arbitrary nature of the standards employed by the moral sense. If God’s will is the ultimate source of these standards and the standards themselves do not constrain God’s will, then these standards are the furthest thing from objective, i.e. universal and necessary. Of course, Hutcheson believes in the rationality and inherent goodness of the standards of good and evil that God imparts to the moral sense because he trusts in God’s benevolence. Above all, Kant disagrees with divine command theory because he conceives of the view that moral principles have their origin in God’s will as a “heteronomous” moral theory, i.e. one that locates the source of these principles external to the will itself (see *KpV* 5:40ff. and *GMS* 4:443). Kant views this view as incompatible with the autonomy of the will, i.e. its capacity to legislate the moral law on its own, and thus Kant finds Hutcheson’s position on the ultimate origin of moral standards problematic insofar as it ultimately subscribes to a version of divine command theory.<sup>82</sup>

### 3.1.5 Begging the Question on our Awareness of Moral Obligation

A fifth objection that I will discuss again in my final chapter and which, to my knowledge, is rarely discussed in the secondary literature, concerns how Kant believes moral sense theory explains our awareness of moral obligations. Kant states he wishes to “note the deception going on” in the case of assuming that “consciousness of virtue is

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<sup>82</sup> For more on Hutcheson and divine command theory see Irwin (2008, 407-8).

immediately connected with satisfaction and pleasure, and consciousness of vice with mental unease and pain” (*KpV* 5:38) and explains this deception in the following way:

In order to represent someone vicious as tormented with mental unease by consciousness of his offenses they must first represent him as morally good, at least to some degree, in what is most basic to his character, just as they must represent someone who is delighted by consciousness of his dutiful actions as already virtuous. The concept of morality and duty would therefore have to precede any regard for this satisfaction and cannot be derived from it. ... Thus one cannot feel such satisfaction or mental unease prior to cognition of obligation and cannot make it the basis of the latter. (*KpV* 5:38)

What Kant is objecting to here is the logical, if not temporal, order of moral sense theory’s conception of how we first come to know of our moral obligations, at least according to how he sees it. Again, according to moral sense theory, what is morally good and evil and thus what we are obligated to do and omit is made known to us via the feelings of pleasure and pain we experience when we perceive benevolent and malevolent actions. Kant’s point in the above is that in order for us to experience the moral sense’s pleasurable and painful feelings of approval and disapproval in the first place, we must already be *aware* of what is morally good and evil, and therefore also of what we ought to do and omit, on some level already in order to make such a judgement. Kant’s charge, then, is that moral sense theory assumes what it sets out to prove: the pleasure and pain of the moral sense is both the cause and the effect of our awareness of moral obligation, and as such moral sense theory begs the question concerning our awareness of moral obligation (see Irwin 2009, 52).

There is a sense in which Kant’s objection is accurate: as we saw in chapter one, Hutcheson argues that we do not originally get our standards of moral appraisal from custom, education, or habit and that, on the contrary, all human beings possess the moral sense and its standards by nature (see *I4* 228). As such, Hutcheson believes that we are at least *capable* of knowing our obligations as soon as we are fully developed human beings. What this means, however, is that we are bound by morality as soon as we are *capable* of knowing our obligations. Hutcheson states we are “under its Influence, even when by false, or partial Opinions of the natural Tendency of their Actions, this *moral Sense* leads them to *Evil*” (*I4* 268). Indeed, although Hutcheson argues that custom, education, and habit can alter our standards of moral judgement (see *E4* xv) such that

what we believe our obligations are can change over the course of living our lives, what appears to be the core of the disagreement here is that Kant does not believe that we feel pleasure and pain in relation to our awareness of virtue and vice *by nature*, but rather only *after* we have acquired the virtuous disposition. As Kant states when discussing the process of moral education, for example:

one must first value the importance of what we call duty, the authority of the moral law, and the immediate worth that compliance with it gives a person in his own eyes, in order to feel that satisfaction in consciousness of one's conformity with it and bitter remorse if one can reproach oneself with having transgressed it. (*KpV* 5:38)

Kant therefore disagrees that we can feel the pleasures and displeasures of the moral sense simply by nature and in virtue of possessing the moral sense. For Kant, only once one has at least partially acquired the virtuous disposition is one capable of such feelings.

There is also a sense in which Kant's criticism is slightly wrong-headed, however. As I briefly discussed in chapter one, although the issue is a matter of debate, there is reason to believe the pronouncements of the moral sense are "non-cognitive" for Hutcheson. In that it is ultimately feelings of pleasure and displeasure that decide what is morally good and evil, for Hutcheson, there is an important sense in which foundational moral judgements are not propositional or "cognitive" in character, but are rather equivalent to an emotive state. In other words, there is a sense in which moral judgements, at least at their most foundational and basic level, are not *judgements* at all, but rather *consists in* feelings of pleasure and displeasure. What this means is that Kant is wrong to assume that the moral sense presupposes some cognition of obligation; Kant only assumes that Hutcheson presupposes this because moral judgements, for Kant, *are* cognitive and thus if the moral sense feels pleasure or displeasure this is only because it is already cognitively aware, on some level, of what is morally good and evil. Kant's objection therefore reflects an important disagreement between him and Hutcheson over the nature of moral judgement. If it is true that moral judgements are non-cognitive, for Hutcheson, then in the end Kant's objection does not hold and Hutcheson is not presupposing what he sets out to prove (see e.g. Irwin 2009, 52). Rather, for Hutcheson, basic moral judgements simply *consist in* emotive or instinctual responses and are not, at least on this fundamental level, assuming any kind of cognition at all. Whether this

objection ultimately holds is therefore dependent on how one interprets Hutcheson's conception of the nature of moral judgements. What is clear is that Kant takes Hutcheson to think of moral judgements as cognitive although still based on feeling, and in this way Kant takes him to be begging the question regarding our awareness of obligation.

### 3.1.6 Positing a Moral Sense is Unphilosophical

In the interest of completeness, Kant mentions one final objection, which is against the idea of positing a moral sense in the first place. As he says in an early reflection: "The principle of Hutcheson is unphilosophical, because it introduces a new feeling as a ground of explanation" (*AA* 19:120, R 6634). As Henrich states, this is an objection to Hutcheson's "method of analysis" (2009, 38), according to which the existence of a moral sense is posited to explain certain phenomena. As we saw in chapter one, Hutcheson believes the positing of a separate sense is justified, for he believes that "[w]hen two Perceptions are intirely different from each other, or agree in nothing but the general Idea of Sensation, we call the Powers of receiving those different Perceptions, different Senses" (*I4* 2). Thus because we perceive moral good as distinct from natural good, and because we experience a particular kind of pleasure when perceiving the former, Hutcheson believes we need to posit the existence of the moral sense in order to explain how this is possible. In calling this approach "unphilosophical," Kant's objection is that positing such a sense in fact explains nothing and only gives a name to what *lacks* an explanation. The moral sense does not, for example, explain *why* we perceive moral good as distinct from natural good, it is simply the name for the fact *that* we seem to do so. Indeed, if the moral sense does in fact make us capable of feeling pleasure when perceiving benevolent actions, Hutcheson does not explain *how* the moral sense makes this possible, he simply states *that* it is the moral sense that makes this possible. In this way Kant is perhaps correct to say that Hutcheson is unphilosophical in the sense that his method of positing a sense to explain certain phenomena is explanatorily unsatisfying.

In light of these six criticisms, it is clear that Kant finds moral sense theory problematic. It should be emphasized, however, that the majority of the above objections concern moral sense theory's conception of moral judgement and not motivation. Aside from objection 6, which objects to Hutcheson's philosophical method, the remaining

objections take issue with moral sense theory's account of the ultimate origin and character of moral judgement, the obligations issuing from them, and the nature of moral good. Although these objections surely have implications for how motivation and action work, they do not target these issues directly. What this suggests is that although Kant finds moral sense theory's conception of judgement problematic, he does not explicitly take issue with its conception of moral motivation.

As we saw with respect to Kant's pre-Critical philosophy, the problems he had with moral sense theory's conception of moral judgement did not imply a rejection of the theory's conception of moral motivation. In the remaining two sections of this chapter, I wish to investigate whether the same can be said of Kant's Critical moral philosophy. My focus is on Kant's mature conception of moral motivation and I wish to determine whether it shares features with Hutcheson's understanding of the psychology of action. Whereas in making the above objections Kant more or less explicitly engages with moral sense theory, whether by mentioning Hutcheson by name or by referring or alluding to the doctrine of moral "feeling" as a particular approach to issues of moral judgement, the influence of moral sense theory's conception of action on Kant's mature view is much more implicit. As such, my approach will be to first sketch Kant's understanding of moral motivation before going on to compare and contrast his view with that of Hutcheson. In between I evaluate the various interpretations of Kant's position in the secondary literature, some of which claim his view on motivation shares features with his British predecessors. It is my hope that I am not only able to more clearly understand the similarities and differences between Kant and moral sense theory on this issue, but that I am also able to shed new light on Kant's complex understanding of moral motivation as a result.

### 3.2 Kant's Critical Conception of Moral Motivation

Especially over the course of the last 25 years or so,<sup>83</sup> Kant's account of moral motivation has been the subject of intense scholarly debate.<sup>84</sup> More than anything else, it

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<sup>83</sup> Beginning with Reath (1989).

is the precise role that Kant assigns to “feeling,” particularly the feeling of respect for the moral law, that has been the focus of these debates, and some of those who claim that there is an important role for feeling to play in Kant’s account of moral action suggest that he assigns it this role because of the lingering influence of his English and Scottish predecessors. Melissa Zinkin, for instance, claims that the role Kant assigns to feeling in moral action illustrates that he “is making a concession to the philosophers of moral sense” (2006, 32). Similarly, A.T. Nuyen argues that Kant “adopts” the moral psychology of David Hume, according to which “it is a passion that provides the psychological push for every action” (1991, 40). Indeed, when comparisons are made between Kant’s understanding of moral motivation and the broadly empirical conception of action common to many English and Scottish philosophers of the eighteenth century, Hume is often singled out as the appropriate representative of the empirical view. This is surprising, however, for as Lara Denis notes and as my project as a whole suggests, when it comes to the influence of Scottish moral philosophy on Kant’s ethics: “Kant often indicated that he saw Hutcheson as more significant to ethics than Hume” (Denis 2012 and see also Irwin 2009, 4n).<sup>85</sup>

My aim in the remainder of this chapter is two-fold. First, I hope to correct the above situation by comparing and contrasting Kant’s conception of moral motivation with that of Hutcheson rather than Hume. I do this in order to determine the extent to which Kant’s conception of moral motivation, and specifically the role he assigns to feeling and desire therein, reflects the influence of Hutcheson. As such, in the following

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<sup>84</sup> The amount of literature that exists on the topic is truly astounding. I make reference to what I consider the most important discussions later in this chapter.

<sup>85</sup> Kant never explicitly says that he regards Hutcheson’s moral philosophy as more important than Hume’s. Rather, Kant indicates this implicitly in that he engages with Hutcheson’s moral philosophy relatively extensively, whereas Hume’s ethical views are hardly discussed at all. In fact, the only instance I have found where Kant mentions Hume’s moral philosophy (aside from the reference already mentioned is this study at *Ann* 2:311) is in the *Mrongrovius II* lectures from the mid 1780s, where Kant makes the following passing remark: “Hume even believes even more smaller feelings lie in the moral feeling. But morality cannot even be felt” (*AA* 29:625).



it will be important for me to pay special attention to the precise role that both feeling and desire play in Kant's account of moral action. Second, I hope that the following analysis will help clarify Kant's complex understanding of moral motivation itself. In the present section (3.2) I provide an extensive explanation of Kant's conception of motivation, where I take care to explain the role that both feeling and desire play therein. In the final section (3.3) I discuss how my account of Kant's conception of moral motivation relates to some of the dominant interpretations that exist in the secondary literature. As mentioned, some of these argue that Kant's account of motivation shares important features with his British predecessors, thus I will have occasion in this section to compare and contrast Kant's and Hutcheson's respective views on this topic. As I hope to show, although their understandings of motivation share certain features on a trivial level, the way in which their views differ is far more significant and thereby far more illuminating of their positions.

### 3.2.1 The Problem of Moral Motivation

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Heiner Klemme correctly observes that "Kant seems to have first achieved final clarity concerning his 'critical' conception of moral motivation very late" (Klemme 2006, 123). This can be confirmed by referring to the brief discussion of moral motivation that takes place in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), where we find Kant drawing a distinction between "the motive of **happiness**" and the motive of "the **worthiness to be happy**" (*KrV* A806/B834) and identifying the latter as the moral motive. This is significant, for this seems to indicate that at the time of the first *Critique* Kant had not yet come to view that "respect [*Achtung*]" for the moral is the moral motive. For this reason, Henry Allison is correct to say that the conception of moral motivation we find in the first *Critique* is only "semi-critical" (see Allison 1990, 67).

According to Klemme, the first presentation of Kant's mature, Critical conception of moral motivation can be found in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), Kant's first work devoted exclusively to moral philosophy (see Klemme 2006, 122). In this work, Kant argues that "[a] good will is good not because of what it effects, or accomplishes, not because of its fitness to attain some intended end, but good just by

its willing, i.e. in itself” (*GMS* 4:394). In this text Kant also claims that “in the case of what is to be morally good it is not enough that it *conform* with the moral law, but it must also be done *for its sake*” (*GMS* 4:390). The good will, therefore, does not merely “conform with duty” and perform actions because it is “impelled to do so by another inclination” (*GMS* 4:397), rather it is one that performs actions “*from duty*” (*GMS* 4:397), i.e. for the sake of duty alone. More importantly, however, and as mentioned above, what is characteristic of Kant’s Critical conception of moral motivation and what is presented for the first time in the *Groundwork* is the idea that actions performed “from duty” are actions that have “respect for the law” as their motive. Kant introduces this idea in the third proposition of *Groundwork* I when he says: “*duty is the necessity of an action from respect*” (*GMS* 4:400).

Despite the fact that Kant’s *Groundwork* presentation of his conception of moral motivation is consistent with what he says in later texts, his discussion of the mechanics of motivation in the *Groundwork* is fairly limited and one could even say, along with Jens Timmermann, that in 1785 Kant presents only a “rudimentary” (Timmermann 2007, 182) view. Timmermann argues there are two reasons for this. First, he claims that “for a long time his [Kant’s] moral psychology was unstable” (Timmermann 2007, 182), and thus we do not find all the details in the *Groundwork* because Kant has not yet worked them all out in detail. Second and perhaps more importantly, “the *Groundwork*’s declared task of identifying the supreme principle of morality by means of analysing the concept of duty does not require an extensive discussion of human moral psychology” (Timmermann 2007, 182). As such, it is perhaps at least understandable why we do not find an extensive discussion of the psychology of action in the *Groundwork*.

Kant of course does eventually present a detailed view of his psychology of action, and above all this can be found in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, specifically in the third chapter of the Analytic, entitled ‘On the incentives of pure practical reason.’<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> In the following, I follow many other interpreters and base my reconstruction of Kant’s mature conception of moral motivation on this chapter of the second *Critique*. At the same time, I do not limit myself to this chapter. Rather, I make reference to many other texts written over the course of Kant’s mature period so as to provide as comprehensive a picture of Kant’s mature conception of moral motivation as possible.

Indeed, the concept that plays a starring role in this chapter, that of an “incentive [*Triebfeder*],” is central to Kant conception of moral motivation as whole and will be discussed in detail below. Before doing so, however, it is essential that we adequately grasp the problem Kant is attempting to solve in his attempt to account for the workings of moral action.

In fact, we have already been introduced to this problem in the previous chapter. I illustrated there that although Kant had not yet made up his mind during the 1760s, after 1770 Kant understood moral principles to have their origin in the understanding and not in feeling. As Kant states in the *Inaugural Dissertation*: “*Moral philosophy* ... in so far as it furnishes the first *principles of adjudication* [*principia diiudicandi*], is only cognised by the pure understanding and itself belongs to pure philosophy” (*ID* 2:396, translation modified). If it is the understanding that judges what is morally good and evil, however, Kant believes that we are then faced with a problem when it comes to the execution of action. This is a problem because Kant believes that the mere understanding of what is morally good is not sufficient to bring us to perform such an action. As Kant claims in the *Kaehler* notes: “If I judge via the understanding that the action is morally good, much is still missing, that I were to do this action, concerning which I have judged” (*Kae* 68). During the pre-Critical period Kant believes that explaining how one gets from correct judgement to correct action is a serious problem in that he thinks that “nobody can or will see that the understanding is supposed to have a moving power to judge” and even goes so far as to say that this problem is “the philosopher’s stone” (*Kae* 68-9).

To be sure, during the Critical period Kant claims that moral principles originate in reason rather than the understanding (see e.g. *GMS* 4:389), but he is nonetheless faced with a similar problem. By the time we get to his most developed presentation of motivation in the second *Critique*, for example, Kant believes himself to have already accomplished one of his main goals in the text, namely to justify the bindingness of the moral law on human beings, what he calls the “deduction” of the moral law, and which Kant accomplishes via his famous doctrine of the “fact of reason.” As he says in the first chapter of the *Analytic*:

Consciousness of this fundamental law may be called *a fact of reason* because one cannot reason it out from antecedent data of reason ... and because it instead

forces itself upon us of itself as a synthetic a priori proposition that is not based on any intuition, either pure or empirical. (*KpV* 5:31, my emphasis)

With the doctrine of the fact of reason, Kant takes himself to have illustrated not only that our *consciousness* of the moral law is a fact such that it is “*given*” (*KpV* 5:31) in reason itself, but also that we are aware of it as “binding” upon us, i.e. that in our consciousness of it, we are aware that we “ought absolutely to proceed in a certain way” (*KpV* 5:31). What this means for my purposes is that by the time Kant turns to the question of how we act morally and are motivated by the moral law, he already presupposes that we know what we ought to do and feel bound to do so. As such, similar to the problem he described during the pre-Critical period, Kant’s discussion of moral motivation during the Critical period is concerned with explaining how it is possible for our knowledge of the moral law or our intellectual recognition of obligation to influence the way we act.

There are a number of ways in which the awareness of morality can move us to act, and at the beginning of chapter three of the *Analytic* Kant distances himself from two possible explanations. First, Kant makes it clear that our awareness of the moral law is not sufficient on its own to move us to act in the sense that this awareness *necessitates* us to act as it commands.<sup>87</sup> Kant says that the will of the human being is of such a nature that its “reason does not by its nature necessarily conform with the objective law” (5:72), and he goes on to clarify that only the divine will necessarily does what the moral law commands ought to happen. Indeed, as Kant says in the *Groundwork*, strictly speaking there is no *ought* for the divine will, rather it simply *does* what the moral law dictates (see *GMS* 4:414). Thus in the first instance Kant denies that acting morally is *only* a matter of recognizing our duty, where acting differently simply involves changing what we know.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> When I turn to a discussion of the various interpretations of Kant’s conception of moral motivation I discuss one that attributes to Kant the slightly different view that our awareness of morality is indeed *sufficient* to act, but does not *necessitate* our acting. This is the *intellectualist* interpretation offered, above all, by Andrews Reath.

<sup>88</sup> I therefore take Kant to be rejecting Socratic intellectualism here, according to which however we act can be explained solely by our conception of the good, and where our conception of the good *necessitates* that we act in a certain way.

Second, Kant distances himself from another view, according to which our knowledge of the moral law brings us to act *by means of a feeling*. Kant begins the incentives chapter of the second *Critique* with precisely this claim:

What is essential to any moral worth of action is *that the moral law determine the will immediately*. If the determination of the will takes place *conformably* with the moral law but only by means of a feeling, of whatever kind, that has to be presupposed in order for the law to become a sufficient determining ground of the will, so that the action is not done *for the sake of the law*, then the action will contain *legality* indeed but not *morality*. (*KpV* 5:71)

Reminding us of his distinction between acting *in conformity with* the law and acting *for the sake of* the law, Kant makes a contrast between two scenarios here: one where the moral law determines the will immediately, another where the moral law is only able to determine the will if a feeling is presupposed. The former is moral but the latter is not. Since acting morally consists in acting *for the sake of the law*, Kant is arguing that acting morally cannot involve acting *conformably* with the law but *for the sake of feeling*. As such, Kant is also ruling out the possibility that our awareness of morality can bring us to act *by means of a feeling* in this way; acting morally means acting *for the sake of the law* alone, and acting in conformity with morality but *for the sake of feeling* is the exact opposite of acting morally. What this means is that there must be another way for the moral law to move us to act, distinct from these two scenarios, and such an alternative is precisely what Kant attempts to explain in the ‘Incentives’ chapter of the second *Critique*.

For Kant, if a human being is to actually perform the action it recognizes it ought to, then the awareness of the moral law must become what he calls an “incentive.” Indeed, distancing himself from the first option above, Kant defines an incentive at the beginning of this chapter as “the subjective determining ground of the will of a being whose reason does not by its nature necessarily conform with the objective law” (*KpV* 5:72). Before turning to Kant’s understanding of an incentive directly, one further clarification is in order. At the beginning of the incentives chapter Kant states the following:

*how* a law can be of itself and immediately a determining ground of the will (though this is what is essential in all morality) is for human reason an insoluble problem and identical with that of how a free will is possible. What we shall have to show a priori is, therefore, not the ground from which the moral law in itself

supplies an incentive but rather what it effects (or, to put it better, must effect) in the mind insofar as it *is* an incentive. (*KpV* 5:72, my emphasis)<sup>89</sup>

What is essential to Kant's solution to the problem of moral motivation, then, is that he assumes the moral law can and does become an incentive, or even *is* an incentive (what precisely this means will be explained in the next section). In other words, Kant simply believes that our awareness of the objective law *can* and *does* move us to act even though we can never know *how* this is possible.<sup>90</sup> What this means is that Kant's account of moral motivation is the much more modest one of explaining "what it [the moral law] effects (or, to put it better, must effect) in the mind insofar as it *is* an incentive" (*KpV* 5:72, my emphasis). The idea here is that if the recognition of the moral law alone *can* move us to act, even though we cannot explain in detail *how* this is possible, we at least need an account of what happens when it does move us, and this is what Kant sets out to do in the 'Incentives' chapter.<sup>91</sup> With this clarification in hand, we can turn to Kant's explanation of what happens in the mind when the law becomes an incentive. The first stage of this explanation will be to discuss the concept at the centre of Kant's account of moral motivation, namely that of an incentive.

### 3.2.2 The Concept of an Incentive

As already quoted above, Kant defines an incentive in the second *Critique* as follows: "by *incentive* (*elater animi*) is understood the subjective determining ground of the will of a being whose reason does not by its nature necessarily conform with the objective law" (*KpV* 5:72). Kant's reference to *elater animi* here is a reference to

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<sup>89</sup> Kant makes a similar claim in the *Groundwork* when he says that "[t]he subjective impossibility of *explaining* freedom of the will is the same as the impossibility of detecting and making comprehensible an *interest* that a human being could take in moral laws; and even so, he actually does take an interest in them, the foundation of which in us we call moral feeling" (*GMS* 4:459-60).

<sup>90</sup> It is possible that Kant believe we are incapable of knowing how this happens because it would involve knowledge a causal connection between noumena and phenomena, the possibility of which, of course, is strictly denied by Kant's epistemology.

<sup>91</sup> In this sense, Kant's answer to the problem of moral motivation involves explaining how morality is *applied* to human beings. As Robert Louden notes, this is a necessary, "second" part of moral theory (2000, 10ff. and especially 2011, Ch. 5).

Alexander Baumgarten, whose conception of *elater animi* was rendered as *Triebfeder* (incentive) by the translator of Baumgarten's *Metaphysics*, G.F. Meier. Kant's understanding of an incentive has much in common with Baumgarten's, thus it will help clarify Kant's usage of the term by turning to Baumgarten.

In the section of the *Metaphysics* dealing with the faculty of desire, Baumgarten states the following:

Whoever desires or averts intends the production of some perception. Hence, the perceptions containing the ground of this sort of intention are the impelling causes of desire and aversion, and thus they are called the INCENTIVES OF THE MIND <ELATERES ANIMI> [*Triebfedern des Gemüths* - Meier]. (Baumgarten 2013, 241)

According to Baumgarten, incentives are “perceptions” that ground an intention to produce something, and most importantly, as perceptions Baumgarten claims here that incentives are of “the mind.” Indeed, Baumgarten goes on to say that “KNOWLEDGE, insofar as it contains the incentives of the mind, is MOVING” (ibid., 241). This suggests that incentives involve knowledge or at least some sort of cognition in some way. This is important, for cognition, according to Baumgarten, can come from the higher or lower cognitive faculty. Cognition that relates to the lower cognitive faculty is obscure or confused (see ibid., 201), and Baumgarten claims that such cognitions are called sensitive representations (ibid., 202). When sensitive representations “are the impelling causes of desire and aversion,” Baumgarten says they are “stimuli” (ibid., 244) and it is due to the fact that such sensitive representations can be impelling causes of desire or aversion that Baumgarten says we have an “inferior” or lower faculty of desire (see ibid., 244).<sup>92</sup> Cognition that relates to the higher cognitive faculty involves knowing something “distinctly” (ibid., 228), as opposed to obscurely and confusedly, and the representations of this faculty are intellectual rather than sensible (ibid., 228). When intellectual representations are the impelling causes of desire or aversion, they are “MOTIVES” (ibid., 247), as opposed to stimuli, and it is due to the fact that such intellectual

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<sup>92</sup> As such, Baumgarten seems to have a functional understanding of the faculties as opposed to a highly metaphysical one. It is not that certain faculties exist in the human mind in and of themselves, for Baumgarten. Rather, it is only insofar as we are capable of knowing and doing certain things that we can be said to have the faculty or capacity to do so.

representations can be impelling causes of desire or aversion that we can say we have a “superior” or higher faculty of desire (see *ibid.*, 247). Accordingly, there are two kinds of impelling causes of desire and aversion, for Baumgarten, in accordance with the sensitive and intellectual nature of the representations, namely stimuli and motives. In this way there are also two kinds of incentives; according to Baumgarten “[t]he incentives of the mind are either stimuli or motives” (*ibid.*, 247). Above all, however, what is essential to the idea of an incentive, for Baumgarten, is the idea that a perception or cognition can be moving in that it can ground or bring forth the intention to produce a representation, and in this way incentives bring forth desires.

Kant seems to have been highly influenced by Baumgarten’s understanding of incentives, and this is clearest above all in the *Metaphysik L<sub>1</sub>* lecture notes from the 1770s.<sup>93</sup> We saw above that Baumgarten describes incentives as “impelling causes” of desire, and in the *L<sub>1</sub>* lectures notes Kant uses this language as well. Kant says that “[e]very act of choice <*actus arbitrii*> has an impelling cause <*causam impulsivam*>” and impelling causes can be either sensible or intellectual (*ML* 28:254). Continuing to use much of Baumgarten’s terminology, Kant says that the sensible impelling causes are related to “the senses” and are called “stimuli <*stimuli*>” and the intellectual impelling causes are related to “the understanding” and are called “*motives* or *motive grounds*” (*ML* 28:254). Kant says that stimuli “are representations of satisfaction or dissatisfaction which depend on the manner in which we are affected by objects” (*ML* 28:254), whereas motives, i.e. intellectual impelling causes, do not depend on how objects affect us but are produced by the intellect itself. What is essential is that, as Wuerth observes, “[b]oth of these impelling causes, motives and stimuli, are what Kant also calls “incentives”” (Wuerth 2014, 231).

As Klemme notes (see Klemme 2006, 122), Kant continues to believe that there are two kinds of incentive in the Critical period as well. In the *Groundwork*, for example, Kant refers to incentives “from the empirical field” (*GMS* 4:411) and he contrasts these with the motive of duty (see *GMS* 4:412). In the second *Critique* as well, Kant contrasts

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<sup>93</sup> See Kant (1997, xxxi ff.) for a discussion of the dating of these notes.



locating “the incentive “*pathologically* (in sympathy or self-love)” as opposed to locating it “*morally* (in the law)” (*KpV* 5:85). And again in the *Religion*, Kant speaks of the case where “the law *alone*” is the “*sufficient* incentive” (*Rel* 6:30) as opposed to cases involving “incentives other than the law itself (e.g. ambition, self-love in general, yes, even a kindly instinct such as sympathy)” (*Rel* 6:30-1). Kant’s discussion of incentives focuses on the moral incentive, and in the *Groundwork* we learn that “respect for the law is the incentive that can give an action a moral worth” (*GMS* 4:440). Before turning to the moral incentive more directly, what remains to be determined is whether Kant views the idea of an incentive as something that impels us to act, perhaps in a way similar to how Baumgarten believed a perception or cognition could ground desire.

Kant does in fact understand incentives in this way, i.e. as forces that ground desire, and that he does so is suggested by the literal meaning of *Triebfeder*. First, it should be noted that, as Stephen Engstrom states (and rightly, in my view), it is misleading to translate *Triebfeder* as “incentive,” for in modern day usage an incentive often refers “to some *object* that attracts or repels rather than to something subjective in the agent” (Engstrom 2010, 91). In contrast to such a meaning, Engstrom states that “when Kant speaks of a *Triebfeder*, he almost always has in mind something in the subject that generates action, rather than an object or circumstance that prompts it” (2010, 92). As evidence, Engstrom notes how “[i]n its original literal meaning, *Triebfeder* refers to the mainspring of a clock” (2010, 92). Indeed, broken down literally, *Triebfeder* means “driving spring” ([*An*]Trieb = drive, *Feder* = spring).<sup>94</sup> Engstrom therefore adds that “we should think of a *Triebfeder* as an inner spring or source of choice and action” (2010, 92). Similar to Engstrom, Timmerman claims that *Triebfeder* is “a motivating desire, the force that propels an agent forward” (2007, 180). That Kant understands incentives as driving forces to action makes sense given the problem he deals with in the ‘Incentive’ chapter as well. As I suggested above, when Kant says his aim in this chapter is to determine “what it [the moral law] effects ... in the mind insofar as it is an incentive” (*KpV* 5:72), he is attempting to explain what happens when our awareness of the moral law moves us to act

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<sup>94</sup> See Duden (2015).

morally. In other words, he is asking what happens in the mind when our awareness of the moral law itself is a driving force of action. With this clarification of Kant's notion of an incentive in hand, we can now turn to Kant's answer to this question.

### 3.2.3 What the Law Effects in the Mind

I illustrated above that Kant's task in the 'Incentives' chapter of the second *Critique* is not to show "*how* a law can be of itself and immediately a determining ground of the will," because this "is for human reason an insoluble problem" (*KpV* 5:72, my emphasis). Kant's aim, rather, is merely to show "what it [the moral law] effects (or, to put it better, must effect) in the mind insofar as it *is* an incentive" (*KpV* 5:72, my emphasis). In light of the above discussion of Kant's conception of an incentive, it is even more clear that Kant's focus in this chapter is to illustrate how our consciousness of the moral law becomes a moving force, i.e. Kant wishes to show what takes place in the human mind when our awareness of the moral law *is* a force that moves us to act.

In the third chapter of the *Analytic*, Kant argues that when our consciousness of the moral law becomes an incentive, what happens in the mind, at least initially, is that certain *feelings* are brought about. In the first instance, these feelings are negative. As Kant claims near the beginning of chapter three, acting morally involves acting "not only without the cooperation of sensible impulses but even with rejection of all of them" (*KpV* 5:72). Feeling is affected via the rejection of the inclinations, for Kant, because he believes that "all inclination and every sensible impulse is based on feeling, and the negative effect on feeling ... is itself feeling" (*KpV* 5:72-3). Thus, because doing what the law requires involves rejecting all our other sensible impulses and inclinations, it also involves the rejection of feeling, and the negative effect upon feeling thereby brought about is "pain" (*KpV* 5:73).

In fact, Kant argues that feeling is negatively affected in two ways: first, he claims that "[p]ure practical reason merely *infringes upon* self-love" (*KpV* 5:73), where self-love is "a predominant *benevolence* toward oneself" (*KpV* 5:73) or, more simply, the desire to bring about one's own well-being. Self-love can coexist with the moral law once it is "infringed upon" and restricted, in which case Kant claims "it is called *rational self-love*" (*KpV* 5:73). Infringing upon self-love brings about the feelings of pain described above.

Second, Kant says that “if self-love makes itself lawgiving and the unconditional practical principle, it can be called *self-conceit*” (*KpV* 5:74). The idea here is that the moral law makes a claim upon us to be the unconditional practical principle of our conduct, and if self-love “makes itself lawgiving” as self-conceit, then it makes a similar claim upon us to be the unconditional practical principle. This is problematic, for in such a case we have a conflict between two principles that make a similar claim upon us and as such they cannot both coexist. If the moral law wins out in this scenario then it not only infringes upon and restricts self-conceit, as it does self-love, rather it “*strikes down* self-conceit altogether, since all claims to esteem for oneself that precede accord with the moral law are null and quite unwarranted” (*KpV* 5:73).<sup>95</sup> As a result of this situation Kant claims that in addition to bringing about the negative feeling of pain, when the moral law strikes down self-conceit it also brings about the negative feeling of “humiliation” (*KpV* 5:75). Kant seems to believe that the moral law “humiliates” self-conceit (*KpV* 5:73) because from the point of view of someone who both makes self-love into the unconditional practical principle and is also aware of the moral law’s (presumably more rightful<sup>96</sup>) claim to be this same supreme principle, the result of even considering making the incorrect principle supremely lawgiving is the negative feeling of humiliation.

In addition to the negative feelings of pain and humiliation, Kant claims that the moral law effects a positive feeling as well. In fact, Kant believes that the positive feeling effected in the mind by the moral law is connected to the negative feelings. Kant clarifies his meaning here when he claims that the moral law

is at the same time an object of *respect* inasmuch as, in opposition to its subjective antagonist, namely the inclinations in us, it *weakens* self-conceit; and inasmuch as

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<sup>95</sup> See Reath (2006, 14-17) for a detailed and illuminating discussion of self-love and self-conceit. See also Engstrom (2010, 111) and Wood (1999, 290), where the conflict between the moral law and self-conceit is compared to the conflict Kant describes in the *Religion* between principles of self-love and those of morality (see *Rel* 6:36).

<sup>96</sup> I take it that Kant believes that even though we may not always act *from* or even *in conformity with* the moral law, our awareness of the moral law entails that we at least think we *ought* to act in accordance with it. This is suggested by Kant’s claim that even “the most hardened scoundrel” (*GMS* 4:454) nonetheless wishes to be good.

it even *strikes down* self-conceit, that is, humiliates it, it is an object of the greatest *respect* and so too the ground of a positive feeling. (*KpV* 5:73)

Thus just as the moral law humiliates us by striking down self-conceit, it brings about the positive feeling of respect for this law as well. Indeed Kant claims that this positive feeling is an “indirect” (*KpV* 5:79) effect on the mind because it seems to arise only insofar as the moral law has negative effects on the mind as well.<sup>97</sup> Why the moral law also brings about this positive effect can be seen by remembering my analysis above: if humiliation arises because we *both* accept self-love as lawgiving *and* regard the moral as having a more rightful claim as the supreme principle, then when we are humiliated by the moral law we at the same time respect it, i.e. regard it as the principle that *ought to be* supremely authoritative. Thus pain (and humiliation) and respect are two sides of the same coin.

Kant believes that we feel positively about the moral law for an additional reason. He claims that the moral law “contains something *elevating*” (*KpV* 5:80) and he explains what he means when he discusses the example of a person in whom one perceives “uprightness of character” (*KpV* 5:76-7). In such a case, Kant claims that this person shows me the “*practicality*” of the law proved before me (*KpV* 5:77). In a similar fashion, the law itself proves to me the law’s practicality in virtue of the principle of “ought implies can” (see *Rel* 6:50): the law, like an upright person, illustrates to us what we *can* do in virtue of showing us what we *ought* to. As such, in the first instance we can say that

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<sup>97</sup> The language Kant uses to express the idea that the positive effect arises indirectly is misleading. He says, for example, that the “consciousness of the moral law ... inasmuch as it moves resistance out of the way, in the judgement of reason this removal of a hindrance is esteemed equivalent to a positive furthering of its causality” (*KpV* 5:75). Similarly, he states that the “[r]ecognition of the moral law ... fails to express its effects in actions only because subjective (pathological) causes hinder it” (*KpV* 5:79). These passages are misleading because they suggest a “balance of forces” model of action, according to which we would act morally if it weren’t for the strength of the pathological inclinations counteracting the strength of the moral motive. As I argue later on in this chapter, this is not Kant’s view, and in the above passages Kant should only be taken to be emphasizing, first, the indirect way in which the moral law’s positive effect on feeling arises, and, second, that this indirect effect would indeed lead to action if it weren’t for the pathological hindrances that make it more likely we choose in favour of them and not the law. What Kant is saying in the second passage just quoted is therefore that if these hindrances didn’t exist at all, we would have no choice but to *choose* in favour of the law and as such their removal would result in the law expressing itself in action.

the law is elevating in that it shows us we are capable of improving the moral worth of our character. Indeed, Kant says that “the soul believes itself elevated in proportion as it sees the holy elevated above itself and its frail nature” (*KpV* 5:77), thus if an upright person is elevating because they follow the law to a considerable degree, then the law itself holds an even purer example of morality before our eyes and would therefore be that much more elevating. We therefore feel positively towards the law, i.e. the law produces a feeling of elevation, because it reveals to us that we are capable of doing what will bring about a higher quality of our character.<sup>98</sup>

In the first instance, then, Kant’s answer to the question of what happens in the mind insofar as the moral law is an incentive is that both positive and negative feelings are brought about. This gives rise to an interesting question: if the moral law effects both positive and negative feelings, are both of these feelings significant when it comes to the law becoming an incentive? If only one feeling is important, which one is it? The first point to mention in this regard is that although the negative and positive effects that the moral law has on feeling are both, strictly speaking, feelings, Kant seems to think of them as different sorts of feelings. With respect to the negative feelings of pain and humiliation, for example, Kant says that “[t]he negative effect upon feeling (disagreeableness) is *pathological*, as is every influence on feeling and every feeling general” (*KpV* 5:75). With respect to the positive feeling of respect, however, Kant says that “[s]o little is respect a feeling of *pleasure* [*Lust*],” and also that “so little *displeasure* is there in it that, once one has laid self-conceit aside and allowed practical influence to that respect, one can in turn never get enough of contemplating the majesty of this law”

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<sup>98</sup> Kant appears to think that this feeling of elevation is enhanced by the fact that we are the authors of the law. For instance, Kant claims that, since the constraint placed upon the inclinations “is exercised only by the lawgiving of his [the human being’s] *own* reason, it also contains something *elevating*, and the subjective effect on feeling, inasmuch as pure practical reason is the sole cause of it, can thus be called *self-approbation* with reference to pure practical reason” (*KpV* 5:80-1). Even though the law constrains inclination and results in pain, Kant is arguing here that once we realize that we ourselves put this constraint in place we feel the positive feeling of “*self-approbation*.” We feel self-approbation not only because it is we ourselves who constrain our behaviour, but because it is we who provide ourselves with a pure example of the law’s practicality, i.e. we elevate ourselves. As such, we feel “self-approbation” because we approve of our having shown ourselves what we are capable of becoming.

(*KpV* 5:77). Thus while the negative effect upon feeling is similar to all other pathological feelings of pleasure and pain, Kant believes the feeling of respect is neither pleasure nor displeasure. This is significant, for, in answer to the above questions, Kant does not refer to the negative feelings as the moral incentive, indeed it would be quite odd if the moral law were to motivate us by bringing about pain and humiliation. Rather, he only refers to the positive feeling of respect as the moral incentive. Therefore it is only this positive feeling that plays a role in Kant's explanation of what happens in the mind when the law becomes an incentive.

In light of the elevating nature of respect described above, it makes sense for the positive feeling of respect to be the feeling that plays the primary role in acting morally. In showing us that we *can* improve the moral worth of our character, the law might be said to give us reason to act morally. In this way the moral law could be said to *urge* us to act morally. Using Baumgarten's understanding of an incentive as a guide, we could say that the representation of the law becomes an incentive in that it grounds a desire to act morally. This is precisely what I believe Kant is saying here, but before going on to explain this view in more detail, we should note that although the positive feeling of respect plays the central role in Kant's account of moral action, this does not mean that the way in which the moral law constraints the inclinations plays no role. According to Kant, "consciousness of the moral law ... inasmuch as it moves resistance out of the way, in the judgement of reason this removal of a hindrance is esteemed equivalent to a positive furthering of its causality" (*KpV* 5:75). Accordingly, although the negative feelings of pain and humiliation do not encourage us to act morally themselves, the cause of these feelings, i.e. the way in which the law constrains the inclinations, contributes to the likelihood of acting morally in that this constraint moves the counter-forces to the positive feeling of respect, the inclinations, out of the way. In this way, then, we can say that although it is ultimately the feeling of respect which, as a positive feeling and an incentive, is primarily responsible for us acting for the sake of the law alone, both the

moral law's positive effect on feeling and its negative constraint of the inclinations play a role in the way in which the moral law moves us to act.<sup>99</sup>

This explanation of what happens when we are moved by the law might be confusing, for one might rightly ask in response, how exactly Kant believes the moral law becomes a moving force insofar as the law brings about *feelings*.<sup>100</sup> In order to make sense of Kant's position, then, we need to return to the suggestion I made above, namely that Kant believes the law moves us insofar as our awareness of it grounds desire.

### 3.2.4 Feelings and Desires

According to Kant, feelings have an intimate relation to desire. Kant defines the faculty of desire in general as “a being's *faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations*” (*KpV* 5:9n, and see also *MdS* 6:211). Desire is therefore fundamental to how we act in that it is via desire that we are the “the cause of the reality” of objects (see *AA* 20:206). Desire involves feeling in that feelings are a kind of representation that can serve as the cause of the reality of objects. Kant explains this in terms of the concept of “life.” To quote a passage just cited in full, Kant claims that

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<sup>99</sup> To be clear here, it is not the negative feelings of pain and humiliation that contribute to acting morally, it only the way in which the moral law, first, infringes upon self-love and, second, strikes down self-conceit that indirectly contributes to acting morally by weakening the counterforces to morality. The negative feelings of pain and humiliation that *result* from this infringement and striking down do not help encourage us to act morally; as stated it would be odd if such negative feelings could do so. At the same time, it is interesting to note here that the moral law can move us to act *despite* the fact the moral law also causes us pain and humiliation. It is able to do so in virtue of the fact that the moral law encourages us to act in a way entirely different from how pleasure and pain may move us. As I discuss below, the moral law moves us not by promising more pleasure or a reduction of pain, but by bringing us to desire acting morally in itself. This is a desire of an entirely different *kind*, and which therefore operates on a level different from the desires for pleasure and the avoidance of pain. As such, it is capable of being effective *despite* the strength of any desire for pleasure or avoidance of pain.

<sup>100</sup> As I more explicitly confess later, I admit here that my reading of Kant's conception of motivation assumes that the feelings effected by our awareness of the moral law do in fact play a causal role in moral action and thus are not, as some have argued, merely “epiphenomenal.” I explain why I am convinced of this view below.

Life is the faculty of a being to act in accordance with laws of the faculty of desire. The faculty of desire is a being's faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations. Pleasure is the representation of the agreement of an object or of an action with the subjective conditions of life. (*KpV* 5:9n)

This passage is relatively cryptic and all it seems to tell us is that there exists a connection between pleasure, life and the faculty of desire. Luckily, however, Kant clarifies his notion of life in the *Metaphysik L<sub>I</sub>* notes. First, Kant says that life is “an inner principle for acting from representations” but later and even more clearly he says the following:

Life is the inner principle of self-activity. Living beings which act according to this inner principle must act according to representations. Now there can be a promotion, but also a hindrance to life. The feeling of the promotion of life is pleasure, and the feeling of the hindrance of life is displeasure. Pleasure is thus a ground of activity, and displeasure a hindrance of activity. Pleasure thus consists in desiring; displeasure, on the other hand, in abhorring. (*ML* 28:247)

In this passage Kant clarifies that feeling is linked to “life” in the sense that the feelings of pleasure are mental states indicating the promotion of life, whereas feelings of displeasure are mental states indicating a hindrance of life. This means that feelings of pleasure and pain relate to activity and desire in the sense that they are mental states that indicate what we are attracted to and should seek out, as well as what we are repelled by and should avoid. Indeed, if, as stated above, “[t]he faculty of desire is a being's *faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations*” (*KpV* 5:9fn), then it appears that Kant thinks of feeling as a kind of representation, by means of which we become the cause of these representations, and in essence this means that feelings are the grounds of desire and aversion.

We should be careful here, however, for if we recall the primary question Kant is attempting to answer when providing an account of moral motivation, i.e. the question of what happens when our awareness of the moral law moves us to act, we will remember that he explicitly rules out the possibility that this takes place *by means of feeling*. Kant makes this claim because if we do as we ought to only *for the sake of* a feeling and not for the sake of the moral law itself, then we are not acting morally. This is precisely what happens when feelings ground desire in the way just described, however: we desire (represent to cause the reality of an object) *because*, i.e. *for the sake of*, the pleasure we



represent as being involved therein. By suggesting that the moral law moves us to act in virtue of the fact that it effects feelings in the mind, then, Kant cannot mean that the moral law moves us *by means of* feelings in this way, i.e. by promising pleasure. In what way, then, does Kant think the feelings effected in the mind by the moral law account for how the moral brings us to act?

Kant gives us a clue to the answer to this question in the second *Critique* where he discusses an interesting “error of subreption” (*KpV* 5:116). Borrowing the concept from Christian Wolff (see Dyck 2014, 24, 31, 34), Kant believes an error of subreption consists in, as Corey Dyck describes it, “taking intellectual objects as subject to sensible conditions” (ibid., 62). In the *Inaugural Dissertation*, for example, Kant defines this “*metaphysical fallacy*” as “the confusion of what belongs to the understanding with what is sensitive” (*ID* 2:412). The particular instance of this error that Kant discusses in the second *Critique* is an “optical illusion in the self-consciousness of what one *does* as distinguished from what one *feels*” (*KpV* 5:116). Kant describes this “error” in the following way:

consciousness of a determination of the faculty of desire is always the ground of a satisfaction in the action produced by it; but this pleasure, this satisfaction in itself, is not the determining ground of the action: instead, the determination of the will directly by reason alone is the ground of the feeling of pleasure, and this remains a pure practical, not aesthetic, determination of the faculty of desire. Now, since this determination has exactly the same inward effect, that of an impulse to activity [*eines Antriebes zur Tätigkeit*], as a feeling of the agreeableness expected from the desired action would have produced, we easily look upon what we ourselves do as something that we merely passively feel and take the moral incentive for a sensible impulse, just as always happens in so-called illusion of the senses. (*KpV* 5:116-7)

In this passage Kant refers to two things that can serve as “an impulse to activity”: first, there is the “feeling of the agreeableness expected from the desired action,” and second there is “the determination of the will directly by reason alone.” Although this latter kind of impulse to activity is by definition not a determination of the will *by means of* the feeling of pleasure, in light of Kant’s discussion of the feelings of pain, humiliation, and respect in the ‘Incentives’ chapter, this kind of determination is still bound up with certain feelings. The “error of subreption” that Kant speaks of here, i.e. the taking of what belongs to the understanding for something that is sensitive, is the mistake of assuming

that what takes place when reason alone determines the will is the same as what takes place in other cases of the determination of the will, i.e. where the expectation of the feeling of pleasure determines the will. The cause of this mistake lies in the fact that in the former case, i.e. the moral case, when reason determines the will alone the result is still “an impulse to activity,” even though this impulse is not the expectation of pleasure. Thus, what this passage seems to suggest is that Kant believes the moral law serves as an impulse to activity in the same way as an expectation of pleasure would be. Insofar as it is such an impulse to activity, what happens in the mind is that feelings are *brought about*. In other words, the *pre-existing* promise of feelings of pleasure, for example, is not needed to serve as an impulse to activity in this case. As discussed above, the most important feeling that the law brings about is the feeling of respect which functions as an incentive, i.e. as a driving force of action. In that Kant believes reason can be an impulse to activity on its own and can bring about a driving force of action, this suggests that Kant thinks effecting the feeling of respect in the mind in this case is equivalent to bringing about a desire.

In fact, Kant says exactly this in other places using different terminology. In particular, Kant argues that the moral law moves us by bringing about a particular *sort* of desire, namely an “interest.” Kant’s concept of an interest is a technical term that relates to a number of other concepts belonging to his psychology of human action generally and should be defined in relation to them. To begin with, in the *Religion* Kant distinguishes between an inclination and an instinct on the grounds that an inclination “presupposes acquaintance with the object of desire” (*Rel* 6:29n), whereas an instinct does not. The idea here is that instincts, things such as “the drive in animals to build or the drive to sex” (*Rel* 6:29n), are things that we simply *innately* desire without ever having first experienced how pleasurable it is to satisfy such a desire. An inclination, on the other hand, implies that we *do* need to have already experienced satisfaction with an object in order to desire it. The example Kant mentions is the propensity to become addicted to intoxicants, where although many people “have no acquaintance at all with intoxication, and hence absolutely no desire for the things that produce it, let them try these things but once, and there is aroused in them an almost inextinguishable desire for them” (*Rel* 6:29n). Kant defines inclination in the *Metaphysics of Morals* in a similar fashion as

“habitual desire,” i.e. a desire we have already satisfied and then desire again (see *MdS* 6:212). Importantly, however, Kant calls this “*desire* in the narrow sense” because it is a “determination of the faculty of desire which is caused and therefore necessarily preceded by ... pleasure” (*MdS* 6:212).<sup>101</sup> Now, Kant adds here that “a connection of pleasure with the faculty of desire that the understanding judges to hold as a general rule (though only for the subject) is called an *interest*” (*MdS* 6:212). Kant makes a similar claim in the second *Critique* when he says that the concept of an interest “can never be attributed to any being unless it has reason and which signifies an *incentive* of the will insofar as it is *represented by reason*” (*KpV* 5:79). An interest, then, is something that goes beyond a mere inclination, a desire in the narrow sense, or even an incentive in that reason or the understanding is involved whereby they judge the pleasure involved “to hold as a general rule (though only for the subject)” (*MdS* 6:212). Kant’s concept of an interest captures something important, for as Iain Morrison clarifies: “If my understanding does not make this judgement, then my desire for *x* might be something that I never act upon again, or something that I regard as a product of a unique set of circumstances such that it does not hold as a rule” (Morrison 2008, 112). What is essential to an interest, then, is the idea that it is not a passing or momentary desire, rather it implies something that we desire consistently over time or that we are committed to.

With this definition of interest in hand we can turn to an important distinction Kant makes between two kinds of interests. In the *Groundwork*, Kant says that

the human will can *take* an *interest* in something without therefore *acting from interest*. The first signifies the *practical* interest in the action, the second the *pathological* interest in the object of the action. ... In the first case the action interests me, in the second the object of the action (in so far as it is agreeable to me). (*GMS* 4:413-4n)

The distinction Kant makes here is between *taking* an interest and *acting from* interest. When I act *from* interest, I am interested not in the action itself, but in “the object of the action” and in such a case I only act in a particular way in order to attain a particular

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<sup>101</sup> As Kant suggests here by calling this desire merely in the “narrow” sense, there are other kinds of desire, i.e. desires that do not have a preceding pleasure but are brought about by other means, such as reason alone or our awareness of the moral law itself.

object. In the case of *taking* an interest in an action directly, however, I act in a particular way not as a means to securing an object,<sup>102</sup> rather I am interested in acting in that way in itself. The distinction between acting from interest and taking an interest is therefore similar to acting in *conformity* to the law but for the sake of a feeling, and acting *for the sake of* the law itself.

The distinction between acting *from* interest and *taking* an interest can be construed as one concerning how pleasure is related to desire as well. In the case of pathological interests, Kant says an object interests me “in so far as it is agreeable to me” (*GMS* 4:414n), i.e. I am here committed to pursuing an object *because* I have experienced it to be agreeable in the past and recognized that this agreeableness holds “hold as a general rule” (*MdS* 6:212). In the case of taking an interest in an action immediately, however, I do so but not because of any kind of agreeableness. When I take an *immediate* interest in the action I take an interest in the action in and of itself. As Kant says in the *Groundwork*:

Reason takes an immediate interest in the action only when the universal validity of its maxim is a sufficient determining ground of the will. ... But if it [reason] can determine the will only by means of another object of desire, or on the presupposition of a special feeling of the subject, then reason takes only a mediate interest in the action. (*GMS* 4:460n)

Taking an interest in an action immediately and desiring to perform it in and of itself is therefore a kind of desiring distinct from desiring to act for the sake of, or based on our interest in, the pleasure coming to us as a result of so acting. Most importantly, taking an interest in action immediately is what happens when we act for the sake of the law alone, because acting morally for its own sake, i.e. being interested in the action itself, is what it means to act morally.

At the same time, we should be careful here to remember that an interest, for Kant, is a desire functioning at a particular level of abstraction, namely it is “a connection of pleasure with the faculty of desire that the understanding judges to hold as a general

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<sup>102</sup> Whether or not the object we are interested in when we act *from* interest is always pleasure, for Kant, is not clear. This is the question of Kant’s non-moral hedonism, an issue I cannot get into here. For a discussion see Reath (2006), Morrison (2008), McCarty (2009), Irwin (2009, 14), Freieron (2014, 148), and Allison (2011, 264).

rule” (*MdS* 6:212) and thus “can never be attributed to any being unless it has reason” (*KpV* 5:79). This suggests that there is a more fundamental notion of a desire that can exist before reason recognizes the relation between pleasure and desire to hold as a general rule. As mentioned above, this is what the notion of an inclination signifies, but Kant also seems to believe that the concept of an incentive signifies this idea. As he claims in the second *Critique*, an interest is that “which signifies an *incentive* of the will insofar as it is *represented by reason*” (*KpV* 5:79). Similarly, he also claims that the concept of an interest arises “[f]rom the concept of an incentive” (*KpV* 5:79). Indeed, Kant says that the moral law “awakens *respect* for itself” (*KpV* 5:74), which, as a feeling, functions as an incentive, and he also says that the law “produces an *interest* in compliance with the law which we call *moral interest*” (*KpV* 5:80). Thus when Kant says that the law both brings about feelings, an incentive, and an interest, I take him to be saying nearly the same thing: when the moral law moves us to act, a desire is effected in the mind and this is what ultimately moves us to act. The important point here, however, is that what brings about this desire is the representation of the moral law itself, not a feeling or a representation of pleasure that we expect to experience as a result of acting in a particular way. Indeed, when Kant says that “only, insofar as reason of itself (not in the service of the inclinations) determines the will, is reason a true *higher* faculty of desire” (*KpV* 5:25), he is implying that desire is capable of being aroused by reason itself, and insofar as we are capable of having such desires, we can say we have a higher faculty of desire.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, much like the way in which Kant distinguishes between the other faculties,<sup>104</sup> the higher and lower faculty of desire is a distinction between two *kinds* of desire based on the *source* of desire: the lower faculty of desire is when desire has its source in sensible representations, i.e. of the expectation of pleasure (see *KpV* 5:23ff.), the higher faculty of desire is when desire has its source in reason, i.e. the representation of moral action in and of itself (see *KpV* 5:25, and Engstrom 2009, 25ff.).

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<sup>103</sup> I therefore agree with Morrisson that Kant, similar to Baumgarten, has a functional understanding of the faculties as well (see Morrisson 2008, 30, 32, 36, 79).

<sup>104</sup> For the faculty of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure see *Anth* 7:230, and for the faculty of cognition see *KrV* B1ff. and Kuehn (1995) for a discussion.

In light of the above we are now in a position to assess why Kant believes effecting *feelings* in the mind of a human being helps explain what happens when the moral law becomes an incentive, i.e. a force moving us to act. In the first instance, feelings are intimately linked to desire, where it is a representation of a feeling that first pushes or pulls us to desire or be averse to what is represented. Although the feeling of respect, for example, is neither pleasurable nor painful, Kant says that it still functions in a way similar to other feelings of pleasure in that it is an impulse to activity. In this way Kant appears to be saying that the moral law becomes an incentive in that it brings about a *desire* in the mind of human beings. We have seen that Kant in fact says exactly this in that he believes the recognition of the moral law not only can, but does cause us to take an interest in acting morally. Taking an interest in acting morally is a distinct kind of desire, however, namely a desire brought about by reason alone. As such, the moral law moves us to act, for Kant, in that it causes us to take an interest in and therefore desire to act morally in and of itself.

### 3.3 Interpretations of Kant on Moral Motivation

I began section 3.2 of this chapter with the observation that a number of scholars believe that Kant's understanding of moral motivation has certain features in common with the empiricist psychology of action presented by, above all others, David Hume. Now that I have discussed Kant's conception of moral motivation in detail, in this section I discuss a number of interpretations of Kant's understanding of moral motivation that have been offered in the secondary literature, including those who interpret Kant as having a conception of motivation similar to Hume.<sup>105</sup> I then turn a discussion of the

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<sup>105</sup> I should mention here that in this section I do not wish to provide a comprehensive survey of all of the ways in which Kant's conception of moral motivation has been understood in the secondary literature. There are two main reasons why I refrain from this. First, given the large number of interpretations, such an undertaking would be an enormous task in its own right and is beyond the scope of this chapter. Second, a number of attempts to categorize the various interpretations of Kant on moral motivation already exist (see Timmons 1985, 391n23, McCarty 2009, 170ff., and Sargentis 2012). My aim in this section is therefore a more narrow one: I present the various ways in which interpreters discuss the role of feeling and desire in Kant's account of moral motivation. This will make it possible to see where my interpretation both does

similarities and differences between Kant's conception of the psychology of moral action with Hutcheson's, who, I believe, is the more appropriate interlocutor with Kant on the issue of motivation. This will help not only to clarify where Kant and Hutcheson agree and differ, but will, I hope, help clarify Kant's account of motivation itself. I begin with a discussion of the interpretation claiming that feeling does *not* play a role in motivation, for Kant, before turning to the variety of ways in which interpreters have argued that it does play a role.

### 3.3.1 The Intellectualist Interpretation

The most well-known interpretation that denies feeling a role in motivation is held by Andrews Reath. Reath famously divides the phenomenon of respect into two parts or aspects, and claims that respect as recognition of the law, i.e. respect as the "consciousness of the *subordination* of my will to a law" (*GMS* 4:401n), is the intellectual or practical<sup>106</sup> aspect of respect (see 2006, 10ff.), and respect as a feeling is the affective aspect of respect (see 2006, 10ff.). Although he notes that "these two aspects are connected aspects of a single complex phenomenon" (2006, 26n7), according to Reath's interpretation, "it is the practical aspect that is active in motivating moral conduct, while the affective side, or feeling of respect, is its effect on certain sensible tendencies" (2006, 10). According to this interpretation, then, feeling does indeed take place when we are motivated by duty alone, but the important claim is that this feeling itself plays no causal role in the motivational process itself, i.e. it is a mere side effect and is inessential to the production of action. As such, other interpreters have claimed that thinking of the role of feeling in this way implies feeling is merely "epiphenomenal" (see Timmerman 2007, 42; Timmons 1985, 391n23; and Sytsma 1993, 121), i.e. it is simply a

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and does not agree with the secondary literature as well as provide the opportunity to engage with those who see similarities between Kant and the empiricist conception of action.

<sup>106</sup> Reath only calls this the practical aspect in the revised version of his essay. See 2006, 26n7.

part of the *experience* of acting morally and plays no role in the motivational process itself.

Reath is not alone in denying feeling a role in moral motivation. Such a reading is shared by Onora O’Neill when she claims that “[t]o act ‘out of reverence for the law’ or ‘from a sense of duty’ ... is not to act with any peculiar feeling of reverence or awe” (see 2013, 222). Robert Paul Wolff argues in a similar way that it is only “a fact about my *phenomenal* character that consciousness of submission to self-made law produces a feeling of reverence in me” (1973, 83). Sharon Sytsma similarly claims that “[t]he feeling of respect, for Kant, is the result of the already motivating power of reason” and she states explicitly that “[t]he feeling of respect is, as it were, the *epiphenomenon* of moral motivation” (Sytsma 1993, 121). Ralph Walker also claims that “our awareness of it [a moral requirement] can motivate us directly, without the need of any further feeling to prompt the act” (Walker 1989, 105). Henry Allison initially suggests an intellectualist reading (see 1990, 121, 123, 287; and also Zinkin 2006, 32 and McCarty 1993, 425), and even his most recent position at least seems undecided on the matter if not leaning towards intellectualism when he claims “the term “respect” appears to be little more than a place-holder for whatever non-inclination-based motivational factor is operative in action from duty” (see 2011, 129-30). These interpretations therefore deny that feeling is part of the motivational process, and claim alternatively that reason or our awareness of the law itself is in some way sufficient to move us to action on its own.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> I admittedly find it very difficult to understand how Reath and the interpreters mentioned in this paragraph think motivation is possible, according to Kant, if reason or an intellectual recognition alone is able to motivate directly and without the cooperation of feeling or desire in any way. Aside from the fact that it doesn’t seem to square with Kant’s discussion of the feeling of respect as an incentive and his understanding of the higher faculty of desire, I wish to note here that I take this interpretation to ultimately dissolve into a version of Socratic intellectualism. Reath has the most detailed presentation of this interpretation, and towards the end of his article when he discusses how incentives, including the moral incentive, influence choice he claims the following: “Kant’s view, I want to argue, is that one chooses to act on an incentive of any kind by regarding it as providing a sufficient reason for action, where that is a reason with normative force from the standpoint of others, not just the agent” (Reath 2006, 18). What Reath claims here is that choice implicitly involves and is the result of a normative judgement, i.e. the judgement that the choice I make is one not only I, but anyone in my circumstances ought to make. Reath makes this claim because he believes that “the moral incentive does not operate by exerting a force on the will” (Reath 2006, 18), i.e. choice is not the result of the strength of the force of the



As should be clear from my reading above, I disagree with this interpretation. In the above, I have attempted to illustrate that feeling does in fact play a role in motivation. Above all, this is suggested by the fact that when Kant attempts to answer the question of what happens in the mind when the moral law becomes an incentive, he immediately turns to a discussion of how the law brings about positive and negative feelings in the mind. It would be curious for him to venture to do so if it were his aim to claim that the feelings brought about by the moral law *do not* contribute to moral motivation in some way. Additionally, I have attempted to explain in the above the precise role that the feelings effected by the moral law play in motivation: similar to how feelings of pleasure ground desire, although the feeling of respect is neither pleasure nor displeasure, it functions in the same way as the expectation of pleasure does, namely this feeling functions as an impulse to activity, i.e. a rudimentary form of desire or, as Kant says, an “incentive” which drives us to perform moral action. Rather than claiming that the feelings effected by the moral law are merely part of the *experience* of acting morally, then, Kant argues that feeling, which acts as a driving force produced by reason itself, has an essential role to play in the performance of moral action.

### 3.3.2 Affectivist Interpretations

In contrast to the above interpretation, there are also many interpreters, indeed the overwhelming majority of them, who argue that feeling and desire *are* involved in moral motivation, for Kant. For example, some commentators argue that when Kant claims feeling is involved in moral motivation, he means that pleasure and displeasure must be

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incentive. What Reath fails to consider, and which I discuss below, is that the moral incentive can both exert a force on the will but not necessitate it to action, i.e. the moral incentive can both exert a force *and* choice can be preserved. Alternatively, Reath seems to believe that the only way for choice to be preserved is for the role of the force of feeling to be excluded altogether. Although his view does not claim that a normative judgement *necessitates* that we act in a certain way, and in this way his view is distinct from classic Socratic intellectualism, it does claim that we only ever act as the result of choosing to follow a particular normative judgement all on its own. It also deserves mention here that during Kant’s time Christian Wolff put forth a version of Socratic intellectualism and Kant explicitly distances himself from this position in the second *Critique* (see *KpV* 5:22-4).

involved in moral motivation as well. At first glance this sounds plausible in that Kant says the moral law has a positive and negative effect on feeling and, in general he understands the faculty of feeling as the faculty of feeling pleasure and displeasure [*das Gefühl der Lust und Unlust*]. Allen Wood and Dieter Schönecker, for example, argue that “Kant admits moral feeling (properly understood) as a motive for action” (2015, 20), but they go on to say that because feeling is involved in moral motivation, “all actions, including moral actions, must proceed, motivationally speaking, from a feeling of pleasure” (Wood and Schönecker 2015, 79). Larry Herrera shares this opinion in that he believes “the moving power of the moral motive depends on the development of the mind’s preconceptual conditions of moral sensibility” and explains how this means that the moral motive depends on “our human capacity to experience pleasure and displeasure” (Herrera 2000, 397, see also 404-6). Mark Timmons has a similar interpretation in that he believes that “Kant’s view . . . is that if the moral law is to come into conflict with desires and, in a sense, vie for influence over the will, it must do so by influencing the feeling on which desires are based” (Timmons 1985, 385).<sup>108</sup> According to these interpreters, then, the moral law moves us to act via the feeling of pleasure. This interpretation can be slightly misleading, however, for it suggests that the moral law moves us to act just like any other promise of pleasure and displeasure. It is likely these interpreters wouldn’t want to attribute such a position to Kant, but because they only go so far as to say *that* the moral law moves us via the feeling of pleasure, and do not explain *how* exactly or in what way it does so, their interpretations are less instructive

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<sup>108</sup> Owen Ware has a similar, albeit more detailed interpretation, according to which it is not just any pleasure that is involved in moral motivation, rather it is the particular kind of pleasure captured by the elevating dimension of the feeling of respect, or what Ware calls the feeling of “self respect,” that does the motivating in moral action (see Ware 2014, 739). According to Ware, with the pleasure of self-respect we “have an *effect on sensibility* that is suited to play the role of moral motivation, for this feeling arises from an awareness of our autonomy” (Ware 2014, 739). Ware therefore still believes that the moral law moves us via pleasure, but this pleasure is distinct in kind from the pathological pleasures related to happiness. I find Ware’s view plausible and think my interpretation is likely in agreement with his. However, his reading is also embedded in a discussion of Kant’s answer to what he calls “motivational effect scepticism” (see Ware 2014, 728). I therefore refrain from discussing his view in detail, for it would take me too far away from my main purpose in this section.

than they could be. Indeed, the interesting question is not only *whether* feeling and desire are involved in moral motivation, rather, it is perhaps more interesting to know *how* feeling and desire are involved in moral motivation. As such, in the following I take care to show how other interpreters have explained the precise role of feeling and desire in Kant's account of moral motivation.

A number of interpreters believe that feeling is involved in motivation, for Kant, in that feeling is essentially the same as a passion or desire. Ido Geiger, for example, believes that "Kant claims that the feeling of respect for the moral law is an aspect of any moral action" (Geiger 2001, 286), and furthermore that the feeling of respect is "the force driving moral action" (ibid., 290). According to Geiger, "[a]n incentive is ... the driving force or mainspring of action" and "the effective forces driving naturally affected beings – what actually move us to action in the phenomenal world – are feelings" (ibid., 289). Thus as an incentive, feelings, and specifically the feeling of respect, are forces driving human beings to act. In a similar vein, Melissa Zinkin argues persuasively that, in light of Kant's pre-Critical notion of a negative magnitude discussed in the previous chapter, "Kant's use of terms that refer to force is essential for understanding his theory of moral motivation" (Zinkin 2006, 50) and she argues that the feeling of respect for the law operates like such a force (see Zinkin 2006, 45). A. T. Nuyen states the thrust of this view even more clearly when arguing that, according to Kant, "it is a passion that provides the psychological push for every action" (Nuyen 1991, 40). In the case of moral action, according to Nuyen's interpretation of Kant, "the feeling of respect is a mechanism that propels the sensuous self to moral action" (Nuyen 1991, 40). As such, Nuyen, as well as Geiger and Zinkin in their own way, believe that feeling, specifically the feeling of respect, is like a passion in that it is a psychological force pushing us to act.

The characterization of Kant's view that I have provided above, agrees with this interpretation to a certain extent. The feeling of respect, as an incentive, does indeed operate similar to a psychological force driving moral action, and as such it is similar to a passion or a desire. As mentioned at the beginning of the previous section, however, many of those who argue for this interpretation also claim that, because Kant ultimately believes that even moral action requires the presence of a psychological force, his conception of moral motivation has much in common with the broadly empiricist

conception of action put forth by David Hume, among others. Nuyen, for example, not only argues that “the feeling of respect is a mechanism that propels the sensuous self to moral action” (Nuyen 1991, 40), but he goes on to argue that insofar as Kant believes respect is such a mechanism, he “adopts” Hume’s moral psychology (see Nuyen 1991, 40). Lara Denis is another who compares Kant with Hume and claims that because Kant believes “feelings ... are essential to human moral motivation,” one can say that Kant and Hume “appear to share a view of human action according to which feelings ... are needed for motivating action” (Denis 2012). Engstrom even claims that because Kant believes an effect on feeling is necessary for the moral law to become practical, Kant is in fact, strictly speaking, “in agreement” with Hume’s claim that “reason is ‘perfectly inert’” (2010, 97). Zinkin shares this interpretation but doesn’t compare Kant with Hume directly. She argues that because Kant claims it is a psychological force that moves us to act morally, he “is making a concession to the philosophers of moral sense” (2006, 32). Similarly, after Geiger argues that Kant believes “the effective forces driving naturally affected beings ... are feelings,” he claims that “[t]his is the insight that Kant, surprisingly perhaps, takes from the empiricist view of agency” (Geiger 2001, 289). A number of other interpreters make similar claims,<sup>109</sup> but they all agree that the main point of similarity between Kant’s view and the “empiricist” conception of action is simply the fact that even moral action, for Kant, must proceed not merely from our awareness of the law directly, but from a psychological feeling, passion, or force. The comparison between Kant and Hume is interesting, and later in this section I compare Kant with the person whom I believe is his more proper historical interlocutor on the issue of motivation, namely Hutcheson. Before doing so, however, there are two other affectivist interpretations of Kant that deserve discussion because they will raise important points that are directly relevant to the comparison between Kant and Hutcheson.

According to one additional affectivist interpretation of Kant, a dimension is added according to which choice is in fact *determined* by the strength of the force of feeling. Richard McCarty defends this interpretation and according to his most recent

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<sup>109</sup> See MacBeath (1973, 312-13), Morrison (2008, 135), Beck (1960, 212), Broadie and Pybus (1975, 63), and Guevara (2000, 102-3).

presentation of the view, he claims that “Kant viewed respect for the law as a psychologically forceful incentive” in that “respect is the motivating feeling that explains actions appraised in Kant’s ethical theory as having “moral worth”” (McCarty 2009, 167). McCarty goes on to clarify how exactly this takes place when he states the following: “The strength of one’s feeling of respect can explain one’s acting on a moral principle rather than on an alternative maxim of inclination” (McCarty 2009, 177). In other words, when the feeling of respect “prevails in motivating action (or omission), it does so through its relative strength as a motive force” (McCarty 2009, 177), i.e. “to prevail it [respect] must be stronger than competing interests grounded on those constrained though still motivationally forceful inclinations” (McCarty 2009, 181).<sup>110</sup> McCarty therefore attributes to Kant the “battle of forces” model of action, according to which even when we act morally our action can be explained by the strongest force operative at the time. The essence of this view is that the strongest force currently exerting its influence over us *determines* choice. This is significant for it means that this interpretation attributes to Kant the view that we are ultimately not free to choose how we act. McCarty suggests this explicitly in an earlier article when he claims the following:

The outcome of a moral choice-event, where agents are antecedently motivated to one course of action by the moral incentive of respect for the law, and to an alternative course of action by the incentives of inclination, is in fact always *determined* by the relative strengths of the conflicting incentives. (McCarty 1994, 25, my emphasis)

We therefore need to ask ourselves: in that Kant seems to find a role for feeling and desire even in the case of moral action, does this mean that he does away with freedom of choice?

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<sup>110</sup> This view is not only McCarty’s most recent view, but is the view in his earlier work as well. In an early article, for example, McCarty claims that “Kant never wavered from maintaining that a moral feeling of respect plays an important and appropriate motivational role” (McCarty 1994, 16), and that “[i]f that moral incentive is stronger than competing, nonmoral incentives, it will subsequently determine the outcome of the moral choice-event, or the performance of the moral course of action instead of the inclinational alternative” (McCarty 1994, 26).

Without getting into an extended discussion of Kant's views on the freedom of choice,<sup>111</sup> it can be illustrated fairly easily that the answer to the above question is: No. As I mentioned above, in the early *Metaphysik L<sub>1</sub>* notes Kant adopts Baumgarten's talk of "impelling causes," which if we recall was linked to Baumgarten's own understanding of an incentive. In this context Kant says the following:

With all non-rational animals the stimuli <*stimuli*> have necessitating power ... but with human beings the stimuli ... do not have necessitating power ... but rather only impelling [power] ... Accordingly, the human power of choice <*arbitrium humanum*> is not brute <*brutum*>, but rather free <*arbitrium*>. (*ML* 28:255)

The core of Kant's (early) view on the freedom of choice, then, is that what is distinctive about human choice as opposed to animal choice is the fact that humans are *not* determined to choose in line with whatever the incentives urge us to do. Rather, the nature of human choice is such that what our incentives urge us to do only *impel* us towards a particular action, such that if we are to in fact perform such action we still need to choose to do so.

Kant does not only hold this view during his pre-Critical period, rather he continues to think of the freedom of choice in this way during the Critical period as well. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant says that "[t]he faculty of desire in accordance with concepts ... is called a faculty to *do or refrain from doing as one pleases*" (*MdS* 6:213), and in this text he distinguishes between "animal choice (*arbitrium brutum*)" and "human choice" (*MdS* 6:213) in a way reminiscent of his discussion in the *Metaphysik L<sub>1</sub>* notes. In 1797 Kant claims that animal choice is "[t]hat which can be determined only by *inclination* (sensible impulse, *stimulus*)" and human choice "is a choice that can indeed be *affected* [*afficirt*] but not *determined* by impulses" (*MdS* 6:213). The mature Kant

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<sup>111</sup> Providing an adequate explanation of Kant's view on freedom of the will would require at least another chapter dedicated to the topic. Indeed, Henry Allison has devoted almost an entire book (see Allison 1990) to precisely such a topic. What I discuss here is therefore only those features of Kant's stance on the freedom of the will relevant to my focus here. In particular, I focus on the issue of whether the strength of a feeling or desire makes it *necessary* that we choose in a certain way, therefore doing away with freedom. I pretend to offer neither a full explanation nor a defense of Kant's stance on the freedom of the will, many aspects of which still elude interpreters (see esp. Allison 1990, Ch. 7 and 8; Klemme 2013).

therefore also believes that human choice is free choice in that “[f]reedom of choice is this independence from being *determined* by sensible impulses” (*MdS* 6:213). Thus both Kant’s pre-Critical and Critical discussion of the freedom of the will seem to suggest that he ultimately believes that even though the incentives are psychological forces urging us to act, they do not determine us to act as a function of their strength. Rather, even if an incentive is strong, in order to ultimately act on such an incentive we must choose to do so.<sup>112</sup>

I therefore disagree with McCarty’s claim that Kant’s seemingly empiricist commitments imply that he does not believe in freedom of choice, although I do agree with the claim that, ultimately, a psychological force is operative in moral action, for Kant. What this discussion of McCarty’s interpretation illuminates is that there are important features of Kant’s position that distinguish it from the simplistic empiricist conception of the psychology of action, according to which all action proceeds from a passion or desire. Karl Ameriks presents an interpretation of Kant that makes an effort to point out the features of his position that differ from Hume’s, for example. I briefly discuss Ameriks’ view before moving on to discuss the ways in which I take Kant’s position to be distinct from not Hume’s, but Hutcheson’s view of motivation.

Ameriks notes how “[t]he first step in understanding” Kant’s position on moral motivation “is to point out that the philosophy of action in general requires a much more complex approach than the simple contrast between belief and desire commonly found in Anglophone ethics” (Ameriks 2006, 92). In contrast to a simplistic view of action involving only belief and desire, Ameriks claims that if we are to understand Kant’s view

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<sup>112</sup> An important qualification needs to be added here. With respect to Kant’s view on the freedom of the will, Allison adds that “we need not take him [Kant] as affirming the utterly implausible view that one’s past behaviour, disposition, and circumstances play no role in governing one’s actions ... Kant is not claiming that, all things considered, it would be equally easy for the liar to speak the truth on that occasion. He is claiming rather that he could have done so” (Allison 2006, 397). Accordingly, while the strength of our feelings, including the moral feeling of respect, do not necessitate our acting in certain ways, it is important to keep in mind that the strength of a feeling certainly might make it more *likely* for us to choose in a particular way. Nonetheless, the strength of the feeling cannot determine us given the nature of our will, thus we always need to choose to act on a feeling no matter how strong it impels us to act in a certain way.

of action, “[t]he relevant complexity to note is that the notion of ‘desire’ – insofar as here it designates simply *all that contrasts* with ‘mere belief’ – can involve a number of very different components, most notably: feeling, volition, and normativity” (ibid., 92). With this in mind, Ameriks makes the following observation: “*If one insists on calling any motive a desire (that is, if the term ‘desire’ just signifies the state that one is in immediately prior to action), then one could say in a harmless way that even Kant can allow that all our actions are desire-based*” (ibid., 100). As is implied here, though, this does not help clarify what is novel about Kant’s position insofar as it is more complex than the simplistic belief-desire paradigm. According to Ameriks, Kant recognizes that “[c]ommon sense and ordinary phenomenological reflection show that people generally need to care or feel strongly about something in order to be likely to will and act on it; simply ‘seeing’ that something is the right thing to do cannot be counted on as enough” (ibid., 103). Ameriks therefore agrees that Kant does not subscribe to the hard intellectualist position, according to which merely believing what one ought to do *necessitates* that one act accordingly. In contrast to both this view *and* the empiricist view of action, Ameriks claims that Kant’s position is far more complex:

Kant realized that we might see what we ought to do, and as a consequence even have a feeling pointing in the direction of doing it, and yet *not move* toward doing it. ... When we have a feeling for something in line with an action that we later go on to take for that thing, it is never the case that the feeling is *by itself* sufficient to be a literal motive, a ‘mover.’ ... [F]or Kant it is still up to the agent, through its free will, to ‘incorporate’ that sign, that feeling, and to become actually motivated by choosing to direct itself accordingly, in contrast to all the other directions that might seem available at that moment. (Ameriks 2006, 106)

As such, Ameriks believes that feeling plays an essential role in moral motivation, but he disagrees with McCarty’s claim that the strongest feeling actually moves us to act. Referencing Kant’s “incorporation thesis” (see Allison 1990, 40), which says that we only ever act if we choose to incorporate an incentive into a maxim (see *Rel* 6:24), Ameriks agrees with the interpretation I offer above, according to which Kant both assigns a key role to feelings in the motivation of action, but adds that this does not preclude the possibility of freedom of choice. Feeling here is indeed essential to moral action, but neither is it sufficient and requires not only desire but volition, i.e. willing or choice, in order to ultimately result in action taking place.



As mentioned, however, Ameriks contrasts Kant's position with that of Hume, not Hutcheson. In general, I do not wish to deny the usefulness of contrasting Kant and Hume on the question of motivation. Indeed, I fully understand that, insofar as Hume is likely the most often read empiricist moral philosopher of the eighteenth century, it is very instructive and even natural to contrast his position with Kant's, who is often regarded as the archetype rationalist moral philosopher of the period. At the same time, Kant engages with Hutcheson's moral philosophy far more often than Hume's,<sup>113</sup> and this suggests that he would have been more familiar with Hutcheson's psychology of action. Thus in our attempt to understand how Kant's conception of moral motivation is *distinct* from the empiricist view, it might be more instructive to compare his view with Hutcheson's position. In the following section I therefore point out some important differences between Kant's and Hutcheson's conception of moral motivation in the hopes that their respective positions can be illuminated as a result.

### 3.3.3 Kant and Hutcheson on Moral Motivation

When comparing Hutcheson's and Kant's psychology of action, in light of my above reconstruction of Kant's view I take them to agree on a very basic point, namely that all action, even moral action, requires the presence of an at least rudimentary kind of desire. This is, however, a relatively simple point and, as Ameriks claims, it is in effect harmless to say that Kant subscribes to such a view. What is more interesting to note and indeed what is more important if we want to understanding the nuances of their respective positions, are the ways in which their accounts of action differ. In this final section I identify four fundamental differences between Kant's and Hutcheson's psychology of action.

(1) In addition to believing that all action proceeds from a passion, an affection, or a desire, Hutcheson subscribes to the battle of forces model of action, according to which any action we undertake can be explained by the strongest force winning out against the opposing forces. This is clear from Hutcheson's view, discussed in chapter one, that

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<sup>113</sup> See footnote 82 above.

becoming moral involves *weakening* the hold that self-interest holds over us (see e.g. *I4* 271), and that vice is when self-interest “overcome[s]” benevolence (see e.g. *I4* 175, 269). In contrast to such a view, I argued above that Kant views incentives, for example, as *impelling* causes, where this means that their force only urges us to act in a particular way but can only ever actually bring us to act in accordance with what their force suggests if we choose to do so. I therefore take it that Kant does not subscribe to the battle of forces model of action and in contrast preserves room for freedom of choice. So while both Hutcheson and Kant, on one level, agree that a psychological force is ultimately at the root of our actions, for Kant these forces only ever bring us to act if we allow them, while for Hutcheson it is the strength of these forces that determines the way in which we act.<sup>114</sup>

(2) In chapter one, I explained how Hutcheson regards both self-interest and benevolence as “ultimate ends” (*E4* 222) of ours, i.e. they are the two foundational desires that all human beings possess and are the two desires to which all others can be reduced. What Hutcheson means when he says that all human beings desire these things as ultimate ends is that we all already desire them insofar as we are human beings. Indeed, I explained the significance of this in chapter one when I illustrated that the judgements of the moral sense, for Hutcheson, can only ever bring us to do what we judge to be morally good because what we judge to be morally good (bringing about the happiness of others disinterestedly) is something we already desire. This marks an interesting and important difference between Hutcheson and Kant.

In this chapter I explained that Kant faces the challenge of explaining what happens in the mind when the moral law moves us to act on its own. I illustrated that what occurs

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<sup>114</sup> A slight qualification is needed here. Although Hutcheson seems to believe that *whether* we act depends upon the strongest desire, passion, or affection, *how* we act is something we have control over. For example, Hutcheson rarely discusses choice at all but on one rare occasion when he does, he claims that self-interest and benevolence are like instincts in the sense that they are “*previous to Reason*” and therefore that our desiring them is “not the Effect of *Prudence and Choice*” (*I4* 196). According to Hutcheson, the only role for choice in action is “the Election of proper means for promoting of either” (*I4* 196, sic.). Thus while Hutcheson seems to believe that we will necessarily do whatever we desire the most, how we go about securing the object of our desire can be determined by reason or choice.

when this happens is that feelings are produced, the most important one of which is the positive feeling of respect which functions as an impulse to activity, and in this sense feeling acts as an incentive or rudimentary desire. Indeed, when we commit to pursuing the object of this rudimentary desire (moral actions in themselves), Kant says we *take an interest* in moral action immediately. As mentioned, Kant alternatively says that what happens when the moral law moves us to act is that the law “produces” an interest in us to act morally (see *KpV* 5:80). This is significant because it means that the force or desire at the basis of moral action is distinct from all other desires and interests in the sense that its source is in the moral law, i.e. our reason, and is not one we previously possess by nature.<sup>115</sup> In fact, this seems to be the only way it is possible for us to fulfill an unconditional obligation, for Kant. As we saw, in answering the question of what happens when our awareness of what we ought to do moves us to act, Kant argues that what *cannot* happen is that we are moved to act morally *for the sake of* feeling, for this would make moral obligation conditional: in such as case we act morally *because* we already desire something else. This is thus the exact opposite of *unconditional* obligation, and thus it cannot be the correct explanation of how an *unconditional* or *categorical* moral command can move us to act. We must be bound by morality first, before we desire to act morally, and thus what must take place in the mind when an *unconditional* command moves us to act is that the moral command itself produces the desire at the basis of moral action. Thus although Hutcheson and Kant agree on a trivial level that all action rests on a desire, for Kant the desire at the basis of moral action *must be* a different kind of desire altogether, i.e. one that is produced by reason and the moral law itself.

(3) A related difference is implied by the above point. If, according to Hutcheson, we desire self-interest and benevolence as ultimate ends by nature, this means that the ultimate ends of action are fixed by nature as well (see Irwin 2008, 409). On the other hand, if, according to Kant, it is possible for us to *take an interest* in acting morally and to desire to act morally as an end in itself, this suggests that we can choose an additional

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<sup>115</sup> Such an interpretation is consistent with Kant’s conception of moral education, according to which we do not necessarily desire to be moral by nature, but must be slowly educated to have such a desire (see Loudon 2000, 169 and 171).

(ultimate) end that is not provided by nature. In fact, Kant says precisely this in the *Metaphysics of Morals* where he even goes so far as to claim that “[t]he capacity to set oneself an end . . . is what characterizes humanity (as distinguished from animality)” (*MdS* 6:392, see also *MdS* 6:387 and *Rel* 6:26-7). Indeed, Kant argues in this text that we have a duty to set ourselves two additional ends, namely one’s own perfection and the happiness of others, and insofar as we *ought* to make these things our ends we must be *capable* of doing so. These are ultimate ends rather than ends that serve as means to more foundational ones if we remember that for Kant acting morally is characterized by acting *for the sake of the law* alone, i.e. desiring to do what we ought to do *solely* because we ought to do it. In other words, we desire to perform moral action as an end in itself, i.e. not as a means to some further, ultimate end. Thus if we ought to bring about certain ultimate ends, then we must also be capable of fulfilling this duty, which would involve desiring these things as ends in themselves. Kant therefore allows for the possibility of our setting ourselves certain ultimate ends that we do not desire by nature, thereby setting him apart from Hutcheson in an important way.

(4) One final and significant difference between Kant and Hutcheson in fact concerns our ultimate ends or the objects of our desires. As I illustrated in the first part of this chapter, Kant criticizes Hutcheson for “reducing everything to happiness,” and I suggested that what Kant takes Hutcheson to believe when making such a claim is that all of our desires, even the disinterested desire for benevolence, is still a desire *for pleasure*. Hutcheson’s interpreters disagree over this issue, but I noted that Kant is at least not alone in interpreting Hutcheson this way. The accuracy of his interpretation aside, what is important is that Kant disagrees with this view and therefore believes that it is possible to desire objects other than pleasure. This difference is borne out in the above: in the case of moral action Kant claims that “[r]eason takes an immediate interest in the action” (*GMS* 4:460). Indeed, because acting morally involves acting *for the sake of the law* as opposed to acting in conformity with the law but *for the sake of feeling*, acting morally involves desiring something distinct from pleasure, namely moral action in and of itself. This point is intimately related to the previous one, because when we choose to pursue an ultimate

end, at least in the moral case<sup>116</sup> we choose an end distinct from pleasure. I therefore want to suggest that by claiming we are capable of desiring something other than pleasure, Kant takes himself to be offering a view distinct from Hutcheson's. For Kant, we can desire performing moral action *immediately*, i.e. as an end in itself.

### 3.4 Conclusion

My aim in this chapter was to discuss the primary ways in which moral sense theory, and Hutcheson's version thereof in particular, influenced Kant's mature moral philosophy. I focused on two topics, i.e. the two topics that Hutcheson considered central to moral philosophy and which were the focus of the previous chapter as well, namely the topics of moral judgement and moral motivation. In the first part of the chapter (3.1) I illustrated that Kant wages six main criticisms against moral sense theory's conception of moral judgement, which reflects his post-1770 understanding of moral philosophy as a rational enterprise. Above all, moral judgement, for Kant, must be both universal and necessary in a way judgements based on feeling are not capable of achieving. In the second and third sections of the chapter I turned to the topic of moral motivation where my aim was to illustrate whether and in what way Kant's mature understanding of moral motivation is similar to Hutcheson's. After sketching Kant's mature view of moral motivation in detail in section 3.2, in section 3.3 I discussed various interpretations of his view, some of which argue his position shows the influence of the empiricist conception of action subscribed to by both Hutcheson and Hume. I proceeded to suggest that while

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<sup>116</sup> In the non-moral case Kant claims we choose self-interest as our end. This has varying levels of moral severity in line with Kant's discussion of the three degrees of evil in the *Religion*. First, in accordance with "*frailty*," i.e. "the general weakness of the human heart in complying with the adopted maxims" (*Rel* 6:29), we simply fail to choose the moral end to begin with and do not necessarily choose the false end, namely personal pleasure. In the second case of "*impurity*" we "adulterate moral incentives with immoral ones" (*ibid.*) and therefore choose both the non-moral and the moral end. In the third case of "*depravity*" we "adopt evil maxims" (*ibid.*), in which case we only choose pleasure as the object of our desire to the detriment of morality. To be noted here as well is that Kant's view as I have characterized it here seems to suggest he is a non-moral hedonist, i.e. he believes we can only ever desire either pleasure as an end, or moral action immediately. Again, although I do not have the space to discuss it at length, I must admit that I find this interpretation of Kant plausible. For more on reading Kant in this way see Reath (2006), Morrison (2008), McCarty (2009), Frierson (2014, 148), and Allison (2011, 264).

on a very superficial level Kant's and Hutcheson's theories of moral motivation share some common features, there are also a number of very important differences between their views. In sum, it seems that while Kant was certainly not unmoved by Hutcheson's understanding of motivation, the differences between their views are more significant than their similarities. My hope is that this comparison clarifies their respective views on moral motivation, especially in the case of Kant whose position has been the subject of intense debate in the secondary literature over the past few decades. In the next chapter I continue discussing Kant's mature conception of motivation and I explore whether another thinker, namely Adam Smith, had a more positive influence on Kant's notion of "respect" for the moral law.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Kant and Smith on *Achtung* and Moral Motivation

In the previous chapter I discussed Kant's mature conception of moral motivation in detail. Part of my focus was the extent to which feeling plays a role in Kant's conception of motivation and we saw that the feeling of "respect" plays a central role therein. In this chapter, I primarily discuss respect not as a feeling, but rather as an attitude. I aim to clarify this attitude by placing it in the context of the thought of a thinker who is not himself a moral sense theorist but is nonetheless operating in the same tradition, namely Adam Smith. There are many ways in which Smith's thought might have influenced Kant's moral theory.<sup>117</sup> In this chapter I focus on one way in particular, and this is how Smith's conception of the attitude of "regard" for what he calls the "general rules of conduct" might help clarify Kant's notion of "respect [*Achtung*]"<sup>118</sup> for the moral law. I begin with an introduction (4.1), followed by a substantial section on Smith (4.2) where I outline his understanding of the general rules of conduct, his views on motivation and the sense of duty, as well as his conception of the attitude of regard. I then turn to Kant, where in (4.3) I briefly summarize Kant's pre-Critical conception of motivation and how it differs from the Critical view, but I focus on illustrating how the concept of respect is absent from the early period. In section (4.4) I turn to Kant's mature conception of respect where I explain the nature of respect as an *attitude* against the background of Smith's notion of "regard" as well as discuss how it is distinct from but related to the *feeling* of respect. In the final section (4.5) I discuss the evidence that

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<sup>117</sup> I address these later in this chapter, but see the following sources for a discussion of the relation between Kant and Smith: Oncken (1877), Shell (1980, 80, 102, 147), Fleischacker (1991), and Klemme (2000, vol. 4).

<sup>118</sup> I adopt what I consider the standard translation of *Achtung*, namely "respect." Others, most notably H. J. Paton (see e.g. 1953, 63-68) and Jens Timmermann (see 2007, 181-2) have opted for "reverence," in part because Kant himself uses the Latin *reverentia* to refer to *Achtung* for the moral law in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (see *MdS* 6:402 and 6:467). Timmermann argues that "reverence" is preferable to "respect" given the many present-day connotations of the latter (see 2007, 182), but in his new translation of the *Groundwork* he opts for "respect" as well.

suggests Kant in fact read Smith, and I give reason to believe that, in addition to helping clarify Kant's notion of respect, Kant may have in fact been directly influenced by Smith's conception of "regard."

## 4.1 Introduction

A characteristic feature of Kant's moral philosophy is the idea that "respect" (*Achtung*) for the moral law is the only motive that gives action true moral worth, and it is generally assumed that this idea is unique to his moral philosophy. There is good reason for this assumption, for shortly after his first published<sup>119</sup> use of the expression in the "third proposition" of *Groundwork* I ("duty is the necessity of an action from respect for the law" *GMS* 4:400), Kant says the following in a footnote: "I might be accused of using the word *respect* just to seek refuge in an obscure feeling, instead of giving distinct information about the matter in question by means of a concept of reason" (*GMS* 4:401n). Although Kant seems to be suggesting that respect is "obscure [*dunkelen*]" simply because it is a feeling in contrast to a concept of reason, one gets the impression that part of the reason for respect's obscurity lies in the fact that he is using an at least uncommon, if not invented, expression to capture the feeling he is discussing. Indeed, Kant might have felt the need to defend himself here because he was concerned he would be criticized by the *Popularphilosophen* for not using "popular concepts" (see *GMS* 4:409). Whatever the precise reason for Kant's "apologetic" tone in the footnote (see Timmermann 2007, 41), Kant's first discussion of respect as an "obscure feeling" certainly does not provide an obvious answer to the question of whether he was assigning a new, technical meaning to the term or whether he was simply using an uncommon and obscure one.

More than a century ago, August Oncken gave reason to believe that Kant was not the first to use *Achtung* in the technical way used in his moral philosophy, and that the same expression could be found in the first German translation of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. As Oncken states:

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<sup>119</sup> As I discuss below, Kant's first (unpublished) mention of respect for the moral law occurs in the *Naturrecht Feyerabend* notes from 1784.



The concern with and consciousness of this inner moral law is the “worth” (“dignity”) of human beings, and the drive to obey the commands of this law takes place similarly in both theories through the feeling of respect [*Achtung*] for the majesty of this moral law (‘reverentia’ for Kant, ‘reverence’ for Smith). (1877, 92)

To cite an example of how Smith uses “regard,” or “reverence,” as well as how these terms were translated in the first German edition of Smith’s *Theory*, consider the following: in the *Theory*, Smith gives the example of visiting a friend when you’re in a bad mood and being tempted to treat them poorly for no good reason. In such a situation, Smith says:

What renders you incapable of such a rudeness, is nothing but a **regard** to the general rules of civility and hospitality, which prohibit it. That habitual **reverence** which your former experience has taught you for these enables you to act, upon all such occasions, with nearly equal propriety, and hinders those inequalities of temper, to which all men are subject, from influencing your conduct in any very sensible degree. (*TMS* 232, my emphasis)<sup>120</sup>

Nichts kan euch abhalten, eine solche Grobheit zu begehen, als **die Achtung** gegen die allgemeinen Regeln der Höflichkeit, die sie verbieten. Diese angewohnte **Achtung** dagegen, die ihr aus eurer vorigen Erfahrung gelernet habt, setzt euch in den Stand bei allen solchen Gelegenheiten mit fast gleicher Schicklichkeit zu handeln, und hindert es, daß nicht jene Ungleichheiten der Laune, denen alle Menschen unterworfen sind, in einem sehr merklichen Grad auf euer Verhalten einen Einfluß haben. (*GTMS* 316, my emphasis)

*Achtung*, as used by Smith, is therefore an attitude of “regard” or “reverence”<sup>121</sup> taken towards what Smith calls here the “general rules” of “civility and hospitality,” but which in other places he calls more generally “the general rules of conduct” (*TMS* 229). In his study, however, Oncken goes no further than merely pointing out this terminological similarity.

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<sup>120</sup> All references to Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* use the third edition of 1767, i.e. the edition that was the basis for Christian Günther Rautenberg’s 1770 German translation and which is the edition with which Kant would have been familiar. That Kant could only have known the third edition is significant given the major changes Smith made to the sixth edition. See Raphael (2010, 16) for discussion of the significance of the changes to the sixth edition.

<sup>121</sup> I discuss below how the terms Smith uses to describe the attitude we take towards the general rules are translated inconsistently, as is clear from this passage, but that *Achtung* is by far the dominant term.

In this chapter, part of my aim is to show that, rather than a mere terminological similarity, Smith's and Kant's conceptions of *Achtung* for the general rules and the moral law respectively have significant conceptual similarities as well. I make this comparison primarily in order to clarify Kant's concept of respect, a concept which has received a great deal of attention by Kant's commentators since its inception. Very early on, for example, August Wilhelm Rehberg criticized Kant's doctrine of respect as an unsuccessful attempt to show how pure reason can have an effect on the phenomenal world (see Rehberg 1788). In the mid-twentieth century, Dieter Henrich criticized respect as problematically presupposing the fact of reason (see Henrich 1963b). More recently and as I discussed in the previous chapter, respect has been at the centre of a mass of secondary literature debating the role of feeling and sensibility in Kant's account of moral motivation. The attention given to respect as a feeling in this literature, however, has resulted in a relatively small amount of attention being given to Kant's understanding of respect as a whole, according to which respect is not only just a feeling, but involves what Andrews Reath has called its "intellectual aspect" (see Reath 2006, 10), namely its function as what I will call an "attitude" taken towards the moral law.

As discussed in the last chapter, Reath claims there is an "intellectual" or "practical aspect" to respect, and he even claims that this is its "primary notion" (see Reath 2006, 10), which is not surprising given Reath's take on Kant's view of moral motivation. Herrera (2000, 399) and McCarty (1993, 426) take issue with Reath's view that respect as an attitude is primary in motivation, and in response they claim that respect is *not* primarily a "propositional attitude" (see Herrera 2000, 409), but is rather a "motivational attitude" (McCarty 1993, 430).<sup>122</sup> Similarly, Allen Wood and Dieter Schönecker refer to respect as a "rational practical attitude" (2015, 80). What is not clear here is in what exactly this attitude consists, how it is distinct from the *feeling* of respect, and indeed how it might be related to this feeling.

In the following sections I hope to clarify these questions by placing Kant's conception of the attitude of respect for the moral law in context with Smith's conception

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<sup>122</sup> In another article McCarty refers to respect as a "moral-motivation attitude" (see McCarty 1994, 15).

of the attitude of “regard” for the general rules of conduct. I begin in the next section with an investigation of Smith’s conception of “regard” for the general rules of conduct. As we will see, similar to Kant’s notion of respect, this attitude has both a cognitive dimension as the recognition of the authority of these rules, as well as an affective dimension as the “sense of duty” which functions as a motive to action. Understanding Smith’s conception of the sense of duty and the general rules requires some background on his moral philosophy in general, therefore before turning to Kant and a comparison of Kant and Smith, in the next section I discuss the relevant aspects of Smith’s moral philosophy that will be important for the later comparison with Kant.

## 4.2 Smith on General Rules and the Sense of Duty

### 4.2.1 General Rules

D.D. Raphael has argued that explaining moral judgements is the main topic of at least the first five editions of Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.<sup>123</sup> In the context of putting forward a theory of moral judgement, the need for moral rules arises from a deficiency inherent in how these judgements function, for Smith. According to Smith, when we make moral judgements, we judge the sentiments, affections, or passions<sup>124</sup> of others, and we do this in two different ways. As Smith says early in the *Theory*:

The sentiment or affection of the heart from which any action proceeds, and upon which its whole virtue or vice must ultimately depend, may be considered under two different aspects, or in two different relations; first in relation to the cause which excites it, or the motive which gives occasion to it; and secondly, in relation to the end which it proposes, or the effect which it tends to produce. (*TMS* 19-20)

These two relations lead to two different species of judgement that can be made in relation to a sentiment or affection:

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<sup>123</sup> See Raphael (2007, 1-12) and Raphael (2010, 15-18) for a discussion of how this was indeed the central topic of the first five editions. Raphael points out how Smith altered the sixth edition to include a discussion of the nature of virtue.

<sup>124</sup> Smith does not seem to distinguish between these terms therefore I use them interchangeably when referring to Smith’s understanding of them in the following.

In the suitableness or unsuitableness, in the proportion or disproportion which the affection seems to bear to the cause or object which excites it, consists the propriety or impropriety, the decency or ungracefulness of the consequent action.

In the beneficial or hurtful nature of the effects which the affection aims at, or tends to produce, consists the merit or demerit of the action, the qualities by which it is entitled to reward, or is deserving of punishment. (*TMS* 20)

Judging an action in either of these two ways<sup>125</sup> occurs by placing oneself, via the imagination, in the situation of the agent (in the case of judgements of propriety) or the patient (in cases of judgements of merit) and “sympathizing” with them, i.e. assessing whether the passions felt by the “person principally concerned” (*TMS* 26) are the same as those we would have if we were in their position. This procedure is then carried out in a similar way when we judge our own actions. However, in order to remove our personal bias when judging ourselves, via the imagination we take up the position of an “impartial spectator,” i.e. an imagined observer of our actions who knows the relevant details of our situation but who is not biased to judge in our favour, or anyone else’s. We approve of our own actions if we believe such a spectator would have the same sentiments we find ourselves to have, and disapprove if we imagine such a spectator’s sentiments would disagree with our own.

The limitations of Smith’s conception of moral judgement are apparent in the case of judging our own actions, and Smith deals with these limitations in Part 3 of the *Theory*. Smith addresses two main limitations to his theory of moral judgement as sketched so far. First, Smith’s theory of moral self-judgement only works in those situations where we have the *time* to imagine ourselves in the position of the impartial

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<sup>125</sup> The second sort of judgement, merit, is not extremely important for my analysis in this chapter, therefore when speaking of Smith’s conception of moral judgement I primarily speak of propriety. As it turns out, Geoffrey Sayre-McCord has suggested that judgements of propriety, for Smith, are in a sense more fundamental than those of merit, in that judgements of merit presuppose judgements of propriety. For example, we would only approve of a person feeling gratitude, i.e. regard gratitude as a “just” effect of an action, only if we first judge the action triggering gratitude to be proper in the first place (see 2010, 126-7 and also Griswold 1999, 183). On this interpretation, judgements of propriety are ultimately the most basic, and therefore the most important, kind of judgement. I do not wish to evaluate this interpretation here, and my focus on judgements of propriety should not be taken as an endorsement of Sayre McCord’s view. Rather, because my interpretation of Smith does not hinge upon the distinction between these two kinds of judgements, I focus on propriety merely for the sake of simplicity.

spectator. More specifically, it is only possible for us to judge of our own actions by means of taking up the position of the impartial spectator when we have ample time to do so either before acting, or in retrospect when we are judging an action we have already completed in the past. Such a theory of judgement therefore seems inadequate for judging what we ought to do “when we are about to act” (*TMS* 220), for example. Smith addresses this worry in 3.2<sup>126</sup> where he observes that “when we are about to act” or in the heat of the moment, “[t]he fury of our own passions constantly calls us back to our own place where every thing appears magnified and misrepresented by self-love” (*TMS* 220). In other words, when we are about to act it is difficult for us to take up an impartial point of view. If we are able to take up this viewpoint, Smith claims we only obtain “instantaneous glimpses, which vanish in a moment, and which even while they last are not altogether just” (*TMS* 220). The problem with judging our conduct in the heat of the moment is therefore twofold: (1) it is difficult to take up an impartial perspective at all given the strength of our passions when we are about to act, and (2) if we are able to achieve such a perspective, it is short-lived and unreliable. With respect to this second problem, there is a further reason why Smith believes whatever impartiality we achieve here is unreliable and this is because we are prone to self-deceit at the time of acting. Paraphrasing Malebranche, Smith claims that in the heat of the moment “[t]he passions ... all justify themselves, and seem reasonable, and proportioned to their objects, as long as we continue to feel them” (*TMS* 220-1). What this means is that we are disposed to approve of whatever sentiments we have in the heat of the moment, and we judge however we happen to feel as “proper.” Although we can indeed take up the position of the impartial spectator after the fact, this is unsatisfactory because “our judgements now are of little importance, compared to what they were before; and when they are most severely impartial, can commonly produce nothing but vain regret, and unavailing repentance, without securing us from the like errors for the future” (*TMS* 221).

The predicament we seem to find ourselves in here is not hopeless, however. As Smith says: “Nature, however, has not left this weakness, which is of so much

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<sup>126</sup> References of this kind to the *Theory* refer to Part#.Section#.Chapter#. Where a Part only has one section, as in Part 3, the reference simply lists Part#.Chapter#.

importance, altogether without a remedy; nor has she abandoned us entirely to the delusions of self-love” (*TMS* 222-3). Our need for advice on what actions to perform in the heat of the moment is satisfied, according to Smith, in the following way: “Our continual observations upon the conduct of others, insensibly lead us to form to ourselves certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done or to be avoided” (*TMS* 222-3). These rules instruct either “that all such actions are to be avoided” (*TMS* 223) or “that every opportunity of acting in this manner is carefully to be sought after” (*TMS* 223-4). As Smith states, these rules are formed by generalizing from how we judge the actions of others, as well as from how others judge of our actions.<sup>127</sup> If we observe, for example, that we always disapprove of a certain way others act, and we have noticed that others also disapprove of this way of acting, then “[w]e resolve never to be guilty of the like, nor ever, upon any account, to render ourselves in this manner the objects of universal disapprobation” (*TMS* 223).<sup>128</sup> These rules help us in the heat of the moment,

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<sup>127</sup> Although these rules are based on both how we judge others and how others judge us, as well as how others judge third parties, it is ultimately the judgements of others that should form the basis of the rules. Because we form rules of conduct at least in part in order to guard against self-deceit, we form these rules largely on the basis of the judgements of others so that our own biases do not become part of the rules.

<sup>128</sup> It is important to emphasize here what is implied by how the general rules are formed. In that they are formed by abstracting general guidelines for action based on how others judge the actions of ourselves and others, as well as how we ourselves judge of the actions of others, this means that general rules have their origin in particular judgements of individual situations. Particular situations are therefore not first judged good or bad because of their agreement with a general rule, which is, for example, known a priori or is a natural law. Rather, particular situations are judged on their own and by themselves, and these judgements are then captured in a general rule, to which we then make reference in the heat of the moment. It is for this reason that some have categorized Smith as a “particularist” when it comes to moral rules (see Fleischacker 2013). It is also interesting to note here that the general rules essentially capture how an impartial spectator would judge of our passions in that they represent an amalgamation of the judgements we and others make in particular situations. This is clear from the fact that they are meant to be a quick substitute “when we are about to act” for the operation of placing ourselves in the position of such an impartial spectator (see Griswold 1999, 186ff. for a further discussion). However, as Griswold mentions (see *ibid.*, 186), to say that the general rules are formed by inductive generalization from particular situations is not to say that each one of us makes these generalizations; some of us receive the general rules first and then we do indeed judge actions on the basis of rules. The point, however, is that these rules are neither innate to our minds, nor are they pre-given in society. Rather, their ultimate origin is always in the particular judgements of the sentiments and affections (see also Irwin 2008, 703).

i.e. at the point where it is so important for us to change how we act, because it is then that an agent can remember the general rules quickly and easily. We do not necessarily act according to such rules simply by remembering them, however. Rather, we are tugged back and forth by the strength of the passion and by the general rules. A person's motives are variously the resolution "to adhere to his principle, and not indulge a passion which may corrupt the remaining part of his life with the horrors of shame and repentance" (*TMS* 227-8), or "the prospect of that security and tranquillity which he will enjoy when he thus determines not to expose himself to the hazard of a contrary conduct" (*TMS* 228), i.e. conduct contrary to the rules. But a passion is always there as well and "with fresh fury drives him on to commit what he had the instant before resolved to abstain from" (*TMS* 228). Whether or not we actually follow the rules therefore depends upon, among other things,<sup>129</sup> the strength of the desires that oppose what the general rules command. These other desires can be of various kinds and in the next section I turn to Smith's conception of motivation as well as discuss the motive he calls the "sense of duty."

#### 4.2.2 Motivation and the Sense of Duty

In the above we have seen that moral judgements concern the propriety and merit of sentiments and affections, and the general rules of conduct capture the sentiments and affections it is proper or meritorious to have in particular situations. In that we are to make reference to the rules "when we are about to act," they appear to be action guiding in that they instruct us on which passion it is proper to act on in a given situation. In order to clarify how this works, in the following I discuss what types of passions there are, for Smith, as well as the motive Smith calls the "sense of duty" (*TMS* 229).

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<sup>129</sup> It also depends upon how strong our desire is to follow these rules, but Smith is not clear about what desire is at the foundation of our desire to follow the general rules of morality. Indeed, this raises the question of Smith's answer to the question "why be moral?" It is not clear what Smith's answer to this question is, and discussing it is not directly relevant to my purposes in this chapter. At the very least, what is clear from Smith's language here is that he is operating with what in the last chapter I called the "balance of forces" model of action, according to which the action we ultimately perform in a given scenario is the result of whatever desire happens to be the strongest on balance with the other desires operative at the time. I discuss this again below.

In sections 1.2.3-5 Smith argues that there are three basic kinds of passions: the unsocial, the social, and the selfish passions. The unsocial passions “are hatred and resentment, with all their different modifications” (*TMS* 51), the social passions are those such as generosity and compassion, i.e. “all the social and benevolent affections” (*TMS* 61) which we find “almost always peculiarly agreeable and becoming” (*TMS* 61), and the “selfish passions” or the passions of self-love or those directed towards private advantage. In addition to these three kinds of passions, Smith also believes that we can be motivated solely by our “sense of duty,” i.e. our sense of what we ought to do or of what the general rules of conduct command. As Smith states: “The regard to those general rules of conduct, is what is properly called a sense of duty” (*TMS* 229). Here Smith introduces the attitude we take towards the general rules as “regard,” which I discuss in more detail below. For the time being, it is important to note that what Smith seems to be claiming here is that our awareness of what we ought to do, i.e. our awareness of what the general rules of conduct command, at the very least gives us a reason to act that is distinct from the reason supplied by the three kinds of passions.<sup>130</sup>

Interestingly and in contrast to his teacher Francis Hutcheson,<sup>131</sup> Smith does not argue that acting on only one kind of passion, e.g. the social passions, is moral. On the contrary, he claims that the circumstances of the situation determine which passion should be acted upon. Contrary to what one may expect, this implies that acting on the basis of our “sense of duty” may not always be desirable. If this is the case, the next question is to determine the extent to which the sense of duty ought to be our motive. According to Smith, when the sense of duty should be the primary motive, and when it should not, “cannot, perhaps, be given with any very great accuracy” (*TMS* 248), but the

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<sup>130</sup> Given Smith states that all actions proceed from a passion or affection (*TMS* 19-20), it is not clear if, when we act from the sense of duty, we also act on one of the aforementioned passions, or if we act on a distinct passion altogether. This is a difficult question to answer and is also related to Smith’s answer to question “why be moral?” in that whatever desire binds us to moral rules will also be the desire operative at the root of our performance of the actions commanded by the rules. Again, because addressing this topic would take me too far afield from my aims in this chapter, I save the discussion of Smith’s take on the issues for another time.

<sup>131</sup> See Raphael and Macfie (1976, 3) for more information.



answer to this question depends, first, on which sentiment, affection, or passion we are talking about and, second, on the “precision and exactness, or the looseness and inaccuracy of the general rules themselves” (*TMS* 248-9). I discuss each of these in turn.

First, whether the sense of duty or a particular passion ought to be our primary motive depends on which sort of passion we are talking about. With respect to the social passions, i.e. “those graceful and admired actions, to which the benevolent affections would prompt us” (*TMS* 249), Smith claims that these “ought to proceed as much from the passions themselves, as from any regard to the general rules of conduct” (*TMS* 249). According to Smith, we do not approve, for example, of someone who repays a good deed “merely from a cold sense of duty” (*TMS* 249). Or, again, “[a] husband is dissatisfied with the most obedient wife, when he imagines her conduct is animated by no other principle besides her regard to what the relation she stands in requires” (*TMS* 249). Similarly, a son should not fulfill familial duties out of the sense of duty, nor should a parent perform parental duties from the sense of duty, rather such actions should proceed from the natural affections or social passions. Not every social passion should be acted on, however. There are situations where a social passion can become too strong and be harmful, such as when our “natural generosity” towards a friend can be too strong such as to harm us (see *TMS* 250), e.g. by putting another’s insignificant interest above our interest in survival. In general, therefore, at least with respect to the social passions Smith states “it is agreeable to see the sense of duty employed rather to restrain than to enliven them, rather to hinder us from doing too much, than to prompt us to do what we ought” (*TMS* 249). To summarize, then: it is most proper to act on the social passions, our sense of duty should not be our reason for acting in these cases and should only restrict the social passions from becoming too strong.

With respect to the unsocial passions, Smith claims that the actions these passions suggest and that we approve of ought to be done from our sense of duty rather than from the passions themselves. We ought to punish, for example, always with reluctance “and more from a sense of the propriety of punishing, than from any savage disposition to revenge” (*TMS* 250). In a similar way, Smith claims the following:

Nothing is more graceful than the behaviour of the man who appears to resent the greatest injuries, more from a sense that they deserve, and are the proper objects of resentment, than from feeling himself the furies of that disagreeable passion;

who, like a judge, considers only the general rule, which determines what vengeance is due for each particular offence. (*TMS* 250)

As with the social passions, then, the general rules of conduct *restrict* the efficacy of the unsocial passions and should prevent us from acting on them. But in contrast to the social passions, there are situations where we ought to do what the unsocial passions suggest, but in such cases we should, in the end, be motivated solely by the sense of duty and never by the passions themselves. In the language Smith uses above, here the sense of duty ought not only restrict us from acting but also ought to “enliven” us and be a positive force for performing action, i.e. the sense of duty ought to be the primary, positive reason for performing such actions.

With respect to the selfish passions, whether our actions ought to proceed from these passions or from the sense of duty depends on the nature of the object of these passions. First, Smith claims that the “pursuit of the objects of private interest, in all common, little and ordinary cases, ought to flow rather from a regard to the general rules which prescribe such conduct, than from any passion for the objects themselves” (*TMS* 251). Smith gives the example of “parsimony” (*TMS* 251), where even if a person is poor, being too anxious or overly concerned with saving every single penny is disapproved when it proceeds from self-interest. Smith believes that we still ought to perform such actions, but that rather than proceed from the selfish passions: they “ought to proceed solely from a regard to the general rule, which prescribes, with the most unrelenting severity, this plan of conduct to all persons in his way of life” (*TMS* 251).

With respect to the objects of self-interest that are “more extraordinary and important” (*TMS* 252), however, Smith claims that “we should be awkward, insipid, and ungraceful, if the objects themselves did not appear to animate us with a considerable degree of passion” (*TMS* 251). A prince “conquering or defending a province,” a gentlemen acquiring an estate or an office (when it does not require the performance of any “meanness or injustice”), or a member of parliament running for election, all these people should be interested in their endeavours, says Smith, out of self-interest. Smith claims we would despise, or at least would not approve of these people if their endeavours were *not* motivated by self-interest, for we expect such people to care about the endeavours that are important to them. We always admire, for example, those who

pursue the objects of ambition out of self-interest.<sup>132</sup> In sum, then, the ordinary objects of self-interest ought to be pursued from a regard for the general rules, i.e. our sense of duty, and this should be the principal reason for acting in such cases. With respect to the more important objects, it seems our sense of duty should *not* be the principle reason for performing them and self-interest is here the most proper motive.

As stated, Smith states that whether or not our sense of duty should be our motive also depends on how precise the rules are. In this regard Smith claims the following:

The general rules of almost all the virtues, the general rules which determine what are the offices of prudence, of charity, of generosity, of gratitude, of friendship, are in many respects loose and inaccurate, admit of many exceptions, and require so many modifications, that it is scarce possible to regulate our conduct entirely by a regard to them. (*TMS* 253)

Smith claims that the “common proverbial maxims of prudence,” which are founded in universal experience, are the best rules we can have, but it is absurd to adhere to them strictly. The rules of gratitude are also not very strict. Only the rules of justice are precise enough that they can be relied upon:

The rules of justice are accurate in the highest degree, and admit of no exceptions or modifications, but such as may be ascertained as accurately as the rules themselves, and which generally, indeed, flow from the very same principles with them. ... What I ought to perform, how much I ought to perform, when and where I ought to perform it, the whole nature and circumstances of the action prescribed, are all of them precisely fixt and determined. (*TMS* 255)

Smith even says that “the most sacred regard” is due to these rules and that “the actions which this virtue requires are never so properly performed, as when the chief motive for performing them is a reverential and religious regard to those general rules which requires them” (*TMS* 255-6). What this means is that the more precise the general rules are, the more should our regard for them, i.e. our sense of duty, be the dominant motive of our action.

According to the above, therefore, there are situations where we ought to act on our selfish passions, situations where we ought to act on the social passions, and also

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<sup>132</sup> Even when these passions extend beyond “the bounds of prudence and justice” (*TMS* 252) we sometimes admire those who have this passion. For this reason we admire not only heroes, but conquerors as well (*TMS* 253).

situations where we ought to act on the sense of duty; we ought to never act on the unsocial passions. Smith adds to the above that although it is not part of Christian doctrine to say that “the sense of duty should be the sole principle of our conduct” (*TMS* 248), he claims that this sense of duty “*should* be the ruling and the governing one” (*TMS* 248, my emphasis) and that philosophy and common sense “directs” this to be the case (*TMS* 248). This is a bit perplexing, one might think, for what does Smith mean by the claim that the sense of duty should be the “ruling and governing” principle of our conduct, if he also believes that it is *not* always best to act on the sense of duty?

In claiming that the sense of duty should be the ruling and governing principle of our conduct, Smith does not mean to say that the sense of duty ought to be the principal *motive of action* in all cases. On the contrary, in chapter 3.4 Smith investigates “in what cases our actions ought to arise chiefly or entirely from a sense of duty, or from a regard to general rules; and in what cases some other sentiment or affection ought to *concur*, and have a principal influence” (*TMS* 248, my emphasis). What Smith appears to be saying here is that even in those cases where the sense of duty is not our sole motive and we ought to act on a passion, having the sense of duty as the “ruling and governing” principle of conduct means that the sense of duty as a motive ought to *concur* and, in modern terminology, “over-determine” our action. For example and as illustrated above, when discussing whether or not we should act on the social passions, Smith claims that these actions “ought to proceed *as much* from the passions themselves, *as* from any regard to the general rules of conduct” (*TMS* 249, my emphasis). Presumably the case is similar with respect to those situations where we ought to act on our selfish passions as well, namely we ought to pursue the significant objects of self-interest both from self-interest and from the sense of duty. Smith’s view, then, is that when the sense of duty is the ruling and governing principle of our conduct, the sense of duty is always a part of our reason for acting in a number of different ways: it is either our sole motive and positively “enlivens” us to perform an action (in the case of the insignificant objects of self-interest and sometimes with respect to what the unsocial passions suggest), it concurs with another passion that ought to be the primary passion acted upon (in the case of the extraordinary objects of self-interest and often with respect to what the social passions suggest), or the sense of duty restricts the force of a passion and either prevents it from

becoming too strong (some cases of the social passions), or it could in principle also simply prevent us from acting entirely (where the sense of duty would be our reason for *refraining* from acting). Smith believes this is how we all *should* act, for he believes that the sense of duty “should” (*TMS* 248) be the ruling and governing principle of our conduct. Put differently, Smith believes we should give the rules ruling and governing authority when it comes to guiding our conduct. In the following section I turn to the attitude of “regard” towards the general rules and illustrate in more detail that to have this attitude, i.e. to have resolved to act in accordance with the general rules, is the same as having made the sense of duty the ruling and governing principle of one’s conduct.

### 4.2.3 Regard

In the above I have suggested that the general rules are action-guiding in that they suggest which passions it is proper to act on, i.e. when it is proper for the sense of duty to be the only force that “enlivens” us to act, when it is proper for the sense of duty to “concur” with other passions that ought to be the primary motive, and indeed when the sense of duty ought to prevent us from acting at all. In this section I wish to discuss in further detail the nature of the attitude of “regard,” namely the attitude we take towards the general rules that reflects the fact that we view them as action-guiding, and what exactly it means to resolve to act according to these general rules, for Smith.

The general rules of conduct are a person’s “measures of conduct which, in all his cool hours, he had resolved never to infringe” (*TMS* 227). In the first instance, then, once we have formed or are aware of the general rules of conduct, it is at least possible for us to “resolve” to live according to them. When we resolve to live according to such rules, however, we take the attitude of “regard” towards the them. In general, Smith in fact uses a number of terms to describe the attitude we take towards the general rules: he uses variously “regard” (*TMS* 229, 231, 232, 248, 249, 251, 253, 255, 256, 341, 418, 419, 424), “reverence” (*TMS* 227, 230, 232, 233), and also “awe and respect” (*TMS* 227).<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> These references cite only those instances where the terms are used to describe the attitude taken towards the general rules. Other instances of the terms do, of course, occur in *TMS* but are not related to the attitude that is my focus here.

As can be seen here, based on the sheer number of times Smith uses “regard,” it is clear that this is the dominant term he uses to describe the attitude we take towards the rules. Something interesting occurs when the *Theory* is translated into German, however. All the above terms, i.e. regard, reverence, and also respect, are not consistently translated. In the translation we find the following terms used to describe the attitude we take towards the general rules: “*Achtung*” (GTMS 312, 316, 317, 335, 340, 342, 343, 349, 507, 553, 554, 561), “*Ehrfurcht*” (GTMS 311, 313, 314, 315, 349), and “*Rücksicht auf*” (GTMS 339, 345).<sup>134</sup> As can be seen here, “*Achtung*” is by far the dominant term used to capture the attitude taken towards the general rules. What will be important for the comparison with Kant is not only this terminology, but the precise nature of the attitude as well, i.e. in what having “regard” or “*Achtung*” for the general rules actually consists, for Smith.<sup>135</sup>

The first thing to be mentioned about this attitude is that it is not the kind of attitude that comes in degrees. It is not like the attitude of praise given to merit, for example, such that one praises a person proportionate to the degree they deserve it. For Smith, this attitude is such that one either “regards” the general rules or one does not. Taking the attitude of regard towards the general rules does not guarantee or necessitate action in accordance with them, however. For Smith, it is possible to act contrary to the general rules and still have regard for them. For example, in the case where someone is feeling a particularly strong passion for the first time, Smith says the following:

that **reverence** for the rule which past experience has impressed upon him, checks the impetuosity of his passion, and helps him to correct the too partial views which self-love might otherwise suggest, of what was proper to be done in his situation. If he should allow himself to be so far transported by passion as to violate this rule, yet even in this case, he cannot throw off altogether **the awe and respect** with which he has been accustomed to regard it. (TMS 227, my emphasis)

Allein die **Ehrfurcht** gegen die Regel, die seine vorige Erfahrung ihm eingepägt, hält die Heftigkeit seiner ungestümen Leidenschaft im Zaum, und hilft ihm die zu partheiischen Vorstellungen zu verbessern, die die Selbst-Liebe ihm von dem, was in seinen Umständen recht und schicklich ist, sonst eingeben mögte. Sollte er

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<sup>134</sup> Again, the pages numbers listed here only refer to the places where these terms are used to describe the attitude taken towards the general rules.

<sup>135</sup> I acknowledge here that my understanding of the attitude of both “regard” and “respect” was greatly clarified by Darwall (1997 and 2008).

sich so wenig bändigen können, dass er sich von der Leidenschaft hinreißen liesse, diese Regel zu verletzen, so kann er doch auch in diesem Fall **die scheue Ehrfurcht**, womit er sich gewöhnt hat, sie anzusehen, nicht völlig ablegen. (*GTMS* 309, my emphasis)

The point here is that once we have grown “accustomed”<sup>136</sup> to regard, have reverence, awe, or respect for the rules, it appears we cannot shake off their “bindingness” on us.<sup>137</sup> Even if we act against them, this does not eliminate the attitude we have towards such rules.

What the above quote also illustrates is that having this attitude towards the general rules does not necessitate one’s acting in accordance with them. Rather, “regarding” the general rules signifies that we believe that we *ought* to act in accordance with them, i.e. that we take the general rules to be binding on us. Not only this, but as “the ruling and the governing” (*TMS* 248) principle of our conduct, our sense of duty, i.e. our regard for the general rules, implies that we regard these rules as having overriding and supreme authority as a principle of conduct. We have seen above, however, that this does not mean that we ought to have the sense of duty as our sole reason for acting; the general rules have ruling authority in that, even when we ought to act on a different passion, we also ought to act on the sense of duty as a concurring motive as well. In general, however, it is important to realize that Smith also seems to equate the attitude of “regard” with the sense of duty as a reason for acting.

For Smith, the sense of duty is meant to capture the fact that our reason for acting, especially in the heat of the moment, can simply be: because the general rules dictate we ought to perform such an action in a particular set of circumstances. Having this as a reason for action is identical to the attitude of “regard” towards the general rules, for Smith, and this is clear from the outset of 3.3 where he states: “The regard to those

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<sup>136</sup> Smith seems to suggest here that acquiring this attitude towards the general rules, i.e. the process by which they becoming binding, is a matter of habituation, rather than a matter of simply choosing to follow them, as is suggested by the language I use when I speak of “taking” this attitude towards the rules. Again, I do not wish to discuss in detail the question of how or why the general rules are binding, for Smith, therefore I leave the investigation of this question aside here.

<sup>137</sup> Unless we subsequently adopt a different (conflicting) ruling and governing principle of conduct.

general rules of conduct, is what is properly called a sense of duty” (*TMS* 229). For this reason, although Smith primarily refers to the sense of duty<sup>138</sup> as our “motive” (see e.g. *TMS* 255-6),<sup>139</sup> he also states that action should proceed from “regard” and its cognates as well. When Smith discusses situations where a person’s sole motive is the sense of duty, for example, he states the following:

The **motive** of his actions may be no other than a **reverence for the established rule of duty**, a serious and earnest desire of acting, in every respect, according to the law of gratitude. (*TMS* 230, my emphasis)

Seine Handlungen können aus einem viel edlern **Bewegungs-Grunde**, aus der **Ehrfurcht gegen die festgesetzte Regel der Pflicht**, aus einem ernstlichen und redlichen Verlangen, in allen Stücken dem Gesez der Dankbarkeit gemäß zu handeln, entspringen. (*GTMS* 313, my emphasis)

In that Smith refers to regard as a motive in cases like this, “regard” as an attitude taken towards the general rules is considered by Smith to be inseparable from our motive for acting when we act in accordance with the general rules, i.e. from the sense of duty.

Before concluding this section, I wish to mention two points about acting on the basis of our regard for the general rules. First, when we regard the general rules as having ruling and governing authority over our conduct, not acting in accordance with these rules has consequences. Smith’s theory of the impartial spectator is often discussed as a theory of conscience (see e.g. Raphael 2007, 34-42), and insofar as the general rules exemplify the judgements of the impartial spectator, the general rules can be considered the pronouncements of conscience as well. Smith argues that a person’s rules of conduct are “those measures of conduct which, in all his cool hours, he had resolved never to infringe, which he had never seen infringed by others without the highest disapprobation” (*TMS* 227). As such, if one performs an action forbidden by the rules one recognizes as having authority over one’s conduct, Smith claims that such infringement “must soon render him the object of the same disagreeable sentiments” (*TMS* 227) we have seen directed towards others who performs similar actions. For this reason, Smith claims that

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<sup>138</sup> “das Gefül [sic] der Pflicht” (*GTMS* 312).

<sup>139</sup> Motive is translated as “Triebfeder” or “Bewegungsgrund” (see *GTMS* 338 and 313 respectively).



acting in accordance with moral rules involves feelings of “agonies,”<sup>140</sup> one is “terrified”<sup>141</sup> at the thought of violating so sacred a rule” (*TMS* 227), one feels “the horrors of shame and repentance”<sup>142</sup> at the prospect of indulging “a passion which may corrupt the remaining part of his life” (*TMS* 227-8). On the other hand, it also involves “the prospect of that security and tranquillity which he will enjoy when he thus determines not to expose himself to the hazard of a contrary conduct” (*TMS* 228). In fact, this is a simple consequence of what the rules are designed to do, i.e. they are designed to prevent us from acting in ways that will be disapproved by others and thereby cause us pain. Breaking these rules, therefore, will bring us the pain they are designed to help us avoid, and following them will bring us the joy of the approval of others, on which the rules are based.

Second, it is important to see that having regard to the general rules ensures the reliability of our conduct. Smith contrasts having regard for the general rules with acting “accidentally” (*TMS* 231), for example, and he even goes so far as to say that “[w]ithout this sacred regard to general rules, there is no man whose conduct can be much depended upon” (*TMS* 231). Smith implies, then, that not only the “duties of politeness” require “**regard** to these general rules” (*TMS* 232, my emphasis)<sup>143</sup> if they are to be fulfilled, but even the “duties of justice, of truth, of chastity, of fidelity, which it is often so difficult to observe, and which there may be so many strong motives to violate,” and on which “the very existence of human society” depends (*TMS* 232). Indeed, Smith claims society “would crumble into nothing if mankind were not generally impressed with a **reverence** for those important rules of conduct” (*TMS* 232-3, my emphasis).<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> “Angst” *GTMS* 310.

<sup>141</sup> “er erschrickt” *GTMS* 310.

<sup>142</sup> “die Schrecken der Scham und der Reue” *GTMS* 310.

<sup>143</sup> “**Achtung** gegen die allgemeinen Regeln” (*GTMS* 316, my emphasis).

<sup>144</sup> “wenn dem Menschen nicht eine **Ehrfurcht** gegen diese wichtigen Regeln des Verhaltens eingeprägt wäre” (*GTMS* 317, my emphasis).

In sum, what is essential in my preceding analysis is that the attitude of regard, for Smith, captures both the recognition of the general rules' ruling and governing authority, and it is also one and the same with the reason for action Smith refers to as the "sense of duty." Now that I have dealt with Smith's view of general rules, the sense of duty, and the attitude of "regard" towards these rules, in the next section I turn to Kant and discuss the central features of his notion of "respect" for the moral law as well as compare and contrast its features with Smith's notion of "regard."

### 4.3 The Development of Kant's Conception of *Achtung* and Moral Motivation

In chapter 2 I illustrated that the development of both Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy took a decisive turn around 1769/70. In particular, it is around this time we see Kant explicitly endorsing a "pure" or "rational" moral philosophy. As previously mentioned, in the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant states the following: "*Moral Philosophy*, therefore, in so far as it furnishes the first *principles of adjudication*, is only cognised by the pure understanding and itself belongs to pure philosophy" (*ID* 2:396, translation modified). In contrast to moral adjudication or judgement, at this time Kant also began to conceive of how moral motivation works in light of his new commitment to "pure" moral philosophy. In a reflection dating from the late 1760s, for example, Kant states the following:

One must extract moral motivating grounds [*die moralische Bewegungsgründe*] from the mixture of all the other (and from the agreeableness of the skill in execution); it has a pure and heavenly origin; we find ourselves right away ennobled when we notice it within us and see happiness only as a consequence of it. (*AA* 19:111, R 6615)

Although at this point in time Kant seems to have already begun thinking of moral motivation as "pure" and distinct from all empirical motivation linked to "agreeableness" and happiness, Kuehn is correct to say that Kant "still had a long way to go" (1995, 384). Indeed, I also mentioned in chapter 2 how Heiner Klemme identifies three claims as central to Kant's mature theory of motivation: 1. Pure reason is practical on its own, 2. Pure reason effects a feeling of respect which is the incentive of moral action, and 3. The morality of action is calculated by the quality of will involved in action (see Klemme

2006, 123). I argued there that although Kant's lecture notes at the time indicate he was already committed to the third claim, the first two claims are nowhere to be found in the reflections and lecture notes from the 1770s. This confirms Klemme's claim that Kant's critical conception of moral motivation is first presented in the *Groundwork* (see Klemme 2006, 122), and that "Kant seems to have first achieved final clarity concerning his 'critical' conception of moral motivation very late" (Klemme 2006, 123). In the following I wish to briefly revisit Kant's early conception of motivation and how his thinking on this topic developed in order to illustrate that the notion of "respect" for the moral law is absent from the early view but makes its appearance only later on with the presentation of Kant's mature view.

We have seen that, in the *Kaehler* lectures notes from the mid-1770s, Kant believes that "[t]he highest principle of all moral judgement lies in the understanding, and the highest principle of all moral drive to do this action lies in the heart; this incentive [*Triebfeder*] is moral feeling" (*Kae* 57). Put differently, moral adjudication or judgement "is the objective ground, but not yet the subjective ground" (*Kae* 56). What this means, as Kant states numerous times in these lectures (see *Kae* 57, 68, 71) and which Kant continues to believe during the Critical period, is that knowing and judging what is morally good is only half the battle and is still a far cry from actually performing the action. Indeed, Kant calls it a "practical error" (*Kae* 57) if the judgement is there but the incentive is not. The decisive question, then, is the following: how do we get from merely judging an action to in fact performing that action?

Kant's answer to this question during the 1770s is quite different from his mature view. In *Kaehler* we find the following view:

nobody can or will see that the understanding is supposed to have a moving power to judge. The understanding can surely judge, but to give this judgement of the understanding force, and that it becomes an incentive to move the will to perform the action, this is the philosopher's stone. (*Kae* 68-9)

That it is impossible to know the connection between knowledge of the good and moving power is a position Kant seems to have never given up, for we find a similar claim in both the *Groundwork* (*GMS* 4:458-9) and the second *Critique*. At the outset of the *Triebfeder* chapter, for instance, Kant clarifies what he both does and does not discuss in the chapter. Kant states that "how a law can be of itself and immediately a determining

ground of the will ... is for human reason an insoluble problem” (*KpV* 5:72, my emphasis). As I illustrated in the previous chapter, however, this does preclude the fact that the understanding and the law *do* function as a determining ground of the will and have motivating power on their own. Kant says in the second *Critique* that his task is rather merely “to determine carefully *in what way* the moral law becomes the incentive and, inasmuch as it *is*, what happens to the human faculty of desire as an affect of that determining ground upon it” (*KpV* 5:72, my emphasis). In the *Kaehler* notes from the mid-1770s, Kant seems to have a similar view such that although we do not, and indeed perhaps cannot, know *how* judgements gain a moving power, we do know *that* they do.

As stated, however, Kant’s conception of how this plays out is much different during the 1770s. According to the *Kaehler* notes: “If I judge via the understanding that the action is morally good, much is still missing, that I were to do this action, concerning which I have judged. But if this judgement does move me to do the action, then that is moral feeling” (*Kae* 68). Thus at this point in his development we find that “[m]oral feeling” signifies “a capacity to be affected by a moral judgement” (*Kae* 68). Kant’s language here is misleading from the perspective of his Critical view, however, for as Klemme points out (see 2006, 123), Kant had not yet come to believe that moral judgement itself can *effect* the force capable of moving us to action. Kant confirms when he says the following:

To bring human beings to feel the abhorrence of vice is completely impossible, for I can only say to him what my understanding has insight into, and I can indeed bring him so far as to have such insight, but that he should feel abhorrence when he does not have such a sensitivity of the senses is not possible. (*Kae* 71)

At this point in time Kant therefore seems to think that actually acting morally, not just having correct judgement, is a matter of cultivating feeling, which *does* have moving power, in such a way that it is in *accord* with moral judgement. Indeed, it is called *moral* feeling here partly because our feelings match morality. As it is stated in *Kaehler*:

everyone can see that the action is abhorrent, but whoever feels this abhorrence has moral feeling. The understanding does not abhor, rather recognizes abhorrence and opposes itself to it, but sensibility only has to abhor, now if sensibility abhors that which the understanding recognizes to be abhorrent, this is moral feeling. (*Kae* 71)

In order to have this kind of “moral” feeling, what we have an aversion or attraction towards simply needs to be cultivated via habit such that it accords with what we judge to be morally right and wrong. As the *Kaehler* notes say: “Indeed we can only produce a habit that is not natural but stands in for nature, which becomes a habit through imitation and frequent practice” (*Kae* 72). In chapter 2 I illustrated that Kant believes this habituation is achieved via education and religion during the 1770s.

As discussed in the last chapter and as we will see below, according to Kant’s mature view, motivationally forceful feeling is not something brought about separately from correctly judging. Kant’s mature position is that our recognition of the moral law itself brings about a feeling, namely the feeling of respect for the moral law, and this “moral” feeling functions as an incentive and motive of action, i.e. it has motivational force. Not only this, but this happens necessarily, i.e. the recognition of the law and the feeling of respect for it are two sides of the same coin. That Kant had not yet developed his mature view in the mid-1770s is clear not only from the fact that the relation between knowledge and feeling takes a different form in the early view, but also because Kant’s technical use of “respect” is absent from all of Kant’s pre-Critical writings.

First of all, it is to be noted that Kant’s mature conception of respect for the law is absent from the *Kaehler* lecture notes. When he uses *Achtung* in these notes he speaks only more colloquially of the *Achtung* between parents and children (see *Kae* 246), and between friends (see *Kae* 303 and 336), and he often discusses respecting the rights of others (*Kae* 282, 284, 311, 352). He does speak of respecting the commands of God (see *Kae* 162-3), but does not speak of respecting moral commands. What is interesting is that he mentions how being honour-worthy deserves respect (*Kae* 76), and more generally he has a discussion of how virtue has an inner worth and for this reason deserves respect (*Kae* 200). There is also mention of how we have a drive to achieve what has an inner worth, i.e. a drive to be respected (*Kae* 271-6). The view that respect is due to what has inner worth approximates Kant’s mature view, but there is no talk of any kind of moral principle deserving respect. Of course, one reason why Kant does not discuss respect for the moral law at this time is that he had not yet developed his conception of the moral law/categorical imperative. As I illustrated in chapter 2, the closest Kant comes to formulating the categorical imperative in these notes is the following: “Morality is the

agreement of action with a universally valid law of the free will [*Willkür*]. All morality is the relation of action to the universal rule” (*Kae* 64-5). The closest Kant comes to talking about a law deserving respect (besides the commands of God) is during a discussion of the distinction between ethics and jurisprudence, where Kant states that “[v]irtue does indeed demand and presupposes respect [*Achtung*] and meticulous observance of human laws, but it [virtue] refers to the motive, to the disposition, from which the action, which has juridical correctness, springs” (*Kae* 106-7). Kant here refers to the observance of laws as respecting them, but he is only talking about “human” or legal laws here, not a moral law, and he does not go on to say that the virtuous motive *is* itself respect for the moral law and that this is what is essential to the moral disposition.

A discussion of respect for the moral law either as recognition, or as a motivational feeling is absent from Kant’s other pre-Critical writings as well. Again, there are various places where he discusses respect for women (*O* 2:248 and 2:229) and for one’s wife (*O* 2:220, *AA* 20:120), as well as respect for persons in the sense of them deserving merit (*O* 2:213), and also respect for persons simply as persons (*AA* 27:224, 19:513, and 24:176). There are also places where he speaks of respecting the commands of God (*AA* 18:724) and respecting civil laws (*AA* 19:590), and he speaks of both respecting the worth of humanity (*O* 2:217 and 2:221, *AA* 13:375 and 19:241) as well as the right of humanity (*AA* 15:611, 15:625, 19:162, and 19:225), but there is no mention of respect for a moral law or principle, nor is there reference to respect as a potential motive or incentive, let alone the only proper moral incentive, anywhere in the pre-Critical period. The first mention of respect for the moral law in any of Kant’s writings seems to be to be in the *Naturrecht Feyerabend* notes from 1784.

Before turning to these notes, however, it is worth revisiting Kant’s view on moral motivation in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the context of Kant’s relation to Smith. In this, Kant’s first presentation of his view on moral motivation during the Critical period,<sup>145</sup> what we find is clearly not Kant’s fully developed, mature view. In the

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<sup>145</sup> Although, strictly speaking, this view is “Critical” since it is presented in the first *Critique*, as mentioned earlier I agree with Henry Allison that it is best to refer to Kant’s views on motivation

second section of the ‘Canon of Pure Reason,’ Kant makes a familiar distinction between pragmatic laws and moral laws (see *KrV* A806/B834). What is interesting is that he says that pragmatic laws have “the motive of **happiness**”, but when following the moral law our motive is “the **worthiness to be happy**” (*KrV* A806/B834). This is interesting because although it is perhaps compatible with Kant’s mature view in that he at times discusses morality as the worthiness to be happy (see e.g. *KpV* 5:130), Kant does not yet seem to have arrived at his mature view of respect as the moral motive.

The first instance of Kant’s mature view on motivation, and prior to its first published presentation in the *Groundwork*, is in the lecture notes from Kant’s class on natural law from 1784. Shortly after stating that an action has worth only when it is done from duty and not inclination, and making the distinction between acting *according to* and *from* duty, *Feyerabend* argues that “[w]e must do moral actions merely from duty and respect for the moral law [*bloß aus Pflicht und Achtung fürs moralische Gesetz*], without the lowest incentives [*ohne die geringsten Triebfedern*]” (*NF* 27:1326). These notes also speak of the law determining the will itself, and that what obligates us must be mere lawfulness (*ibid.*). Indeed, the notes state that “the law as a law must determine” us, and this is just to say “we must have respect for the law” (*NF* 27:1326). Further evidence that Kant had reached his mature view by this point is clear from the fact that he claims respect has a relation to the recognition of worth: “respect is the estimation of a worth, insofar as it limits all inclination” (*NF* 27:1326), and this “absolute worth,” he says, is set “in the actions” (*NF* 27:1326). It is therefore in these lecture notes that we see Kant’s discussion of respect for the law as the moral motive for the first time.

#### 4.4 Kant’s Mature Conception of Respect for the Moral Law

From the time Kant publishes his mature view on moral motivation in the *Groundwork* onwards, the concept of “respect [*Achtung*]” functions in a number of

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in the first *Critique* as “semi-critical” given its relatively underdeveloped status (see Allison 1990, 67).

different ways. For instance, respect applies to three objects in Kant's writings. First, what will be my focus in the following and what is the primary object of respect is the moral law itself (see *GMS* 400, 401n, 403, 405, 407, 426, 436, 440; *KpV* 71-90). Second, Kant at times discusses how persons deserve respect insofar as they are examples of the moral law (*GMS* 401n, 428, 435, 436, 439; *KpV* 5:76-8). Third, Kant also says that we respect persons simply insofar as they are persons/ends-in-themselves (*MdS* 448-50, 462-8).<sup>146</sup> Although it could be interesting to compare Kant and Smith on the second kind of respect,<sup>147</sup> because my goal is to compare Smith's notion of regard for the general rules and Kant's notion of respect for the law, in the following I focus exclusively on the moral law as an object of respect.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, Kant's first published mention of respect for the law is in the "third proposition" of *Groundwork* I, which states: "*duty is the necessity of an action from respect for the law*" (*GMS* 400). The law that Kant mentions here is of course the moral law, which in the *Critique of Practical Reason* is defined as follows: "So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law" (*KpV* 5:30).<sup>148</sup> The question I am interested in here

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<sup>146</sup> For more on these three different objects of respect see Klimchuk (2004, 39) and Allison (2011, 128ff. and 128n). Mary Gregor also makes a distinction between two types of respect: for the law, and for persons who follow the law (see 1963, 181). See also Darwall (2008) for a discussion of how exactly we are supposed to understand the third kind of respect in Kant.

<sup>147</sup> Smith, for instance, seems to have a conception of respecting a person insofar as they "regard" or respect the rules. In general, Smith claims that "[a]n amiable action, a respectable action, an horrid action, are all of them actions which naturally excite the love, the respect, or the horror of the spectator, for the person who performs them" (*TMS* 225). Respectable actions in particular, i.e. those which excite the respect of a spectator, are those Smith discusses under the heading of the "respectable virtues" and these are "the virtues of self-denial, of self-government, of that command of the passions which subjects all the movements of our nature to what our own dignity and honour, and the propriety of our own conduct require" (*TMS* 30). Given that the general rules do just this, i.e. command us to have certain passions and not others, it seems that a person who obeys the general rules of conduct would excite the respect of a spectator.

<sup>148</sup> It is clear that Kant distinguishes between the moral law and the categorical imperative, where the categorical imperative signifies the relation of the moral law to "a will that according to its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by it (a necessitation)" (*GMS* 413). However, because this distinction is not central to my discussion, I do not discuss it in the following.



is: what exactly does respect for the moral law consist in, according to Kant's mature view?

Kant's first clarification of respect comes in a footnote one page after he introduces the notion in the *Groundwork*. There Kant says that respect "is a feeling" (*GMS* 4:401n). However, in this footnote Kant goes on to describe respect in another way. He says: "What I recognize immediately as a law for myself I recognize with respect, which signifies merely the consciousness of the *subordination* of my will to a law" (*GMS* 401n). The first and most essential thing to understand about the concept of respect, then, is that it has two components. Andrews Reath notes this when he refers to the recognition of the law as the intellectual or practical<sup>149</sup> aspect of respect (see 2006, 10ff.), and respect as feeling as the affective aspect of respect (see *ibid.*). Indeed, Reath claims that "these two aspects are connected aspects of a single complex phenomenon" (2006, 26 note 7). It is my task in the following to discuss these two aspects of respect, but my focus will be on respect signifying the awareness of the law, or what I will call the "attitude" of respect. I hope to clarify the nature of this attitude and its relation to its function as a motivationally forceful feeling by placing it in context with the foregoing discussing of Smith's "attitude" of regard for the general rules.

#### 4.4.1 Respect as Attitude: Recognition of the Law's Authority

As mentioned, Kant tells us in the *Groundwork* that respect "signifies merely the consciousness of the *subordination* of my will to a law" (*GMS* 401n). What this means is that respect signifies *being bound* to the law, i.e. standing under obligation. In order to characterize this attitude towards the moral law more concretely, it is first worth discussing how we become conscious of the law in the first place. According to Kant's doctrine of the fact of reason, at first glance it may seem as if we are simply conscious of the moral law insofar as we are rational, i.e. that we are in some way innately aware of the law. Kant says the following, for example: "the moral law is given, as it were, as a fact of pure reason of which we are a priori conscious and which is apodictically certain"

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<sup>149</sup> Reath only calls this the practical aspect in the revised version of his essay. See 2006, 26 note 7.

(*KpV* 5:47). However, Kant explicitly addresses the question of how we are conscious of the law earlier in the second *Critique*:

But how is consciousness of that moral law possible? We can become aware [*bewußt werden*] of pure practical laws just as we are aware of pure theoretical principles, by attending to the necessity with which reason prescribes them to us and to the setting aside of all empirical conditions to which reason directs us. (*KpV* 5:30)

Consciousness of the moral law therefore requires attentive reflection, and is not something that occurs without some effort; as Allison has remarked, consciousness of the law requires some “reflective activity” (2011, 132).<sup>150</sup>

Once we are aware of the law, however, the attitude of respect follows necessarily. In the second *Critique*, for example, Kant says that “the boundless esteem for the pure moral law” - which I take to be equivalent to respect - “is inseparably connected with the representation of the moral law in every finite rational being” (*KpV* 5:80). It is passages like this that cause Timmermann, for example, to state that “Kant frequently emphasises the inescapability of reverence ... whether we like it or not” (2007, 182).<sup>151</sup> Wood and Schönecker are therefore correct to remark that respect is not something that can be commanded. Rather, the only thing that can be commanded is “*reflection*, the application of practical reason, and insight into the validity of the moral law” (2015, 80). Once we reflect on the law, its validity and its necessity, respecting the law is inescapable.

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<sup>150</sup> In this paragraph I disagree with Sytsma (1993, 119), Walker (1989, 107), and Stratton-Lake (2000, 34-9), all of whom claim that it is respect that first causes us to become aware of the law, its constraint, and even our own autonomy. Given the quote from Kant above, this view has problems fitting with what Kant says. It is also a problematic view from a systematic perspective, for if respect causes us to become aware of the law, this implies that the law is capable of bringing about an attitude in us and even binding us without our being conscious of this process. This seems to imply that being bound by the law is in some way out of our control, which conflicts with the law’s autonomously binding character.

<sup>151</sup> That the attitude of respect works this way in general is supported by the fact that Kant believes the distinct attitude of respect for persons who exemplify the law follows necessarily from our recognition of them as well. As Kant states: “before a humble common man in whom I perceive uprightness of character in a higher degree than I am aware of in myself *my spirit bows, whether I want it or whether I do not*” (*KpV* 5:76-7, emphasis added).

It is important to determine what exactly we are bound to do when we respect the moral law. As the fundamental law of the second *Critique* and the three formulations of the categorical imperative in the *Groundwork* make clear, the law in question binds us to only act on a particular class of maxim. To take the formula of universal law from the *Groundwork* as an example, respecting the moral law involves the recognition that you can only act on those maxims “through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (*GMS* 4:421).<sup>152</sup> As such, the categorical imperative (the moral law as binding upon finite beings) restricts us from acting on maxims that cannot become universal laws, i.e. maxims that either cannot consistently be universalized (that fail the universalization test, see *GMS* 4:422), or cannot be universally and consistently willed (that involve a conflict or contradiction of will, see *GMS* 4:423). As such, respecting the moral law involves a restriction on the actions that it is morally permissible to undertake; acting contrary to the law, i.e. on a maxim that fails the universalization test or that involves a contradiction of the will, is to perform a morally wrong and therefore impermissible action, for Kant.

Respect does not signify being bound to any kind of law whatsoever, however. Similar to Smith’s regard to the general rules, respect for Kant signifies regarding the moral law as the “supreme” principle of morality (see e.g. *GMS* 4:392, 409, 411, 440). Respecting the moral law therefore implies regarding it as not only an authoritative law, but as a law that has supreme authority, i.e. its commands override all others. This is connected to the value we recognize in the law. As Kant says in the *Groundwork* footnote: “Respect is actually the representation of a worth that infringes on my self-love” (*GMS* 4:401n). Respecting the law therefore involves the recognition that it has a particular kind of worth that trumps the value of self-love. In the *Groundwork*, Kant distinguishes between what has a “price,” i.e. what “can be replaced with something else, as its *equivalent*,” and what has “dignity,” i.e. what “allows of no equivalent” (*GMS*

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<sup>152</sup> I acknowledge that the content of the three formulations of the categorical imperative are different, but each formulation and the fundamental law of the second *Critique* all illustrate the point I wish to make here, which is simply that the law or any form of the categorical imperative all restrict the class of actions that are morally permissible.

4:434). According to Kant, “what constitutes the condition under which alone something can be an end in itself does not merely have a relative worth, i.e. a price, but an inner worth, i.e. *dignity*” (*GMS* 4:435). Now, for Kant, “morality is the condition under which alone a rational being can be an end in itself; ... Thus morality and humanity, in so far as it is capable of morality, is that which alone has dignity” (*GMS* 4:435). Humanity therefore has an inner worth or dignity only insofar as it is moral. This is essentially the same thought expressed at the beginning of *Groundwork* I where Kant famously claims the following: “It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be taken to be good without limitation, except a GOOD WILL” (*GMS* 4:393). Over the course of the subsequent pages we learn that the concept of a good will is contained in that of duty (see *GMS* 4:397), and more specifically we learn that a good will is a will that does its duty *from duty*, i.e. for no other reason than because it ought to do it (*GMS* 4:397), and what we ought to do is commanded by the moral law. As such, both morality (the moral law as a command, the following of which makes a human an end in itself) and humanity (insofar as it is moral or an end in itself, i.e. insofar as it has a good will) have dignity and worth. Respecting the law implies recognizing the law as having this value, which, again, is a value that has no equivalent and as such is above everything else that has merely relative value.

As I illustrated above, for Smith it was possible to have “regard” for the general rules but act contrary to them. In other words, having regard for the rules didn’t make it such that you necessarily act in accordance with them. This was the case, for Smith, because a passion might be so strong that it overcomes the strength of our regard for the rules. Kant also believes it is possible to respect the law but not act in accordance with it, but for a different reason. If acting in accordance with the general rules involves overcoming the strength of other desires that oppose what the rules command, then Smith might be said to subscribe to what some call a “balance of forces” model of action, where our action is a result of the stronger force or desire on balance with the other desires operative at the time. Although it is a matter of debate,<sup>153</sup> I argued in the previous chapter

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<sup>153</sup> The overwhelming majority of views in the secondary literature agree that a “balance of forces” model of action is an inaccurate picture of Kants view: See Reath (2006, 12-3), Zinkin

that it is fairly clear Kant does not subscribe to such a view mainly because it seems to preclude freedom of choice, and makes our actions determined by our strongest desires. Kant's view, rather, is that even where a desire is stronger than all others, there is always a choice to act on that desire. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this is linked to Kant's view on the freedom of the will, expressed in his notion of the faculty of choice [*Willkür*] and what Allison has called Kant's "incorporation thesis," according to which, as Kant says in the *Religion*: "freedom of the power of choice has the characteristic ... that it cannot be determined to action through any incentive *except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim*" (*Rel* 6:23-4). This means that respecting the law does not determine us to follow the law, rather, as Timmerman also observes, having respect for the law only makes it available as a possible reason for acting, which, if we were to act on it, requires us to *choose* to act in accordance with the law (Timmermann 2007, 43). According to Timmermann, respect is always, in principle, strong enough to be a reason for acting. The question of the moral law actually motivating us to action is therefore not a matter of it being a force stronger than others, but of freedom – of *choosing* to act as the law commands (*ibid.*).<sup>154</sup> What this means, similar to Smith's notion of "regard," is that as an *attitude*, respect is not the kind of thing that comes in degrees, rather one either respects the law or one does not, for Kant.

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(2006, 50), Ameriks (2006, 94), Herrera (2000, 403), Ware (2014, 742), Wuerth (2010, 10), Irwin (2009, 55) and Allison (1990, 126). In addition to Walker (see 1989, 101ff.), McCarty is the one who most seriously maintains that Kant *does* subscribe to the balance of forces model, and that respect needs to be a strong enough force if it is to push us to action (see McCarty 2009, 172, 177, 181 and also 1994, 19, 25). At the same time, McCarty seems to believe that this does not preclude the possibility of freedom of choice because we have to assume agents are free even if determined by the strength of forces (1994, 29). Nonetheless, McCarty is forced to admit that such a view implies that at the time of acting there is a sense in which this implies action is beyond our control (see 1994, 28).

<sup>154</sup> It is slightly misleading to say here that respect is always strong enough to be a reason for acting. As I go on to show, the attitude of respect does not come in degrees, but as a *feeling* it is appropriate to say that it does come in degrees. Again, however, the strength of respect as a feeling does not necessitate the extent to which we might choose to act on it. As Allison notes (2006, 396) its strength might make it more *likely* we do choose it, but the fact remains that we always have the choice to act either on it or against it, regardless of its strength.

In this section I have shown that respect as an attitude signifies our awareness of standing under the moral law, i.e. as being bound to it, as a law that is supremely authoritative over our conduct and over our formation of maxims. As a law that is supremely authoritative, respect for the moral law also implies the recognition of a worth or a value that cannot be compared to anything else. Respect as an attitude was also shown to be something that does not come in degrees, nor does it necessitate action in accordance with the respected law. At the same time and as mentioned above, however, respect is also a feeling, and one that is intimately connected to the attitude of respect. In the next section I therefore turn to respect as a feeling and to the connection between respect as an attitude and respect as a feeling.

#### 4.4.2 Respect as Feeling

As I mentioned above, in addition to signifying the “consciousness of the *subordination* of my will to a law” (*GMS* 4:401n), Kant also claims that respect “is a feeling” (*GMS* 4:401n). Confusingly at times, the concept of respect therefore refers to both an attitude and a feeling, and even in his first definition of the term Kant refers to it as both of these things in almost the same breath (see *GMS* 4:401n). Kant’s use of one term to describe these two sides of the phenomenon continues into the second *Critique*, where, in a passage already quoted, respect is discussed as “boundless esteem for the pure moral law” and just lines later this esteem, an attitude, is referred to as “a feeling” (*KpV* 5:79-80). There is perhaps good reason why Kant uses a single term to signify both an attitude and a feeling, however. As a feeling in addition to an attitude, it is important to realize that these two aspects of respect, although different in themselves, are two sides of the same coin. I mentioned above, for example, how Reath states that “these two aspects are connected aspects of a single complex phenomenon” (2006, 26 note 7). According to Reath, this means that “though distinguishable, these aspects of respect need not be phenomenologically distinct, but would be experienced together” (2006, 12). To have the attitude is therefore at once to feel respect.

If the attitude and the feeling of respect are two sides of the same coin, and if the attitude necessarily arises from our consciousness of the law, this means that the feeling arises necessarily from such a consciousness as well. Such a view is confirmed when

Kant says, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, that “[r]espect for the law, which in its subjective aspect is called moral feeling, is identical with consciousness of one’s duty” (*MdS* 6:464). This also means that, just as the attitude of respect cannot be commanded, neither can the feeling; to feel respect requires being conscious of the moral law and being aware of it as supremely authoritative.

As being connected to a kind of consciousness, however, the feeling of respect is distinct from other feelings based on its source. When Kant first introduces respect as a feeling in the *Groundwork*, he says that respect is not a feeling “*received* by influence, but one *self-wrought* [*selbstgewirktes*] by a rational concept and therefore specifically different from all feelings of the former kind, which come down to inclination or fear” (*GMS* 4:401n). Here Kant distinguishes between two different ways in which feeling can be brought about. On the one hand there are feelings “*received* by influence” (*GMS* 401n). Generally understood, these kinds of feelings are received from external objects, the feelings themselves being pleasurable feelings (inclinations) or displeasurable, i.e. painful, ones (fear).<sup>155</sup> As feelings that are received by external objects, we are passive with respect to them and do not control when such feelings are brought about. Indeed, we are dependent upon external objects for feelings of this kind to be brought about, and such feelings arise only contingently based on the presence of such objects. Kant contrasts this kind of feeling with those that are “*self-wrought* by a rational concept” (*GMS* 401n). As we saw above, the feeling of respect is brought about by our awareness of the moral law. As such, the feeling of respect has a source distinct from all other feelings, namely an a priori source. As Kant says in the second *Critique*, respect is a feeling “that is not of empirical origin” (*KpV* 5:73) and has an “intellectual cause” (*KpV* 5:79). In that this feeling has a rational as opposed to an empirical origin, respect is not therefore brought about by receptivity, but is a product of spontaneity, i.e. it is actively produced by our own reason. Recall that the feeling of respect is brought about by consciousness of the moral law, and specifically the moral law’s overriding constraint. In

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<sup>155</sup> That feelings in general, for Kant, involve pleasure and displeasure is clear from how he understands the faculty of “feeling” in the *Anthropology* as the “feeling of pleasure and displeasure” (see *Anth* 7:230ff.).

that we are in control of paying attention to the moral law and its constraint, we are in a sense in control of when this feeling comes about, as opposed to being dependent on external objects for the production of other feelings. As we have seen, this feeling also arises *necessarily* from consciousness of the law. It is for this reason that Kant claims this is a feeling that can be “cognized a priori” (*KpV* 5:73), i.e. because it is a feeling that we can be sure will necessarily arise. Indeed, in the *Critique of Judgement* Kant implies that respect is the only feeling of this kind when he claims that respect alone is “a special and peculiar modification of this feeling”, i.e. of “feeling” as a faculty in general (see *KdU* 5:222).

Kant understands *feeling* in general as having to do with pleasure and displeasure (see e.g. *Anth* 7:230ff.), and because respect is a feeling, Kant thinks of it as at least related to pleasure and displeasure as well. In the *Groundwork*, for example, he states that the feeling of respect for the law “is something that is considered an object neither of inclination, nor of fear, even though it is at the same time somewhat analogous to both” (*GMS* 401n). Interestingly, above we saw that, for Smith, regard involved both a feeling of being “terrified at the thought of violating so sacred a rule” (*TMS* 227) as well as “the prospect of that security and tranquillity which he will enjoy when he thus determines not to expose himself to the hazard of a contrary conduct” (*TMS* 228). It seems that Kant has something similar in mind here. As analogous to fear and inclination, the feeling of respect involves a feeling of both attraction and aversion (see Timmermann 2007, 43n), i.e. we are attracted to the possibility of living up to the demands of the moral law and thereby raising the worth of both our actions and ourselves. We have an aversion towards the fact that the demands of the moral law require us to set aside the demands of our inclinations (see Wood and Schönecker 2015, 69 and McCarty 2009, 179), and we are also afraid of not living up to the demands of the moral law and feeling shame that we aren’t as good as we could be.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> This is linked to Kant’s notion of the pleasurable feeling of *Selbstzufriedenheit* or “satisfaction with oneself” which is proportionate to the extent to the extent to which we have acted morally. I discuss this in detail in chapter 5.



As discussed in the last chapter and mentioned above, respect as a feeling has been a topic of debate in the literature, specifically in relation to whether or not it plays a role in moral motivation, for Kant. In the last chapter I disagreed with Reath's "intellectualist" interpretation, according to which feeling is not involved in motivation, but is rather "a feeling or emotion that is experienced when the moral law checks the inclinations and limits their influence on the will" (2006, 10). Reath argues that "it is the practical aspect that is active in motivating moral conduct, while the affective side, or feeling of respect, is its effect on certain sensible tendencies" (2006, 10). According to this reading, the *feeling* of respect is a mere epiphenomenon (see Timmermann 2007, 42) that is part of our experience of the recognition of the moral law, but as such it plays no role in our actually doing what we recognize we ought to do. I argued in the last chapter in favour what I take to be the now dominant view in the literature,<sup>157</sup> according to which respect as a feeling *does* play a role in motivation. According to this view "Kant viewed respect for the moral law as a psychologically forceful incentive" (McCarty 2009, 167). I do not wish to devote any further space to offering an argument for the interpretation that the feeling of respect plays a role in motivation. What deserves repeating here is simply that the effect that the moral law has on feeling, i.e. the fact that it brings about the feeling of respect, is the means by which the moral law has a psychologically effective influence on sensibility, and this plays an essential role in the causal story of moral action.

In the above I hope to have illustrated that, similar to Smith's conception of "regard" for the general rules of conduct, Kant's conception of "respect" for the law is at once the recognition of its authority as the supreme principle governing which actions are and are not morally permissible, and is also a "feeling" or "sense of duty" which functions as a moral motive. Both Smith's attitude of regard and Kant's attitude of respect do not come in degrees, they are attitudes one either does or does not have, whether or not one is conscious of the moral law or has regard for the general rules. For both Smith and Kant, recognizing the general rules/moral law gives us a reason for

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<sup>157</sup> Among those who subscribe to this view are the following: Wood and Schönecker (2015, 56-88); Timmermann (2007, 43); Ware (2014); and McCarty (2009, 167ff.).

acting, i.e. because the rules/law commands it. I hope to have at least shown that reading Kant against the background of Smith's idea of "regard" helps clarify the attitude of respect itself, as well as the distinction between the attitude and the feeling of respect.

If it is in fact true that Kant was influenced by Smith's conception of "regard," one might ask why Kant would have been tempted to incorporate such an idea. In the next section I venture to offer an answer to this more historical question where I discuss the evidence suggesting Kant did in fact read Smith before summarizing the development of Kant's thinking on moral motivation, and suggesting that Smith's notion of "regard" provided Kant with a solution to a problem he encountered while developing his Critical position on this topic.

## 4.5 Kant and Smith

Whether Kant read Smith, and in particular Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, was asked quite early on by Kant's readers. As early as 1798, for example, Christian Garve suggested that the "sympathetic spectator of Smith ... is in fact the lawgiver of Kant" (1798, 166).<sup>158</sup> Schopenhauer mentions the connection between Smith and Kant as well, when he suggests that Smith may have influenced Kant's conception of the categorical imperative.<sup>159</sup> In a more scholarly fashion and as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Oncken states in a 1877 study that we find a number of textual similarities in both Kant's and Smith's ethical works. Among other things, Oncken claims they have a similar conception of conscience and they both divide the moral subject into two persons or personalities (see 1877, 93). Oncken also claims, however, that, strictly speaking, we cannot say that Kant borrowed anything directly from Smith. He claims, rather, that it is only speculation "that Kant received stimulus from Smith, even if only mediately" (ibid., 96). Even though he does go on to say that this speculation "approaches certainty" (ibid., 97), for Oncken the evidence is not strong enough to prove a direct influence.

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<sup>158</sup> See also Klemme (2000, vol. 4, viii) for a discussion.

<sup>159</sup> See Klemme (2000, vol. 4, ix).

Sometime later, in the first critical edition and first modern German translation of Smith's *Theory*, Walter Eckstein argues the evidence is a bit more certain that Kant in fact read Smith's *Theory*. Eckstein points to a letter from Marcus Herz to Kant dated July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1771, in which Herz states that he was told by "Herr Friedlander" that "the Englishman Smith [*den Engländer Smith*]" is Kant's "favourite [*Liebling*]" (AA 10:126). Given the date of the letter, that the *Wealth of Nations* wasn't published in English for the first time until 1776, and given the first German translation of the *Theory* appeared the year before the letter (1770), Eckstein takes this as "an extremely valuable piece of evidence for the fact that Kant knew Smith's *main ethical work* and had a high estimation of its worth" (Eckstein 2010, xxii). In their introduction to the Glasgow edition of the *Theory* as well, D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie essentially come to the same conclusion as Eckstein and cite the same evidence for believing that "Kant knew and valued TMS" (1976, 31).

Susan Meld Shell references a number of reflections, in which she believes there is evidence Kant was familiar with Smith's ethical writings (see Shell 1980, 80n, 102n).<sup>160</sup> Samuel Fleischacker reviews these reflections in detail, many of which make reference to an "impartial observer [*unparteyischer Zuschauer*]," and he concludes that "there is enough clear documentary evidence of a connection between Smith and Kant to justify a philosophical comparison of their work" (1991, 254). Finally, Klemme claims that "clear evidence of Kant's reading of the *Theorie der moralischen Empfindungen* is provided by student lecture notes on anthropology in 1781/2 in which Kant quotes explicitly from the *Theorie*" (Klemme 2000, vii note 13). Indeed, the place in the lecture notes Klemme cites (AA 25:1035) contains a discussion of gratitude to inanimate objects that is so similar to a discussion in Smith's *Theory* that it is very probably a paraphrase from Smith's text.<sup>161</sup>

I therefore take it to be an accepted fact that Kant read the 1770 translation of Smith's *Theory*. Indeed, as others have suggested (see Fleischacker 1991, 253), Kant

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<sup>160</sup> The reflections Shell cites are the following: AA 15:334, R 767; 15:592, R 1355; 19:117, R 6628; 19:184, R 6864; 19:243, R 7078; 19:247, R 7093.

<sup>161</sup> Compare AA 25:1035 with *GTMS* 226 and *TMS* 164.

seems to have read Smith's *Theory* soon after the translation appeared. This is clear not only from the date of the Herz letter to Kant (July 19<sup>th</sup> 1771), but also from the approximate dates of the many reflections cited by Shell and Fleischacker as well.<sup>162</sup>

If Kant did indeed read Smith's *Theory*, the next question to ask is *why* he would have been interested in Smith's text apart from the fact that it was influential at the time (see Eckstein 2010, xviii-xxiii). In other words, what could Kant have found interesting in Smith's *Theory*? Klemme gives four possible reasons why Kant may have been interested in the *Theory* when he read it in the early 1770s:

1. "Kant was simply impressed by Smith's careful observations of human feelings, motives and actions"
2. "Smith had something important to say about moral motivation, a topic on which Kant had not arrived at a settled view during the early 1770s."
3. "Kant found in Smith important conceptual distinctions." (For example, Smith's distinction between praise and praise-worthiness, or that between propriety and merit)
4. "Smith's theory of the impartial spectator and his illustrations on the 'Sense of Duty' influenced Kant's own idea of the categorical imperative" (see Klemme 2000, vol. 4, viii).

The comparison I have made above between Smith's notion of regard and Kant's notion of respect confirms that Kant would indeed have been interested in all these topics. I illustrated that during the 1770s Kant had not yet come to his mature conception of moral motivation, and would have therefore found what Smith has to say about motives and passions, including the sense of duty, extremely interesting.

There is, then, good reason to believe both that Kant read Smith's *Theory*, and that Kant would have found much of what Smith said interesting. The question I would like to pursue in the remainder of this paper is whether or not there is reason to believe Kant may have been impressed by Smith's notion of "regard" in particular, and why.

We have seen that Kant had not yet come to his mature position on motivation as of the middle of the 1770s, for in the *Kaehler* notes we find a different conception of the relation between the understanding (not even reason) and motivation: the understanding

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<sup>162</sup> R 767 (1772-3), R 1355 (1773-5?, 1776-8?, 1772-3??), R 6864 (approx. 1771), R 6628 (1769-70 (1764-8?), R 7078 (1776-8), and R 7093 (approx. 1771?, 1769?).

comprehends moral principles, and in order for this to be motivating, feeling must be habituated to feel drawn or averted towards the same things that the understanding comprehends we ought to be. When feeling and the understanding do accord, Kant calls this “moral feeling” (*Kae* 71). Although Kant was already committed to a central element of his Critical view at the time, namely that what is essential to the evaluation of moral action is the quality of will, we saw that he did not yet put forth the two other views that are characteristic of his mature view: 1. That pure reason is practical on its own, and 2. that pure reason becomes practical by producing a motivationally forceful feeling of respect. What I wish to suggest is that, paired with his reformulation of the nature of the faculty of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*), it is Smith’s notion of “regard [*Achtung*]” as the recognition of moral rules which itself provides us with a motivationally effective feeling that allowed Kant to come to his mature view on moral motivation.

A central question of the *Critique of Practical Reason* is whether pure reason is practical on its own and can itself determine the will. This is essentially a question concerning the nature of the faculty of desire. As Kant says in the ‘Deduction’ of the second *Critique*, the question is “how reason can determine maxims of the will, whether this takes place only by means of empirical representations as determining grounds or whether pure reason might also be practical” (*KpV* 5:45). As discussed in the previous chapter, Kant defines the faculty of desire in the second *Critique* as “a being’s *faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations*” (*KpV* 5:10n). As Stephen Engstrom notes, such a definition leaves “unspecified how or by what its operation might be determined” (2009, 27). In the second *Critique* Kant explicitly criticizes Christian Wolff and Alexander Baumgarten for assuming desire can be determined in only one way, namely via the representation of pleasure. Although they distinguish between the lower and the higher faculty of desire, Wolff and Baumgarten do so based on whether it is the senses (lower) or the understanding (higher) representing the pleasure in question. This is problematic, for Kant, for if one draws the distinction between the lower and higher faculty of desire in this way, he claims that “it does not matter at all where the *representation* of this pleasing object comes from but only how much it *pleases*” (*KpV* 5:23). The result of such a view is therefore that the faculty of desire is always determined by pleasure, and more

specifically by the higher degree of pleasure. In other words, if we think of the faculty of desire like Wolff and Baumgarten do, then we have a balance of forces model of action such that we necessarily choose what is represented as having the most pleasure (it doesn't matter if this pleasure is represented by the senses or by the understanding). In this way, Kant claims that Wolff and Baumgarten "deny pure reason the ability to determine the will without some feeling being presupposed" (*KpV* 5:23-4).

In contrast to Wolff and Baumgarten, Kant does not want to deny this possibility from the start. As such, Kant believes that only the lower faculty of desire represents pleasure as a condition for the determination of the will, and the higher faculty of desire implies that "pleasure only follows upon its determination" (*KpV* 5:10n). Feelings of pleasure, for Kant, are therefore not only different in degree, but they can also be different in kind. As I illustrated above, in the *Groundwork* Kant distinguishes between feelings "received by influence" and those "self-wrought by a rational concept" (*GMS* 4:401n), where the latter has a distinct, rational source. As Kant claims in the second *Critique* after criticizing Baumgarten's and Wolff's distinction between the lower and higher faculty of desire:

either there is no higher faculty of desire at all or else *pure reason* must be practical of itself and alone, that is, it must be able to determine the will by the mere form of a practical rule without presupposing any feeling and hence without any representation of the agreeable or disagreeable as the matter of the faculty of desire, which is always an empirical condition of principles. (*KpV* 5:24)

Indeed, it is because feelings of pleasure can both precede the determination of the faculty of desire, as well as follow from it (put differently: that feelings have two distinct sources) that the faculty of desire is not restricted to being determined by pleasure, rather it can be determined by other sources as well, namely reason.

It is unclear when exactly Kant started to conceive of the distinction between the higher and lower faculty of desire in this way, but there is evidence that it was at least by the late 1770s.<sup>163</sup> From a reflection dating from this period, Kant says: "Pleasure in

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<sup>163</sup> It is worth noting here that Kant distinguishes between the higher and lower versions of all the faculties in a similar way: the higher and lower faculties differ not only in degree, but also in kind, and it is clear that Kant at the very least distinguished between the higher and lower faculty of cognition in this way in the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770.

action either precedes the law or follows from it” (*AA* 18:255). Here Kant is clearly thinking about how a (moral) law can bring a human being to act, and in line with his Critical view he believes that we do not follow the law solely because we see doing so as a means to pleasure, but that it is possible for pleasure to only follow from following the law for its own sake. What is interesting here is that already in this early reflection Kant identifies the feeling of pleasure associated with following the law for its own sake with respect; the above reflection continues with: “In the latter case it is respect” (*AA* 18:255, R 5615). This is in fact Kant’s first mention of respect in a way similar to his use during the Critical period, although all we have here is mention of respect as the kind of pleasurable feeling involved in following the law – he doesn’t mention respect for the law as an attitude). Nonetheless, what Kant’s remark here reveals, it seems to me, is the following: once Kant reformulated the distinction between the lower and the higher faculty of desire, all Kant needed to reach his Critical view was a concept that signified how a purely rational grasp of the law is at the same time a motivationally forceful feeling (and therefore related to pleasure). Smith’s notion of “regard” is precisely this: our recognition or regard for the general rules at once gives us a reason for acting, i.e. being the general rules command we ought to. If this reason is motivationally forceful, it is called the “sense of duty” (*TMS* 229). In this way, paired with his understanding of the faculty of desire, it is Smith’s notion of regard that provided a missing piece to Kant’s mature, Critical conception of motivation.

I suggested above that Kant likely read Smith’s *Theory* soon after the publication of its first German translation in 1770. In the above, however, I suggested that Kant seems to have incorporated Smith’s notion of *Achtung* only in the late 1770s at the earliest, but most likely not until the mid-1780s when Kant mentions *Achtung* in this technical way in his lecture notes on natural law (in 1784) and in the *Groundwork* (1785). If we work with the hypothesis that Kant did in fact adopt some aspects of Smith’s notion of *Achtung*, one may ask why Kant did not discuss this concept earlier. A few reasons can be presented to answer such a question. First and most importantly, as I illustrated above, Kant’s understanding of moral motivation was quite underdeveloped in the early 1770s, and he did not first publish his considered view until the mid-1780s. Indeed, in the mid-1770s Kant does not even distinguish between the understanding and reason, something

that was surely necessary in order for him to arrive at his notion that pure *reason* is practical on its own. Furthermore, another significant reason why Smith's influence in this regard did not show itself for so long could be the fact that Kant was the newly appointed Professor of Logic and Metaphysics, and the years of his silent decade were spent working on the first *Critique*, rather than any work devoted specifically to moral philosophy.

There is yet further reason why it is not strange that Kant only incorporated the influence of Smith until the late 1770s or early 1780s. Clemens Schwaiger, for example, suggest that Kant may have undertaken a re-reading of the moral sense theorists in the 1780s, evidence for this being references to Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume pop up in Kant's lecture notes around this time, with Shaftesbury in particular being honoured as a moral philosopher of value in a way he was not before (Schwaiger 1999, 190-191, note 719; and see *AA* 27:1325, 28:1073, and 18:1081; *NF* 27:1325 and 27:1330). If this is accurate, then perhaps Kant re-read Smith around this time as well. Smith's influence suggests itself in other ways only in the mid-1780s as well, for even early on in the *Groundwork*, for example, we find Kant referencing "a rational impartial spectator [*ein vernünftiger unparteyischer Zuschauer*]" (*GMS* 4:393), his language here being reminiscent of Rautenberg's first German translation of Smith's *Theory*.<sup>164</sup> At the very least, I think it is safe to say with Fleischacker that "Smith's work seems to have interested Kant for many years after he read it in 1770 or 1771" (1991, 253), and thus even if Kant first read Smith's *Theory* soon after its translation into German in 1770, it is not surprising that he incorporated elements of Smith's thought only later once he began to focus more seriously on topics in moral philosophy

## 4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that understanding Smith's notion of "regard" for the general rules of conduct can help clarify Kant's conception of respect for the moral law. After outlining how Smith's notion of regard embodies both a recognition of the validity

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<sup>164</sup> See Fleischacker (1991, 251-3) for a discussion of the origin and translation of the phrase "impartial spectator" as well as Kant's uptake of it.



and authority of the general rules, as well as the motive Smith refers to as the “sense of duty,” I illustrated that Kant’s mature understanding of respect for the law is absent from his early conception of motivation, and that it appears for the first time in his lecture notes on natural law from the early 1780s. I then showed that Kant’s notion of “respect” refers to both an attitude, our consciousness of the validity and supreme authority of the moral law, and a feeling, which functions as a motive. In the last section I suggested that it is only once Kant came to re-think the nature of the faculty of desire that he incorporated Smith’s notion of “regard,” and he did so because it supplied a necessary element to his thinking on moral motivation leading up to his mature view that pure reason is practical on its own. I concluded by illustrating that, although Kant seems to have read Smith in the early 1770s, it is not odd for him to have incorporated Smith’s ethical thought only later on. In the next chapter, I discuss a topic related to motivation, namely the role of pleasure in the performance of moral action. More particularly, I discuss Kant’s notion of the satisfaction we experience when we are aware of having performed virtuous action, and I explain how he answers an objection related to this idea posed by Christian Garve.

## Chapter 5

### 5 Self-Contentment and Kant's Response to the Pleasure Problem

In this, my final chapter I turn my attention to Kant's notion of the satisfaction involved in the performance of virtuous action – what he calls *self-contentment* [*Selbstzufriedenheit*]. After a brief introduction (5.1) I explain this concept in detail (5.2) before outlining an objection this concept invites that was raised by Kant's contemporary, Christian Garve (5.3). Garve's objection is similar to a problem Hutcheson anticipated in relation to the pleasure felt by the moral sense, what I called in chapter one the "pleasure problem." I argue that, with his concept of self-contentment, Kant offers a better solution to the problem than the one offered by Hutcheson (5.4). I conclude (5.5) by distinguishing self-contentment from a number of other terms, with which scholars have equated it in the past.

#### 5.1 Introduction

In chapter one we saw that the idea that we feel pleasure when we perceive benevolent actions and displeasure when we perceive the opposite is central to Hutcheson's conception of the moral sense. We also saw that moral judgement, for Hutcheson, is ultimately based on these feelings of pleasure and displeasure. Although, as explained in chapter three, Kant objects to Hutcheson's conception of moral judgement for a number of reasons, I have not yet discussed how Kant nonetheless preserves a place for a particular kind of satisfaction connected to the awareness that we ourselves have performed a moral action. Kant suggests that he makes room for such an idea in the second *Critique* when discussing the objection that the moral sense cannot ground obligation because it already assumes it. According to Kant:

one must first value the importance of what we call duty, the authority of the moral law, and the immediate worth that compliance with it gives a person in his own eyes, in order to feel that satisfaction in consciousness of one's conformity with it and bitter remorse if one can reproach oneself with having transgressed it. Thus one cannot feel such satisfaction or mental unease prior to cognition of obligation and cannot make it the basis of the latter. (*KpV* 5:38)

Although Kant's main argument in this passage is that we cannot feel satisfaction or unease in the consciousness of our virtuous and vicious action before we are bound by morality, and therefore that such feelings cannot ground morality, he nonetheless acknowledges that we *do* feel such satisfaction and unease in connection with this kind of consciousness. He says this almost explicitly shortly after the above passage when briefly discussing the process of moral education: "I certainly do not deny that frequent practice in conformity with this determining ground [i.e. acting in conformity with the moral law] can finally produce subjectively a feeling of contentment with oneself [*Zufriedenheit mit sich selbst*]" (*KpV* 5:38, translation modified). Kant therefore seems to believe that once one becomes bound by morality, being conscious of acting virtuously is connected with a feeling of "contentment with oneself" or, as he most often calls it, "self-contentment [*Selbstzufriedenheit*]." Kant has a fairly detailed understanding of this concept and it is my task in the following section to clarify and explain its significance within Kant's moral philosophy.

## 5.2 Self-Contentment

Kant's most direct discussion of self-contentment is in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where, in the section on the 'Critical Resolution of the Antinomy of Practical Reason,' he asks the following question:

Have we not, however, a word that does not denote enjoyment, as the word happiness does, but that nevertheless indicates a satisfaction with one's existence, an analogue of happiness that must necessarily accompany consciousness of virtue? Yes! The word is *self-contentment* [*Selbstzufriedenheit*]. (*KpV* 5:117, translation modified)<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Lewis White Beck suggests that Kant might be answering David Hume in this passage, who claims the following in the fourth appendix to his *An Enquiry the Principles of Morals*: "It seems indeed certain, that the *sentiment* of conscious worth, the self-satisfaction proceeding from a review of man's own conduct and character; it seems certain, I say, that this sentiment, which, though the most common of all others, has no proper name in our language" (Hume 1998, 103). Kant owned a copy of the first German translation of the *Enquiry* (see Warda 1922, 50), which was a translation of the second edition of 1753. If it is true that Kant is in dialogue with Hume here, perhaps Kant's point is to stress that there is indeed a word for the phenomenon Hume is describing in *German*. Indeed, Hume is lamenting the fact that there is no such word in the

Above all, self-contentment is a kind of “satisfaction,” but one that is connected with a particular kind of consciousness, namely, as this passage says, a “consciousness of virtue.” The specific nature of this consciousness is mentioned in the *Vigilantius* notes where we find that “being contented with oneself . . . consists in consciousness that our actions conform [*gemäß*] to the moral law” (*AA* 27:648). This passage is slightly misleading, however, for if self-contentment is connected to the consciousness of virtue then it cannot arise from the awareness that our actions merely *conform* to the moral law, but rather only when an action is performed for the *sake* of the moral law as well. Kant makes this clear in the *Metaphysics of Morals* when he says that “[w]hen a thoughtful human being has overcome incentives to vice and is aware of having done his often bitter duty,” the result is “a state of contentment and peace of soul in which virtue is its own reward” (*MdS* 6:377). In essence, then, self-contentment is a kind of satisfaction that is connected to the awareness of virtuous action, i.e. action not merely in conformity with the moral law but performed for the sake of the moral law. Not only this, but it is important to stress that it arises as the result of retrospective reflection upon action already performed, i.e. it results from “having done [*gethan zu haben*]” (*MdS* 6:377) our duty. It is not, therefore, similar to the feelings discussed in chapter three which either precede (pleasure) or follow (respect, pain, humiliation) the determination of the will but which always precede action, rather it is a kind of satisfaction that follows action entirely, and indeed only virtuous action.<sup>166</sup>

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English language, whereas Kant was surely aware that Christian Wolff, for example, had already used the term *Selbstzufriedenheit* (see Wolff 1733, 283-4).

<sup>166</sup> Two points deserve mention here. First, Kant does at times speak of a correlate phenomenon of “discontentment [*Unzufriedenheit*]” (see e.g. *AA* 8:283n) that results from the awareness of having acted against and/or not from the moral law. Because this is simply the contrary to self-contentment, I do not discuss this term extensively here. Kant himself discusses the positive concept of self-contentment more often and I focus on it specifically because it is this term that functions most prominently in the problem I discuss later in this chapter. Second, Kant occasionally discusses a phenomenon that might be related to self-contentment, namely the enjoyment we experience after completing any hard task. In the *Anthropology*, for example, Kant claims that work is “the best way of enjoying one’s life” because it is “disagreeable in itself and pleasing only through success” (*Anth* 7:232, see also *H* 27:47). Although similar, there is reason

Before moving on it is necessary to address an issue that arises in relation to Kant's conception of self-contentment. Kant occasionally mentions that we can never know the true motives of our actions (see e.g. *GMS* 4:407), thus if self-contentment arises from the awareness that we have performed virtuous action not only in conformity with duty but *from* duty, then there is a concern that we can never in fact experience self-contentment given we can never know with certainty that we have done our duty *from* duty, causing it to dissolve into a meaningless concept. When defining self-contentment Kant is aware of this issue. This is clear from the fact that he thinks we can overestimate our morality, as is apparent in his definition of arrogance (*arrogantia*). In the *Collins* lectures notes, arrogance is what “makes an unwarranted pretension to merit. It lays claim to more moral perfections than are due to it” (*AA* 27:357), and in the *Vigilantius* notes it is mentioned that arrogance can lead us to “engender a self-contentment in ourselves, and respect ourselves self-lovingly, without assessment of our true moral worth” (*AA* 27:622). Kant therefore believes that our assessment of the extent to which we have acted morally can be mistaken, and we can never be *certain* that we have acted morally. In contrast to the *unjustified* assessment of our worth involved in arrogance, Kant does mention “a *justified* satisfaction with self [*ein gegründetes Wohlgefallen gegen sich selbst*]” (*AA* 27:622, emphasis added), which presumably involves a more accurate assessment of our motives, although not likely certain knowledge thereof. Accordingly, what is important is that we *do our best* to assess the morality of our previously completed actions accurately and have reason to think we acted not only in conformity to the law, but *from* the law as well. Although we may never be certain, this is all we can hope for given our blindness to our true motives.

With this clarification in hand we can turn to the nature of self-contentment as a kind of “satisfaction [*Wohlgefallen*]” (*KpV* 5:117). Most importantly, Kant thinks self-

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to believe this kind of enjoyment is distinct from self-contentment, at least for Kant. As we will see, Kant distinguishes self-contentment from the pleasure or enjoyment related to happiness, and Kant says that the enjoyment that completing work or a hard task involves is “pleasure [*Lust*]” or “joy [*Frohsein*]” and is something “enjoyable [*Genießbares*]” (see *Anth* 7:232). Self-contentment, as we will see, is not an enjoyment in this sense.

contentment is a kind of satisfaction that is, in the first instance, distinct from the kind of satisfaction signified by happiness. This can be made clear by distinguishing between two kinds of contentment [*Zufriedenheit*]. In the *Vigilantius* notes we learn that “[c]ontentment is ... of two kinds, namely (1) with oneself and (2) with one’s condition [*Zustand*]” (*AA* 27:643, translation modified). Kant argues that contentment with one’s condition “is based on the feeling of pleasure and pain” and is “contentment ... taken in a pathological sense” (*AA* 27:643). Kant understands contentment with one’s condition as equivalent to “happiness [*Glück*]” (*AA* 27:643), which can be seen, for example, in the *Groundwork* where he says that “under the name of *happiness*” we understand “entire well-being and contentment with one’s condition” (*GMS* 4:393, see also 4:399). Distinct from contentment with one’s condition is “[c]ontentment in the moral sense” which “always has a reference to a state founded on consciousness of the law-abiding use of our freedom, and thus on the conformity of our own actions with the moral law” (*AA* 27:643). This moral contentment is contentment with one’s self, i.e. self-contentment. Kant therefore thinks the satisfaction involved in self-contentment is not enjoyment [*Genuss*] and is distinct from the pathological pleasure and pain characteristic of happiness and contentment with one’s condition. It is nonetheless still a kind of satisfaction, however, and as such Kant claims it is “an analogue of happiness” (*KpV* 5:117 and see *AA* 18:262).

Kant’s distinction between contentment with one’s condition and moral contentment in fact clarifies why the latter is called *self*-contentment. Kant claims, for example, that “happiness and well-being do not stem from our self, but from the concurrence of other conditions. What comes from us is based on us, on freedom, what [is based] on the external, comes from nature and luck [*Glück*]” (*AA* 28:1296). Paying attention to the etymological root of the word happiness [*Glückseligkeit*], Kant therefore seems to understand happiness as something that is based on luck [*Glück*] or chance, i.e. as dependent upon external conditions outside of our control. We are content with our condition [*Zustand*], then, when we are content with the extent to which nature has provided for our well-being, something which is at least not entirely in our control.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Indeed, Kant even suggests that too much meddling on our part to secure our own happiness can even bring us further away from it (see *GMS* 4:395-6).

*Self-contentment*, on the other hand, is related to what we are capable of bringing about by ourselves, and as such Kant thinks of self-contentment as related to the practice of freedom.<sup>168</sup>

The connection between self-contentment and freedom is suggested in the *Religionsphilosophie Volckman* notes: “The pleasure with one’s own person is called self-contentment [*Selbstzufriedenheit*]. What is characteristic of us is what freedom consists of. As a result, the pleasure with one’s freedom or with the quality of one’s will is self-contentment” (AA 28:1191). In that self-contentment results from the awareness of previously performed moral action, and moral action is characteristically free action, self-contentment is something that arises from the use of our freedom. In contrast to contentment with one’s condition, then, self-contentment is something we are capable of freely bringing about ourselves, and this is why it is called *self-contentment*, i.e. because we are content with what *we* have accomplished ourselves, not with what has been provided for us by the external world.

The nature of the satisfaction involved in self-contentment is in fact intimately connected to the fact that it is brought about by the use of our freedom. If self-contentment is distinct from contentment with one’s condition and the pathological pleasure and pain signified by happiness, but it is nonetheless a kind of satisfaction and analogous to happiness, one might rightly ask what kind of satisfaction it is. In the second *Critique* Kant clarifies when he claims the following:

Freedom, and the consciousness of freedom as an ability to follow the moral law with an unyielding disposition, is *independence from the inclinations* ... and so far as I am conscious of this freedom in following my moral maxims, it is the sole source of an unchangeable contentment ... and this can be called intellectual contentment. (*KpV* 5:117-8)

Kant goes on to distinguish intellectual contentment from “aesthetic” contentment, namely the satisfaction of the inclinations, and he claims that contentment is not the right term to use in the latter case because “the inclinations change, grow with the indulgence one allows them, and always leave behind a still greater void than one had thought to fill. Hence they are always *burdensome* to a rational being, and though he cannot lay them

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<sup>168</sup> On this point compare with §787 of Baumgarten’s *Metaphysics* (2013, 273-4).

aside, they wrest from him the wish to be rid of them” (*KpV* 5:118). Satisfying one’s inclinations can therefore never result in “contentment,” especially an “unchangeable contentment,” because we can never be rid of them entirely; we are, after all, both rational *and* sensible beings. The fact that the inclinations are always burdensome is significant here, for it is due to the fact that the inclinations are burdensome that we are aware of the following:

we can understand how consciousness of this ability [freedom] of a pure practical reason through a deed (virtue) can in fact produce consciousness of mastery over one’s inclinations, hence of independence from them and so too from the discontent that always accompanies them, and thus can produce a negative satisfaction with one’s state, that is, *contentment*, which in its source is contentment with one’s person. (*KpV* 5:119)

Freedom, understood in the negative sense of independence from the inclinations, is therefore also freedom from the discontentment and burden that goes with them. As I have shown in previous chapters, acting morally, for Kant, is to act “not only without the cooperation of sensible impulses but even with rejection of all of them” (*KpV* 5:72), and thus acting morally is a prime example of acting independently of the inclinations. The satisfaction associated with acting morally is therefore only a “negative satisfaction” in the sense that it is at least partial or temporary relief from the burden and discontent that accompanies the inclinations. Only in this way is self-contentment a kind of satisfaction, for Kant. It is not, strictly speaking, pleasure, pain, or even enjoyment, rather it is merely the absence of discontent and as such it can be conceived as a kind of satisfaction, albeit a merely “negative” one. Indeed, Kant implies that this is the most self-contentment can ever amount to when he says that “mere contentment with oneself ... can be merely negative” (*MdS* 6:391).<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> One might argue here that self-contentment, as a merely “negative” satisfaction, is in fact no satisfaction at all and thus is not much of a reward for acting virtuously. In the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant acknowledges that there is something beyond self-contentment, i.e. something that is a reward for virtue but that is also more “positive.” As Kant says: “there is a subjective principle of ethical *reward*, that is, a receptivity to being rewarded in accordance with laws of virtue: the reward, namely, of a moral pleasure that goes beyond mere contentment with oneself (which can be merely negative) and which is celebrated in the saying that, through consciousness of this pleasure, virtue is its own reward” (*MdS* 6:391). Kant goes on to explain that this reward consists in the approval of others, i.e. the awareness that others appreciate our moral action. In



An important point deserves clarification here. If the exercise of freedom is equivalent to acting independently of the inclinations, and as such is accompanied by the negative satisfaction of being free from their burden and discontent, then there is a worry that *any* exercise of freedom might be accompanied by such a negative satisfaction. Kant of course believes that self-contentment does not arise from the exercise of *any* free choice, rather the negative satisfaction involved in self-contentment arises only from the performance of free *moral* action. Not all free action results in the experience of negative satisfaction, for Kant, because he seems to believe that all action not motivated solely by the moral law involves the inclinations in some way. Kant suggests this in the *Groundwork* (see *GMS* 4:397), in the second *Critique* (see *KpV* 5:72), and also in the *Metaphysics of Morals* where he suggests that all action not motivated solely by the moral law involves the inclinations:

since the sensible inclinations of human beings tempt them to ends (the matter of choice) that can be contrary to duty, lawgiving reason can in turn check their influence only by a moral end set up against the ends of inclination, an end that must therefore be given a priori, independently of inclinations. (*MdS* 6:380-1)

As he does at numerous points throughout his writings (see e.g. *Rel* 6:30, *GMS* 4:398, and *KpV* 5:85), in this passage Kant contrasts acting morally, which involves setting a moral end, with acting on the sensible inclinations, which have their own ends. As discussed in chapter three, Kant believes that all human choice is free in the sense that the strength of our desires do not *necessitate* we act in certain ways, rather they only *impel* us and must still choose to act, even in the case of non-moral action. What this means is that

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this sense the reward for virtue is called “*sweet merit*” because consciousness of the appreciation of others produces a positive moral enjoyment in us. On the other hand, “*bitter merit*” is what Kant claims “comes from promoting the true well-being of others even when they fail to recognize it as such (when they are unappreciative and ungrateful) ... All that it produces is *contentment* with oneself, although in this case the merit would be greater still” (*MdS* 6:391). As Kant says in the last part of this passage, the merit we receive from promoting the well-being of others even when they don’t appreciate our efforts is of a higher order than “sweet merit.” At the same time, Kant does not deny here that self-contentment is only ever negative. Importantly, however, the negative satisfaction of self-contentment is the only kind of merit we can ever count on since, as I have already mentioned, self-contentment is in our control, whereas sweet merit is not, for its existence depends upon the appreciation of others.

whenever we do *not* act morally, we still act freely, i.e. we choose to act, but we choose to act on the inclinations. Thus only acting morally involves both acting freely *and* acting independently of the inclinations, which is why only moral action is accompanied by the negative satisfaction of self-contentment. Kant does not, therefore, want to say that all action is accompanied by negative satisfaction. Only moral action is, for it is only in the case of moral action that we are free of the inclinations.

Although self-contentment is the satisfaction resulting from the absence of the discontent of the inclinations, Kant points out that self-contentment is nonetheless not *complete* independence from the inclinations. As both sensible and rational beings, Kant believes that “[o]ne would therefore never ascribe to a creature the highest level of self-contentment or with other words bliss [*Seligkeit*]” (AA 28:1191). Bliss, for Kant, “is the contentment that depends on no external conditions and this belongs to God alone. Man is not of this kind; he is a dependent being” (AA 29:600). As both rational *and* sensible, we can never completely remove ourselves from the burden and discontent of the inclinations, even though we may partially and at times do so by acting independently of them, i.e. by acting morally. Only God is completely “independent from external causes” (AA 28:699, see also AA 29:624) and thus only He is capable of achieving bliss. At the same time, because self-contentment is at least a partial independence from the inclinations, Kant calls it “an *analogon* of blessedness” (AA 27:656).

Self-contentment therefore captures an important kind of satisfaction that only beings who are both sensible and rational can attain: whereas happiness is simply the well-being resulting from the inclinations and is thus attainable by all sensible beings, self-contentment is the negative satisfaction associated with being partially removed from the burden of the inclinations that human beings are capable of achieving when they act morally. Because we are not only rational but sensible also, we cannot achieve the complete (and permanent) independence from the inclinations attainable by God alone. Because God is wholly rational and as such is both completely as well as permanently independent of all inclinations, Kant observes that “one cannot say” that “God is happy,” but only that “he is blissful” (AA 28:808). Human beings, on the other hand, can be both happy and self-content, i.e. content with their condition and content with their self, in virtue of the fact that they are both sensible and rational.

In sum, self-contentment is Kant's concept for the negative satisfaction connected to our retrospective awareness of having acted morally. It is *self*-contentment because it is dependent upon our choice to act morally and not external circumstances. It is a type of satisfaction distinct from both happiness and bliss, but is nonetheless analogous to both.

As was the case for Hutcheson, the fact that Kant makes room for a kind of satisfaction connected to acting morally makes him vulnerable to what I called in chapter one the "pleasure problem," according to which acting morally might only be performed for the sake of this satisfaction, thereby reducing moral action to a self-interested desire. Kant was aware of this problem and in the next section I outline the specific version of it he faced, as well as his response to it.

### 5.3 The Pleasure Problem: Garve's Objection and Kant's Response

In chapter one I illustrated that Hutcheson's moral theory is subject to a problem that arises when one combines his conception of the moral sense with his theory of motivation. According to Hutcheson, the moral sense signifies our capacity to feel pleasure when we perceive objects that are morally good, i.e. benevolent actions, and he even goes as far as saying that the moral sense "gives us more *Pleasure* and *Pain*, than all our *other Facultys*" (I4 244). In the *Inquiry*, Hutcheson also argues against the idea that all action springs from self-interest. On the contrary, Hutcheson claims that we have the "ultimate desire" (I4 152) for the good of others, i.e. we desire the good of others disinterestedly and for its own sake and not as a means to any personal pleasure. As I discussed, however, the idea that we experience pleasure when perceiving *our own* benevolent actions can be problematic. If, according to Hutcheson, acting morally amounts to acting benevolently, i.e. *disinterestedly* desiring the happiness of others, and perceiving our own benevolent actions gives us pleasure (indeed more pleasure than all our other faculties), then there is a risk that we only ever act benevolently in order to feel the pleasure of the moral sense, i.e. the pleasure associated with perceiving our own benevolent actions. Hutcheson anticipates this problem when he states the following:

the principal business of the *moral Philosopher* is to shew, from solid Reasons, "That *universal Benevolence* tends to the Happiness of the *Benevolent*, either from the Pleasures of *Reflection*, *Honour*, *natural Tendency* to engage the good

Offices of Men, upon whose Aid we must depend for our Happiness in this World; or from the Sanctions of *divine Laws* discover'd to us by the Constitution of the *Universe*;" ... but not to attempt proving, "That Prospects of our *own Advantage* of any kind can raise in us the *virtuous Benevolence* towards others." (I4 270)

In other words, what Hutcheson wants to argue is both that benevolent actions are accompanied by some pleasure, but also that benevolent actions are never performed for the sake of this pleasure alone. It is important to clarify how this is the case, for, as Hutcheson does throughout the *Inquiry* in particular, he does not want to argue that benevolent actions can be reduced to self-interested ones. Indeed, the challenge Hutcheson faces here is one that concerns moral psychology: if benevolence brings us pleasure, then who is to say that it is not "our *own Advantage*" that brings about "*virtuous Benevolence* towards others," i.e. who is to say benevolence is not really just self-interest in disguise.<sup>170</sup> Because Kant makes room for a kind of satisfaction associated with acting morally, there is the worry that he might face a similar problem. In fact, one of Kant's contemporaries raised an objection to Kant's moral philosophy that resembles this problem.

In his *Essays on Various Topics from Morality, Literature and Social Life* [*Versuche über verschiedene Gegenstände der Moral, Literatur und dem gesellschaftlichen Leben*], Christian Garve claims that, according to the principles of some philosophers, "the virtuous individual ... ceaselessly strives to be worthy of happiness, but – insofar as he is truly virtuous – never strives to be happy" (Garve 1792, 111-112). It is undeniable that Garve has Kant in mind here. At the time of the publication of Garve's *Essays* (1792), Kant had published both the *Groundwork* (1785) and the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), both of which identify acting morally with striving to be worthy of happiness (see e.g. *GMS* 4:393 and *KpV* 5:110ff.). Garve

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<sup>170</sup> This point is significant, because the challenge Hutcheson is dealing with does not concern moral education. It may in fact be possible that bringing about the happiness of others from self-interested motives can eventually lead us to bring about their happiness as an end itself, i.e. disinterestedly. This is a different question, however, and is neither Hutcheson's nor Kant's focus in relation to the problem I am discussing in this chapter.

criticizes the idea that the striving to be worthy of happiness can be separated from the desire for happiness itself when he claims the following:<sup>171</sup>

For my part I confess that I grasp this division of ideas very well with my head, but I do not find this division of desires and strivings in my heart; - that it is even inconceivable to me how any person can become aware that his longing to be worthy of happiness is purely separated from the longing for happiness itself – and has therefore performed his duty entirely disinterestedly. (Garve 1792, 112)

Garve makes two important objections here. First, Garve argues that it is impossible for anyone to distinguish, via introspection for example, between these two kinds of desires, i.e. the striving for happiness and the striving to be worthy of happiness. Second and more relevant to my purposes here, Garve suggests that the desire to be worthy of happiness might just be reducible to the desire for happiness. Garve's objection is therefore similar to the challenge Hutcheson anticipated. The problem Garve poses to Kant is that the virtuous motive, which is supposed to be distinct from the motive of self-interest, might in fact be reducible to self-interest after all. Kant surely did not want to claim that the moral motive could be reduced to the desire for happiness, for the possibility of acting independently of our inclinations and solely from respect for the moral law is central to his moral philosophy as a whole. As such, it was in Kant's interest to respond to Garve and clarify why this objection is mistaken

In two texts written after the publication of Garve's *Essays*, namely the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) and the article *On a recently prominent tone of superiority in philosophy* (1796), Kant mentions the position of a certain "eudaemonist" (see *AA* 8:395n and *MdS* 6:377) who believes that "the pleasure (*contentment*) that a righteous man has in view, in order to feel it one day in the consciousness of his well-conducted course of life (and thus the prospect of his future felicity), is in fact the true *motive* for conducting his affairs well (in accordance with the law)" (*AA* 8:395n, translation modified). As Kant sees it, the eudaemonist's objection is the following: because the "righteous man" experiences contentment in relation to "his well-conducted course of life," this contentment and not the striving to be worthy of happiness might be the true motive of the righteous man's "virtuous" actions. Given the similarity between the

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<sup>171</sup> Kant quotes this passage in his 'Theory and Practice' essay (see *AA* 8:281).

position of the “eudaemonist” and Garve’s objection, it is likely that Kant has Garve in mind here.

In both the *Metaphysics of Morals* and the *Tone* essay, Kant responds to the eudaemonist by distinguishing between “*pathological pleasure* and *moral pleasure*” (*MdS* 6:378). According to Kant, “[p]leasure that must precede one’s observance of the law in order for one to act in conformity with the law is pathological ... but pleasure that must be *preceded* by the law in order to be felt is in the *moral order*” (*MdS* 6:378). On the one hand, therefore, there are the pathological pleasures, the expectation of which can act as a motive to action.<sup>172</sup> On the other hand, there is a certain kind of pleasure that only results from acting in accordance with the moral law. This latter pleasure is what Kant calls “*moral pleasure*” (*ibid.*) and it plays a central role in Kant’s response to Garve.

Kant responds to Garve’s objection by claiming that Garve’s reasoning is circular and his objection is meaningless. Kant says the following in the *Tone* essay:

since I must assume him [the righteous person] beforehand to be righteous and obedient to the law, i.e., to be one in whom *the law precedes the pleasure*, in order for him subsequently to feel a pleasure of the soul in the consciousness of his well-conducted course of life, it is an empty circle in the reasoning to make the pleasure, which is a *consequence*, into the *cause* of that course of life. (*AA* 8:395)

Based on his distinction between pathological and moral pleasure, then, Kant argues it is in fact impossible for the expectation of *moral* pleasure to somehow be the true motive of our strivings to be worthy of happiness. This is because it is only when we are already *motivated by the moral law alone* and not the expectation of future pleasure that it is possible for us to experience moral pleasure in the first place. To perform virtuous actions only for the sake of the pleasure that results from acting morally is precisely not to have the moral motive – it is to be motivated by the desire for pleasure. Indeed, given the nature of moral pleasure, it is simply a logical mistake to think one can experience moral pleasure if one’s reason for acting is the expectation of this pleasure.

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<sup>172</sup> To be clear, we do not necessarily need to experience pleasure for us to desire something, for Kant. As I discussed in chapter three, Kant’s distinction between instinct and inclination is meant to capture precisely this point: an inclination “presupposes acquaintance with the object of desire” (*Rel* 6:29n) whereas an instinct does not.

In the above passage Kant describes moral pleasure as “a pleasure of the soul in the consciousness of [one’s] well-conducted course of life” (*AA* 8:395). I take it that when Kant discusses moral pleasure he has his conception of self-contentment in mind, thus I believe that Stephen Engstrom is on the right track when he claims that self-contentment is just a different term for moral pleasure (see Engstrom 2007, 144). Strictly speaking, however, moral pleasure is a type of pleasure and self-contentment is a particular instantiation of moral pleasure, but it is certainly correct to say that self-contentment is *a* moral pleasure in that it can only be felt after one is already “righteous and obedient to the law” (*AA* 8:395). Indeed, I illustrated above that self-contentment is experienced after we have already acted morally, thus it is correct to say that self-contentment only follows the law and does not precede it. As a moral pleasure, then, it would appear that Kant believes his conception of self-contentment is not vulnerable to Garve’s objection and the pleasure problem.

As mentioned, Kant is not alone in claiming that there is a particular kind of satisfaction associated with acting morally, and nor is he alone in answering the kind of objection posed by Garve. In the next section I explain how Kant’s solution to the pleasure problem is a better response than that offered by Hutcheson.

## 5.4 Kant’s Solution in Comparison to Hutcheson’s

Kant’s solution to what I have been calling the “pleasure problem” has important similarities to Hutcheson’s solution to the problem, but there are also significant differences between their respective solutions. An interesting similarity between the two results from the fact that their general moral theories both identify the moral motive as lying not in self-interest, but in benevolence (Hutcheson) and acting for the sake of duty alone (Kant). As has been the focus of this chapter, they both also claim that the pleasure of acting virtuously (the pleasure of the moral sense, for Hutcheson, and the satisfaction of self-contentment, for Kant) can only be experienced when one acts from the moral motive and *not* from self-interest. As such, although Hutcheson does not say so explicitly, Kant’s response to the pleasure problem applies to Hutcheson’s position as well: if acting benevolently is equivalent to *not* acting on self-interest, then any pleasure associated with acting benevolently simply would not arise if we were to attempt to experience the

pleasure of benevolence *from* self-interest. In such a case our motive would not be benevolence but self-interest, thus it is a logical impossibility for the pleasure associated with moral action (i.e. the pleasure of the moral sense) to arise in this scenario for Hutcheson as well.

The solution to the pleasure problem that Hutcheson himself provides is significantly different from Kant's, however. Recall that, according to his main solution to the pleasure problem (see above pg. 41), Hutcheson points out that the idea that we can act benevolently in order to feel the pleasure associated with perceiving our own benevolent actions implies that we can bring about benevolent affections at will and, in this case, for self-interested reasons. In chapter one I showed how Hutcheson denies the possibility of this when he states that "neither Benevolence nor any other Affection or Desire can be directly raised by *Volition*" (I4 139). If we could raise an affection or desire via an act of will, Hutcheson claims we could be bribed not only to perform good acts for other people, for example, but to *love* them as well. For Hutcheson, we can be bribed to *act* in certain ways, "but *real Esteem* no Price can purchase" (I4 135).

Hutcheson qualifies his solution to the pleasure problem, however, and it is here where we find an important difference between his position and Kant's. Hutcheson qualifies his response to the problem in the following way:

The Prospect of any Advantage to arise to us *from having any Affection*, may indeed turn our Attention to those *Qualities* in the object, which are naturally constituted the necessary *Causes* or *Occasions* of the advantageous Affection; and if we find such Qualitys in the Object, the Affection will certainly arise. Thus *indirectly* the Prospect of Advantage may tend to raise any Affection; but if these Qualitys be not found or apprehended in the Object, no *Volition* of ours, nor *Desire*, will ever raise any Affection in us. (I4 140)

Hutcheson therefore makes room for the possibility of self-interestedly, even if indirectly, bringing about the pleasure associated with benevolence: if certain objects necessarily raise benevolent affections in us, affections which are bound up with the pleasure of the moral sense, then we can self-interestedly seek out these objects in order to experience the pleasure associated with these affections. Hutcheson's position is therefore slightly unsatisfying in that he seems to grant, in however a roundabout way, that we can be benevolent from self-interest. This is unsatisfying because if it is possible to indirectly



raise benevolence through self-interest, then there is the risk that true, disinterested benevolence is not possible after all and all action can be reduced to self-interest.

Kant's solution to the pleasure problem is more satisfying than Hutcheson's, and this is due, above all, to an important feature of self-contentment that has not yet been discussed. I mentioned above that in the second *Critique* Kant discusses self-contentment in connection with an objection he makes to moral sense theory when he says the following:

one must first value the importance of what we call duty, the authority of the moral law, and the immediate worth that compliance with it gives a person in his own eyes, in order to feel that satisfaction in consciousness of one's conformity with it and bitter remorse if one can reproach oneself with having transgressed it. (*KpV* 5:38)

Shortly after this passage, Kant discusses self-contentment in relation to moral education and claims:

Someone must be at least half way toward being an honest man to even frame for himself a representation of those feelings [i.e. of satisfaction and mental unease]. I certainly do not deny that frequent practice in conformity with this determining ground [i.e. acting in conformity with the moral law] can finally produce subjectively a feeling of contentment with oneself [*Zufriedenheit mit sich selbst*]. (*KpV* 5:38, translation modified)

Kant's point here is that self-contentment can only be felt after one is "at least half way" moral, and thus that experiencing self-contentment can only take place once one has at least partially acquired the virtuous disposition, something which takes place over an extended period of time and involves "frequent practice," among other things.<sup>173</sup> What this means is that self-contentment is not something that can be experienced in connection with the performance of *every* virtuous action. Indeed, because self-contentment can only be felt after one is "at least half way" towards being a moral person, this kind of satisfaction just isn't the kind of thing one can expect to experience

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<sup>173</sup> Kant outlines four stages of moral education in his *Lectures on Pedagogy* (see *AA* 9:450ff.), and frequent practice in conformity with the law takes place during the third, "civilizing" stage of moral education. For further discussion of Kant's process of moral education see Geisinger (2012), Louden (2000, 38ff., 2011 Ch. 11, 2012), Munzel (2003), Surprenant (2003), and Yala (2005). For a discussion of the reliability of the *Lectures on Pedagogy* see Louden (2011, 136ff.). Also, in the conclusion to this project I briefly discuss how there may only be three stages to Kant's conception of the process of moral education rather than four.

after the performance of any single action alone if one has not yet achieved the virtuous disposition. If one is attempting to act morally in order to experience self-contentment, this is a good indication that one does not yet have the moral disposition and therefore that one shouldn't expect to experience self-contentment at all.

In light of this feature of self-contentment, Kant's solution to the pleasure problem is different from Hutcheson's in an important way. It was the fact that certain objects necessarily raise the affection of benevolence paired with the idea that the pleasure of the moral sense could be experienced after the performance of *every* benevolent action that made it possible, on his account, for self-interest to indirectly raise benevolence. An important feature of this view is therefore that the pleasure of acting morally can be experienced no matter how far along one is in the process of moral education. In other words, according to Hutcheson one could, in principle, experience the pleasure of the moral sense if one is a vicious person. In relation to the pleasure problem, however, the issue for Hutcheson is that, if it is possible for benevolence to be raised by self-interest, then perhaps benevolence can be reduced to self-interest after all. By contrast, Kant claims that the satisfaction associated with virtuous action can only be experienced by one who has at least partially acquired the moral disposition, which means that it is strictly impossible, even *indirectly*, to bring about this satisfaction in a particular instance if one's motive is self-interest. Thus Kant *entirely* rules out the possibility of acting morally for the sake of self-interest, and as such avoids the challenge posed by, in his instance, Garve: the striving to be worthy of happiness is not the same as the striving for happiness itself, i.e. the moral motive cannot, even indirectly, be reduced to self-interest.<sup>174</sup> For this reason, the solution to the "pleasure problem" implied by

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<sup>174</sup> I wish to emphasize here that I am only claiming that it is impossible, on Kant's view, to indirectly raise the moral motive from self-interest *in a particular instance* of action. The question of whether or not the self-interested expectation of self-contentment can bring about the moral disposition, and thereby the moral motive, *over time* is a different question altogether, one which involves evaluating the role of self-interested action in the process of moral education, for Kant. For both Hutcheson and Kant, the "pleasure problem" is not one that concerns moral education, however. Rather, it is one that concerns moral psychology, i.e. whether the moral motive is reducible to self-interest. I cannot get into the issue of moral education here, but in my conclusion I briefly discuss how investigating the relation between Kant, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and also Smith on the topic of moral education is worthwhile.

Kant's notion of self-contentment amounts to a more satisfying solution to the problem than that offered by Hutcheson.

In the next section I contrast self-contentment with a number of related terms in Kant's moral philosophy, with which a number of interpreters have equated it in the past. I use the forgoing analysis of the concept to argue that, in most cases, interpreters have in large part misunderstood the term.

## 5.5 Terminological Clarification

Kant's concept of self-contentment is rarely discussed in the secondary literature. In those cases where it is, however, I believe it is wrongly equated with a number of other, somewhat related concepts in Kant's moral philosophy. In addition to Engstrom's equation of self-contentment with moral pleasure (see Engstrom 2007, 144), Lewis White Beck suggests that self-contentment is equivalent to both moral feeling (see 1960, 224) as well as the positive side of respect (ibid., 229). Additionally, Richard McCarty discusses moral pleasure, self-contentment, and respect as if they were the same phenomenon (see 2007, 176). I have already clarified how self-contentment is indeed a moral pleasure in the sense that it is an instantiation of this *kind* of pleasure. Contrary to Beck and McCarty, however, I hope it is clear from the above discussion that self-contentment is equivalent to neither the positive side of respect, nor moral feeling. The main reason for this is that respect and moral feeling signify a feeling that takes place *prior* to the execution of action. Indeed, as I argued in chapter three, respect and moral feeling are feelings that are necessary for the execution of action to take place. Self-contentment, however, arises only once action is completed and we retrospectively reflect on the fact that we were motivated from duty alone. Although self-contentment is surely a feeling associated with the execution of moral action, it occurs at a different stage of this execution, i.e. not *during* the process of execution but *subsequent* to it. Furthermore, both respect and moral feeling take place each time we are conscious of the moral law. By contrast and as illustrated above, self-contentment can only be experienced once one makes significant progress towards becoming a virtuous person, and thus it is not something involved in the performance of each moral action.

One final clarification is in order. When one thinks of the satisfaction associated with virtue in connection to Kant's moral philosophy, the first thing that comes to mind is his concept of the highest good. In fact, Kant's most explicit discussion of self-contentment actually takes place in the section of the second *Critique* where Kant discusses the nature of the highest good in detail, namely in the 'Critical Resolution of the Antinomy of Practical Reason.' Kant defines the highest good as "happiness distributed in exact proportion to morality" (Kant *KpV* 5:110-1), and, similar to self-contentment, the connection is between "morality of disposition ... as cause with happiness as effect in the sensible world" (*KpV* 5:115). There are at least three main reasons why self-contentment should not be understood as equivalent or even related to the highest good, however. Although Kant at times speaks of "[t]he production of the highest good *in the world*" (*KpV* 5:122, my emphasis), he believes that both the immortality of the soul and the existence of God must necessarily be assumed if happiness is ever to be a consequence of morality. God must be assumed, for example, because the highest good is "happiness distributed in *exact* proportion to morality" (*KpV* 5:110-1, my emphasis), and only He has the power to effect such an *exact* proportion (see *KpV* 5:124ff.). Self-contentment is therefore not equivalent to the highest good, first, because self-contentment appears to be possible in this life, as something only a being that is both sensible and rational can experience, whereas the highest good is possible only in an afterlife. Second, and as I illustrated above, because we can never know the true motives of our actions, we can never, strictly speaking, experience a completely *justified* self-contentment, for we never really know if we have acted solely from duty alone. In other words, self-contentment is not connected to the *exact* extent that we are moral. The highest good, on the other hand, is an *exact* proportion between happiness and morality, which suggests that self-contentment and the highest good are quite distinct. Third and perhaps most importantly, the highest good is the connection between *happiness* and morality, whereas self-contentment signifies a merely (negative) satisfaction distinct from happiness altogether. Self-contentment is not meant to signify how morality can make us happy; it does not capture how our "supreme" good as moral and rational beings (morality) leads to our most "complete" good as sensible beings (happiness) (see *KpV* 5:110). Rather, self-contentment captures how acting morally is

rewarding in itself and, as analogous to bliss, gives us a taste of what it would be like to be free of our sensible inclinations altogether. For these reasons I believe self-contentment is very different from Kant's concept the highest good. In general, I hope this terminological clarification helps determine the role self-contentment is supposed to play in Kant's moral philosophy. It is not a term that comes into play during the execution of action, rather it is only relevant (1) once we have at least partially acquired the moral disposition, and (2) after we have completed moral action.

## 5.6 Conclusion

In light of both the above terminological clarification, as well as the preceding sections, my main task in this chapter has been to clarify Kant's conception of the satisfaction associated with acting morally, i.e. self-contentment. I have illustrated that it is a negative satisfaction distinct from both happiness and bliss, though it is analogous to both. However, my second task has been to illustrate the way in which self-contentment amounts to a better solution to what I have called "the pleasure problem" as opposed to the solution offered by Hutcheson. Responding to an objection raised by Garve, and similar to one Hutcheson anticipated, Kant argues that the nature of self-contentment as a moral pleasure, and as something one can experience only after one is at least half way towards being a moral individual, makes it such that it is logically impossible to expect to experience self-contentment if one's intention is solely to experience this satisfaction. I argued that although Kant's solution has certain things in common with Hutcheson's, Kant's is ultimately more satisfying because it entirely rules out the possibility of the moral motive being reduced to self-interest. I concluded by clarifying self-contentment in relation to a number of other terms utilized by Kant and that signify certain feelings or pleasures related to acting morally. Ultimately, I argued that self-contentment is equivalent to none of them, although it is an instance of what Kant calls "moral pleasure." In sum, I hope to have shed some light on a concept of Kant's that has important similarities to the pleasure of the moral sense, and also one that has received very little attention in the secondary literature.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this project I identified two aspects of Kant's moral philosophy that have received relatively little attention in the scholarship produced over the past half century: (1) the way in which Kant's moral philosophy was influenced by his predecessors and contemporaries, and (2) the way in which Kant's moral philosophy developed over the course of his philosophical career. My aim in the preceding dissertation has been to shed light on these topics by investigating one of the most important influences on Kant's moral philosophy: British moral sense theory. Indeed, it has been my main task to re-evaluate the nature and extent of this influence over the course of Kant's development. I argued that such a study is necessary in light of the fact that the existing scholarship widely disagrees as to whether and how far moral sense theory influenced Kant, and also because a wealth of Kant's unpublished lecture notes have been made widely available since the latest studies on the topic were produced.

The preceding chapters have attempted to shed light on the above topics, each in their own way. After explaining the core features of moral sense theory in chapter one, chapter two argued that Kant's opinion of moral sense theory changed fairly drastically over the course of his pre-Critical, i.e. early developmental, phase. Whereas Kant seemed intrigued by the idea of a "moral feeling" playing a role in *both* moral judgement and moral motivation early on, after his "great light," where he came to a settled opinion regarding the rational nature of moral philosophy, he came to reject the idea of a moral feeling grounding moral judgement. At the same time, his lecture notes and reflections after this turning point in his thinking reveal that this rejection of the idea of a feeling grounding judgement did not imply a rejection of the idea that a moral feeling plays a role in moral motivation. Nonetheless, that at this stage of his development, i.e. at a time when Kant was still developing his position on moral motivation, moral feeling is involved in action in quite a particular way: feeling must simply *match* or *agree with* what the understanding judges to be morally right.

In chapter three, my aim was to investigate Kant's discussion of moral sense theory during the Critical period. I illustrated that Kant's opinion of moral sense theory's

conception of moral judgement during the Critical period is consistent with what he says about it after 1769. Indeed, his considered view offers six criticisms against the idea of a moral sense grounding moral judgement. My main focus in chapter three, however, was to determine if Kant continues to adopt aspects of moral sense theory's conception of moral motivation into the Critical period. First, I explained Kant's mature understanding of moral motivation in detail and surveyed many of the dominant interpretations in the secondary literature, a number of which claim Kant's view has features in common with the broadly empiricist conception of action presented by Hume and others. I then argued that although on a superficial level Kant's conception of moral motivation has certain features in common with Hutcheson's, their differences are ultimately more significant. Thus while Kant was surely *influenced* by Hutcheson's understanding of moral motivation, the extent to which he adopts its features is quite minimal. As such, it can be concluded that while placing Kant in context with Hutcheson is helpful for understanding both of their respective positions, it is clear that they ultimately disagree on issues of both judgement and motivation more than they agree.

My fourth chapter argued that although Kant only minimally adopts certain features of Hutcheson's conception of motivation, Kant's understanding of "respect" for the moral law as the moral motive seems to have been influenced by Adam Smith's notion of the "regard" we have for the general rules of conduct. I compared their respective conceptions of this "attitude" and illustrated that they have much in common with one another. Furthermore, I ventured to show that given when the first German translation of Smith's *Theory* was published, and given the point in time at which Kant first incorporates the idea of "respect" into his moral philosophy, it is likely that Kant at the very least drew inspiration from Smith when conceiving of the idea of respect.

In my fifth chapter, I illustrated that, although Kant criticizes the idea that the pleasure of the moral sense can ground moral judgement, he nonetheless has a place in his moral philosophy for the idea that we feel a particular kind of satisfaction when we reflect on the fact that we have performed moral conduct. This was Kant's notion of "self-contentment." I also illustrated that Kant's understanding self-contentment is intended to answer an objection posed by Christian Garve, an objection similar to one Hutcheson anticipated in relation to the pleasure of the moral sense as well. This is the

objection that, if the performance of moral action is connected with a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction, who is to say that moral action is not always performed simply for the sake of this pleasure rather than from disinterested benevolence or “respect” for the moral law alone. I called this problem the “pleasure problem” and argued that, with his notion of self-contentment, Kant in fact offers a more satisfying solution to the problem than Hutcheson.

In sum, I hope to have shown that placing Kant in context with his British predecessors can at the very least help clarify some of the more perplexing aspects of both his pre-Critical and Critical moral philosophy. I hope to have shed light on Kant’s engagement with one of his most important influences, and by tracing the nature of this influence over the course of his development I hope to have shed light on the nature of this development itself. As I mentioned at the beginning of this study, however, the topics that have been my focus in the foregoing dissertation are not the only ways in which Kant’s moral philosophy engages with the thought of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and also Smith. In the remaining pages, I therefore wish to briefly outline three additional ways in which Kant’s moral philosophy is related to his British predecessors as a way to indicate possible future directions of research.

*Moral Education.* In chapter five I discussed how, according to Hutcheson, it is possible to raise benevolence (and the pleasure associated with it) from self-interest in a certain way, but that for Kant this possibility is precluded by the nature of self-contentment. In answering the pleasure problem, however, Kant and Hutcheson are attempting to answer a very specific objection. The objection Garve poses to Kant and the objection Hutcheson anticipates is one about moral psychology, i.e. whether positing a kind of pleasure or satisfaction associated with acting morally threatens to reduce benevolence or the motive of duty to self-interest. There is another, related question (which itself is not necessarily a problem or objection) and this is the question of whether acting “morally” from self-interest can eventually produce the moral disposition. In other words, this is a question about moral education: is it possible, according to Kant and Hutcheson, for example, to act self-interestedly but in a particular way such that one will eventually become moral and act not from self-interest, but from benevolence and respect for the law?



Interestingly enough, Hutcheson is not the only moral sense theorist to posit the possibility of acting benevolently from self-interest. Although not discussed in chapter one, Shaftesbury holds this view as well. In relation to the question of what reasons we have for acting moral, which in Shaftesbury's case is also equivalent to acting benevolently, Shaftesbury has two answers: (1) acting benevolently makes us happy because it fulfills our natural end as human beings (see Gill 2006, 119), and (2) acting benevolently brings about pleasures "of the mind" (C 201) which Shaftesbury thinks are higher in kind than all other pleasures. As can be seen here, both of the reasons Shaftesbury presents as reasons we have to be virtuous are self-interested ones: we have reason to act morally because it makes us happy and gives us pleasure. Similarly, Smith claims that acting morally is in our interest as well. Although no one has made the attempt to fully reconstruct Smith's answer to the question "why be moral?", Samuel Fleischacker suggests that we act morally, for Smith, because we desire approval (see 1991, 268-9). Smith claims, however, that the approval of others is "the chief part of human happiness" (TMS 66), which means that if we act morally because we desire approval, we are ultimately acting morally because it will make us happy. Thus Hutcheson, Shaftesbury, and Smith, at the very least make room for the possibility that acting self-interestedly is not incompatible with becoming moral and might even be compatible with the process of moral education.

This is interesting, for Kant also suggests that there is a role for self-interest to play in the process of moral education. As he claims in the second *Critique*: "It certainly cannot be denied that in order to bring either a mind that is still uncultivated ... onto the track of the morally good in the first place, some preparatory guidance is needed to attract it by means of its own advantage or to alarm it by fear of harm" (*KpV* 5:152). Not only this, but Kant also suggests that acting in conformity with the moral law but from self-interest has a role to play at a particular stage in moral education. After a first phase of "discipline" and a second of "cultivation," it is only in the third "*civilizing*" phase that "the human being becomes *prudent*" (*AA* 9:450). In this phase, morality is shown to be a

prudent option, but this is only the precursor to the fourth<sup>175</sup> and final phase of “moralization” where only morally good ends are chosen, and they are chosen solely because they are good in themselves, not because they are in our interest (see *AA* 9:450). Thus although Kant surely believes that moral actions should be performed solely *from* duty alone, it seems that he might also make room for the possibility of self-interest playing a role in moral education. Indeed, Kant suggests this when he occasionally discusses moral imitators (see e.g. *Anth* 7:293 and Louden 2000, 77) and “permissible moral illusion” (*Anth* 7:151ff.). A first way in which the foregoing dissertation could be continued, therefore, would be to investigate the way in which this might be true for Kant and to investigate if placing his position in context with Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Smith on this matter could help illuminate his position.

*The Highest Good.* According to Kant, we are morally obligated to perform particular actions in and of themselves and not for any other purpose or end, e.g. for the purpose of increasing our own happiness. At the same time, Kant believes that “[e]very action ... has its end” (*MdS* 6:385), which means that the actions we are morally obligated to perform must still have an end, even if it is not our direct intention to bring it about. Kant calls the end of moral action “the *highest good*” (*KpV* 5:108ff.), which he defines as “happiness distributed in exact proportion to morality (as the worth of a person and his worthiness to be happy)” (*KpV* 5:110-1), as briefly discussed at the end of chapter five. Kant’s concept of the highest good and the distinction between happiness and the worthiness to be happy is central to his practical philosophy as a whole, and the latter distinction in particular is often thought to have been Kant’s own invention. However, Smith has an at least similar sounding distinction between praise and praise-worthiness (*TMS* 136 and 192ff. and also Irwin 2008, 699f.). I just noted how approval, i.e. praise, for Smith, constitutes a large part of our happiness. At the same time, Smith claims we

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<sup>175</sup> How many stages there are in Kant’s conception of the process of moral education is unclear. To be sure, Kant himself says that moral education is a three-stage process (see *AA* 9:441), but strictly speaking there appear to be four stages. As Louden notes (2011, 141), the stage of “moralization” is distinct from “culture,” i.e. the third stage, even though Kant at times refers to the third stage as moralization as well. For more on this issue see Louden (2000, 38ff., 2011, 138ff.), and Moran (2009, 475ff.).

cannot enjoy this happiness unless we do what is praise-worthy (see *ibid.*). A second way in which to continue the research on the relation between Kant's moral philosophy and that of his British predecessors would be to investigate how, for both Smith and Kant, being worthy of happiness and acting virtuously is the *condition* of participating in happiness itself.

Also on the topic of the highest good is an interesting connection between Kant and Hutcheson. In Hutcheson's thought we find an important source for Kant's idea that we must make certain necessary assumptions, i.e. what Kant calls the "postulates of pure practical reason," if the highest good is to be possible. Kant argues that we must assume both the immortality of the soul and the existence of God if we are to believe that happiness will ever be in exact proportion to our virtue. This is because such a proportion can only be achieved in the afterlife and God is the only one with the power to make it happen (see *KpV* 5:122). In fact, it has already been observed by others that Hutcheson believes that the happiness resulting from virtue is only possible in the afterlife (see Schollmeier 1967, 162 and Stark 2004, 11-12n). However, Hutcheson in fact argues that belief in *both* an afterlife (Hutcheson 2002, 123) *and* in a divine being (Hutcheson 2002, 187ff.) are necessary presuppositions of our belief in happiness resulting from virtue. Thus one could also continue the foregoing project by investigating the connection between Kant and Hutcheson on the idea of the postulates of pure practical reason.

*The Obligation to Act Morally.* A third and final avenue of future research concerns the fact that both Hutcheson and Kant seem to face a similar confusion in relation to the obligation they both claim we have to act morally. First, Hutcheson claims that "there is naturally an obligation upon all men to benevolence" (Hutcheson 2004, 177). This can mean either that we simply ought to perform benevolent *actions*, or that we ought to have the benevolent *desires* from which such actions spring (see Jensen 1971, 91ff.). However, because all actions spring from desire, for Hutcheson (see Hutcheson 2004, 101), regardless of how one conceives of this obligation it implies that we are obligated to have benevolent desires. Now, because Hutcheson believes in the principle that "ought implies can" (see Hutcheson 2004, 191), if we are always under *obligation* to have benevolent desires, then we must be *able* to have these desires whenever we choose. Confusingly, Hutcheson's psychology explicitly denies that desires

can result from an act of will (see Hutcheson 2008, 224), thus it is unclear how we are to understand Hutcheson's conception of the obligation to benevolence.

Second, Kant, for his part, also advances two separate claims that each result in a similar confusion. First, Kant argues that moral obligations must be performed for a particular reason, i.e. solely because we ought to do them (see e.g. *MdS* 6:219). In this vein Kant claims there is a general obligation of virtue [*Tugendverpflichtung*] that instructs us to do our duty *from* duty, i.e. solely because we ought to do it (see *MdS* 6:410). Second, Kant argues that it is our duty to make our own perfection an end of ours (see *MdS* 6:387), and since he claims that “[t]he greatest perfection of a human being is to do his duty *from duty*” (*MdS* 6:392), this duty also amounts to the claim that we are obligated to do our duty for a particular reason, i.e. solely because it is what we ought to do. Like Hutcheson, however, Kant also believes that “ought implies can” (see e.g. *Rel* 6:50), and as such these two views imply not only that we *ought* to do our duty *from* duty, but that we *can* do so as well. In a similarly confusing fashion, however, Kant explicitly denies that we can be obligated to do our duty from duty (see Kant *MdS* 6:402-3 and *KpV* 5:83). A third way in which the preceding project could be continued would therefore be to compare and contrast Hutcheson's and Kant's conception of the obligation to act morally in an attempt to clarify the nature of these obligations and make them consistent with their respective wider philosophical views.

This is likely not an exhaustive list of the possible ways in which situating Kant's moral philosophy within the context of his British predecessors could help clarify certain aspects of his moral philosophy that still evade an adequate explanation. Indeed, as I mentioned at the beginning of my project, I hope that the preceding chapters at the very least make it clear that placing Kant in context with Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Smith is a worthwhile enterprise. I therefore hope that, above all else, my project has made it apparent and has served as an example of how understanding a historical figure in their proper historical context is not merely interesting from a historical perspective, but that it can go a long way to help clarifying some of the most interesting aspects of a figure's thought in general.

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