

Reason in its Practical Application

E. Sonny Elizondo

University of Maryland, Baltimore County

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"[T]here can, in the end, be only one and the same reason, which must be distinguished merely in its application." (Groundwork, 4:391)¹

IT IS A COMMONPLACE THAT ETHICS IS PRACTICAL. In the analytic tradition, this practicality has often been taken to support non-cognitivist, or expressivist, accounts. If ethics is truly practical, the thinking goes, then ethical judgment cannot be in the business of cognizing an ethical subject matter. For such cognition, supposing it were even possible, would not have the immediate connection to motivation and action that seems essential to ethics.²

1. All references to Kant are to *Kants gesammelte Schriften, herausgegeben von der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902–). All translations are from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, general eds. Allen W. Wood and Paul Guyer. I will use the following abbreviations in citations: *Critique of Pure Reason* – KrV; *Critique of Practical Reason* – KpV; *Critique of the Power of Judgment* – KU; *Critique of the Power of Judgment, First Introduction* – KU EE; *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* – P; *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* – G; *The Metaphysics of Morals* – MS; *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* – A; *What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?* – O; *Lectures on Metaphysics* – VM; *Lectures on Logic* – VL; *Jäsche Logic* – JL; *Lectures on Ethics* – VE; *Lectures on Pedagogy* – VP.
2. It is increasingly difficult to offer a clear, uncontroversial characterization of the cognitivism/non-cognitivism distinction. The traditional criterion of truth-aptness no longer works, since many expressivists are happy to embrace truth, so long as truth is understood in a deflationary way. Indeed, the program of quasi-realism, developed in various ways by the two leading lights of expressivism, Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard, is committed to extending truth, knowledge, and the whole suite of traditionally cognitive concepts to ethical thought and language, expressivistically construed. What, then, distinguishes the cognitivist and the non-cognitivist? Following remarks by Blackburn and Gibbard, I will understand cognitivism as the view that the function of ethical judgment is to describe, where the paradigm of description is the attribution of properties to the subject of judgment. So understood, an ethical judgment is a claim about how things stand with respect to an ethical subject matter and, as such, is assessable in terms of its agreement with that subject matter – that is, it is apt for substantial (and not merely deflationary) truth. For example, according to the cognitivist, to judge that murder is wrong is to attribute the property of wrongness to the act-type murder, a judgment that is true just in case that act-type really has that property. It is this account of ethical judgment that the expressivist denies. On his view, ethical judgments may, in important ways, mimic descriptive judgments, but they are not genuinely descriptive. They do not attribute properties; they do make claims about how things stand; and so they are not apt for substantial truth. For Gibbard's view, see his *Wise*

Not everyone, of course, has been convinced that practicality and cognitivism are at odds. One prominent family of views tries to combine these elements by tying ethics to specifically practical reason. If ethical judgment, understood as an exercise of practical reason, is simply about what one should do, then, it seems, we can account for the practicality of ethics in a relatively straightforward and attractive way. So long as practical reason can give rise to motivation and action, ethical judgment can too.³

Such practical rationalism has many variants, but it is most commonly associated with Kant and his followers. It should perhaps be more than a little surprising, then, to find increasing convergence between expressivists and Kantians. For example, two of the most prominent representatives of these positions, Allan Gibbard and Christine Korsgaard, seem to think of themselves as in deep agreement about the nature of ethics.⁴ Gibbard puts his point in terms of the essentially practical states of mind — norm-acceptance, plans, and the like — that ethical judgments express, while Korsgaard refers to attitudes of endorsement and the non-descriptive function of normative concepts, but the basic claim seems strikingly similar. Indeed, Gibbard is clear that, by his lights, Korsgaard just is an expressivist, and Korsgaard has recently written that expressivism is true, in its way. Ethics is practical, Gibbard and Korsgaard seem to agree, all the way down, which implies that the business of ethical judgment cannot be to cognize at all.⁵

Choices, Apt Feelings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990) and *Thinking How to Live* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). For Blackburn's view, see his *Essays in Quasi-Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) and *Ruling Passions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

3. Not that this is uncontroversial, of course.
4. Gibbard, "Morality as Consistency in Living: Korsgaard's Kantian Lectures", *Ethics*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (October 1999): 140–164; Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live*; Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Korsgaard, "Realism and Constructivism in Twentieth-Century Moral Philosophy", in her *The Constitution of Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
5. For Gibbard on Korsgaard, see his "Morality as Consistency in Living", 141, and *Thinking How to Live*, 6 note 2. For Korsgaard on expressivism, see "Realism

As I say above, I think this convergence between expressivists and Kantians should be surprising. For again, one of the apparent attractions of practical rationalism is precisely its promise to reconcile practicality and cognitivism by seating ethical judgment in a capacity that is at once practical and rational. Why, then, should a Kantian, like Korsgaard, be driven to find common cause with the expressivist? The answer, I think, is clear. Korsgaard denies cognitivism because she thinks that assigning ethical judgment a cognitive function is tantamount to attributing such judgment to *theoretical* rather than *practical* reason. This is apparent from her many denunciations of (substantive) moral realism, which she regularly accuses of construing ethics as a "theoretical" or "epistemological" discipline.⁶ Echoing Aristotle, she argues that the point of ethics is not knowledge but action. It is not about correctly tracing the contours of normative reality but about intelligently solving practical problems. This is not to say, Korsgaard claims, that ethical judgments cannot be correct or incorrect. It is simply to say that such correctness cannot be understood

and Constructivism", 325, and the Introduction to *The Constitution of Agency*, 22 note 20. (In the latter, she cites Gibbard explicitly and approvingly.) To be fair, Korsgaard would reject my claim that she is denying cognitivism, since she believes that it is a mistake to think that "the business of cognition is describing the world" ("Realism and Constructivism", 325 note 49). Indeed, she seems to think of her project as helping us transcend the distinction between cognitivism and non-cognitivism, which she understands in terms of a distinction between descriptive and prescriptive uses of language (*ibid.*, 310). Even if she is right, though, that these alternatives are not exhaustive — that there is a "constructivist" option not countenanced here — I take her denial of descriptivism as sufficient reason to attribute to her a denial of cognitivism. For an interesting attempt to distinguish Korsgaard's constructivism and expressivism, see Sharon Street, "What is Constructivism in Ethics and Metaethics?", *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (May 2010): 363–384.

6. *E.g.*, "According to substantive realism, then, ethics is really a theoretical or epistemological subject" (*Sources*, 44); "The moral realist thinks of practical philosophy as an essentially theoretical subject" ("Realism and Constructivism", 324). Similar statements appear again and again in both works. This association of cognitivism with theoretical reason also explains Korsgaard's claim that practical reason theories, such as Aristotle's, Kant's, and her own, do not fit into the traditional cognitivist/non-cognitivist distinction, since they do not assign ethical judgment either a descriptive or prescriptive function (*ibid.*, 309). See also note 5.

in a straightforwardly cognitive way. Since ethical judgments are not claims about how things stand with respect to an ethical subject matter, they cannot be assessed in terms of their agreement with that subject matter; and so familiar epistemic standards of (substantial) truth, warrant, and knowledge, at home in the domain of theory, have no straightforward application in the domain of practice.⁷ Thus, practicality and cognitivism really are at odds, just as the expressivist thinks, and tying ethics to reason does nothing to change this.

If this were correct, it would be a very significant conclusion indeed, shedding light not only on ethics but on the nature of practical reason generally. But I do not think it is correct. Or, at least, I am not convinced. Whatever the merits of a non-cognitivist approach to ethics, it seems to me too quick to think that practical rationalism *must* imply the denial of cognitivism; that the specific nature of practical reason — that in virtue of which it counts as practical rather than theoretical — *requires* that the judgments that issue from it lack a cognitive function. That is, despite Korsgaard's arguments, I believe there remains room for a conception of practical reason that is at once practical and cognitivist.

To be sure, I am not alone in this belief. Korsgaard's view of the matter is far from uncontroversial, and there are apparent versions of practical rationalism that are avowedly cognitivist.⁸ Still, though,

7. Hereafter, all references to epistemic standards of truth, warrant, and knowledge will be to substantial versions of these standards and not to deflationary analogs.

8. I include here Thomas Nagel and T.M. Scanlon, both of whom Korsgaard regards as paradigms of theoretical rationalism, a characterization they would certainly deny (*Sources*, 40–42; "Realism and Constructivism", 324). For Nagel's view, see his *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). For Scanlon's view, see his *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). More interestingly, perhaps, I also include here neo-Aristotelian philosophers, such as Warren Quinn and Philippa Foot, who quite clearly think of practical reason as a cognitive faculty. For Quinn's view, see his "Putting Rationality in its Place", in his *Morality and Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). For Foot's view, see her *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). I say this is "more interesting" because, as I note above, Korsgaard thinks that Aristotle and Kant are both practical rationalists, and so, it would seem, both deny cognitivism. I

it seems to me that we lack a clear understanding of the essential commitments of such a position, an understanding that takes seriously the distinction between theoretical and practical reason and serves to explain how and why the latter has the same cognitive credentials as the former. My aim in this paper is to try to go some way toward providing such an understanding, through an examination of the very figure who inspires Korsgaard's rejection of cognitivism: Kant. For as I read him, Kant construes the distinction between theoretical and practical reason not in terms of a distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive functions but in terms of two distinct applications of a single faculty of reason, which is through-and-through cognitive. That is to say, both theoretical and practical reason function to cognize a subject matter, and so both are straightforwardly subject to familiar epistemic standards of truth, warrant, and knowledge.

As with many aspects of Kant's philosophy, these matters are difficult and their interpretation controversial. My ambition is less to provide a complete defense of my reading than to lay out, as clearly as I can, an account of practical reason that is at once plausibly Kantian and philosophically interesting. Of course, even if I am right about Kant, this does not show that Korsgaard is ultimately wrong about reason; and I will offer no direct argument against her position here. Nonetheless, I believe that reflection on Kant's true view, with its careful treatment of and respect for both the practicality and the rationality of reason, should perhaps lead us to rethink what it means to be a rationalist in ethics.

agree with Korsgaard that Aristotle and Kant are practical rationalists, but I do not agree that they deny cognitivism. To this extent, my reading of Kant places him closer to some contemporary Aristotelian views than Kantian views. For another reading of Kant that emphasizes his continuity with the "practical cognitivist" tradition that includes Aristotle, see Stephen Engstrom, *The Form of Practical Knowledge: A Study of the Categorical Imperative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). I came upon this important book late in working through this material on my own, and I have not been able to take full account of it. I hope to do so in the future.

I

Though my interest is in the Kantian account of practical reason, I will begin by discussing the Kantian account of the will. In the context of Kant's theory, this shift in focus should seem rather natural. After all, Kant is clear that the will is nothing other than practical reason; and so we should expect that, in understanding the one, we are at the same time understanding the other (*G* 4:412). Moreover, approaching practical reason from the side of the will also affords the opportunity to face directly what is perhaps the most significant puzzle about a cognitivist conception of practical reason — viz., how anything cognitive could be at the same time practical. I believe that we can gain insight into this issue by reflecting on the rudiments of Kant's account of mind in general. Such reflection will allow us to see what, according to Kant, makes a faculty or state cognitive and what makes a faculty or state practical. With a clearer view of both of these elements, we will be better positioned to understand Kant's attempt to reconcile them.

According to Kant, to have a mind of any kind — intellectual or sensible, rational or animal — is to have a faculty of representation. As a first approximation, then, we can understand the mind as a capacity to possess or produce representations, where 'representation' is understood capaciously, so as to include perceptions, desires, sensations, etc. But this is only a first approximation, since Kant is clear that the faculty of representation is not, so to speak, a brute power, producing representations in the way a decaying atom produces radiation. This is because the faculty of representation is functionally organized. Kant is clearest about this in his decomposition of the generic faculty of representation into the three particular faculties of cognition, desire, and pleasure (*KU* 5:177–179, *KU EE* 20:206). These faculties are individuated by their essential functions — in particular, by the kind of representation it is their business to produce.⁹ The function of the faculty of

9. For expressions of Kant's teleological approach to the mind, see *KrV* A51/B75, *KrV* A294/B350–A295/B351, *KrV* A642/B670, *G* 4:432, *KpV* 5:119–120, *KU* 5:187, *KU* 5:119–120, *JL* 9:11–13, etc.

cognition is to cognize — *i. e.*, to produce cognition. The function of the faculty of desire is to desire — *i. e.*, to produce desire. Etc.¹⁰

We can begin to fill out these functions by examining Kant's taxonomy of representation in more detail. Of particular importance for present purposes is the genus of which both cognition and desire are species: objective representation (*KU EE* 20:206–208, *MS* 6:211–212). Objectivity here is understood in terms of the functional relation between a representation and its object. It is the function of objective representations to fit their objects. This is easiest to see in the case of cognition, but desire too is objective in this same sense. The key point here is that there are two distinct ways in which a representation can come to fit its object. In the first way, the representation functions to achieve fit by conforming to the given object. In the second way, the representation functions to achieve fit by conforming the object to the given representation. The former representational function is definitive of cognition. The latter representational function is definitive of desire.¹¹ For example, if I perceive a flower through my window, this representation functions to represent the flower as it is, out there in my garden. But if I desire the flower, as a gift for my beloved, this representation functions to bring about the flower, in the hands of my beloved. To mark this difference in ways of achieving representational fit, we can say that cognition specifically functions to be *accurate* and desire specifically functions to be *efficacious*.

Moving, then, from representations to the faculties that function to produce them, we can say more precisely what the functions of the faculties of cognition and desire are. If the faculty of cognition functions to produce cognition, and cognitions are representations that function to be accurate, then the faculty of cognition functions

10. I set aside the faculty of pleasure for now, since it plays only a supporting role in the current drama. I will, however, have something more to say about it in §III.

11. Borrowing a contemporary metaphor, we might say that there are two mind-world relations: one in which the mind is fit to the world, and one in which the world is fit to the mind. Objective representations function to achieve mind-world fit, but they can do so in different ways.

to produce accurate representations. And if the faculty of desire functions to produce desire, and desires are representations that function to be efficacious, then the faculty of desire functions to produce efficacious representations.

Now, since the faculties of cognition and desire have functions, these faculties are subject to standards. That is, they can be evaluated as successful or unsuccessful to the extent that they fulfill or fail to fulfill their functions. Since these standards are grounded in the nature of the faculties, they apply to these faculties as such. They are, in a word, constitutive standards. As constitutive standards, these standards are not the products of any representational activity — as in the legislation of positive law — and they do not need to be themselves the objects of any representation. After all, animals have faculties of representation. Representational standards apply to these faculties, even though animals lack any capacity to set such standards or even to represent them. Put another way: While animal faculties are *subject* to standards, the exercise of these faculties is not *guided* by standards. This is not, however, to say that normative guidance has no place in Kantian psychology. Indeed, as we shall see, Kant thinks that such guidance is necessary for and even constitutive of the exercise of specifically intellectual faculties, including the will. But even where there is guidance, this does not mean that the relevant standards are products of activity. Rather, they are presupposed by activity, since they follow from the nature of the relevant faculty itself.

Applying this framework to the faculties of cognition and desire, we can easily see what constitutive standards govern these faculties. If the faculties of cognition and desire function to produce accurate and efficacious representations respectively, then these faculties are successful to the extent that they in fact produce such representations. The faculty of cognition is successful when its representations are accurate. The faculty of desire is successful when its representations are efficacious.

With this general account of objective representational faculties in the background, I want to examine the practical faculty, the faculty of

desire, in more detail. I claimed above that the faculty of desire functions to produce desires. As this characterization suggests, Kantian desires are more like outputs than like inputs of the motivational system.¹² Consequently, on Kant's view, desires themselves have a history. There is an account to be given about how and why a particular (kind of) faculty of desire produces the particular (kind of) desires that it does. The Kantian form of such an account appeals to determining grounds of the faculty of desire — *i.e.*, features of an individual's psychology that explain why she desires as she does. Whatever their more particular features, Kant thinks that such grounds are always instances of two generic types: those that are sensible and those that are intellectual.

When the determining ground of the faculty of desire is sensible, Kant thinks, then it is feeling that explains why the subject desires as it does. The paradigm case here is the hungry animal who discovers a tasty-looking morsel of food. When a mouse, say, spies the bit of cheddar that falls from my sandwich, its perception arouses a sensory pleasure, which causes its subsequent desire to eat the cheese. To be so moved by sensible determining grounds is to possess a sensible faculty of desire.

When the determining ground of the faculty of desire is intellectual, however, it is not feeling but an intellectual representation that explains why the subject desires as it does. To see how such an explanation might go, we must look a bit more closely at Kant's view of the intellect.¹³ Kant regards the intellect — “understanding” or “reason” in the broadest sense — as a specifically conceptual capacity (*KrV* A19/

12. Notice, then, that the agent does not act *on* desire, as we are apt to say. Rather, the agent acts *through* desire, since to be in a state of desire is simply to be in a state that functions to bring about its object.
13. One might ask, where does the intellect fall in the tripartite division of mental powers I introduced above? The answer, as will become clear, is that it belongs to the faculty of cognition. I do not emphasize this here, though, since even a non-cognitivist Kantian such as Korsgaard allows the intellect to determine the faculty of desire. She simply thinks that when the intellect does this, it does not do so in its cognitive capacity. Of course, I disagree, but I will only begin to argue the point in the next section.

B33, *KrV* A51/B75). As such, the intellect allows us not merely to represent objects but to represent those objects under concepts and so to think about them. Thought here is understood propositionally, in terms of (predicative) judgment. Indeed, since Kant thinks that concepts are nothing but predicates of possible judgments, he goes so far as to claim that all activities of the understanding can be traced back to judgment, “so that the understanding in general can be represented as a faculty for judging” (*KrV* A69/B94).¹⁴ It seems, then, that the intellect can determine the faculty of desire if and only if it can, through judgment, bring a subject to desire. To be so moved by intellectual determining grounds is to possess an intellectual faculty of desire, a will.

The role of judgment here bears further discussion. For the mere involvement of judgment in the etiology of desire does not suffice for volition. After all, a judgment, as much as any sensory representation, can give rise to feelings. And if the explanation of why the agent comes to desire is *simply* that she feels a certain way, then it does not matter whether the representation that aroused the feeling originates in the intellect or sensibility; the determination itself remains sensible (*KpV* 5:23). Consider, perhaps, a person who enjoys doing logic puzzles. Her representations can be through-and-through intellectual, but so long as she manipulates these representations *simply* for the fun of it, then it is feeling that determines the faculty of desire. What is necessary, then, for the intellect to determine the faculty of desire — and so what is necessary to will — is for judgment itself rather than mere feeling to be a determining ground.

Moreover, not just any judgment appears fit for this duty. As Hume noticed, it is difficult to see any direct practical import in ordinary judgments about ordinary matters of fact. For example, the judgment that umbrellas keep one dry in the rain, considered as such, does not seem to have motivational significance. It is only when we posit, say,

14. I obviously skate over many complexities here. The best treatment of these issues I know is Béatrice Longuenesse’s *Kant and the Capacity to Judge: Sensibility and Discursivity in the Transcendental Analytic of the Critique of Pure Reason* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

a feeling of horror at the prospect of wet socks that we can begin to understand the connection between reason and desire. According to Kant, though, not all judgments are in this way ordinary, and so the powers of our intellect are not so limited.

Kant distinguishes two different kinds of judgment: theoretical and practical. He characterizes this distinction in a number of different ways, but perhaps his most common way of putting the point is in terms of judgments of what-is and judgments of what-ought-to-be (*G* 4:387, *KU* 5:171, *KU EE* 20:195, *JL* 9:86). This is, in some ways, an unfortunate framing, as it suggests that in both cases the subject matter is some state of the world. It is clear, however, that Kant does not mean this. While theoretical judgment is about the world in the most general sense, practical judgment is not about the world — at least not directly. It is about what rational agents should *do* in the world. Kant clearly signals this agential focus in other characterizations of practical judgment, in terms of judgments of freedom (as opposed to nature) and judgments concerning acting (as opposed to being). Properly understood, then, practical judgment concerns not merely what-ought-to-be but what-ought-to-be-done by rational agents. We may, of course, render judgment about the former. But, Kant thinks, such judgments must ultimately depend on our judgments about the latter. What states of the world ought to be are just those states of the world that would result from rational agents doing what they ought to do. Kant brings all these strands of thought together in the second Critique, when he claims that “the only objects of a practical reason [and so of a practical judgment] are therefore those of the good and the evil”, which, he says, are referred to actions or willings and not to effects (*KpV* 5:58, *KpV* 5:60, *G* 4:413).

It should be fairly obvious, then, that only practical judgment is suited to serve as a distinctly intellectual determining ground of the faculty of desire, for only practical judgment has as its object this determination itself (*KpV* 5:20, *KpV* 5:65). For example, I may desire to tell you a joke simply because I love the sound of your laughter. But I may also desire to do so because I think it is good to lighten your mood

in this way. In the first case, feeling alone moves me. In the second case, intellect intercedes. My judgment explains my motivation, and so what would otherwise be a sensible desire becomes an intellectual one, a volition. This is what it is to will: to come to volition through a judgment that that volition is good.¹⁵

It is important to emphasize how tightly judgment and will are conjoined here. For there are ways of reading Kant that allow more space between these elements than I believe Kant in fact permits. First of all, there is a tendency to think of the will in Kant as a capacity to be determined either by reason or by sensibility. This is not correct. Strictly speaking, the will is *always* determined by reason through practical judgment. If a subject comes to desire, but not because she judges that it is good to do so, then her desire is simply not volition. She may act, but she does not will.¹⁶

15. Compare Kant's discussion of the "guise of the good" thesis in the second Critique. He claims there that the thesis is ambiguous, since it leaves undetermined whether we represent a thing as good because we desire it or we desire it because we represent it as good. Clearly, Kant thinks that the latter is true, at least as far as the will is concerned. In this case, "the concept of the good is the determining ground of desire (of the will); ... [and] we will something in consequence of this idea [of the good], which must precede volition as its determining ground" (*KrV* 5:59n, Kant's emphasis).
16. This raises the question of how widespread willing really is. This is a difficult and delicate issue, which I cannot discuss in detail here. Suffice it to say, if we identify willing with practical judgment, in the way that I have, it may seem that we do not will nearly as often as we think. How uncomfortable this makes us depends on what alternatives to willing we think available. If we think of acting that is not willing simply as animal action, of the sort exemplified by the hungry mouse, we are likely to feel quite uncomfortable indeed. But if we think of acting that is not willing as including intentional action, albeit action that is not guided by practical judgment, then we might feel less distressed. Consider, perhaps, the actions of young children, who do not yet have the conceptual resources necessary for practical judgment but do not thereby lack intentional agency, or akratic agents, who intentionally do other than they think they should. To allow for such possibilities, we would have to distinguish the will from the capacity to form and act on intention. Many philosophers, even Kantians, do not make such a distinction. Perhaps they should. For interesting discussion of competing accounts of the will that takes up similar issues, see Gary Watson, "The Work of the Will", in his *Agency and Answerability: Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

This is not to say that sensibility plays no role in the determination of the will. It is simply to say that when sensibility does play such a role, it can do so only through the connection of feeling to judgment. For example, I think this is exactly what is going on with the prudent shopkeeper from *Groundwork* I. This person — call him "Peter" — judges that it is good to charge a fixed price in order to secure a reputation for honest dealing, but he makes this judgment only because he regards the volition as in his interest, which, for Kant, is just to say that he is pleased by the prospect of its efficacy.¹⁷ In such a case, feeling does play an essential role in determining Peter's faculty of desire. But even here, this feeling does not determine his faculty directly, as it would in a mere animal. It stands at one remove, serving as a condition of the judgment that is itself the determining ground. Peter judges the volition good because of the feeling. But it is always, properly speaking, his judgment and not his feeling that explains why he does what he does.¹⁸

Even if one accords practical judgment this constitutive role in willing, however, one might still think that the psychological story I'm telling is incomplete. After all, surely it is possible for an agent to think that she should do something and yet, for all her rational conviction, feel no impulse to do so. And if this is possible, then don't we need an additional element to mediate between judgment and desire, to explain how reason can motivate? Kant's answer, I think, is no. This is not to deny that, as a matter of fact, our practical judgments can fail to move us. But, on Kant's view, this possibility does not show that practical judgments require motivational supplement. It shows only that the functioning of our motivational systems is subject to interference and

17. Notice that, on Kant's view, what Peter wills is not a bare action — charging his customers a fixed price — or a bare purpose — securing a reputation for honest dealing — but an action paired with its purpose — to charge his customers a fixed price in order to secure a reputation for honest dealing. It is this entire complex that Kant means to capture when he individuates willings in terms of maxims.
18. As this suggests, understanding why an agent wills requires understanding why she judges. I elaborate on this important point in §II.

so capable of defect. Thus, though there may be various impediments that preclude the transition from judgment to desire, Kant believes that there is no further psychological act or element necessary to effect this transition. It is the natural operation of the will, the faculty through which practical judgment is immediately practical.¹⁹

Put another way: The practicality of reason is a premise of the Kantian argument. It is not a conclusion. Kant never questions, even hypothetically, whether reason is practical, whether reason can determine the will. “Reason”, as he says, “always has objective reality insofar as volition alone is at issue” (*KpV* 5:15). All he questions is whether *pure* reason is practical, whether “pure reason of itself alone suffices to determine the will or whether it can be a determining ground of the will only as empirically conditioned” (*KpV* 5:15). To this extent, then, Kant is not answering Hume’s skepticism about practical reason. Rather, he rejects the terms of Hume’s question. For by Kant’s lights, were reason not practical, there would be no will, and our actions would not be fit for rational and so moral assessment. We’d simply be clever animals, which is more or less what Hume thought.²⁰

II

Return, then, to the question of cognitivism. Does Kant’s conception of the will suggest a cognitivist conception of practical reason? The

19. For excellent discussion of this basic point, see Korsgaard’s “Skepticism about Practical Reason”, in her *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

20. In this way, Kant’s true “reply” to Hume in practical philosophy parallels his “reply” in theoretical philosophy. Kant’s strategy throughout is to assume the reality of a certain rational achievement and then to ask what must be true in order for that achievement to be possible. His answer, in both cases, turns on his conviction that there must be more to the human mind than dreamt of in Humean philosophy. Instead of impressions, ideas, and laws of association, there are faculties of sensibility and understanding, each with its own formal principles; and there is a faculty of will, through which reason is immediately practical. Without the former, Kant thinks, we could not do physics. Without the latter, we could not act well. Of course, such forms of argument will fail to satisfy an inveterate skeptic, who finds Kant’s starting assumptions dubious. But Kant’s concern is not the refutation of skepticism. It is the explanation of our manifest rational achievements, theoretical and practical.

answer, it seems clear, depends on the status of practical judgment. If practical judgment is cognitive, then practical reason, which issues such judgment, must be cognitive too.

To assess the cognitive credentials of practical judgment, consider again the distinction between theoretical and practical judgments introduced above. The distinction, I claimed, turns on two issues. First, theoretical and practical judgment differ in their subject matter: the former has a theoretical object (what-is), and the latter has a practical object (what-ought-to-be-done). Second, theoretical and practical judgment differ in their connection to the faculty of desire: the former determines the faculty of desire only mediately, and so serves to motivate only through another representation; and the latter determines the faculty of desire immediately, and so serves to motivate through itself. Thus, practical judgment is practical in two respects. It is practical in its object, and it is practical in its issue.

The question, then, is: Do these dimensions of practicality serve to impugn the cognitive credentials of practical judgment? I do not believe that they do. The difference in subject matters seems on its face irrelevant to cognitive status. And if Kant is already comfortable claiming that judgment can motivate, it is not immediately clear on what basis he would resist thinking that cognition could do so too. Moreover, Kant regularly refers to practical cognition [*praktische Erkenntnis*] and often explicitly characterizes the theoretical/practical distinction as a distinction within the cognitive domain (*JL* 9:86, *KrV* Bx, *KpV* 5:19–20). If we take him at his word, then, it seems that Kant counts practical judgments as no less cognitive than their theoretical counterparts.

But maybe it is a mistake to take Kant at his word here. Maybe the “cognition” in “practical cognition” is meant loosely, referring to something more like rule-governed thought. After all, as I explained in §I, a cognition, as Kant understands it, is a representation that functions to be accurate; and one might well wonder whether this model really has application in the practical domain. True, practical judgments represent volition as good, but can such judgments be legitimately assessed in terms of their accuracy, in terms of whether the volition represented

as good really is good? Or would such an assessment betray a kind of category mistake, importing standards into an area of rational endeavor where they simply do not apply? Reflection on such questions might lead one to think that, despite what Kant seems to say, he really does restrict cognition to the theoretical domain, and so cannot hold a cognitivist conception of practical reason after all.

Now, I accept that a cognitivist conception of practical reason requires thinking about the correctness conditions of practical judgment in terms of accuracy, but I do not think this betrays a category mistake. In my view, practical judgments, every bit as much as theoretical judgments, are claims about how things stand with respect to a subject matter, and so are appropriately assessed in terms of their agreement with that subject matter. In order to explain why, though, I must first say more about how I understand the evaluative framework appropriate to cognitive judgment. I will focus on theoretical judgment, which I assume is uncontroversially cognitive, but only temporarily. As I will argue in the next section, the framework applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to practical judgment as well.

First, though cognitions in general function to be accurate, there are different kinds of accuracy appropriate to different kinds of cognitions. Since judgment is a specifically conceptual, propositional kind of cognition, Kant associates it with a specifically conceptual, propositional kind of accuracy: truth (*JL* 9:53, *KrV* A293/B350). More specifically, a judgment is true just in case the subject of the judgment really possesses the property attributed to it by the predicate of the judgment.²¹

Second, in my previous discussion, I passed over an ambiguity in Kant's use of the term "judgment" [*Urteil*]. Kant uses this term to refer to both the propositional attitude of judging and the propositional content judged. When referring specifically to the attitude, Kant will often use the more specific term *Fürwahrhalten* — literally, "holding-to-be-true" (*JL* 9:66, *KrV* 820/B848). It is important to see that Kant's notion of holding-to-be-true is very broad, covering a wide variety of

21. And so, to be clear, this is truth in a substantial and not merely deflationary sense.

propositional attitudes, not all of which are naturally captured by the term "judgment". Though we may hold a proposition to be true, say, when we merely entertain it, we are not thereby committed to the truth of the proposition, in such a way that our attitude is subject to epistemic evaluation. We manifest no epistemic defect, for example, if it turns out that the proposition is false or, indeed, if we take it to be false.²² In what follows, I will be interested only in those holdings-to-be-true that involve epistemic commitment, where this involves two elements: (i) a commitment that everyone who represents the same object in the same circumstances should judge in the same way, and (ii) a commitment that everyone should so judge because that judgment agrees with its object — *i. e.*, is true (*P* 4:298, *KrV* A821/B849).²³ I reserve the term "judgment" for just these attitudes.

Third, in my discussion of the faculty of desire, I noted that Kant uses the term "determining ground" to refer to features of an individual's psychology that explain why she desires as she does. Kant employs the term in a similar way in the case of judgment. Determining grounds of judgment are those features of an individual's psychology that explain why she judges as she does. As determining grounds of

22. There are also holdings-to-be-true in which we are committed to the truth of the proposition but *not* in such a way that our attitude is subject to epistemic evaluation. This is the kind of attitude that Kant calls "belief" [*Glaube*] — *e. g.*, our (practically warranted) belief that God exists. In such cases, we escape epistemic evaluation because the grounds on which we hold our proposition to be true are not epistemic. For sympathetic recent discussion, see Andrew Chignell, "Belief in Kant", *Philosophical Review* 116, No.3, 2007: 323–360. For more directly philosophical discussion of the complicated relation between propositional attitudes and truth, see J. David Velleman, "On the Aim of Belief", in his *The Possibility of Practical Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

23. Notably, Kant thinks that (i) and (ii) can come apart. This happens in the case of aesthetic judgment, where it is precisely this separation that sets the problem of the critique of taste: how can aesthetic judgments make good on their claim to universal validity when the ground of this validity is a feature of our subjectivity — *i. e.*, pleasure — rather than a feature of the object? Kant's idealism complicates the contrast here, since, in the case of theoretical cognition at least, the object itself depends on the mind. Kant is clear, though, that the dependence on subjectivity exhibited in the aesthetic and theoretical cases is quite different (*KU* 5:189).

judgment in particular, these grounds must take a specific form. For Kant thinks of intellectual faculties as active faculties that require the subject's self-conscious involvement in a way that merely sensible, passive faculties do not. Kant respects this condition by claiming that a subject comes to judgment only as a result of taking some consideration to count in favor of so judging; or, more specifically, a subject comes to hold a proposition true only as a result of taking some consideration to indicate its truth. When the subject does so, that consideration becomes the ground of her judgment.²⁴

If this is right, then we should expect Kant's account of the evaluative framework appropriate to cognitive judgment to be rather more complicated than the simple picture advanced above. That is to say, we should expect that a subject is intellectually successful not merely when her judgments are true. We should also expect that she is intellectually successful when the grounds of her judgment are appropriately related to the truth.

In order to see how Kant integrates the appropriateness of grounds into his account of intellectual success, I want to look first at his account of how we go wrong with respect to our judgment. In particular, I want to look at his account of cognitive error. According to Kant, error is not just any cognitive defect. It has two essential marks: falsehood and illusion [*Schein*] (*VL Vienna* 24:824, *JL* 9:55, *KrV* A293/B249–A298/B355). The first is straightforward. Error requires, as Kant says, a "holding-to-be-true of falsehood" (*VL Vienna* 24:832). But mere falsehood is not enough for error. In order to err, we must hold a falsehood to be true as a consequence of illusion.

24. One might wonder whether my claim that a subject comes to judgment by taking some consideration to count in favor of so judging introduces a non-cognitive element into judgment. I do not think that it does. The taking-to-count-in-favor attitude can itself be understood cognitively, as answerable to its subject matter — *i. e.*, what (really) counts in favor of what. Indeed, I think this understanding is important for Kant's account of how we go wrong with respect to the grounds of our judgment. I offer an account of this mistake in my discussion of error below. For contemporary discussion of related issues, see Scanlon's *What We Owe to Each Other*, Chapter 1, §11.

Take one of Kant's examples: He offers the familiar case of the moon's looking larger when it is just over the horizon than it looks when it is higher in the sky (*KpV* A297/B354, *A* 7:146). This, he says, is an empirical illusion.²⁵ The way things appear to be through our senses is not the way they are. Sometimes we can shake off our illusions, bringing the appearance back into line with how we know things to be. But even when we can't shake off the illusion, as in this case, we can still avoid being taken in by it. The astronomer and the astronomically naïve person suffer the same illusory appearance. But while the former is not "deceived by this illusion", and so does not render judgment on its basis, the latter does (*KrV* A297/B354). It is precisely this in which his error consists.

Kant elaborates this difference between erroneous and non-erroneous judgment in terms of a difference between two kinds of grounds of judgment: subjective and objective. A subjective ground is a consideration that indicates only something about the subject's relation to the object. An objective ground, by contrast, indicates something about the object itself. Thus, though we always come to judgment on the basis of considerations that we take to indicate the truth of the relevant proposition — in these terms, on what we regard as objective grounds — we are not always right in this. As Kant says, under the influence of sensibility, we sometimes "take merely *subjective* grounds to be *objective*, and consequently confuse *the mere illusion of truth with truth itself*" (*JL* 9:54, Kant's emphasis).

Applying this distinction to the current case, we can see that the astronomically naïve person, in mistaking a feature of his subjectivity for a feature of the object, errs in judging on what can only be a subjective ground. The astronomer, by contrast, makes no such mistake. She corrects for the biases of her perceptual system, and so is guided in her judgment not simply by her subjective constitution but by the

25. I count four kinds of illusion in Kant: empirical illusion (*KpV* A295/B352, *A* 7:146), moral illusion (*VL Vienna* 24:832, *VE Collins* 27:348), logical illusion (*KpV* A296/B353), and transcendental illusion (*KpV* A297/B353). I consider empirical illusion here and moral illusion later. I consider logical and transcendental illusion not at all.

character of the object. That is, her judgment is “determined through objective grounds of truth that are independent of the nature and the interest of the subject” (*JL* 9:70). In this respect, we can say that her judgment is not simply true but also well-grounded. When this is so, Kant thinks, her judgment qualifies as knowledge [*Wissen*].²⁶

I noted above that since we are intellectual beings, who hold propositions to be true on grounds that we take to indicate their truth, we should expect that we are intellectually successful not merely when our judgments are true. We should also expect that we are intellectually successful when the grounds of our judgments are appropriately related to the truth. We are now in a position to make good on this expectation. By reflecting on the notion of error, we have seen more clearly the ways in which we can go wrong (and right) in judging as we do. Just as error seems something worse than mere falsehood, so does knowledge seem something better than mere truth. The former leaves us unmoored from the subject matter in a way that seems to do special offense to our intellectual ambitions. For not only do we misjudge the object, but the grounds for such judgment are not at all suited to their task. We are thus doubly mistaken: with respect to the object and with respect to what considerations should guide our thinking about it. As rational beings, who strive to direct the course of our cognitive lives in accordance with epistemic standards, we demand to be right about both. Only knowledge satisfies this demand, thereby doing justice to our rational vocation. It is the acme of intellectual success.

III

Now, if practical judgments were truly cognitive, then we should expect them to have all of the features of cognitive judgment that I just described. In judging that a volition is good we would be staking a claim about a genuine subject matter, attributing goodness to

26. Kant’s discussion of knowledge is more complex than the simple view I discuss here — for example, it includes a claim to certainty (*JL* 9:70–72, *KrV* A822/B852). That said, I think my gloss captures Kant’s core idea, at least well enough for present purposes.

a volition on grounds that we took to indicate its goodness. But is it really plausible to think of practical judgments in this way? To answer this question, recall the two aspects of epistemic commitment I identified as essential to cognitive judgment: (i) a commitment that everyone who represents the same object in the same circumstances should judge in the same way, and (ii) a commitment that everyone should so judge because that judgment agrees with its object — *i. e.*, is true.

With respect to the demand for universal agreement, one might query whether it is possible to render a less ambitious practical judgment, one that is about how it is good to will yet doesn’t involve any claim that everyone should agree. Indeed, doesn’t Kant think we do just this with respect to volitions that would promote our private ends, our happiness? I will have more to say about judgments involving our happiness in a moment, but the first thing to note is that a demand for universal agreement does not seem at all foreign to practical judgment. This is evident from Kant’s various characterizations of goodness. As Kant says in the *Groundwork*, good “is that which determines the will by means of representations of reason, hence not by subjective causes but objectively, that is, from grounds that are valid for every rational being as such” (*G* 4:413). He says much the same thing in the second Critique, when he asserts that “what we are to call good must be an object of the faculty of desire in the judgment of every reasonable human being” (*KpV* 5:60). Where there is no demand for universal agreement, then, there seems to be no claim of goodness and so no practical judgment.

But even if practical judgment does involve a demand for universal agreement, one might still wonder whether it also involves a correlative demand that everyone should so agree because the judgment is true. There are deep Kantian reasons to worry whether the notion of truth transfers well into the practical domain. Suppose for now, though, that these worries can be assuaged. What would follow, I think, is a natural and plausible account of how we go right and wrong in our practical judgments. I want to trace the outlines of this view to show its power before I discuss possible Kantian misgivings about it.

Return to the question I set aside above — viz., how to understand what seem to be merely private judgments. If what I just said about universal agreement is correct, then such judgments are, strictly speaking, not possible. One can, of course, judge that willing in a certain way will advance one's interest or make oneself happy. But, Kant thinks, these are not practical judgments at all. They are theoretical judgments about the natural order of cause and effect — *e.g.*, acting in such and such a way is a means to the satisfaction of my inclinations or the production of a certain feeling.²⁷ Such judgments may be relevant to our thinking what to do, but they cannot be identified with any such thought.

So what should we say, then, of cases in which it seems as if the judgment is merely private? What has gone wrong? In order to answer this question, I want to return to Kant's account of error, supposing, again, that this account applies straightforwardly to practical judgment. Recall, we err when we hold a falsehood to be true as a consequence of illusion. In the practical case, the falsehood is clear — judging a volition good when it is not — but the relevant illusion may seem harder to spot. Given that the object here is volition and that Kant does not think that we have a special sense-perceptual faculty trained on volition, there is no direct analog to the case of empirical illusion I discussed earlier. That said, Kant does think that there is a subjective element involved in our representation of volition, the feeling of pleasure. It is important to recognize here that Kant does not accept the view, endorsed by his rationalist predecessors, that pleasure is literally an appearance of goodness.²⁸ Pleasures are, as Kant says, “merely subjective”, and so “they represent nothing at all in the object but simply a relation to the subject” (*MS* 6:212, *KU* 5:189, *KU* 5:204). Nevertheless, Kant thinks that we are inclined to regard pleasure as if it were an indi-

27. On the mistake of thinking that propositions concerning the mere production of effects are really practical at all, see the discussion of practical and theoretical propositions in the introductions to the third Critique (*KU* 5:171–173, *KU EE* 20:195–201).

28. Kant discusses the Wolffian view that pleasure is a mode of cognition at *LM Dohna* 28:674.

cation of goodness. To see what he has in mind, I want to look at what he calls “moral illusion”.

Kant says that “moral illusion is when that which serves our best interest seems to arise from duty” (*VL Vienna* 24:832). Since we are discussing practical judgment, and so goodness in general, the inclusion of duty here may seem puzzling, but I do not think it should be. For if practical judgment really involves full epistemic commitment, as I am here supposing, then duty is a rather more ordinary notion than it might otherwise seem. Kant is often read as if he takes duty — and related deontological notions, such as imperatives, obligation, and the like — to represent alternatives to goodness or perhaps to capture only one special “moral” sense of goodness, where this involves the thought that we *must* do something, whether or not we want to. I do not think either of these readings is correct. First, Kant is clear that these notions apply to us simply because we do not always do what we represent as good (*G* 4:413). But this is not to displace goodness. It is simply to remark on our relation to it, as imperfect beings. Second, as we have already seen, Kant believes that cognitive judgment in general involves a commitment to universal agreement on the basis of truth. But if so, then deontological demands follow from the nature of judgment as such: judge this way rather than that, not because you want to but because it is true, or at least indicated by the evidence.²⁹ Though we are perhaps less likely to speak about duty and obligation in theoretical cases, it seems that the same basic concepts apply. If this is right, then we should be rather less impressed than we tend to be by this deontological side of Kant. The claims of duty turn out to be no more than the claims of truth upon judgment.³⁰

The moral illusion, then, that Kant associates with practical error is really rather ordinary. Think of the perils of gift-giving, where it is all too easy to buy for another what one really wants for oneself.

29. “Everyone must believe a fact if it is sufficiently attested, just as he must believe a mathematical demonstration, whether or not he wants to” (*O* 8:146).

30. As Kant says, “to do something from duty means to obey reason” (*VP* 9:483). In the case of judgment, we obey reason by seeking and conforming to truth.

I may judge it good, and so in this sense my duty, to buy my partner a new TV in order to make her happy, even though, in reality, I want it much more than she. In such a case, what seems to arise from duty is simply something that serves my interest. Though I come to judgment on the basis of considerations that I take to indicate the truth about what is good, I am nonetheless mistaken. My judgment is clouded by the pleasure I take in my proposed activity, and I fall prey to a kind of illusion. That is, I judge my volition good on grounds that merely indicate something about *my* relation to the volition — how I feel about it — rather than something about the volition itself — *its* goodness. In this way, we can understand practical error on the model of empirical error, insofar as both involve a confusion of subjective and objective grounds.³¹

If this is really the right way to understand how practical judgment goes wrong, we should also expect it to explain some of the more familiar mistakes that Kant discusses — *e. g.*, the lying promise in *Groundwork* II. To see how it might do this, consider another characterization of moral illusion. In the Collins *Lectures on Ethics*, Kant distinguishes two kinds of moral fantasies [*Träume*], only the first of which will interest us here. We fall prey to this fantasy, Kant says, when we “fancy of

31. One might worry that I do not allow feeling enough room in practical judgment. For example, can't I permissibly judge it good to indulge my taste for the early films of Mike Myers, provided that I wouldn't be shirking any obligation by doing so? And doesn't this show that practical judgment sometimes permits subjective grounds, so long as those grounds are not in conflict with morality? Yes and no. In the proposed case, I judge as I do because I feel as I do. But it does not follow from this that the ground of my judgment is therefore subjective. Indeed, odd as it may sound, I think that the feeling here is (or is part of) an objective ground. Why? Because, in this case, the feeling functions not as a source of illusion, a distorting influence on judgment. Rather, it functions as evidence about what it is good for me to do; and judgment on the basis of evidence is the paradigm of judgment on an objective ground. In this way, I think there is no deep difference between how I take account of my feelings and how I take account of another's. There is no problem in considering my partner's likes and dislikes when I'm buying her a gift — indeed, I should — and there is no problem in considering my likes and dislikes when I'm deciding how best to spend my evening — indeed, I should. Thus, so far as I can see, permitting feeling this kind of role in practical judgment presents no problem for my account.

the moral law that it is indulgent in regard to ourselves” (*VE Collins* 27:348). I think this describes the liar's mistake exactly. The liar — call him “Paul” — does not seek to exempt himself from the law. He rather proposes a law that itself includes an exemption, not just for himself but for everyone. Put another way: Paul knows that lying promises are suspect; it is not good to do them, at least not usually. What he is considering here is whether, in these circumstances, the presumption against lying is rebutted. What Paul (and so we) learn by asking whether his maxim can be universalized is that the presumption holds. His indulgent law is, as Kant says, a false law, and so no law at all.³²

Understanding Paul's mistake in this way allows us to see this case as of a piece with the kind of error described above. For Paul, like me when I am shopping for gifts, wrongly judges his volition good, because that which serves his interest seems to arise from duty. Under the influence of need, Paul judges that it is good to make a lying promise in order to get money, even though he evidently suspects that this may not be the case. As a rational being, Paul aims to judge his volitions good on account of their goodness. But in this case, his feelings intrude, and so he misses his mark. Again, subjective grounds supersede objective ones.

Thus far, I have tried to show that construing practical judgment in straightforwardly cognitive and epistemic terms — the same terms that apply to theoretical judgment — yields a natural and plausible account of how practical judgment goes right and wrong. Throughout this discussion, I have spoken casually about truth. One might worry, though, that such casual talk obscures an important difference between the theoretical and practical cases, a difference that limits the full assimilation of the practical to the cognitive.

32. Cf. Kant's suggestion that the practical philosophy of *Groundwork* II is, in part, a response to our being subject to a “*natural dialectic*, that is, a propensity to rationalize against those strict laws of duty ... and, where possible, to make them better suited to our wishes and inclinations...” (*G* 4:405, Kant's emphasis). Of course, the connection between dialectic and illusion is deep in Kant; dialectic is, as he says, “a logic of illusion” (*KrV* A61/B86, A239/B249).

In the previous section, I identified truth as the propositional form of accuracy. Thus, on the current view, practical judgment is true just in case the subject matter of judgment is as it is represented to be — *i. e.*, just in case the volition to which goodness is attributed really is good. But, one might think, this idea of truth cannot be straightforwardly applied to the practical case, because it is at odds with the key Kantian commitment to autonomy. Indeed, it might seem that it is precisely such an application that Kant is criticizing when he accuses his rationalist predecessors of positing a heteronomy of reason and will (G 4:441–444). In seeking to ground ethics in the cognition of an independent order of value — an order to which reason must conform — such theories cast practical reason as answerable to an authority beyond itself. The only way to respect the autonomy of reason, then, is to abandon cognitivist ambitions altogether.

In assessing this line of thought, it is important to distinguish two kinds of claims that are easily run together in these discussions: claims about the function of judgment and claims about the truth-makers of judgment. Once we recognize this distinction, we can see that the traditional rationalism Kant is criticizing is best represented as a conjunction of two claims: one about the function of judgment — cognitive — and another about what makes those judgments true — an order of value independent of reason. Kant's rejection of traditional rationalism, then, could take one of two forms, depending on which of these claims is the locus of his criticism. He could reject the traditionalists' cognitivism, in which case, trivially, he would reject their account of the truth-maker as well. (If a judgment does not function to be true, it has no truth-conditions and so no truth-makers.) But he could also reject their account of the truth-maker while leaving their cognitivism in place. That is, he could think that practical judgments function to be true but deny that such judgments are made true by an order of value independent of reason.

So which of these positions is Kant's? Is his autonomy objection to traditional rationalism primarily to its cognitivism or to its account of the truth-maker of practical judgment? I believe it is the latter. If the

essence of autonomy is practical reason's answerability to no authority beyond itself, then, so far as I can see, autonomy has no direct bearing on Kant's account of the function of judgment. Its only direct bearing is on Kant's account of the truth-maker of judgment. In particular, while it is inconsistent with autonomy for practical judgments to be true in virtue of their conformity with an order of value *independent* of reason, it is not inconsistent with autonomy for practical judgments to be true in virtue of their conformity with an order of value *dependent* on reason. For in cognizing, and so conforming, to a reason-dependent subject matter, practical judgment, and so reason, would simply be conforming to itself. Autonomy, then, presents no obstacle to cognitivism. Practical reason simply needs to be its own object.

Consider, for example, the familiar Kantian thought that practical judgments are correct just in case they satisfy a set of rationally supported procedural conditions — paradigmatically, the ones laid out in the so-called "CI procedure". This proceduralist, or constructivist, view is sometimes presented as an alternative to thinking about correctness in terms of truth. But I do not think that the basic constructivist thought requires so radical an interpretation. Constructivism need not be construed as a rejection of truth. Rather, it could equally well be construed as an elaboration of the truth conditions of practical judgment. Satisfaction of procedural conditions makes volition good, and so a judgment that represents a volition as good when that volition in fact satisfies these conditions represents its subject matter aright. The volition to which goodness is attributed really is good, and the judgment that makes this attribution really is true.³³

Now, as a matter of fact, I don't think that Kant is a constructivist in this sense.³⁴ But I don't think that much matters here. My present

33. Obviously, this cognitivist form of constructivism is different from the non-cognitivist form of constructivism that I attributed to Korsgaard in my introduction. I suspect that part of the appeal of Korsgaard's view, at least to fellow Kantians, stems from a failure to distinguish clearly between these positions.
34. This is a large topic, beyond the scope of this paper, but I will offer a brief comment. The key, I think, to resisting Kantian constructivism is to emphasize Kantian teleology. I claimed in §I that our faculties have essential functions,

concern is simply the relation between cognitivism and autonomy, and the example of constructivism, because it is familiar, is useful. For if cognitivism and constructivism are consistent, as I am suggesting, then it seems that cognitivism and autonomy are consistent too. Practical judgments function to be true, but since they are made true by a reason-dependent subject matter, practical reason remains answerable to itself alone.

If I am right about all this, then there seems no reason to deny that practical judgment is cognitive in the very same sense as theoretical judgment. Though its subject matter and its motivational function differ, it nonetheless involves the same aspects of epistemic commitment — universal agreement on the basis of truth — and it is naturally and plausibly assessed in cognitive, and so epistemic, terms. I conclude, then, that practicality and cognitivism are not at odds. The Kantian account of practical judgment and so reason combines both.

IV

I want now to explore, briefly, some of the implications of this conclusion for our understanding of Kant's ethical theory — in particular, his

which support constitutive standards, determining when those faculties function well or badly. If we take the good of a faculty — what counts as success for the faculty as such — to be fixed by these standards, then the good of a faculty will be set by its nature. Applied to practical reason, this teleology allows Kant to provide a straightforward account of the good's dependence on reason that appeals not to any sort of construction but simply to the functional nature of reason itself. That is, the good of reason is the well-functioning of reason; and so practical judgments are true not because they conform to a procedural ideal but because they get it right about the conditions of our rational flourishing. In this respect, I believe Kant's view is not so different from Aristotle's. Many recent commentators have emphasized similarities between Kant and Aristotle on similar issues, though no one, so far as I know, makes quite this point in quite this way. For discussions that come close, see Allen W. Wood, *Kantian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), especially Chapter 6; Barbara Herman, "The Difference that Ends Make", in Lawrence Jost and Julian Wuerth, eds., *Perfecting Virtue: New Essays on Kantian Ethics and Virtue Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and, somewhat surprisingly, Christine M. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

account of the good will. Such exploration will further demonstrate the significance of my thesis, as well as provide indirect corroboration of it.

The key to understanding the good will, I believe, is to understand the goodness of the will in terms of the goodness of the judgment that determines it. What it is to will is to come to volition through practical judgment. What it is to will well is to come to volition through practical knowledge. To see this, consider Kant's infamous claim that actions that express a good will are done from duty and not from other motives.

First, as I argued earlier, we should be rather less impressed than we tend to be by the deontological side of Kant. Duty is simply the guise under which imperfect beings represent the good. Acting from duty, then, is no more and no less than being guided, in one's actions, by what is good. That is to say, an agent acts from duty when she comes to volition through a practical judgment that she holds to be true on objective grounds of goodness.

If this is the right way to understand duty, then it should be fairly apparent that many of the familiar worries about acting from duty rest on misunderstandings — *e.g.*, the concern that in elevating duty Kant is denigrating other, more attractive kinds of moral motivation, such as emotion. First of all, if the determining ground of the will is practical judgment, then emotion is not even a candidate motive. This is not to disparage emotion. It is simply to deny that it is the right kind of psychological state to play a role in volition. If I am moved to help you *simply* out of sympathy, say, and not as a consequence of judging that helping you is good, then the problem with what I have done is not simply that it lacks moral worth. The problem is that what I am doing is not, properly speaking, willing at all.

Alternatively, if I am moved as a consequence of judging that helping you is good, but the ground of my judgment is simply my sympathy, then I am indeed willing, but I am not willing well. Why? Because the ground of my judgment is subjective rather than objective. Though I am not seduced by advantage, as in the case of Peter, the self-interested shopkeeper, I am still moved by feeling rather than evidence, by *my* relation to the volition rather than considerations that indicate *its*

goodness. This is why Kant claims that sympathetic action, however kindly, is on the same footing as action on the basis of other inclinations (G 4:398). Even if the volition is in fact good, the way in which I come to judge it good manifests an intellectual estrangement from its goodness. We can see, then, that Kant's real concern about the contingency of actions not done from duty is not that we will be more likely to light upon the wrong action but that our actions will not reflect our knowledge of their goodness.

Moreover, for similar reasons, emotion can neither enhance nor detract from the quality of one's will. Just as my emotions do not bear on whether, in rendering a theoretical judgment, I achieve theoretical knowledge, so do my emotions not bear on whether, in rendering a practical judgment, I achieve practical knowledge. To think that they do is simply to confuse epistemic evaluation with evaluation of other kinds. This is not to say that emotions are irrelevant to good willing. For example, being sympathetic may help us to appreciate better the needs of others and so to make correct practical judgments about how to help them (MS 6:547). Additionally, the presence or absence of emotion can make the operations of the good will easier, by reducing impediments to it (G 3:393–394). In both of these roles, however, emotions do not and cannot make for good willing. They simply facilitate it.

It should be clear, then, that if we attribute to Kant a cognitivist conception of practical reason, and so will, the account of the good will he puts forward in the *Groundwork* is exactly the account we should expect him to have. The question of why we will is transparent to the question of why we judge, and so doing the right thing for the right reason is simply a matter of judging the right thing for the right reason. But if so, then there should be little doubt about what kind of reason this must be. It must be an objective rather than subjective ground. It must be a duty rather than a feeling.

V

In this paper, I have argued that Kant holds a cognitivist conception of practical reason. He believes that practical reason, no less than

theoretical reason, has a cognitive function, and so believes that practical reason, no less than theoretical reason, is straightforwardly subject to familiar epistemic standards of truth, warrant, and knowledge. Thus, Kant would not agree with his contemporary followers, such as Korsgaard, who insist on a radical division between theoretical and practical reason, each with its own function and so subject to its own standards. From the properly Kantian point of view, such followers conflate the theoretical and the cognitive, rendering impossible what Kant took to be actual: the unity of reason as a cognitive faculty that differs merely in its application.

This is an important historical result, but my interest in it is not merely historical. Kant's issues are, in many respects, our issues too, and we may yet have more to learn from his reflections. I think this is especially true in the case of practical rationalism. For, as I noted in my introduction, it seems to me that we still lack a clear understanding of this view, one that respects both the differences and the similarities between theoretical and practical reason. Of course, I cannot argue here that Kant actually provides such an understanding. Nevertheless, I believe we would do well to take his views on these matters quite seriously. I conclude with some brief remarks about why this might be so.

Consider, for example, R. Jay Wallace's characterization of theoretical and practical reason in his *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on practical reason.³⁵ He says that theoretical reason "involves reflection with an eye to the truth of propositions.... Practical reason, by contrast, is not concerned with the truth of propositions but with the desirability or value of actions" (§I). This way of thinking about the theoretical/practical distinction is, I believe, far from idiosyncratic. Many philosophers would put the contrast in similar terms, placing truth on one side and desirability or value on the other.³⁶ However, this neat and natural framing of the distinction is not without its prob-

35. "Practical Reason", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/practical-reason/>>.

36. Think of the traditional philosophical trinity of truth, goodness, and beauty.

lems, as evidenced by Wallace's subsequent discussion of the so-called "realist" account of practical reason. According to Wallace, "[r]ealists picture practical reason as a capacity for reflection about an objective body of normative truths regarding action" (§II). But, assuming that reflection about normative truths is reflection with an eye to the truth of propositions about normative matters, this is clearly in tension with his former characterization of the theoretical/practical distinction. Either concern with the truth cannot be distinctive of theoretical reason after all, because practical reason is concerned with the truth too; or, such concern is distinctive of theoretical reason, and so the realist view is, properly speaking, no view of practical reason at all.

The problem here does not seem to be merely an artifact of Wallace's phrasing. Indeed, it seems clear that something like it also underlies Korsgaard's by now familiar skepticism about cognitivist conceptions of practical reason. Since she thinks that theoretical reason is essentially tied to truth in a way that practical reason is not, she in effect endorses the second disjunct above and so charges cognitivists (and so realists) with offering a crypto-theoretical account of practical reason. Not everyone, of course, would accept this conclusion. Wallace himself would resist it, since he is a realist.³⁷ But it is not so clear how he could resist it, given his original way of framing the distinction. That is, it is not clear how he (or anyone) could allow both theoretical and practical reason an interest in truth without thereby obscuring the distinction between them.

My suggestion is that we can look to Kant for help. For on the Kantian account, as I have explained it, Wallace's framing betrays a kind of category mistake. Despite the naturalness of distinguishing theoretical and practical reason in terms of truth and goodness, these are not genuine differentiae. Truth is the agreement of a judgment with its subject matter, whatever that may be. Goodness is a subject matter. Consequently, Kant can allow both theoretical and practical reason an interest in truth, so long as he insists that they are interested

37. Wallace endorses realism in "Normativity and the Will" in his *Normativity and the Will: Selected Essays on Moral Psychology and Practical Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

in truths of different kinds: truths about a theoretical subject matter (what-is) and truths about a practical subject matter (what-ought-to-be-done). We should not say, then, as Wallace does, that "[p]ractical reason, by contrast [with theoretical reason], is not concerned with the truth of propositions but with the desirability or value of actions" (§I). Rather, we should say that practical reason *is* concerned with the truth of propositions but *only* when those propositions are about the desirability or value of actions. In this way, we can respect the distinction between theoretical and practical reason without thinking that the former is allied to truth in a way that the latter is not.

Now, for all that I have argued in this paper, Kant's account may not survive philosophical scrutiny. That remains to be seen. Nonetheless, if these remarks are on the right track — if there are difficulties in our contemporary thought that Kant might help us resolve — then I think we should welcome the further development of a properly Kantian rationalism.³⁸

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