

The Unity of Reason, Reconsidered:

On the ‘Autonomy of Ideas’ in the Later Kant

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Running Head: The Unity of Reason, Reconsidered

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Abstract: In the *Groundwork* and all three *Critiques*, Kant expresses the hope of eventually unifying theoretical and practical reason in one system, with a principle common to both. But he never clarifies what this principle is, leaving scholars to advance different possibilities. I advance a new response to this problem: I claim that Kant begins to refer to what he calls the ‘autonomy of ideas of reason’ in his final decade, enabling a new approach to finally bridging the theoretical and the practical. This concept of autonomy, however, is no longer equivalent to the moral autonomy attributed to the self-legislating will, nor does it refer to the spontaneity of theoretical reason. Instead, it corresponds to the autonomy ascribed to reflective judgment in representing both theoretical and practical ideas of reason. Thus, this conception furnishes a principle, the principle of purposiveness, which I propose as the unifying principle Kant had been seeking.

Keywords: Unity of reason, heautonomy, ideas of reason, theoretical and practical reason, Kant, *Opus Postumum*, analogy, symbolism, schematism, purposiveness, reflective judgment

1. The Unity of Reason

Kant famously treats theoretical and practical reason as two distinct faculties, admitting of two different critiques and resulting in the construction of two different systems—a system of metaphysics (including science) and a system of morals. While theoretical reason is tempted to illegitimately transcend the bounds of experience, practical reason validly derives its principles from pure moral concepts or ideas, abstracted from everything empirical. Thus, as Kant insists in *GMS*, “Human reason, even in the commonest understanding, can easily be brought to a high measure of correctness and accuracy in moral matters, whereas in its theoretical but pure use it is totally and entirely dialectical” (4:391).

Despite the clear differences between theoretical and practical reason, Kant repeatedly insists that an overarching goal of his critical system is to demonstrate how theoretical and practical reason can be seen to be the same faculty, unified by a common principle. Thus, in the Architectonic of *KrV*, Kant writes,

Now the legislation of human reason (philosophy) has two objects, nature and freedom, and thus contains the natural law as well as the moral law, initially in two separate systems but ultimately in a single philosophical system. (A 840/B 868)

Kant returns to the issue in both *GMS* (1785) and *KpV* (1788). In *GMS*, he claims,

I require that the critique of a pure practical reason, if it is to be complete, also be able to present its unity with speculative reason in a common principle; because in the end there can be only one and the same reason, which must differ merely in its application. (4:391)

There, however, Kant defers the project of accounting for the unity of reason, claiming that he “could not yet bring it to such completeness here without introducing considerations of a wholly different kind and confusing the reader” (4:391). Yet, in *KpV*, Kant once again refers to the unity of reason only as a future hope for the critical project, declining to say anything more about the issue than that the “comparison” in structures of the first and second *Critiques*

rightly occasions the expectation of perhaps being able some day to attain insight into the unity of the whole pure rational faculty (theoretical as well as practical) and to derive everything from one principle. (5:91)

In other words, throughout this period, Kant continues to conceive of the critical project as aimed at establishing a *unity* between the theoretical and practical uses as one general faculty of reason, derived from a common principle. But he does not yet address what such a unifying principle might be, nor do its prospects seem altogether clear: if theoretical reason admits only of a negative critique rather than a positive doctrine, in what sense could it be taken to form a unified faculty with practical reason, or could the two be joined into one common metaphysical system?

Scholars have attempted to respond to the question of the unity of reason by advancing several proposals for the unifying candidate: the regulative use of reason in positing the ideas of the soul, freedom, and God as practical postulates;¹ the highest good, or the idea that a benevolent God has created a world that coheres with morality;² or the categorical imperative as the “supreme principle of reason,” both theoretical and practical, uniting the public use of theoretical reason with the universalizability of moral action.³

Yet each of these proposals point to resources Kant already had at his disposal in *GMS* and first two *Critiques*: Kant devotes entire sections of the first and second *Critiques* to the highest good (*KrV* A 804–19/B 832–47; *KpV* 5:107–13) and to the postulates (*KrV* A 795–804/B 823–32; *KpV* 5:122–34), as well as to the spontaneity of reason as what posits each of these concepts (*KrV* A 548/B 576). But in each of these texts, Kant does not yet take himself to have an answer to the problem; indeed, as shown above, in each subsequent invocation of the unity of reason, he seems only to defer its resolution. Similarly, Kant advances the categorical imperative as the supreme principle of morality in both *GMS* and *KpV*, where he also voices the hope of eventually accounting for the unity of reason. Yet it is noteworthy that Kant never refers in this context to the categorical imperative as the principle of *reason*, theoretical as well as practical, suggesting that this cannot be his solution.

It is only later that Kant claims to have found a solution to the unity of reason problem. In *KU*, Kant refers to the power of judgment as offering a “transition” or “bridge” across the “incalculable gulf” between the theoretical and practical domains (5:175), while *OP* is characterized as the ‘transition’ that would pay “the unpaid bill of my uncompleted philosophy,” filling “a gap [*Lücke*] that now stands open” (*B* 12:222, 12:257, 12:254).⁴ In neither text does he

continue to refer to the unity of reason as a still outstanding problem, suggesting that these are relevant places to look if we want to understand Kant's own response to the unity of reason problem.

In this paper, I suggest a different possibility for a common principle unifying the theoretical and practical guises of reason, one that arises from a consideration of the developments in Kant's writings in the wake of the three *Critiques*. Following on the scholarly claims that the categorical imperative and its formula of autonomy increasingly fall away in the 1790s,⁵ in the first section of this paper, I show that Kant *does* continue to refer extensively to autonomy in this period. However, this is no longer a strictly moral conception of autonomy couched in terms of the self-legislating will, but a broader conception of autonomy newly expressed through the project of transcendental philosophy in constituting a 'system of ideas', one that unifies the theoretical and practical domains.

To understand this conception, I claim that we need to take stock of the resources afforded by Kant's new account of the reflective power of judgment in *KU*. I argue that it is only in this text that Kant develops a consistent view of the representation and cognition of ideas of reason: in both the theoretical and practical domains, Kant claims for the first time that they can no longer be directly schematized or represented by reason, but only indirectly represented by reflective judgment, a procedure on account of which Kant ascribes autonomy to reflective judgment. As such, Kant advances autonomy as what unifies theoretical and practical reason, but understood differently than the moral conception of autonomy of *GMS* expressed through a formulation of the categorical imperative. Instead, autonomy is here a defining feature of an activity, the activity of reflective judgment, in its relation to both theoretical and practical reason in constituting a system of ideas. Hence, autonomy can play this unifying role precisely because it is now construed as operative in both the theoretical and practical domains.

2. The 'Autonomy of Ideas'

While it has been argued that autonomy drops out of Kant's post-critical philosophy altogether,⁶ it is crucial to notice that Kant refers to autonomy repeatedly in the manuscript of *OP*.⁷ While Kant refers to autonomy there in various ways,⁸ for my purposes in this paper, I will focus on one central line of discussion: what Kant terms the 'autonomy of ideas of reason'. Kant claims in this text that transcendental philosophy can be regarded under two aspects: under one, "it is the system of synthetic knowledge from a priori concepts," while under the other, "it is the autonomy of ideas, and the principle of the forms to which systems with theoretical-speculative or moral-practical intent must conform" (21:93). Kant claims that autonomy is expressed through ideas of reason, a move I address further below. But autonomy here is formulated differently from Kant's definition of moral autonomy cited in *GMS* as a "property of the will by which it is a law to itself," expressed by the principle of autonomy, "not to choose in any other way than that the maxims of one's choice are also comprised as universal law in the same willing" (4:440). Autonomy in this context is seemingly not expressed in the legislation of universal law, since it is predicated instead of ideas of reason;⁹ nor is it strictly moral, restricted to the domain of choice and the operations of the will. Instead, autonomy is accorded to both "theoretical-speculative" and "moral-practical" guises of reason (*OP* 21:93).

Kant reaffirms this conception of autonomy repeatedly in the manuscript. He claims, “The autonomy of ideas [*Autonomie der Ideen*]: to ground [*begründen*] experience as a unity.... Transcendental philosophy is the consciousness of the capacity of being the creator [*Urheber*] of the system of one’s ideas, in a theoretical as well as in a practical respect” (21:92–93), such that this system is comprised “not of objective concepts, but of subjective ideas” (21:93). Or: “Transcendental philosophy is the subjective principle of ideas of objects of pure reason constituting [*constituierenden*] themselves into a system and of reason’s autonomy” (21:79), where this “complex of ideas” forms “a system both of theoretical-speculative and moral-practical reason” (21:91). Thus, Kant claims that this system is ‘created’ or ‘constituted’, where the ideas at issue are both theoretical and practical. Kant refers in these passages to transcendental philosophy as a *subjective* principle¹⁰ or as a system of *subjective* ideas, which will become relevant for my ensuing argument. Moreover, Kant characterizes the link between the theoretical and the practical in such a system as the expression of a form of ‘autonomy’, in particular through a *principle* of autonomy: “the autonomy of the theoretical-speculative connection to moral-practical reason” is the “principle which constitutes the whole of the transcendental philosophy” (21:108).

In these passages, autonomy is identified with executing the project of transcendental philosophy in general (“transcendental philosophy is autonomy,” 21:60), and pertains, as Kant says explicitly, to the *connection* between theoretical and practical reason. Hence, Kant does not refer to the autonomy of practical reason in this context, but to the autonomy of *reason* as such, more specifically to the autonomy expressed through the constitution of a system of ideas of reason.

Within this conception of autonomy, self-legislation¹¹ is predicated not of the prescription of moral principles or *moral* laws, but of the representation of ideas of reason and laws of *thought*: “Ideas are not mere concepts but laws of thought which the subject prescribes to itself: autonomy” (21:93). By now, Kant clearly has a way of positively construing even the ideas of *theoretical* reason, such that ideas in general can be conceived in a unified manner as self-prescribed “laws” (of thought, not only of action) rather than as merely illusory concepts.

This conception self-evidently draws on Kant’s earlier characterizations in the 1780s of the ideas of theoretical reason as giving rise to regulative “maxims” or “laws” of reason (A 666/B 694, 8:145, 4:452).¹² Yet Kant’s treatment of the regulative ideas of theoretical reason should not be considered to be settled at that stage, since it has often struck commentators as deeply problematic: Kant advances “mutually exclusive claims” that result in an “extremely self-contradictory” section of *KrV*, the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic.¹³ While in one passage Kant refers to “reason’s legislation” (A 700/B 728), he later makes clear that theoretical reason has no positive domain of legislation of its own, but instead falls under the purview of legislation by practical reason (A 795–97/B 823–25). In *KU*, Kant clarifies this aspect of his view by ascribing legislation only to the understanding, practical reason, and power of judgment, passing over theoretical reason altogether (5:174–75, 5:177, 20:245–47).

While some commentators have ascribed autonomy to theoretical reason,¹⁴ the above considerations suggest that Kant does not ascribe autonomy to theoretical reason in the 1780s merely because he neglects to, but because it is not possible to. After all, what is autonomy?

Autonomy can be understood as a faculty's capacity to prescribe itself laws without being determined by foreign causes; 'autonomy' is thus often taken to be synonymous with the capacity to self-legislate, to have the *authority* to give principles to itself. As such, autonomy can only be validly applied to faculties which have a legitimate independent domain of legislation, which have the authority to command or to prescribe. Theoretical reason cannot be autonomous because it *has* no such valid domain of legislation: when left to its own devices, it becomes speculative, tending to lead itself astray through fallacious patterns of reasoning; it is only once directed towards the ends of practical reason—hence falling under the purview of *another* faculty's domain of legislation—that it can be employed legitimately.

As such, Kant never ascribes autonomy to theoretical reason at this stage. Instead, the first ascription of autonomy to the theoretical faculties occurs only in *KU*,¹⁵ attributed once again only to the understanding and power of judgment rather than to theoretical reason, as I turn to below. While Kant did have an elaborated concept of moral autonomy by the time of revising the B-edition of *KrV* (a concept lacking when the A-edition was first drafted),¹⁶ it is telling that in these revisions he opts not to even touch the bulk of the Transcendental Dialectic (B xxxviii–xl), where the regulative use of reason is addressed. Indeed, commentators have even speculated that the relevant revisions of this section are provided only in later texts.¹⁷

These issues may have precluded Kant from referring to theoretical reason as an autonomous faculty in the 1780s, and thus from establishing a true connection between theoretical and practical reason that would allow for the possibility of finding a point of unification between them. By contrast, the passages I just cited in *OP* indicate a unified conception of autonomy that can be predicated of the employment of both theoretical as well as practical ideas of reason, such that Kant identifies it as the genuine unifying 'connection' between theoretical and practical reason (21:108).

3. The Schematism of Ideas of Reason in the First and Second Critiques

In the passages cited above, Kant presents the unification of the theoretical and practical systems through autonomy as the culmination of the critical project. Indeed, unlike the careful segmentation of his earlier works as pertaining to either the theoretical or practical domain (but not to both), in his final years Kant writes numerous drafts of tables of contents for *OP* that demonstrate his aim to treat the theoretical and practical guises of reason as unified in a single system: "1. Speculative Reason; 2. Practical Reason; 3. Technical-Practical Reason; 4. Moral-Practical Reason in One System" (*OP* 21:44).¹⁸ Kant's arguments in this work are clearly unfinished, and the ordering of the manuscript remains unclear;¹⁹ Kant did not always write in full sentences, interspersing notes among the main text. Hence, to fully understand Kant's eventual position and why he felt he could not advance it previously, we must not only consider these writings, but also developments in other texts—in particular, how Kant's account of ideas of reason evolves after the 1780s.

In the Transcendental Dialectic of *KrV*, Kant defines theoretical ideas of reason as intellectual concepts admitting of no sensible determination, ones liable to be misconstrued as empirical concepts picking out objects of intuition—such as the ideas of soul, God, and the world-whole (A 310–11/B 366–68). Yet the problematic, 'self-contradictory' nature of the

Appendix discussed above also extends to another aspect of Kant's treatment of the ideas of reason: Kant claims both that in order to be employed the transcendental ideas must admit of schematism, or application to experience by way of mediating concepts (A 833/B 861), and that they can be justified only by functioning *themselves* as schemata of a more general transcendental idea, the idea of systematicity (A 670–71/B 698–99). Kant's argument for the latter point runs as follows: since systematicity is a transcendental condition for cognition, it cannot have an empty referent, and hence requires an application to some object of representation. Therefore, "a something in general"—the transcendental psychological, cosmological, and theological ideas—must be posited in order to represent systematicity (A 677/B 705). Kant thus concludes that we are justified in postulating the transcendental ideas of reason, even if we are "not acquainted at all" with their denoted objects in experience, insofar as they function as necessary schemata by which to represent systematic unity (A 677/B 705).

Yet, as scholars have noted, the claim that ideas of reason must be able to be schematized contradicts Kant's definition of ideas of reason as concepts that, by definition, cannot be sensibly determined, and hence cannot be applied to any objects of representation.²⁰ Thus, Kant leaves it unclear as to whether ideas of reason *require* a schematism or are themselves schemata, and how either of these can be plausibly construed as instances of schematism in the first place, defined as the restricting condition in sensibility by which transcendental concepts of cognition can *only* be applied to objects with which we are actually acquainted in experience.

As Kant claims in discussing the schematism of the moral idea of the good in *KpV*, analogous issues present themselves for ideas of practical reason. While on the one hand, "all cases of possible actions that occur can only be empirical" (5:68), on the other, the morally good is an idea of reason lying outside the empirical domain altogether: "nothing corresponding to it can be found in any sensible intuition" (5:68). All observable actions can only be empirical, but morality is not an empirical concept: it is an idea of reason referring to the supersensible domain, which by definition would have no applicability to empirical cases. Yet morality, as Kant has argued, *must* be applicable to possible actions.²¹ As a result, "it seems paradoxical to want to find in the sensible world a case... to which there could be applied the supersensible idea of the morally good, which is to be exhibited in it *in concreto*," or schematized (5:68). The 'paradox' consists in the fact that the possibility of some empirical referent must be secured for the idea of morality; yet this would, by definition, be impossible for any idea of reason. Kant thus concludes that practical judgment faces "special difficulties" in applying its pure concepts to experience that theoretical judgment does not, since the latter could apply the categories by way of "a *schema* in sensible intuition" (5:68). The pure concepts of morality do not admit of this possibility, as *ideas* of reason rather than concepts of understanding, and hence as not sensible in their reference at all. Kant's response to this quandary at this stage is to say that moral ideas cannot admit of application to schemata of empirical cases, but at best to "the schema (if the word is appropriate here) of a law itself" (5:68).

Thus, as with the theoretical ideas, Kant can only account for the application of moral ideas to experience in terms of the framework of schematism. Yet once more in *KpV*, he immediately qualifies this designation by appending the disclaimer that the term 'schematism' may not be appropriate. In both domains, the theoretical and the practical, Kant affirms that

there must be some way to represent ideas of reason as applicable to experience—the idea of the good must be able to be made actual, and the idea of systematicity is a transcendental condition for experience—but does not yet have a conclusive frame by which to account for this possibility. As a result, Kant treats the one currently available to him, the schematism of the categories of understanding, as ill-suited to be applied to reason.

4. Kant's Argument Against Schematizing Ideas of Reason in the Third Critique

Kant, I argue, finds a solution to this problem only in *KU*, where he finally clarifies his position: he becomes adamant that ideas *cannot* be schematized, and articulates a fully elaborated alternative in place of schematism. Kant begins by claiming:

To demonstrate the reality of our concepts, intuitions are always required. If they are empirical concepts, then the latter are called examples. If they are pure concepts of the understanding, then the latter are called schemata. But if one demands that the objective reality of the concepts of reason, i.e., of the ideas, be demonstrated, and moreover for the sake of theoretical cognition of them, then one desires something impossible, since no intuition adequate to them can be given at all. (5:351)

Kant continues that schematism is only one instance of a larger class, which he calls hypotyposis or 'making something sensible'. Hence, Kant now makes clear that schematism is restricted only to the understanding and its categories. Yet there is another instance of hypotyposis, which he calls 'symbolism',²² that *does* apply to ideas of reason, or to "concept[s] which only reason can think, and to which no sensible intuition can be adequate" (5:351). Importantly for my argument, however, Kant's account of this second instance presupposes the newly discovered reflective power of judgment. Kant gives the example of symbolizing or analogizing the function of a despotic monarchic state to the empirical concept of a machine or a handmill (5:352). In this case, since the intuition cannot be given a priori as it can in the case of schematism, Kant claims that "the power of judgment proceeds in a way *merely analogous* to that which it observes in schematization" (5:351, my emphasis). That is, the power of judgment carries out an ordinary procedure of empirical schematism (one in which it is determined by the understanding) by applying the concept <handmill> to a particular instantiation it can identify as falling within the scope of this concept. However, unlike in the ordinary case, its procedure of application is not yet complete, since it then applies this newly schematized representation of a handmill to something else—namely, to the idea of reason in question: the idea of a despotic monarchy.

Hence, the power of judgment performs what Kant calls a "double task," first applying a concept to a manifold of intuition as in an ordinary case of empirical schematism, and then applying the resulting representation in turn to an idea of reason (5:352). In the second procedure, it is no longer determined by a rule (a concept) of the understanding, but acts freely (indeed, *autonomously*, as I show below), formulating its own procedure to guide the generation of a given indirect representation of the idea of reason in question: for instance, it might opt to link the idea of a despotic regime to a vulture rather than to a handmill, in order to emphasize its parasitic nature, rather than its destructiveness.

In other words, Kant now makes a new distinction. In *KrV*, as mentioned above, Kant takes the transcendental ideas to be justified insofar as they play a necessary role in schematizing systematicity as a sort of meta-idea (that is, an idea operative at the highest level of generality). But Kant there claims that the ideas promote the “greatest systematic unity in the empirical use of our reason” (A 670/B 698) insofar as they can be employed “*as if*” they constitute the “ground or cause” of a given object of experience (A 671/B 699). If the use of ideas in empirical cognition in this way always leads to systematic unity, that is what legitimates us in employing these ideas—indeed, it makes doing so a “necessary maxim of reason” (A 670/B 698).²³ For instance, although our inner psychological states are “continuously changing,” in psychological inquiry we unify them into a systematic order “*as if* the mind were a simple substance that (at least in this life) persists in existence with personal identity,” or in cosmological inquiry, we investigate the cosmos *as if* it “were infinite,” even where this assumption cannot yet be empirically verified (A 672/B 700; my emphasis). Hence, in *KrV* Kant claims that the transcendental ideas can be justified only ‘as if’ they corresponded to real empirical objects.

In *KU*, Kant refers to this ‘as if’ function as an *analogical* representation of ideas of reason, and in so doing, develops a consistent account of how ideas of reason can legitimately guide inquiry in its ongoing formation of a system of knowledge.²⁴ Their role in this, Kant now uniformly specifies, can be validated only insofar as they are connected analogically to empirical objects. For instance, Kant holds that we cannot fully think the purposiveness of nature as an idea of reason without connecting this idea indirectly or analogically to a particular representation of purposiveness within a sensibly given organism (*EE* 20:239, *KU* 5:376). Hence, the transcendental ideas can no longer be justified insofar as they function as direct, yet empty or ‘placeholder’,²⁵ representations of some further idea, as Kant had sometimes suggested in *KrV*; instead, *all* ideas must be able to be indirectly connected to experience, in such a way that this connection comes to directly inform and shape the agent’s sense of the idea itself—“enlarg[ing]” the concepts which the power of judgment relates to ideas of reason “in an unbounded way” (*KU* 5:315).

Kant holds this view both for theoretical ideas of reason, such as the idea of an organism as purposive, and for moral ideas of reason, such as the ideas of virtue, vice, love, or the idea of morality itself (*KU* 5:314, 5:316, 5:353). As discussed above, in *KpV* Kant claims that moral ideas can be applied not directly through determinate schemata as laws, but only through the “schema of a law itself (if the word schema is appropriate here)” (5:68), going on to enumerate the counterfactual of the contradiction-in-willing test precluded by the categorical imperative.²⁶ In this context as well, Kant presents the requisite account of the application of the moral idea of the good not in terms of the direct schematism, or application of the idea to an empirical case through a determinate law, but as the application of the idea to the “form” of a law in general (5:69) or of lawfulness itself (5:68), recalling the account in *KU* just outlined of how the power of judgment analogically applies the idea of reason to the general rule or form of schematism in general rather than to a determinate object of intuition (5:351). Indeed, already in *KpV*, Kant refers to this means of representing the moral law as a “*symbol*” rather than as a “schema” (5:70). Here too, as in *KrV*’s account of the ‘as if’ function of regulative ideas, Kant anticipates the later theory he gives in *KU* of the presentation of ideas of reason as necessarily

analogical, symbolic, or indirect rather than as schematic, while not yet advancing such an account in any systematic way.

What has changed in *KU* is that Kant has now advanced this systematic account of what this analogical presentation amounts to. Moreover, this theory explicitly applies to both theoretical and moral ideas of reason, whereas the prior accounts of the ‘as if’ function of theoretical ideas and the ‘symbolic’ nature of moral ideas were segregated between the theoretical domain on the one hand, and the moral domain on the other. Where the faculty associated with the former was theoretical reason in its regulative use, the faculty associated with the latter was pure practical judgment in accordance with its typic. Hence, there was no sense in which these two prior accounts of the employment of theoretical and moral ideas, each invoking two entirely distinct faculties, could be said to be unified.

Instead, the argument that Kant elaborates in *KU* presents new prospects for providing just such a unified account. This is because the more complicated procedure Kant presents can no longer be made sense of in terms of the workings of reason alone, as his account of the regulative employment of ideas of reason had, but instead calls on a new faculty, distinct from reason, as what can now relate to reason in this indirect fashion, and which is presupposed by the employment of theoretical *as well as* by practical reason: the power of reflective judgment. While Kant had of course acknowledged a role for the power of judgment in both the first and second *Critiques*, he later claims that its function had been limited to direct representation or subsumption, in which the power of judgment merely applied or schematized the determinate rules and given concepts supplied by external faculties such as understanding or practical reason (*KU* 5:179). In *KU*, Kant limits this subordinate function of judgment in schematism to only one mode of judgment, determinative judgment, since he now also recognizes reflective judgment. Where determinative judgment subsumes particulars under universals that are already given, reflective judgment is defined as the faculty for finding an unknown or indeterminate universal for a particular that is given (*KU* 5:179, *EE* 20:211). Yet the latter task had been characterized in *KrV* as the attempt to grasp *ideas of reason*, as indeterminate universals that can never be fully given.²⁷ Thus, Kant had expressly precluded the power of judgment from presenting ideas of reason in *KrV*, restricting its function only to cases in which “the universal is in itself certain and given”; all other cases in which the universal is *not* certain (hence, all cases involving ideas of reason) call on the “use of reason” (A 646–47/B 674–75). Yet in *KU*, it is instead reflective judgment’s essential operation to compare particulars to the understanding or reason (*EE* 20:225), “holding together” its representations with these higher cognitive faculties (20:211)—hence, holding them with, comparing them to, ideas of reason.²⁸

Therefore, rather than attributing the attempted realization of ideas of reason to the regulative use of reason and accounting for it as a kind of schematism, it is now reflective judgment which is tasked with attempting to grasp ideas of reason, albeit only indirectly. The power of judgment thus takes on the active role previously ascribed to reason,²⁹ and is thereby charged with finding ‘indeterminate’ or ‘problematic’ universals, such that what was previously couched as the regulative employment of ideas of reason becomes an exercise of reflective judgment. With this shift, the danger of the ‘speculative’ employment of reason is mitigated, since there is no longer any sense in which theoretical ideas of reason can be construed as having direct

applicability to experience. Instead, a complex cognitive procedure is now requisite to attempt to grasp them, one which presupposes the power of judgment as operative in the employment of *both* theoretical and practical ideas of reason. With it, I argue, the ground is cleared for a positive conception of ideas in constituting the system, and the power of judgment as playing a newly unifying role in carrying out this task.

5. A New Sense of 'Autonomy'

These developments bring us back to the initial question of how autonomy, predicated of ideas of reason, can be taken to unify theoretical and practical cognition. We have seen that in *KU*, the power of judgment presents ideas of reason not by applying them to a determinate particular under the direction of the understanding, but by carrying out a kind of double subsumption—from intuition to empirical concept, and from empirical concept to idea of reason. In so doing, the power of judgment holds up and compares particulars to ideas of reason, thereby allowing for indirect or approximative representations of them.

Because this operation is one in which the power of judgment does not—and indeed, *cannot*—follow the explicit direction of reason (the assumption that this is possible, that theoretical reason can be schematized in experience, is precisely the mistake presupposed by the speculative use of reason), Kant claims that the power of judgment must be *autonomous*.³⁰ This is a sense of autonomy that Kant had not recognized previously; indeed, the first instance in which autonomy is broadened beyond practical reason is in the introduction to *KU*:

In regard to the faculties of the soul in general, insofar as they are considered as higher faculties, i.e., as ones that contain an autonomy, the understanding is the one that contains the *constitutive* principles a priori for the *faculty of cognition* (the theoretical cognition of nature); for the *feeling of pleasure and displeasure* it is the power of judgment, independent of concepts and sensations that are related to the determination of the faculty of desire and could thereby be immediately practical; for the *faculty of desire* it is reason, which is practical without the mediation of any sort of pleasure, wherever it might come from, and determines for this faculty, as a higher faculty, the final end. (5:196)

Here, as mentioned above, autonomy is accorded to the theoretical faculties for the first time in Kant's writings; yet, as in *KrV*, Kant does not predicate autonomy of the regulative use of reason. Instead, Kant only recognizes three domains of autonomy: the domain governed by the understanding, as constitutive of the concepts of nature; the power of judgment, as constitutive of the feeling of pleasure; and practical reason, as constitutive of concepts of volition (as well as of the "final end," namely the effect of "the concept of freedom," 5:196). When it comes to the domain of autonomy accorded to the power of judgment, in *EE*, Kant clarifies that the only feeling that can be constituted by reflective judgment is *a priori* feeling, not sensuous incentive³¹: namely, a feeling of pleasure which "must be regarded as dependent" on "the special action of the power of judgment... by means of which it strives to rise from intuitions to concepts in general" (20:249). This feeling is therefore one generated a priori on the basis of "reflection and its form" (20:249), as reflective judgment's comparison of sensible to discursive

content—the very activity presupposed by the analogical procedure by which reflective judgment relates intuitions to ideas of reason.

Hence, Kant claims that reflective judgment’s distinctive feeling is generated by assessing the relation of the cognitive faculties rather than by being determined by empirical sensation, and is one “identical with the representation of subjective purposiveness” (20:249)—a topic to which I return in §VII. As such, reflective judgment’s autonomy is distinctively subjective,³² in that rather than constituting *objects* through its lawgiving as the understanding or practical reason do—objects of intuition or objects of volition—the reflective power of judgment generates a feeling, which, as a “representation... related solely to the *subject* [that] absolutely cannot constitute any cognition” of an object (*KU* 5:206, my emphasis), is by definition subjective. Hence, where both the understanding and practical reason have their own respective and independent “domains” of “legislation” over the constitution of objects (5:174), reflective judgment can only prescribe conditions for subjective feeling, since its domain of legislation, the scope of its authority, is restricted only to its *own* procedure—to its own a priori conditions of reflection, including the reflection, as we have seen, of a given particular under an idea of reason (*EE* 20:225). For instance, the procedure by which the power of judgment applies the rule of schematism a *second* time, relating the schematized representation of an empirical concept to an idea of reason, is thus merely subjectively valid—its legitimation comes in its use in securing the intelligibility of experience in general (20:209)—and it is reflexive, in that the scope of this rule’s command, and hence its directive force, governs only the activity of the very same faculty that hands down this rule in the first place. As such, Kant advances a new conception of autonomy that pertains to the reflexive legislation, or self-giving, of merely subjective conditions for cognition by the power of judgment.³³

Kant characterizes the power of judgment’s activity as relevant to both the theoretical and the practical domains in this regard: its principles provide a “transition from the purely theoretical to the purely practical,” because these “can occasionally be annexed to either of them in case of need” (*KU* 5:196, 5:168). Indeed, as we have seen, reflective judgment’s activity is requisite for representing ideas of reason *in general*, both theoretical and, as I defend further below, practical. Kant claims in this connection that a source of unity between the theoretical and the practical is needed because “the field of the supersensible” is one “that we must certainly occupy with ideas for the sake of the theoretical as well as the practical use of reason” (5:175). Yet to make sense of this prospect, resources outside of either theoretical *or* practical reason are requisite, since, on the one hand, “theoretical cognition is not in the least extended to the supersensible,” while on the other, “we can provide nothing but a practical reality” for this domain, through practical reason (5:175). In other words, it is precisely by recognizing the important sources of *disunity* between theoretical and practical reason—that the former’s cognition of the supersensible has no validity, while the latter comprises the *only* such source of valid cognition—that a unifying activity can be found in reflective judgment as what relates the two domains.

Thus, with this conception, Kant comes to recognize a form of autonomy that can be accurately characterized as the ‘autonomy of ideas of reason’: the autonomy of reflective judgment in relation to theoretical and practical reason, whose purview expressly includes the

indirect representation of ideas of reason. This new concept of autonomy is broadened beyond the moral sphere, and is attributed to the exercise of judgment in relating *all* intuitions to concepts, thus comprising the symbolic presentation of ideas of reason. This enables Kant to finally account for the precise cognitive procedure by which subjects attempt to grasp ideas: they associate them indirectly to objects of experience, and they do this through a reflexive procedure in cognition that reflective judgment gives or ‘legislates’ to itself. Thus, as I have shown, the power of judgment’s subjective generation of a procedure for representing an idea of reason *is* the way in which the regulative aspect of ideas can be represented or cognized. Kant’s later reference to ideas of reason as “laws of thought the subject prescribes to itself” is a clear reference to this very reflexive procedure (*OP* 21:93).³⁴

As a result, the power of judgment’s function now amounts to a necessary condition for whatever the ‘constitution’ or ‘creation’ of a ‘system of ideas’ might consist in. Indeed, Kant’s language here should strike us as strange. After all, Kant often uses these terms, *konstituieren* or *schöpfen* or *urheben*, in referring to other aspects of the system, but never in a way that could be extended, without qualification, to the ideas of reason in general. In *GMS*, Kant exhorts us to “create [*schöpfen*] [practical] concepts and laws from pure reason” (4:411), such that practical reason can “regard itself as the creator [*Urheberin*] of its principles independently of alien influences” (4:448); indeed, the autonomy of practical reason consists in the very idea of the will’s being subject to a law of which it can view itself as the author or creator [*Urheber*] (4:431). In the theoretical domain, Kant also refers to the *constitutive* [*konstitutiv*] principles of the understanding, for instance the mathematical principles, which justify the application of mathematics because they show how appearances “could be generated” on the basis of what these principles prescribe (*KrV* A 178/B 221). The constitutive principles of both theoretical and practical reason therefore *create* or constitute what it is that they represent: an agent carrying out an action conforming to a moral maxim that she generates and prescribes to herself, or constructing a geometrical demonstration in space that follows from a set of axioms she stipulates.

The ideas of reason, however, are either not constitutive in status at all (theoretical ideas), or are not *restricted* to their constitutive function (moral ideas). Theoretical ideas cannot create what they represent in any sense, and indeed, by definition, cannot validly pick out objects of representation whatsoever. It might be thought that it is just the contrary for moral ideas, since Kant claims that through practical ideas, “pure reason even has the causality actually to bring forth what its concept contains” (*KrV* A 328/B 385; see also *KU* 5:135). Yet Kant insists that moral ideas are always regulative *as well as* constitutive (*KU* 5:453, 5:457), since their objects can only partly be attained in experience (*KpV* 5:127n, *Eth-Mron.* 29:604). In the very same passage just cited affirming the constitutive status of moral ideas, Kant adds that moral ideas also call on us to “approach a concept that will, however, never be reached in execution” (*KrV* A 328/B 384). Moral ideas are therefore constitutive, unlike theoretical ideas; but they are only *partly* constitutive. To the extent that they express idealizations of paradigmatic behavior, they are, like theoretical ideas, also *regulative*. Thus, Kant’s account of the indirect, regulative representation of ideas of reason now applies to both the theoretical and practical domains, even though theoretical and practical reason differ in whether their ideas also enjoy a

legitimate constitutive status (like moral ideas) or are barred from this status altogether (like theoretical ideas).

In his references to the unity of reason, Kant speaks of a *unity* between theoretical and practical reason, derived from a “common principle” (*GMS* 4:391). That is, Kant describes the two domains of cognition as on a common footing, rather than the governance of one faculty by another. What both theoretical and moral ideas share in this respect is the property of being *regulative*, not that of being constitutive. And it is this shared aspect that relates both of them to the autonomous workings of reflective judgment, by which both of them can be referred, if indirectly, to experience.

However, with the transition away from schematism as direct representation in experience to the account of *indirect* representation, it is now possible to make sense of the ideas as guiding system-constitution in an indirect fashion, governing the constitutive and determinative aspects by which the system is progressively constructed.³⁵ Indeed, while fully defending this interpretation is beyond my scope, this is precisely what Kant emphasizes throughout *OP*: for instance, where previously Kant took ‘proper science’ to expressly exclude the empirical domains of biology and chemistry (*MAN* 4:469), he ultimately comes to acknowledge them as falling within the scope of his scientific system (*OP* 21:566; see also 21:388, 21:212, 22:509, 21:567).³⁶ Crucially, both of these domains presuppose fundamental ideas of reason: the idea of an end or purpose, presupposed by biology’s central concept of an organism (*KU* 5:372–73, *OP* 21:210);³⁷ the moving forces, or ‘materials’ (*OP* 22:535, 22:525),³⁸ as ideas of reason (*OP* 22:200; *KrV* A 649/B 677), presupposed by post-Lavoisierian chemistry (*OP* 21:453).³⁹

Thus, one way to understand Kant’s revised conception of science is that his new account of the indirect presentation of ideas enables him to make sense of domains such as biology and chemistry as reflective comparisons of observed particulars to ideas of reason.⁴⁰ As a result, Kant now acknowledges that the constitution of the metaphysical system presupposes not only the a priori application of the categories to experience, but also reflection on conditions of experience under ideas of reason.

6. The Power of Judgment’s Role in Unifying the Theoretical and the Practical

In order to account for the unity of reason, it is not sufficient to establish mere points of *similarity* between its theoretical and practical guises.⁴¹ Yet a successful account must also not *identify* the theoretical with the practical, conflating the relevant distinctions between the two uses. Instead, what Kant takes himself to have achieved in *KU* and *OP*, on my reading, is to have singled out a unifying capacity, the autonomy of reflective judgment, as what theoretical and practical reason both presuppose in presenting ideas of reason to guide empirical inquiry on the one hand, and action manifesting in experience on the other.

As we have seen, the autonomy of reflective judgment in indirectly presenting ideas of reason is a development not already available to Kant in the first or second *Critiques* or *GMS*. And where, as I pointed out at the outset, Kant explicitly claims in all three of these texts that the unity of reason question is not yet resolved (despite raising it in each one as an outstanding problem awaiting the completion of the system), it *is* presented as resolved in *KU* and *OP*.

Indeed, in *KU*, Kant explicitly defines the power of judgment as what mediates the theoretical and practical parts of the system (5:196, 5:168).

This gives us one way to construe why Kant ultimately identifies the autonomy of *reason* in generating a theoretical and practical system of ideas as the source of unity for theoretical and practical reason. As I stated at the outset, Kant's position here is sketchy and can be understood in various ways, none of them free from interpretive difficulties. Among these difficulties is the charge that it is only *prior* to *KU* that Kant can marshal a viable response to the unity of reason problem, since, in that text, he hardly mentions theoretical reason at all:⁴² instead, Kant refers primarily to a domain of the "theoretical faculty of cognition" (5:167), or the "understanding" (20:246), as distinct from the domain of practical reason. This gives rise to the objection that, in later texts, Kant can no longer clearly formulate the problem of the unity of reason, let alone its solution. However, this charge overlooks the fact that, on my proposal, it is now *reflective judgment* whose autonomous procedure has in key respects taken the place of the regulative employment of theoretical reason, such that Kant attributes regulative principles and concepts throughout *KU* to the procedure of the reflective power of judgment rather than to reason (20:251, 5:197, 5:361, 5:375, 5:376, 5:379, 5:387, 5:396, 5:458). Thus, we can explain the seeming discrepancy as to why Kant takes himself to have resolved the unity of reason problem, at the same time that he ceases to refer to theoretical reason almost at all, in terms of a new division of labor: theoretical reason is still the source, alongside practical reason, for ideas of reason (5:401), but insofar as it gives these ideas to reflective judgment, and insofar as judgment must independently proceed with these ideas in order for them to be representable under their regulative aspect at all, it is the task of *employing* ideas—hence the *use* of reason—that is accorded to reflective judgment.

This would explain why Kant's first apparent reference to *theoretical* reason as autonomous in 1791 defines it in terms of the autonomy of 'judging': "Now one calls the capacity [*Vermögen*] to judge [*zu urtheilen*] in accordance with autonomy, that is, freely (according to principles of thought in general), reason" (*SF* 7:27). Interestingly, it is 'judgment in accordance with autonomy' that is here identified with reason, a conception that therefore presupposes the account of the autonomy of judgment advanced the year before. Moreover, Kant's characterization in this passage of autonomy as arising from the free constitution of 'principles of thought' recurs later in the account of the autonomy of ideas of reason—understood, to recall, not as "mere concepts but *laws of thought* which the subject prescribes to itself" (*OP* 21:93, my emphasis). The procedure reflective judgment embarks on in indirectly presenting the ideas of reason in accordance with subjectively given principles for thought gives Kant a way to make sense of the autonomy of *reason*, here understood in a broad sense as the higher faculties of cognition, comprising the unified activity by which reflective judgment settles a subjective procedure by which to (indirectly) cognize the ideas given to it by theoretical and practical reason.

The shift towards a unified theoretical and practical conception of autonomy can be discerned in several of Kant's other writings from the period. In the lectures immediately anticipating *GMS* (*Eth-Mron*. 1784–85), Kant recapitulates the Principle of Autonomy, referring to "the principle of autonomy of the will, in that, in all its actions, the will can regard itself as giving laws to itself [*selbstgesetzgebend*]," by which "I regard myself as universally legislative"

(29:629). Hence, Kant refers to ‘autonomy’ here as the concept of moral autonomy that he predicates of the will freely legislating universal principles that *ipso facto* are prescribed to itself. Eight years later, in the wake of *KU* (*Eth-Vig.* 1792–93), Kant mentions ‘autonomy’ nine times, but refers in each case to the “autonomy of reason,” never to the autonomy of the will (27:499–501, 27:505). Kant’s notes on ethics from the 1790s show the same shift towards a unified conception of reason in general (e.g., *R* 7316, 19:313–15).⁴³

Of course, this is not to say that the importance of the moral law disappears in this period; Kant continues to refer frequently in *OP* to the categorical imperative as legislative, as well as to the “freedom of the will” (21:16, 21:5, 21:36). Yet Kant no longer refers to autonomy as a specifically practical concept, while he clearly restricts the scope of the categorical imperative to the practical domain (*OP* 22:109, 22:112, 22:122). Instead, where Kant invokes the concept of autonomy, he takes pains to stress a conception that applies to the theoretical as well as to the practical.⁴⁴

Hence, on many proposals,⁴⁵ the very task of *OP* itself—or what Kant called his ‘transition’ project (*B* 12:257)—is to provide a transition to complete the Kantian system through the “schematism of the power of judgment” (*OP* 21:291, 21:363, 22:484–85, 22:495). However, I have stressed throughout that we cannot understand the relevant sense of the ‘schematism of the power of judgment’ merely in terms of the schematism of the categories; instead, we must consider Kant’s account in *KU* of how the power of judgment relates to ideas of reason and thereby connects the theoretical and practical domains. Indeed, this is the very point of connection Kant cites in *MS*, written in overlapping time periods in the 1790s with *OP*,⁴⁶ between the transition project requisite to complete the theoretical system and what would be required to complete the *moral* system:

Just as a passage from the metaphysics of nature to physics⁴⁷ is needed—a transition having its own special rules—something similar is rightly required from the metaphysics of morals: a transition which, by applying the pure principles of duty to cases of experience, would *schematize* these principles, as it were, and present them as ready for moral-practical use. (6:468)

Hence, in *MS* as well, it is the task of schematism that Kant identifies as the point of connection unifying the theoretical and practical systems. However, if the moral system calls for the same transition or ‘schematism’ as the one provided for the theoretical system by the *Opus Postumum*, the relevant concept of schematism therefore cannot be understood as the direct application of pure concepts or principles to experience, as we have seen. Instead, it must ostensibly refer to the procedure reflective judgment gives itself for its indirect or analogical presentations of the ideas in experience, thereby providing guidance for instances of direct schematism or application as well.

While fully elaborating this connection is beyond the scope of the paper, in concluding this section I will advance one possible suggestion. In *GMS*, Kant argues that the concept of humanity does not just impose a negative constraint on prohibited actions, but must be positively advanced in a necessarily incomplete fashion (4:430). In other words, humanity is a concept that can be approached, but will “never be reached in its execution,” as Kant claims of

moral ideas in general (A 328/B 384), and indeed he suggests in this context that humanity as end-in-itself is an idea (4:429), a reference reiterated in *KU*'s discussion of humanity as an "idea of reason" (5:233). Kant argues that humanity's advancement consists in the adoption of two positive or obligatory moral ends, the only two such ends he recognizes: the advancement of humanity in others (beneficence) and the advancement of humanity in oneself (self-perfection) (4:430). Moreover, Kant subsequently claims in *MS* that "a categorical imperative would be impossible, eliminating any doctrine of morals" without these two positive moral ends, since without these, all ends would be instrumental and "would hold for practical reason only as a means to other ends" (6:385).⁴⁸ As a result, Kant ultimately suggests that the categorical imperative presupposes a grounding in moral ideas as ends of the system.

It might be said that this is precisely how the Doctrine of Virtue is structured: as a system of duties that together comprise a system of moral ideas of reason, oriented ultimately by the two positive ends as expressions of the regulative idea of humanity.⁴⁹ This suggests that the method of the moral transition, analogously to the theoretical transition, consists in reflecting *moral* ideas against particular modes of experience; indeed, Kant's metaphysics of morals takes as its object "the particular nature of human beings, which is cognized only by experience" (6:216).⁵⁰ To cite one example, Kant describes the positive end of self-perfection, which is also referred to as an idea (6:447),⁵¹ as giving rise to an imperfect duty to "'be perfect.' But a human being's striving after this end always remains a progress from *one* perfection to another," since the fulfillment of this end is a matter of "choice in accordance with his own rational reflection [*Überlegung*]⁵² on what sort of life he would like to lead and whether he has the powers necessary for it" (6:445–46). In other words, the agent's task in this case might be construed as a reflective comparison of the circumstances of one's own life to the moral idea of perfection, such that the realization of the duty can only constitute one partial and hence inevitably incomplete representation of the idea.

Kant makes this connection expressly: only right is strictly constitutive—like "pure mathematics," "it certifies its method by what it does"—but ethics is not, because it "calls upon judgment" (6:411). Like the theoretical transition, the moral transition therefore presupposes the reflective power of judgment to complete this task. Hence, Kant claims, the ethical system does "not admit of a classification that could be guaranteed to be complete" (6:468). This recalls a later claim from *OP*: the constitutive conception of the scientific system, "which concerns the formal principles of natural science, can (and should) be presented completely," while the reflective conception "is an enterprise of physics which can never be wholly completed" (22:496). Kant therefore ultimately associates his ethical system with the latter, comprising, together with the constitutive method of right, one comprehensive moral system.

7. Unifying Principle of Reason?

I have shown that the autonomy of reflective judgment in presenting ideas of reason is what allows for a means of unifying the two domains of reason. As such, the references to the 'autonomy of ideas' in *OP* can now be clarified. Consider the other appearances of the term, in addition to the passages referenced in §II: "Transcendental philosophy is the autonomy of ideas, insofar as they form, independently of everything empirical, an unconditioned whole"

(21:79); transcendental philosophy “is (or, rather, makes) a system objectively and, at the same time, subjectively.... Autonomy of ideas, insofar as they form an independent whole against experience” (21:81); “transcendental philosophy is... the formal element of the theoretically-speculatively and morally-practically self-determining subject. (The autonomy of ideas: to ground experience as a unity a priori—not *from* experience, but *for* experience; not as an aggregate of perceptions, but as a principle)” (21:92); “transcendental philosophy is the self-creation [*Selbstgeschöpfung*] (autonomy) of theoretical-speculative and moral-practical reason” (21:100).

In these passages, Kant refers to the formation of an ‘unconditioned whole’ of ideas apart from experience. He characterizes this as a reflexive process, by which the system of ideas ‘constitutes itself, such that transcendental philosophy therefore consists in the ‘self-creation’—the ‘autonomy’—of both theoretical and practical reason. If there can be a common conception of autonomy that unifies theoretical and practical reason in this respect, the considerations raised in this paper have shown that its source should be traced to the autonomy of reflective judgment in representing ideas of reason. The ideas of reason are given a priori, hence cannot directly refer to sense objects, yet positively structure the system as a ‘unity’—a prospect fully recognized only in the wake of Kant’s account of the analogical presentation of ideas of reason by reflective judgment, which finally offers a systematic alternative to the speculative application of the ideas to experience. Yet the ideas can comprise such a unity only if they are formed in accordance with a ‘principle’.

This recalls Kant’s references throughout the critical period to a unifying ‘principle’ of reason, which as I have shown is reiterated several times in *OP*: “transcendental philosophy is the *subjective principle* of ideas of objects of pure reason constituting themselves into a system and of its autonomy” (21:79); the “complex of ideas” is “a system both of theoretical-speculative and moral-practical reason, *under a principle* through which the thinking subject... is itself the creator of this system of ideas” (21:91); “the autonomy of the theoretical-speculative in connection with moral-practical reason” is the “*principle*” of transcendental philosophy (21:109; my emphases). In conclusion, I would like to advance a suggestion as to what this principle might be.

If my argument has borne out that, as has been suggested, “autonomy is not just the remit of practical reason,”⁵³ it also complicates the notion that Kant’s conception of autonomy remains unchanged during his attempts to contend with the unity of reason. In particular, I have challenged the idea that even if it is autonomy that serves as unifying principle of reason, that this principle continues to denote a formulation of the categorical imperative. Indeed, throughout these passages in *OP*, Kant refers to a *subjective* principle of autonomy by which ideas constitute a system (21:79), and to a system of subjective ideas created by reason (21:93). But if the unifying principle is merely subjective, this cannot be the categorical imperative—which is, of course, an *objective* principle of morality insofar as, by prescribing it, the will legislates universal law.

What is the principle of the autonomy of reflective judgment, and does it generate a more plausible candidate for the unifying principle Kant refers to? We have seen that the power of judgment is autonomous insofar as it generates a procedure that is merely subjectively necessary, valid only for itself—hence, valid as a procedure that accounts for the indirect

presentation of ideas of reason. On my view, this tracks Kant’s general evolution on the question of the unity of reason: whereas, in the 1780s, Kant is searching for a determinate *formulation* of a principle—a prescription—by which to unify theoretical and practical reason, subsequently, he trains his attention on our capacity to *generate* subjective principles by which to organize objects of experience. As such, while Kant does continue to refer to a unifying principle of reason in *OP*, he refers to it only in terms of the subjective principle of autonomy for organizing ideas of reason into a system, and never names a determinate prescription by which this ordering is to be achieved.

However, I do think there are textual resources to say more than this, and thus I will close the paper by advancing the strongest possible candidate for a unifying principle that can be identified without forcing the text. The most fundamental subjective principle of reflective judgment Kant discusses is the principle of purposiveness. This principle is best-known for grounding our experience of nature as ordered teleologically as a system of ends (5:180–81)—which, as discussed above, continues to be crucial to the argument of *OP*. Yet, as we saw above, Kant also claims that the feeling constituted by reflective judgment “is identical to subjective purposiveness,” and that it arises in accordance with the “reflection” of the power of judgment as “it strives to rise from intuitions to concepts in general” (*EE* 20:249). The feeling of purposiveness associated with ‘reflection’ in this sense thus also pertains to the principle of purposiveness in its ‘logical’ sense—namely, in its weaker formulation in terms of the transcendental command to assume the possibility of ordering experience into a system (or more generally, to assume the possibility of relating conditions of particularity to conditions of generality) (20:209). This is the principle that Kant ultimately takes to ground the systematicity of experience as such, recalling his appeal in *KrV* to the principle of systematic unity as guiding the realization of the “ends,” the ideas, of reason (A 797–98/B 825–26, A 833–35/B 861–63). The principle of purposiveness in this weaker sense is, Kant suggests, precisely what justifies the autonomy of reflective judgment, grounding its right to hold particulars up to undetermined universals, including all ideas of reason.⁵⁴

Reflective judgment thereby finds the means for the ends accorded to it by reason. In this sense, the principle of purposiveness admits of both specifically theoretical and practical formulations (*KU* 5:181; *EE* 20:200–1), and in both domains, instructs the power of judgment to do just that: to secure adequate means to its theoretical and practical ends (20:195–201). While Kant had already emphasized the purposive orientation of experience (*P* 4:349–50; *KrV* B 425–26, A 622/B 650) and reason’s directedness towards ends (A 797–98/B 825–26), he had not yet accounted for the distinctive faculty that could generate the subjective principle of purposiveness, nor accounted for this generation as an instance of autonomy—indeed, Kant *has* no viable conception of a merely subjective domain of legislation prior to *KU*. With these new developments, Kant can be seen to finally account for purposiveness as the point of connection between speculative and practical reason already remarked on in *KpV*: “In order to extend a pure cognition *practically* there must be a *purpose* given a priori” (5:134); “speculative restriction of pure reason and its practical extension first bring it into that relation of equality in which *reason in general can be used purposively*” (5:141, my emphases).

Yet it is not until Kant’s formulation of the autonomy of reflective judgment in *KU* that

purposiveness can adequately be accounted for as a unifying principle of cognition in general. In so doing, Kant singles out a unifying capacity, the autonomy of reflective judgment, as what theoretical and practical reason both presuppose in presenting ideas of reason to be employed purposively in thought and action. Since it is only reflective judgment that can be annexed to either theoretical or moral philosophy “in case of need” (5:168), the achieved point of unification preserves the two domains as interconnected but importantly distinct. Thus, Kant comes to embrace a common conception of autonomy that is jointly theoretical and practical: the autonomy of ideas of reason, understood as the autonomy of reflective judgment in purposively employing the ideas given to it both by theoretical and practical reason. With it, Kant can now speak positively of the completion of his transcendental project: such a project consists in the constitution of a system of ideas, theoretical as well as practical, as plausibly unified by the principle of purposiveness—a principle secured through the autonomous activity of reflective judgment as it relates in equal measure to both guises of reason.⁵⁵

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References to Kant’s works are to *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Prussian Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Reimer, subsequently Walter de Gruyter, 1902–), except for references to *KrV*, which use the standard A/B notation. Translations (when available) are drawn from the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge, 1992–), with some modifications by the author. References are abbreviated as follows:

B: *Correspondence*

Eth-Mrong: *Lectures on Moral Philosophy* (Mrongovius)

EE: First Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*

Eth-Vigil: *Lectures on Moral Philosophy* (Vigilantius)

GMS: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

ID: *Inaugural Dissertation*

KpV: *Critique of Practical Reason*

KrV: *Critique of Pure Reason*

KU: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

MAN: *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*

Meta-Dohna: *Lectures on Metaphysics* (Dohna)

MS: *Metaphysics of Morals*

OP: *Opus Postumum*

P: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*

R: *Notes and Fragments (Reflexionen)*

SF: “Conflict of the Faculties”

TG: “Dreams of a Spirit-Seer”

WHD: “What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?”

WF: “What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany Since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?”

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¹ Kleingeld, “Unity”; Neiman, *Unity*, 43; Nuzzo, *Unity*; Guyer, *Rationality*.

² Beck, *Commentary*, 278–79; Förster, “Hoffen”; Friedman, *Sciences*, 50; Guyer, “Unity”; Timmermann, “Unity”; Schafer, *Reason*.

³ Cohen, “Belief”; Mudd, “Rethinking”; O’Neill, *Constructions*; Wood, “Form,” 103.

⁴ Where Friedman (“Förster,” *Sciences*) sees the ‘gap’ as one between the critical system and science, Förster sees this problem as distinct from a later ‘gap’, one within the critical system posed by the power of judgment’s schematism of the categories (Förster, *Synthesis*, 73–74; “Reply”). The considerations raised in this paper suggest another possibility: that Kant is concerned with the schematism of the power of judgment, but in relation to ideas of reason rather than the categories, entailing an altogether different conception of the relevant sense of schematism. On this proposal, the unity of theoretical or practical reason introduces a third possible gap: indeed, Kant initially names the separation of theoretical from practical reason an ‘incalculable gulf [*Kluft*]’ in *KU* (5:175), and the ongoing relevance of the unity of reason to Kant’s task in *OP* is clear, as I turn to below. Yet, although the problem of a gap or gulf has been thematized extensively in the literature on *OP* (Beiser, “Idealism”; Emundts, *Übergangskonzeption*, 58n; Edwards, “Time”; Förster, “Gap”; Tuschling, *Dynamik*; see Howard, *Nature*, for criticism), it is typically understood as wholly internal to Kant’s theoretical system. Indeed, even among treatments that do address *OP*’s practical implications (Adickes, *Opus Postumum*; Düsing, *Tel-eologie*; Förster, *Synthesis*; Krause, *Gedanken*; Heman, “Vermächtnis”; Marty, “Philosophie,” *L’homme*; Thorndike, *Transition*; Vaihinger, *Als-Ob*), no extant accounts take up Kant’s view of autonomy in *OP*; for an initial treatment, see Vaccarino Bremner, “Remarks.”

⁵ Herman, *Practice*, 133; *Habitat*, 80–81; Kleingeld, “Principle.”

⁶ Kleingeld, “Analogy,” “Principle.”

⁷ Particularly in Fascicles I, VII, and X, dated around 1799–1801.

⁸ Kant also elaborates a doctrine of self-positing in *OP*, which he refers to as an *autonomous* process—e.g., “the principle of the autonomy [*Princip der Autonomie*] of making oneself into an object, as given in appearance” (22:416; see also 21:101, 21:106–8). An analysis of Kant’s doctrine of self-positing is outside my scope; for treatments, see Emundts, “Self-Affection”; Förster, *Synthesis*, 137–47; Hall, *Post-Critical*, ch 5; Onnasch, *Natur*; Thorndike, *Transition*.

⁹ Of course, Kant also characterizes the autonomous will and moral law as ideas of reason in *GMS*; I address Kant’s treatment of moral ideas there in §§V–VI.

¹⁰ In their theoretical instantiations, Kant takes principles to be the most general premises in an inference, from which other judgments can be derived (*KrV* A 148/B 188); he characterizes principles as rules or prescriptions (A 31/B 47) but also contrasts them from formulas (A 134/B 173). Principles can be either objective or subjective: an objective principle is a law, while a subjective principle is a maxim (*GMS* 4:421n).

¹¹ Recent scholarship has suggested, however, that Kant’s definition of moral autonomy applies to *universal* legislation (Kleingeld and Willaschek, “Autonomy”, 6n), entailing that Kant’s reference to the will as ‘self-legislating’ should be understood as the agent’s universal legislation of moral laws to all, and *ipso facto* also to herself. This reading accords with how I understand ‘self-legislation’, but I take it to be complicated somewhat by Kant’s attribution of a merely subjective, hence not universal (albeit one that *lays claim* to universality: *EE* 20:239; *KU* 5:292, 5:356), domain of legislation to reflective judgment, as I return to below. I read Kant as separating the universal conditions for legislation by practical reason or understanding from the merely subjective conditions attributed to reflective judgment.

¹² See also Kant’s definition of “freedom in thinking” in 1786 as consisting in the “subjection of reason to no laws except those which it gives itself” (*WHD* 8:145). I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising these considerations.

¹³ Brandt, “Deductions,” 180; Grier, “Illusion”; Kemp Smith, *Commentary*, 547.

¹⁴ Kohl, *Freedom*, 237–38; Schafer 2023: ch. 7.

¹⁵ Keller, “Autonomy.”

¹⁶ For discussion of the emergence of autonomy in Kant’s thought, pertaining initially solely to practical reason in the 1780s and eventually broadening to theoretical cognition by the 1790s, see contributions to Bacin and Sensen, *Autonomy*.

¹⁷ Kemp Smith, *Commentary*, 547; Zammito, *Genesis*, 157.

¹⁸ Other attempts can be found at *OP* 21:24, 21:27, 21:59.

¹⁹ See Förster, “Critique”; Tuschling, *Dynamik* on the difficulties of dating the manuscript: the pages, as ordered on Kant’s desk when he died, were mixed together before they could be transcribed; for approximated periodizations of the text, see Adickes, *Opus Postumum*; Förster, “*Third Critique*”; Howard, “Transition.”

²⁰ Where “the schematism of the categories is supposed to *restrict* the use of concepts to the conditions of sensibility, the schematism of reason *expands* them in an effort to determine precisely that which cannot be determined, the indeterminate” (Ypi, *Architectonic*, 114).

²¹ ‘Ought’ must imply ‘can’: “The action to which the ‘ought’ applies must indeed be possible under natural conditions” (*KrV* A 548/B 576).

²² See Kant's early (1766–1770) references to 'symbols' [*Sinnbilder*] in *TG* (2:350n, 2:339) and in *ID*: "There is (for man) no *intuition* of what belongs to the understanding, but only a *symbolic cognition* [*metaphor symbolica*]" (2:396). On the issue of symbolic cognition, Kant was in active discussion with Johann Heinrich Lambert; see *B* 10:109–10 (where Lambert suggests to Kant in 1770 that "our symbolic knowledge is a thing halfway between sensing and actual pure thinking") and Lambert, *Organon*, vol. 2. In the critical period, the references to symbolism reemerge, as I show here, only once Kant has found a way to make sense of an *indirect* form of representation of ideas of reason within the system.

²³ This is the "transcendental deduction of all the ideas of speculative reason" (*KrV* A 671/B 699).

²⁴ For discussion of this argument, see Chignell, "Repugnance"; Recki, *Ästhetik*, 155–77; Willaschek, *Sources*, 255–56.

²⁵ Zuckert, "Investigation."

²⁶ "Ask yourself whether, if the action you propose were to take place by a law of the nature of which you yourself were a part, you could indeed regard it as possible through your will" (*KpV* 5:69); compare *GMS* 4:421 and O'Neill, *Acting*, 173–93, for discussion.

²⁷ If "the universal is assumed only problematically... it is a mere idea, the particular being certain while the universality of the rule for this consequent is still a problem" (*KrV* A 646–47/B 674–75); compare to the definition of reflective judgment at *KU* 5:179: if "the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is merely reflective."

²⁸ This account of reflective judgment is reiterated in the early 1790s (*Meta-Dohma* 28:675–76).

²⁹ Guyer, "Reason," 17; Horstmann, "Deduction," 172.

³⁰ Hence, Kant explicitly denies that the use of judgment under the determination of the understanding is autonomous: "the determinative power of judgment... is no autonomy, for it merely subsumes under given laws or concepts as principles" (*KU* 5:385).

³¹ As mentioned above, autonomy is attributed only to reflective, not determinative, judgment (*KU* 5:385). Kant distinguishes a reflective judgment from a judgment of sense—one determined by sensation—in that the latter's feeling is not cognitive in the way described above: a judgment of sense "is not related to the faculty of cognition at all, but is related immediately through sense to the feeling of pleasure" (*EE* 20:224); unlike a reflective judgment, it "presupposes no comparison of the representation with the faculties of cognition that operate in unity in the power of judgment" (*EE* 20:225).

³² Kant qualifies that its autonomy is more accurately described as *he*autonomy (*KU* 5:186; *EE* 20:225), where the addition of the Greek reflexive pronoun 'he-' to the Greek pronoun for 'self' or 'itself' (*auto*) stresses that reflective judgment's domain of legislation, unlike the autonomy of practical reason which is universal in scope, is *strictly* subjective (Floyd, "Heautonomy," 205). Hence, "the power of judgment does not give the law to nature nor to freedom, but solely to itself" (*EE* 20:225).

³³ Because Kant takes himself to have accounted for the subjective domain of legislation in this manner (*EE* 20:238, 20:225; *KU* 5:192), he names *KU* his "critique of the judging subject" (5:194).

³⁴ While in *KrV* Kant had claimed that ideas of reason must have “objective validity” (A 669/B 697), but arguably never secures it (Ypi, *Architectonic*, 114–16), in *OP* he defines ideas of reason unambiguously as “self-created *subjective* principles of the power of thought” (21:29, my emphasis). See §VII.

³⁵ Kant goes even further than this, acknowledging the possibility of principles that are simultaneously regulative and constitutive (*OP* 22:240–41; see Förster, *Synthesis*; Friedman, *Sciences*; Waibel, “Principes”); thus, Kant clearly manifests a concern with finding a closer connection between the regulative and constitutive elements of the system.

³⁶ Emundts, *Übergangskonzeption*; Howard, *Nature*, 40; van den Berg, *Science*, 183–86.

³⁷ In *WF*, dated to 1793–95 (hence, while Kant was likely composing the fourth fascicle of *OP*), Kant reiterates that “transcendental” schematism and “schematism by analogy” are the only two possible ways to “confer objective reality” on pure concepts, including ideas of reason (20:332, 20:279). The example given of analogical schematism is the analogy of the idea of purposiveness of nature to the products of artisans (20:280), recalling the argument in *KU* for organisms as an “analogue of art” lacking an external maker or artisan (5:374). This suggests that the prospect of analogically representing ideas of reason plays a central role in Kant’s teleology.

³⁸ McNulty, “Chemistry.”

³⁹ Hoppe, *Physik*, 97 claims that physics in *OP* takes ideas as its objects as well: experiment-ideas (*Versuchsideen*).

⁴⁰ For an overview of the debate on reflective judgment’s role in *OP*’s conception of science, see Basile, “Ausgangsfrage”; *Opus Postumum*, 9.2.1. This debate is generally construed in terms of whether Kant’s method in the text is ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’, whereas my understanding of reflective judgment in its analogical presentation of ideas of reason (an argument not specifically thematized in this debate) is slightly different: the comparison of a particular to an idea is not accurately characterized as a ‘bottom-up’ procedure; it is not akin to an inductive generalization. Instead, to continue the metaphor, it is a comparison of the ‘bottom’ to the ‘top’.

⁴¹ See the charge in Guyer, “Review,” of Neiman’s account of theoretical and practical reason as not really unified, but merely parallel ‘autonomous powers’ (Neiman, *Unity*, 43).

⁴² Kleingeld, “Unity.”

⁴³ See discussion in Rauscher, “Reflections.”

⁴⁴ Take this passage: “A person is determined by heteronomy but also as a person under the law of autonomy. A person is a being that determines itself according to the principles of freedom” (*OP* 21:62). Note that Kant refers broadly to ‘principles of freedom’ rather than specifically moral principles, ‘determining oneself’ rather than determining the will. Or: “Transcendental philosophy is reason (autonomy) constituting itself into an absolute whole of ideas, which precedes all experience a priori” (21:106; see also 21:100–8, 21:59–61, 21:79–81, 21:92–93). Notice that Kant clearly predicates autonomy of the constitution of the conditions for *all* experience rather than for specifically moral experience.

⁴⁵ Förster, *Synthesis*; Friedman, *Sciences*, 245–50; Lehmann, *Nachlasswerk*, 296; Mathieu, *L’Opus postumum*, 137–38; Vasconi, *Sistema*, 101–19.

⁴⁶ After completing *MAN* in 1785, Kant claimed he would proceed “immediately with the full composition of the Metaphysics of Morals” (*B* 10:406), and had been planning to write MS

since at least 1768 (*B* 10:74). The project was deferred in part as a result of his realization that he needed to complete a second, and then a third, *Critique* (*B* 11:49). See discussion in Kuehn, “*Metaphysics*”; Wood, “Form.”

⁴⁷ This is a clear reference to *OP*, or the “Transition from the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science to Physics” (*B* 12:257); indeed, it is the *only* reference in Kant’s published works (Basile, *Opus Postumum*, 438). Some might take the ‘metaphysics of nature’ in this passage to refer to the task of *KrV* rather than *MAN* (Friedman, *Sciences*, 168), where the ‘passage’ from the metaphysics of nature to physics is advanced in *MAN* rather than *OP*. However, Kant explicitly differentiates the project of *MAN* from a metaphysics of nature (*KrV* Axxi; *B* 10:406; *KU* 5:170). The shifting referent of ‘metaphysics of nature’ is discussed in Friedman, *Sciences*, 243, 260; Guyer and Wood, “Introduction,” 66; Pluhar, “Preference,” 39–40n; and the passage in Thorndike, *Transition*. I thank Sophie Cote for pressing me on this point.

⁴⁸ For a cogent analysis of these arguments, see Herman, *Habitat*, ch. 7. For further discussion, see Vaccarino Bremner, “Ideas.”

⁴⁹ Similarly to how the ideas of *OP* discussed above of the moving forces, the organism, or the ether are analogical specifications of the more general regulative idea of systematicity (*KrV* A 669–79/*B* 697–707). See the duties of *MS* that are discussed as ideas of reason in *KU*: love (*MS* 6:448–58; *KU* 5:314), cosmopolitan disposition (*MS* 6:473–74; *KU* 5:314), as well as the vices, particularly envy (*MS* 6:458–61; *KU* 5:314). Others are named as ideas in their own right in *MS*: moral perfection (6:447), virtue (6:461), friendship (6:469).

⁵⁰ On *MS* ‘practical anthropology’, see Wood, “Form,” 3–4. Compare the object of *OP*: the constitution of a system of transcendental philosophy comprised in part by the idea of “man in the world” (21:32–38), which also self-evidently presupposes experience of real human beings—of the ‘world’.

⁵¹ See also Kant’s discussion of the appropriate concept of perfection for morality as teleological or qualitative (*MS* 6:386), an argument reiterated in *KU* for the concept of perfection relevant to teleology (*EE* 20:228; *KU* 5:227–8).

⁵² Kant uses *überlegen* as a synonym for *reflektieren* in the definition of reflective judgment in *KU* (*EE* 20:211).

⁵³ Cohen, “Belief,” 328; see also Merritt, *Reflection*, 120.

⁵⁴ Kant invokes this weak sense in his transcendental deduction of reflective judgment (*KU* 5:182–86).

⁵⁵ I am indebted to Chloé de Canson, Patricia Kitcher, Axel Honneth, Pauline Kleingeld, Wolfgang Mann, Sophie Cote, Anja Jauernig, Daniele Lorenzini, and anonymous reviewers for comments and discussions on previous versions of this paper, as well as to audiences at Princeton University, New York University, the International Kant Congress in Oslo, and the University of Pennsylvania. Support for the completion of this article was generously provided by the University of Potsdam Center for Post-Kantian Philosophy, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, American Council for Learned Societies, and Mellon Foundation.