

Achtung in Kant and Smith

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1. Introduction

For quite some time it was unclear if Kant ever read Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS). In contrast to the *Wealth of Nations*, which Kant cites directly in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (see MS, AA 06:289.12-14)¹, it was only once Kant’s many unpublished reflections and lecture notes on moral philosophy were widely available in the Academy Edition that scholars have been confident that Kant read the TMS after the first German translation was published in 1770.² Above all others, the efforts of Walter Eckstein (2010), Samuel Fleischacker (1991), Heiner Klemme (2000), and Susan Meld Shell (1980) have shown that in many cases Kant’s terminology, his choice of examples, and his understanding of concepts like impartiality, not to mention certain important letters from his correspondence, all illustrate that there is no doubt that Kant read the TMS, and likely soon after the first German translation was published. Thus, in their contribution to the *Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, for example, David Norton and Manfred Kuehn confidently remark that “Kant knew well and appreciated highly” Smith’s TMS, “at least during the early [seventeen-]seventies” (2000, 978). This confidence is a relatively recent achievement in the history of Kant scholarship, however, and although it is now all but certain that Kant read the TMS, much work remains to be done in order to determine whether or not the TMS had a lasting impact on Kant’s thinking, and in what way. Recent scholarship has discussed Smith’s anticipation of Kant’s moral

¹ Citations from Kant’s works use the Akademie Ausgabe (Kant 1900ff.) and adopt the recommended citation style of *Kant-Studien*, whereby the abbreviation of a work, e.g. KpV, is followed by the Akademie Ausgabe (AA) volume, page, and, if possible, line number. English translations are given in the main body of the text and the original German passages are provided in footnotes. In general, I follow the English translations in the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant and note where I deviate from them. Translations from the Kaehler and Feyerabend lecture notes are my own.

² Adam Smith. *Theorie der moralischen Empfindungen*. Translated by Christian Günther Rautenberg. Braunschweig, 1770.

argument for the existence of God³, but insufficient attention has been given to one of the main reasons why Kant would have been interested in the TMS in the first place⁴, namely Smith's careful analysis of the passions and human motivation. The following discussion seeks to remedy this by illustrating a fairly substantial, but underappreciated, way in which Smith's understanding of motivation had a lasting and significant impact on Kant's moral philosophy. I will argue that Kant's concept of respect (*Achtung*) for the moral law as the incentive of action with moral worth has roots in Smith's understanding of the attitude of 'regard' for the general rules of conduct and the related motive of the 'sense of duty'.

Respect is arguably one of the most characteristic, and also one of the most controversial, features of Kant's moral philosophy. In recent decades, for example, respect has been at the centre of an expansive debate concerning Kant's account of moral motivation.⁵ At the same time, and surprisingly, this large body of secondary literature has not considered whether respect for the moral law as an incentive is unique to Kant's moral philosophy or whether it might have historical precedent. More than a century ago, however, August Oncken indicated that a similar use of *Achtung* could be found in the first German translation of the TMS. In his detailed analysis of the ways in which Kant's and Smith's writings are linguistically similar, Oncken remarks that:

The concern with and consciousness of this inner moral law is the "worth" ("dignity") of human beings, and the drive to obey the commands of this law takes place similarly in both theories through the feeling of *respect* [*Achtung*] for the majesty of this moral law ('reverentia' for Kant, 'reverence' for Smith). (1877, 92)⁶

To cite an example of how Smith uses "reverence," or his more preferred term "regard," as well as how these terms were translated into German, consider the following passage from the TMS where Smith discusses the scenario of visiting a friend and being tempted to treat them poorly for no good reason other than that you're in a bad mood:

³ See Schliesser (2017, 342) and Fleischacker (2004, ch. 15; and 2017). See McHugh (2017), White (2010), and Richardson (2017) for other recent discussions of Kant and Smith.

⁴ See Klemme (2000, viii)

⁵ The sum total of literature is too expansive to mention here. Important contributions that reference the major relevant literature on this debate include Reath (1989), Allison (1990), O'Neill (2013), Sytsma (1993) McCarty (2009), and Ware (2014).

⁶ "Die Pflege und das Bewusstsein dieses inneren Sittengesetzes macht die „Würde“ („dignity“) des Menschen aus und der Antrieb, den Geboten desselben zu gehorchen, geschieht abermals gemeinschaftlich in beiden Theorien durch das Gefühl der *Achtung* vor der Majestät dieses Sittengesetzes (reverentia bei Kant, reverence bei Smith).“ (Oncken, 1877, 92)

What renders you incapable of such a rudeness, is nothing but a regard [*Achtung*] to the general rules of civility and hospitality, which prohibit it. That habitual reverence [*Achtung*] which your former experience has taught you for these enables you to act, upon all such occasions, with nearly equal propriety, and hinders those inequalities of temper, to which all men are subject, from influencing your conduct in any very sensible degree. (TMS 232; III.5.2; and see Smith 1770, 316)⁷

Oncken went no further than to point out the *terminological* similarity between Kant and Smith. Indeed, Oncken was a proponent of the view that, although the similarities between their philosophies warrant a detailed comparison, we cannot be sure that Kant ever had direct exposure to the TMS. (see 1877, 97) Now that we know Kant read the TMS, if one takes a closer look at the meaning of the concept of *Achtung* in the first German translation of the TMS, one notices not only an interesting *terminological* similarity between Kant and Smith, but a striking *conceptual* similarity as well. My aim in the following is not merely to demonstrate this conceptual similarity. Rather, my aim is also to illustrate that they are similar in such a way that the concept of *Achtung* in the 1770 German translation of the TMS likely had a positive and lasting influence on Kant's mature moral philosophy. In particular, I argue that Smith's concept of regard and the associated idea of the sense of duty, translated as *Achtung* and *das Gefühl der Pflicht* respectively, would have offered Kant a way to deal with a problem concerning moral motivation that he was struggling to solve during his pre-Critical development.

The following discussion is divided into three main sections. In the next section (2.) I illustrate that Kant's concept of respect for the moral law as the incentive of action with moral worth appeared relatively late in his intellectual development. While other uses of respect are present in his early writings, his technical understanding of respect occurs for the first time in the mid-1780s. I illustrate that this is in large part due to the fact that it took Kant a long time to solve an important problem surrounding the workings of moral motivation. In section three (3.) I turn to Smith and provide an analysis of his understanding of the attitude of 'regard' for the general rules of conduct and the related idea of the 'sense of duty' as a motive of action. In section four (4.) I turn to Kant in order to show that his understanding of respect is remarkably similar to Smith's understanding of

⁷ References to Smith are taken from the third edition of the TMS (Smith 1767), as this is the edition that formed the basis of the 1770 German translation and which is therefore the edition, with which Kant was familiar. For ease of reference, I include the page number from the third edition followed by the section, chapter, and paragraph number from the now standard Glasgow Edition of Smith's works (Smith 1976). When necessary I also occasionally include the corresponding page number from the 1770 German translation.

regard and the sense of duty: on a basic level, Kant's concept of respect is both an attitude and a feeling, and these are two aspects of a single complex phenomenon. I explain how such a concept would offer a way to deal with the problem of moral motivation that Kant was trying to solve, and thereby suggest that there is reason to believe that Kant adopted core features of this concept from Smith. I conclude by outlining some important differences between Kant and Smith and drawing some implications from the account I have offered for our understanding of Kant's relation to Smith more generally. In the end I argue that the concept of respect illustrates an important way in which Smith's TMS had a lasting influence on Kant's moral philosophy long after his first exposure to it.

1. *Achtung* in Kant's Pre-Critical Writings and the Problem of Moral Motivation

Kant's technical understanding of respect for the moral law as the incentive of action with moral worth appears relatively late in his intellectual development. The first appearance of the concept in his published writings is in the *Groundwork's* third proposition, where we are told that “*duty is the necessity of an action from respect for the law*”. (GMS, AA 04:400.18-19)⁸ The first chronological appearance of the term in any of his writings, published or unpublished, is in the *Feyerabend* lecture notes on natural law dating from 1784, the time during which Kant was writing the *Groundwork*. In these notes Kant states for the first time that “We must do moral actions merely from duty and respect for the moral law, without the lowest incentives”. (V-NR/Feyerabend, AA 27:1326)⁹ Kant implies here that respect is the incentive of moral action and he goes on to mention many other features that are central to his later published view, such as that what obligates us must be mere lawfulness (V-NR/Feyerabend, AA 27:1326), that “the law as a law must determine” the will, and that this is just to say “we must have respect for the law”. (V-NR/Feyerabend, AA 27:1326)¹⁰

Kant's technical understanding of respect as the incentive of moral action, which will be discussed in more detail in section 3, is entirely absent from all of his writings prior to 1784. During the 1770s, for example, in the *Kaehler* lecture notes Kant uses *Achtung* only when he speaks more colloquially of the *Achtung* between parents and children (see V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 246), between

⁸ “*Pflicht ist die Nothwendigkeit einer Handlung aus Achtung fürs Gesetz*” (GMS, AA 04:400.18-19).

⁹ “Wir müssen die moralischen Handlungen, ohne die geringsten Triebfedern, bloß aus Pflicht und Achtung fürs moralische Gesetz thun”. (V-NR/Feyerabend, AA 27:1326)

¹⁰ “so muß ihn das Gesetz als Gesetz bestimmen [...] er muß also Achtung fürs Gesetz haben”. (V-NR/Feyerabend, AA 27:1326)

friends (see *ibid.*, 303 and 336), and respecting the rights of others (*ibid.*, 282, 284, 311, 352). He also speaks of respecting the commands of God (see *ibid.*, 162-3), but does not speak of respecting moral commands. Although he mentions that being honour-worthy deserves respect (*ibid.*, 76), and more generally that the inner worth of virtue deserves respect (*ibid.*, 200), a view that approximates Kant's mature view, there is no mention of any kind of a moral principle deserving respect.

Kant's technical understanding of respect for the moral law as the incentive of moral action is absent from his published pre-Critical writings as well. In these texts there are various references to respect for women (GSE, AA 02:248 and GSE, AA 02:229), a man's respect for his wife (GSE, AA 02:220, BBGSE, AA 20:120), as well as two of the core kinds of respect in Kant's mature moral philosophy, namely respect for persons on the basis of merit (GSE, AA 02:213) and respect for persons simply as persons (Refl, AA 19:513, and V-Lo/Blomberg, AA 24:176). We also find references to respecting the worth of humanity (GSE, AA 02:217 and GSE, AA 02:221; Br, AA 13:375 and Refl, AA 19:241) and respecting the right of humanity (Refl, AA 15:611, Refl, AA 15:625, Refl, AA 19:162, and Refl, AA 19:225). Although there are places where Kant speaks of respecting the commands of God (Refl, AA 18:724) and respecting civil laws (19:590), there is no mention of respect for a moral law or principle, nor is there reference to respect as a potential motive or incentive, let alone the only proper moral incentive, anywhere in the pre-Critical period.

Of course, one reason why Kant does not discuss respect for the moral law during his pre-Critical period is that he had not yet developed his mature conception of the moral law or the categorical imperative at this time.¹¹ The only passage that mentions an idea resembling the categorical imperative during the 1770s is the following, also from the Kaehler notes: "Morality is the agreement of action with *a* universally valid law of free choice. All morality is the relation of action to the universal rule". (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 64.30-65.1-3)¹² This statement is of course far from his mature statements of the categorical imperative and the moral law, especially because Kant does not mention what this universal law or rule is. More generally, the closest Kant comes to talking about a law deserving respect (besides the commands of God) during the pre-Critical period

¹¹ For a detailed study of the development of Kant's conception of an imperative, including the categorical imperative, see Schwaiger (1999). Although Kant did not have all the elements of his mature view of the categorical imperative during the pre-Critical period, see Henrich (1963) and Schmucker (1961, Ch. IV) for arguments that Kant had developed important pieces, such as universality and the will's agreement with itself, quite early on.

¹² "Die Moralitaet ist die Uebereinstimmung der Handlung mit *einem* allgemein gultigen Gesetz der freyen Willkuer. Alles Moralitaet ist das Verhaeltniis der Handlung zur allgemeinen Regel". (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 64.30-65.1-3)

is during a discussion of the distinction between ethics and jurisprudence, where Kant states that “Virtue does indeed demand and presupposes respect and meticulous observance of human laws, but it [virtue] refers to the motive, to the disposition, from which the action, which has juridical correctness, springs”. (ibid., 106.28-107.3)¹³ Kant here refers to the observance of laws as respecting them, but he is only talking about “human” or legal laws, not a moral law, and he does not go on to say that the virtuous motive itself *is* respect for the moral law, nor does he talk about respect as an incentive as what is essential to the moral disposition.

The most important reason why the concept of respect is absent from Kant’s pre-Critical writings, however, is that it took Kant a long time to solve a particular problem concerning the workings of moral motivation. In order to understand this problem, we need to take a brief look at Kant’s pre-Critical development. Kant’s intellectual development took a decisive turn in 1769, Kant’s so-called “great light [großes Licht]” (Refl, AA 18:69.22) when he began to reject what Kuehn has called the “continuity thesis” (1995, 376), i.e. the primarily epistemological view according to which “the sensitive and the intellectual form a kind of continuum” such that “the only difference between intellectual and sensitive cognitions is their degree of distinctness.” (1995, 376)¹⁴ In contrast to this view, the *Inaugural Dissertation* argues that sensibility and the intellect are two entirely different faculties such that they are different in *kind*, not merely in degree. Rather than it being the case that intellectual cognitions are always distinct and sensitive cognitions always confused, and that they differ only in terms of their degree of distinctness (and thus are placed along the same continuum), Kant’s view in the *Inaugural Dissertation* is that sensitive cognitions can be distinct, and intellectual ones confused. This shift in Kant’s thinking about cognition is important because it altered the way he thought about morality.

It is only after Kant’s “great light” that we find him explicitly endorsing a ‘pure’ or ‘rational’ moral philosophy. In the *Inaugural Dissertation*, for example, Kant states that: “*Moral Philosophy*, therefore, in so far as it furnishes the first *principles of adjudication*, is only cognised by the pure understanding and itself belongs to pure philosophy”. (MSI, AA 02:396, translation modified)¹⁵ This

¹³ “Zwar fordert die Tugend und setzt zum voraus Achtung und peinliche Beobachtung der menschlichen Rechte, aber sie geht auf den BewegungsGrund auf die Gessinnung, aus dem die Handlung, die *rectitudinem juridicam* hat, entspringt“. (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 106.28-107.3)

¹⁴ In the *Anthropology* Kant identifies the “Leibniz-Wolffian school” as maintaining what Kuehn calls the continuity thesis, and Kant remarks here that “Leibniz was actually to blame” (Anth, AA 7:140-1n).

¹⁵ “*Philosophia igitur moralis, quatenus principia diiudicandi prima suppeditat, non cognoscitur nisi intellectum purum et pertinent ipsa ad philosophiam puram*”. (MSI, AA 02:396.14-17)

understanding of moral philosophy is significant because it leads to a problem when it comes to moral motivation; a problem that Kant famously describes as “the philosopher’s stone”:

Nobody can or will see that the understanding is supposed to have a moving power to judge. The understanding can surely judge, but to give this judgement of the understanding force, and that it becomes an incentive to move the will to perform the action, this is the philosopher’s stone. (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 68.23-69.5)¹⁶

In the *Kaehler* notes, from which the above passage is taken, Kant states that “The highest principle of all moral judgement lies in the understanding, and the highest principle of all moral drive to do this action lies in the heart; this incentive [*Triebfeder*] is moral feeling.” (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 57.1-5)¹⁷ The problem here is that it becomes impossible to explain how a purely intellectual cognition of moral obligation can lead to a sensible incentive when these two mental faculties are different in *kind* and no longer exist along a continuum. In the *Kaehler* notes, this problem is described as follows: moral adjudication or judgement “is the objective ground, but not yet the subjective ground” (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 56.10-12) and a “practical error [einen praktischen Fehler]” (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 57.9-10)¹⁸ occurs when the cognition or objective ground is present but the incentive or subject ground is not.

Kant of course both continues to think of the intellect and sensibility as distinct kinds of cognition into the Critical period and continues to conceive of moral philosophy as an entirely pure discipline, thus it is no surprise that Kant describes the above problem in similar terms in his mature writings. In the second *Critique*, for example, Kant states that “*how* a law can be of itself and immediately a determining ground of the will [...] is for human reason an insoluble problem”. (KpV, AA 05:72.21-23, my emphasis)¹⁹ This does not of course preclude the possibility that the law *does* function as a determining ground of the will and has motivating power on its own. Indeed, in the second *Critique* Kant assumes they do and says that, given the insolubility of this problem, his

¹⁶ “Das kann und wird auch keener einsehen, daß der Verstand sollte eine bewegende Krafft zu urtheilen haben. Urtheilen kann der Verstand freylich, aber diesem Verstandes-Urtheil eine Krafft zu geben, und daß es eine Triebfeder werde den Willen zu bewegen, die Handlung auszuüben, das ist der Stein der Weisen.“ (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 68.23-69.5)

¹⁷ “Das oberste principium aller moralischen Beurtheilung liegt im Verstande, und das oberste Principium alles moralischen Antriebes, *diese* Handlung zu thun, liegt im Hertzen; diese Triebfeder ist das moralische Gefühl.“ (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 57.1-5)

¹⁸ “Die Billigung der Handlung ist der objective Grund, aber noch nicht der subjective Grund.“ (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 56.10-12)

¹⁹ “wie ein Gesetz für sich und unmittelbar Bestimmungsgrund des Willens sein könnte [...] das ist ein für die menschliche Vernunft unauf lösliches Problem“. (KpV, AA 05:72.21-23)

task in the ‘Incentives’ chapter is merely “to determine carefully *in what way* the moral law becomes the incentive and, inasmuch as it *is*, what happens to the human faculty of desire as an effect of that determining ground upon it”. (KpV, AA 05:72.18-21, my emphasis)²⁰ Kant’s mature response to this task is his doctrine of respect: what happens in the mind is that the feeling of respect is necessarily produced by the purely intellectual recognition of obligation and this feeling functions as the incentive of moral action. *How* this happens remains inexplicable, but *that* it does is Kant’s mature view. As illustrated above, however, the concept of respect doesn’t make an appearance in Kant’s writings until the mid 1780s, which is why we find Kant endorsing an entirely different, and less persuasive, solution to this problem during the 1770s.

Kant’s early solution to the problem of moral motivation is that the two sides of moral motivation, purely intellectual cognition on the one hand and motivational feeling or the incentive on the other, are acquired separately. According to the *Kaehler* notes: “If I judge via the understanding that the action is morally good, much is still missing, that I were to do this action, concerning which I have judged. But if this judgement does move me to do the action, then that is moral feeling.” (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 68.19-23)²¹ Important to note here is that at this point in his development ‘moral feeling’ signifies “a capacity to be affected by a moral judgement” (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 68.18)²², but Kant’s language is misleading from the perspective of his Critical view. As Klemme points out (see 2006, 123), in the 1770s Kant had not yet come to believe a core component of his mature view, namely that moral judgement itself can *effect* the force capable of moving us to action. In *Kaehler*, we find an alternative view:

To bring human beings to feel the abhorrence of vice is completely impossible, for I can only say to him what my understanding has insight into, and I can indeed bring him so far as to have such insight, but that he should feel abhorrence when he does not have such a sensitivity of the senses is not possible; [...]. (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 71.25-31)²³

²⁰ “zu bestimmen, auf welche Art das moralische Gesetz Triebfeder werde, und was, indem sie es ist, mit dem menschlichen Begehrungsvermögen als Wirkung jenes Bestimmungsgrundes auf dasselbe vorgehe“. (KpV, AA 05:72.18-21)

²¹ „Wenn ich durch den Verstand urtheile, daß die Handlung sittlich gut ist, so fehlt noch sehr viel, daß ich diese Handlung thue, von der ich so gewurtheilt habe. Bewegt mich aber dieses Urtheil, die Handlung zu thun, so ist das das moralische Gefühl.“ (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 68.19-23)

²² “eine Fähigkeit durch ein moralisches Urtheil afficirt zu werden“. ((V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 68.18)

²³ “Den Menschen dahin zu bringen, daß er die Abscheulichkeit des Laster fühle, ist gar nicht möglich, denn ich kann ihm nur das sagen, was mein Verstand einsieht, und so weit bringe ich ihn auch, daß er es einsieht, aber daß er den Abscheu fühlen soll, wenn er nicht solche Reitzbarketi der Sinne hat, ist nich möglich; [...].“ (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 71.25-31)

At this point in time Kant therefore seems to think that avoiding ‘practical error’ and actually acting morally, not just having correct judgement, is a matter of *separately* cultivating feeling in such a way that it is in *accord* with moral judgement. Indeed, Kant claims that we can only be said to have *moral* feeling when our feelings match morality in this way:

Everyone can see that the action is abhorrent, but whoever feels this abhorrence has moral feeling. The understanding does not abhor, rather recognizes abhorrence and opposes itself to it, but sensibility only has to abhor, now if sensibility abhors that which the understanding recognizes to be abhorrent, this is moral feeling. (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 71.19-25)²⁴

In order to have this kind of ‘moral’ feeling, i.e. sensible aversion and attraction towards objects, our sensibility needs to be cultivated via *habit* such that it accords with what we judge to be morally right and wrong, i.e. what we understand that we ought to desire or abhor. As the *Kaehler* notes say:

“Indeed we can only produce a habit that is not natural but stands in for nature, which becomes a habit through imitation and frequent practice.” (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 72.4-6)²⁵ This is achieved through education and religion (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 73) and the way to do this is not to punish and reward for certain actions, but to make one feel shame for having done vicious actions (see V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 72 and V-Anth/Fried, AA 25:727). This is done so that we come to *feel* a certain way about the inner constitution of the action. If we are merely punished, we only see an action as bad because of its consequences. But if we are shamed for performing an action, Kant claims that we are taught that the action is *in itself* vicious.

This early solution to the problem of moral motivation is problematic, however. The issue with this solution is that it relegates the intellectual cognition of obligation to a secondary or even an inconsequential role when it comes to actually *acting* morally. For, if this early solution accurately describes moral education, then in order to be attracted to or repulsed by actions that are morally good and bad respectively, we only need to form a habit of our feelings and train moral feeling via education and religion. It is therefore unclear, according to this solution, what role the intellectual cognition of obligation plays, if any, when it comes to actually acting morally. In order to become a good person, the intellectual grasp of morality could, in principle, be left aside. At the very least, this

²⁴ “Jeder kann einsehen, daß die Handlung verabscheuungswürdig ist, aber der diesen Abscheu fühlt, hat ein moralische Gefühl. Der Verstand verabscheut nicht, sondern er sieht die Abscheulichkeit ein, und widersetzt sich derselben, aber die Sinnlichkeit muß nur verabscheuen, wenn nun die Sinnlichkeit dasjenige verabscheut, was der Verstand als abscheulich einieht, so ist dieses das moralische Gefühl.“ (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 71.19-25)

²⁵ “Allein wir können doch einen habitum hervorbringen, der nicht natürlich ist aber doch die Nature vertritt, der durch die Nachahmung und öftere Ausübung zum habitu wird.“ (V-Mo/Kaehler(Stark), 72.4-6)

is not the kind of solution one would expect from a philosopher who defines moral philosophy as a ‘pure’ discipline; for what is the point of the purely intellectual recognition of moral obligation if it makes no difference for how we act?

Kant’s brief discussion of moral motivation in the *Critique of Pure Reason* suggests that he had not yet settled on his mature solution in the early 1780s either. In the ‘Doctrine of Method’, for example, Kant distinguishes between “the motive of **happiness** [dem Bewegungsgrunde der Glückseligkeit]” and the motive of “the **worthiness to be happy** [die Würdigkeit, glücklich zu sein]” (KrV, A 806/ B 834) and identifies the latter as the moral motive. This is significant, for this seems to indicate that at the time of the first *Critique* Kant had not yet come to view that respect for the moral is the moral motive. For this reason, Henry Allison has described the understanding of moral motivation we find in the first *Critique* as “semi-critical” (see Allison 1990 67).

In order to deal better with the problem of moral motivation, Kant needs a concept for a phenomenon that intimately connects the intellectual recognition of obligation and a motivationally efficacious feeling or incentive. This is precisely what the concept of respect for the law as the incentive of morality accomplishes in his mature moral philosophy.²⁶ The question is: in the runup to Kant’s first presentation of his mature solution to the problem of moral motivation, did he come to realize something about the concept of respect itself that makes it a fitting solution to this problem? Did Kant invent a new and unique way to use the concept of respect such that it functions as a solution to the problem he was facing? Or did he come across a fitting usage of respect in the writings of his contemporaries that offered him the solution he was looking for? In the remainder of this paper, I argue for the latter option by illustrating that the concept of *Achtung* that Kant would have encountered in the first German translation of Smith’s TMS would have presented Kant with a way to handle this problem.

3. Smith on Regard and the Sense of Duty

In this section I offer a brief account of two related ideas in Smith’s TMS that are strikingly similar to features of Kant’s mature account of respect for the moral law as the incentive of moral action: the attitude of regard for the general rules of conduct, and the motive of the sense of duty. In the German translation of the TMS, with which Kant was familiar, these ideas were translated as

²⁶ See DeWitt 2014 for a recent discussion of the way in which respect plays this ‘bridging’ role.

Achtung and *das Gefühl der Pflicht* respectively. This will make it possible to illustrate in the final section (4.) both the ways in which Smith's concept of *Achtung* is similar to Kant's mature account of respect, as well as how such a concept would have provided Kant with an appealing way to deal with the problem of moral motivation.

3.1 Moral Judgement and Regard for the General Rules of Conduct

The Theory of Moral Sentiments was first published in 1759 and went through six editions during Smith's lifetime. The first German translation of the TMS, by Christian Günther Rautenberg, which was published in 1770 and with which Kant was familiar, was based on the third edition. This is significant because the central topic of the first five editions of the TMS is the nature of moral judgement; it was only in the sixth edition that the TMS was expanded to include a number of discussions on the nature of virtue.²⁷ Regard, which I will illustrate was translated as *Achtung* in Rautenberg's edition of the TMS, is an attitude we take towards what Smith called the "general rules of conduct", and these rules are necessary in order to overcome certain deficiencies inherent in how moral *self*-judgment functions. Thus, before turning to regard it will be helpful to briefly turn to Smith's understanding of moral judgment, the problems associated with self-judgement, and the nature of moral rules.

According to Smith, when we make moral judgements we judge the sentiments, affections, or passions²⁸ of others in two ways: we judge 1) whether the sentiment is appropriate given its cause, which Smith calls the sentiment's "propriety," and 2) whether the sentiment deserves reward or punishment given the beneficial or hurtful effects it produces, which Smith calls the sentiment's "merit." (TMS 18; I.i.3.6-7)²⁹ Judgement happens by placing ourselves, via the imagination, in the situation of the person we are judging, whom Smith calls the "person principally concerned" (TMS 26; I.i.4.6), and "sympathizing" with them, i.e. assessing whether the passions they feel are the same

²⁷ For an account of the development between the editions, see Raphael and Macfie's Introduction to Smith (1976, 15-20). See also Raphael (2007, 1-12) and (2010, 15-18) for a discussion of how moral judgement was *the* central topic of the first five editions, but Smith altered the sixth edition to include a discussion of the nature of virtue.

²⁸ Smith does not make a meaningful distinction between these terms; therefore, I also use them interchangeably in this section.

²⁹ The distinction between these two kinds of judgement is not particularly important for my subsequent discussion. I therefore focus exclusively on 'propriety' in the remainder of this paper, which is Smith's own focus in the TMS.

as those we, the spectator, would feel if we were in their position. Approval occurs when the passions of the person principally concerned and those of the spectator match, disapproval occurs when they differ. When we judge our own actions, this procedure is carried out in a similar way, but in order to remove our personal biases we take up the position of an ‘impartial spectator’, i.e. an imaginary observer who knows the relevant details of the situation but who is not biased to judge in our favour, or anyone else’s. We approve of our own sentiments if we imagine that such an impartial spectator would have the same sentiments as those we find in ourselves, and disapproval occurs if we imagine that such a spectator’s sentiments would disagree with our own.

The need for moral rules arises due to certain limitations inherent in how moral self-judgement functions. Smith addresses two main limitations. First, it is only possible for us to judge of our own actions by means of taking up the position of the impartial spectator either if we have enough time to do so before acting or in retrospect when judging an action that we have already committed. The theory therefore seems inadequate when it comes to evaluating what we ought to do “when we are about to act” (TMS 220; III.4.2), i.e. in the heat of the moment. This is problematic in that the moment immediately prior to action is of prime importance for actually changing our behaviour. Second, Smith claims that even if we are able to take up this point of view immediately prior to action, we only obtain “instantaneous glimpses, which vanish in a moment, and which even while they last are not altogether just.” (ibid.) Indeed, Smith claims that whatever impartiality we achieve at this stage is unreliable because we are prone to self-deceit at the time of acting. (see TMS, 220-1; III.4.3) Given these two main limitations with his theory of moral self-judgement, taking up the position of the impartial spectator is less than ideal if we want to control the way we act when it matters most, i.e. right when we are about to perform an action.

The predicament in which we seem to find ourselves here is not hopeless, however. As Smith says: “Nature, however, has not left this weakness, which is of so much importance, altogether without a remedy; nor has she abandoned us entirely to the delusions of self-love.” (TMS 222-3; III.4.7) The way in which nature helps us here is by encouraging us to form *rules of action*: “Our continual observations upon the conduct of others, insensibly lead us to form to ourselves certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done or to be avoided.” (ibid.) We observe how others tend to judge actions as well as reflect on how the impartial spectator tends

to judge our own sentiments³⁰ and those of others and by means of inductive generalization we form general rules of action.³¹ These rules help us overcome the above-mentioned limitations with moral self-judgement in that we can quickly and easily both remember and refer to *unbiased* and *reliable* guides to action when it matters most.

On Smith's account, human beings not only naturally wish to gain the favour of others (see e.g. III.3.20), they also naturally desire to pursue virtue for its own sake.³² In that the general rules capture the sentiments that spectators would approve of, and also wherein virtue consists, Smith says that "past experience" (TMS 161; III.4.12) and "habitual reflection" (TMS 160; III.4.12) encourage us to "resolve" to obey the general rules. If we notice that a certain way of acting is always disapproved by others, for example, Smith says we would then "resolve never to be guilty of the like, nor ever, upon any account, to render ourselves in this manner the objects of universal disapprobation." (TMS 223; III.4.7) What is important for my purposes is that Smith describes this resolution to obey the general rules in terms of taking a specific attitude towards them, namely "regard."

A good illustration of this attitude in action is Smith's example of the "man of furious resentment" who, in the heat of passion, thinks that the death of his enemy is appropriate compensation for committing only a slight provocation. Smith claims that the resentful man is held back from this unjust action by the "regard", "awe", and "respect" with which he considers the general rules of conduct:

that reverence for the rule which past experience has impressed upon him, checks the impetuosity of his passion, and helps him to correct the too partial views which self-love might otherwise suggest, of what was proper to be done in his situation. If he should allow himself to be so far transported by passion as to violate this rule, yet, even in this case, he cannot throw off altogether the awe and respect with which he has been accustomed to regard it. (TMS 227; III.4.12)

³⁰ Indeed, as Smith notes, the general rules are meant to capture the judgements of the impartial spectator (see e.g. TMS 227; III.4.12) thus their purpose is to remind us of how our sentiments would be judged by such a spectator.

³¹ Smith is thus a particularist about moral judgements (see TMS 224; III.4.9; and see Fleischacker 2017; and Griswold 1999, 186ff)

³² See (TMS 358; VII.ii.2.15) for one of the rare places where Smith explicitly discusses why virtue "ought to be esteemed." It is perhaps worth noting that Kant's idea of taking an immediate, moral interest in action is similar to Smith's view that human beings are interested in virtue for its own sake.

As can be seen here, Smith uses a number of terms to describe the attitude we take towards the general rules, but by far the most dominant term he uses through the TMS is “regard”³³.

Although Smith does not explicitly discuss the topic, the attitude of regard can be characterized as the *recognition* of the action-guiding authority of the general rules. With respect to the case of the “man of furious resentment”, for example, Smith claims that when such a man considers acting on his passions:

his observations upon the conduct of others, have taught him how horrible all such sanguinary revenges appear. Unless his education has been very singular, he has laid it down to himself as an inviolable rule, to abstain from them upon all occasions. This rule preserves its authority with him, and renders him incapable of being guilty of such a violence. (TMS 160; III.4.12)

In this passage Smith is describing the process mentioned above, whereby we observe the conduct of others (and ourselves), form general rules, and then learn via experience and education that following such rules is a means to gain the favour of others and to acquire virtue for its own sake. This causes us to ‘lay this rule down to ourselves’ as one that has authority over our conduct. In that the rules capture which sentiments we ought to have in a given situation, the ‘reverence’, ‘awe’, and ‘respect’ with which this man has come to “regard” the general rules thus involve recognizing that they authoritatively command which sentiments we ought to have. Indeed, Smith emphasizes that without taking the attitude of regard towards the general rules, our passions would simply pursue their own satisfaction without worrying about whether or not they ought to do so. (ibid.)

Importantly, however, having regard for the general rules of conduct does not require that we act accordingly. As Smith’s example of the man of furious resentment indicates, even if we do not act as the general rules command, we cannot be rid of the awe and respect with which we have come to ‘regard’ them.

When Smith’s TMS is translated into German for the first time, something interesting happens to regard and the other terms Smith uses to describe the attitude taken towards the general rules of morality once one resolves to obey them: all of these terms are overwhelmingly rendered as “*Achtung*”. In Rautenberg’s translation, the nouns “regard”, “awe and respect”, and “reverence” are inconsistently translated with a number of different expressions, namely “*Ehrfurcht*” (Smith 1770, 311, 313, 314, 315, 349), “*Rücksicht auf*” (ibid., 339, 345), and, most importantly, “*Achtung*” (ibid.,

³³ When referring to the attitude we take towards the general rules Smith variously uses “regard” (TMS 229, 231, 232, 248, 249, 251, 253, 255, 256, 341, 418, 419, 424), “reverence” (ibid., 227, 230, 232, 233), and also “awe and respect” (ibid., 227). As one can see here, just in virtue of the frequency with which these terms are used, “regard” is the dominant term.

312, 316, 317, 335, 340, 342, 343, 349, 507, 553, 554, 561). As can be seen here, “*Achtung*” is by far the most dominant term used to capture the attitude taken towards the general rules, thus any reader of Smith in translation, such as Kant, would have taken *Achtung* to be the concept Smith uses to capture this attitude.

3.2 The Sense of Duty

In the preceding section we have seen that the general rules of conduct capture the sentiments and affections it is proper or meritorious to have in particular situations. In order to overcome certain deficiencies in moral self-judgement, we refer to the general rules ‘when we are about to act’ in order to access reliable and unbiased guidance on which passion to follow. The attitude of regard signifies the fact that we recognize the general rules as authoritative over our conduct, i.e. it expresses our awareness that the general rules authoritatively command how we *should* act, even if we do not end up following their advice. Since regard for the general rules is action-guiding and thus can alter our behaviour, Smith identifies this attitude with a particular “motive” (see e.g. TMS 230; III.5.1), namely the sense of duty. As Smith states at the beginning of a section entitled ‘Of the influence and authority of the general Rules of Morality’, for example: “The regard to those general rules of conduct, is what is properly called a sense of duty.” (TMS 229; III.5.1)

The sense of duty is a motive in the sense that it can either encourage us to positively act in a certain way, or hold us back from acting in ways contrary to the general rules. Contrary to what one might expect, however, especially from the point of view of Kant’s philosophy, the sense of duty is not the only motive or passion, upon which it is praiseworthy to act. On the contrary, for Smith it is praiseworthy to act on the basis of many different passions, and there are two factors which determine which passion should be at the root of our action: first, which sentiment, affection, or passion we are talking about and, second, the “precision and exactness, or the looseness and inaccuracy of the general rules themselves” (TMS 248-9; III.6.2). It will be important to briefly examine these two factors in order to better see how the sense of duty functions as a motive, for Smith.

Smith argues that all action proceeds from a “sentiment or affection of the heart” (TMS 19; I.i.3.5) and he lists three basic passions: the unsocial, the social, and the selfish passions. The unsocial passions “are hatred and resentment, with all their different modifications” (TMS 51; I.ii.3.1), the social passions are those such as generosity and compassion, i.e. “all the social and

benevolent affections” (TMS 61; I.ii.4.1) which we find “almost always peculiarly agreeable and becoming” (ibid.), and the “selfish passions” or the passions of self-love or those directed towards private advantage. (TMS 64ff.; I.ii.5) Acting on the basis of the social and the selfish passions is praiseworthy, depending on the situation: although we often ought to act from the social passions, for example, there are some circumstances where we should not, such as when our “natural generosity” towards a friend can be too strong such as to harm us (see TMS 250; III.6.4). Similarly, although Smith argues it is praiseworthy to act on the selfish passions when it comes to those things that are “more extraordinary and important” (TMS 252; III.6.7) to us, such as our career, we ought not to act on the selfish passions “in all common, little and ordinary cases” (TMS 251; III.6.6), such as when it comes to saving money. Looking after our wealth is nonetheless something we ought to do, but rather than proceed from self-interest, Smith claims we ought to be thrifty solely from our regard to the general rules, i.e. solely from our recognition that we ought to do so. (ibid.) In fact, this is only one of two scenarios where the sense of duty ought to be the primary motive behind our action, the other being the case of the unsocial passions: although most of the actions that our unsocial passions suggest to us should be avoided, there are some that Smith argues should still be done, such as punishment.³⁴ Punishment should be performed but not on the basis of our unsocial passions, but rather “more from a sense of the propriety of punishing, than from any savage disposition to revenge” (TMS 250; III.6.5). In these cases, the sense of duty should positively encourage us to act in the sense that it is our primary motive. In most other cases, however, the sense of duty merely holds us back from action, such as preventing us from being *too* generous and harming ourselves in the process.

Whether or not our sense of duty should be our motive also depends on how precise the rules are. When it comes to “the general rules which determine what are the offices of prudence, of charity, of generosity, of gratitude, of friendship”, for example, Smith claims they “are in many respects loose and inaccurate, admit of many exceptions, and require so many modifications, that it is scarce possible to regulate our conduct entirely by a regard to them.” (TMS 253; III.6.9) Only the rules of justice are precise enough that they can be relied upon:

The rules of justice are accurate in the highest degree, and admit of no exceptions or modifications [...] What I ought to perform, how much I ought to perform, when and where I ought to perform it,

³⁴ Smith famously has a retributive theory of justice and punishment. See Stalley 2012 for a recent discussion.

the whole nature and circumstances of the action prescribed, are all of them precisely fixt and determined. (TMS 255; III.6.10)

Smith even says that “the most sacred regard” is due to these rules because of their accuracy and that “the actions which this virtue requires are never so properly performed, as when the chief motive for performing them is a reverential and religious regard to those general rules which requires them” (TMS 255-6; III.6.10). The more precise the general rules are, then, the more should our regard for them, i.e. our sense of duty, be the dominant motive of our action.

Although the sense of duty ought not always be the dominant motive of our action, Smith nonetheless argues that it should be the ruling and governing “principle of our conduct” and that philosophy and common sense “directs” this to be the case (TMS 248; III.6.1). What Smith means by this is that even in those cases where the sense of duty is not our sole motive and we ought to act on a different passion, having the sense of duty as the “ruling and governing” principle of conduct means that it ought to “concur” (ibid.) and, in modern terminology, ‘over-determine’ our action. When discussing whether or not we should act on the social passions, for example, Smith claims that these actions “ought to proceed *as much* from the passions themselves, *as* from any regard to the general rules of conduct” (TMS 249; III.6.4, my emphasis). Presumably the case is similar with respect to those situations where we ought to act on our selfish passions; we ought to pursue the significant objects of self-interest, for example, *both* from self-interest *and* from the sense of duty. Smith’s view, then, is that when the sense of duty is the ruling and governing principle of our conduct, the sense of duty is always a contributing motive in a number of different ways: it is either our sole motive and positively ‘enlivens’ us to perform an action (in the case of the insignificant objects of self-interest and certain objects of the unsocial passions), it concurs alongside another passion that ought to be the primary passion acted upon (in the case of the extraordinary objects of self-interest and often with respect to what the social passions suggest), or the sense of duty restricts the force of a passion and either prevents it from becoming too strong (some cases of the social passions), or it could in principle also simply prevent us from acting entirely (where the sense of duty would be our reason for *refraining* from acting).

If we look at how the sense of duty is rendered in the 1770 Rautenberg translation of the TMS, we find some extremely interesting results. The sense of duty is not only translated as “das Gefül [sic] der Pflicht” (see Smith 1770 312, 338, 340, 392) and is thus called a feeling, but as a motive this ‘feeling’ of duty is dubbed the “Triebfeder” or incentive that should govern all action if

the sense of duty is our ruling and governing principle of conduct. Consider the translation of the following passage, for example:

That the sense of duty should be the sole principle of our conduct is no where [sic] the precept of Christianity; but that it should be the ruling and the governing one, as philosophy, and as, indeed, common sense directs. (TMS 248, III.6.1)

Daß daß [sic] Gefül der Pflicht die einzige Triebfeder unsers Verhaltens seyn soll, das befiehlt das Christenthum nirgends: wol aber, daß es nach der Anleitung, die uns die Philosophie, und selbst die gesunde Vernunft erteilt, die herrschende und regierende Triebfeder seyn soll. (Smith 1770, 338)

As illustrated above, what is most significant about the sense of duty is that Smith *identifies* this ‘feeling’, which Rautenberg here dubs an incentive, with the attitude of regard for the general rules:

“The regard to those general rules of conduct, is what is properly called a sense of duty.”
(TMS 229; III.5.1)

“Die Ehrfurcht gegen diese allgemeine Regeln des Verhaltens macht eigentlich das aus, was man das Gefül der Pflicht nennet [...] .“(Smith 1770, 311-312)

Accordingly, just as Smith occasionally speaks as if regard, rather than the sense of duty, is the motive accompanying all action when this is our ruling and governing principle of conduct in the original TMS (see e.g. TMS 171; III.6.1: “[...] our actions ought to arise chiefly or entirely from a sense of duty, or from a regard to general rules”), so does Rautenberg’s German translation occasionally say that we act from *Achtung* as a *Bewegungsgrund* or *Triebfeder*³⁵:

Der Mann, der blos aus Achtung gegen das, was ein schicklicher Gegenstand der Ehre und des Beifalls ist, handelt, wenn gleich Ehre und Beifall ihm allezeit sollten versaget werden, dieser handelt aus dem erhabensten und göttlichsten Bewegungsgrunde, dessen die menschliche Nature je fähig ist. (Smith 1770, 507)

Similarly, in the passage where Smith argues that all the common objects of self-interest should be pursued from the sense of duty rather than the selfish passions, Rautenberg’s translation states that:

Die Bestrebung nach den Gegenständen des Eigennuzzes muß in allen gemeinen, geringen und gewöhnlichen Fällen mehr *aus Achtung* gegen die allgemeinen Regeln, die ein solches Verhalten vorschreiben, als aus einer hizzigen Begierde nach den Gegenständen selbst herrüren. (Smith 1770, 342, my emphasis)

³⁵ ‘Bewegungsgrund’ and ‘Triebfeder’ were Rautenberg’s inconsistent translations for ‘motive’ and ‘principle of action’. For examples of ‘Bewegungsgrund’ see Smith (1770, 482, 485, 490, 492, 507-8); and for ‘Triebfeder’ see Smith (1770, 142, 169, 338, 352, and 364).

A reader of the TMS in its first German translation, therefore, would have come across the concept of *Achtung* as referring to both an attitude and a feeling, and as a concept that both functions as and is identified with a motive or incentive, and is accordingly dubbed a *Bewegungsgrund* or *Triebfeder*. As I illustrate in the next section, this is a technical term that is strikingly similar to Kant's mature understanding of the incentive of respect for the moral law. Not only this, rather I argue that Kant would have found it appealing as a way to deal with the problem of moral motivation, with which he was wrestling up until the mid-1780s.

4. Kant's Concept of Respect

In the paragraphs that follow the *Groundwork's* third proposition, where the concept of respect appears for the first time in Kant's published writings, Kant describes respect as having two core features: it is both an attitude one can take towards an object, such as the moral law, as well as a feeling. These two "aspects" of respect, as Andrews Reath has famously described them (1989, 287), are clearly expressed in an important footnote that occurs shortly after the third proposition:

I might be accused of using the word *respect* just to seek refuge in an obscure feeling, instead of giving distinct information about the matter in question by means of a concept of reason. But even though respect is a feeling, it is not one *received* by influence, but one *self-wrought* by a rational concept and therefore specifically different from all feelings of the former kind, which come down to inclination or fear. What I recognize immediately as a law for myself I recognize with respect, which signifies merely the consciousness of the *subordination* of my will to a law, without mediation of other influences on my sense. (GMS, AA 04:401fn, emphasis in original)³⁶

As described in this passage, respect is both a feeling *and* a specific kind of "consciousness" or way of *recognizing* the moral law. In order to see the extent to which Kant's concept of respect is similar to Smith's understanding of *Achtung* and *das Gefühl der Pflicht*, I here offer an account of these two aspects.

³⁶ "Man könnte mir vorwerfen, als suchte ich hinter dem Worte *Achtung* nur Zuflucht in einem dunklen Gefühle, anstatt durch einen Begriff der Vernunft in der Frage deutliche Auskunft zu geben. Allein wenn Achtung gleich ein Gefühl ist, so ist es doch kein durch Einfluß *empfangenes*, sondern durch einen Vernunftbegriff *selbstgewirktes* Gefühl und daher von allen Gefühlen der ersteren Art, die sich auf Neigung oder Furcht bringen lassen, specifisch unterschieden. Was ich unmittelbar als Gesetz für mich erkenne, erkenne ich mit Achtung, welche bloß das Bewußtseyn der *Unterordnung* meines Willens unter einem Gesetze, ohne Vermittlung anderer Einflüsse auf meinen Sinn, bedeutet." (GMS, AA 04:401fn)

4.1 Respect for the Moral Law as the Incentive of Moral Action

In the first instance, respect is an attitude, which means nothing other than a specific way in which to cognitively relate to, or be conscious of, a given object.³⁷ From the *Groundwork* onwards, the attitude of respect in Kant's philosophy has three main objects: 1) the moral law (see e.g. GMS, AA 04:400, GMS, AA 04:401fn., KpV, AA 05:71-90), 2) persons insofar as they exemplify the moral law (see e.g. GMS, AA 04:435-6, GMS, AA 04:439, KpV, AA 05:76-8), and 3) persons simply insofar as they are persons or ends-in-themselves (see e.g. MS, AA 06:448-50, MS, AA 06:462-8).³⁸ My focus here is the attitude of respect for the law because it is this attitude in particular that Kant identifies with a feeling, and which he calls the incentive of moral action. Kant also considers respect for the moral law to be primary in the sense that, as he repeatedly stresses, "respect for a person is actually only respect for the law". (GMS, AA 04:401n, see also KpV, AA 05:81fn.)³⁹ Before turning to respect as a feeling or incentive it will thus be important to clarify what the attitude of respect for the law is.⁴⁰

Kant claims that we *necessarily* respect the moral law as soon as we are conscious of it, and in the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant explains that we become conscious of the moral law by reflecting on the nature of practical principles:

But how is consciousness of that moral law possible? We can become aware of pure practical laws just as we are aware of pure theoretical principles, by attending to the necessity with which reason

³⁷ I do not intend to be making a controversial claim by referring to respect as an attitude. Indeed, other Kant scholars have referred to respect in this way as well: Reath has referred to respect as a "propositional attitude" (1989, 287); Richard McCarty has called respect a "motivational attitude" (1993, 425); and Allen Wood and Dieter Schönecker call respect a "rational practical attitude". (2015, 80)

³⁸ For more on these three different objects of respect see Klimchuk (2004, 39) and Allison (2011, 128ff. and 128n). Mary Gregor only makes a distinction between two types of respect: for the law, and for persons who follow the law (see 1963, 181).

³⁹ "Alle Achtung für eine Person ist eigentlich nur Achtung fürs Gesetz". (GMS, AA 04:401fn)

⁴⁰ The attitude of respect for the moral law has received very little direct attention in the secondary literature in comparison to that given to the feeling of respect. Kant's understanding of the attitude of respect for persons, especially insofar as they are persons/ends-in-themselves, has received a great deal of attention in the secondary literature (see Hill (1991); Korsgaard (1996); Wood (1999); and Sensen (2011)), in large part because of how influential it has been in contemporary ethics and political philosophy. The neglect of attention given to respect as an attitude towards the moral law is surprising given Kant's stress on the priority of respect for the law, and it has resulted in virtually no consideration of what *kind* of attitude respect for the law might be. It is my hope that the discussion in this section adds some missing details in this direction.

prescribes them to us and to the setting aside of all empirical conditions to which reason directs us.

(KpV, AA 05:30.3-7)⁴¹

Consciousness of the moral law is thus not something that occurs without some effort and requires, as Henry Allison has remarked, some “reflective activity” (2011, 132) on our part.⁴² Once we become aware of the moral law, however, Kant claims that we *necessarily* regard it in a certain way or, in other words, we necessarily take a certain attitude towards it, namely respect. Jens Timmermann has called this the “inescapability” of respect (2007, 182), and Kant highlights this feature of respect throughout his works.⁴³ In the *Groundwork*, for example, Kant claims that “reason” represents all the commands of duty as “worthy of the highest respect” (GMS, AA 04:405.6-7)⁴⁴ and that from the idea of universal legislation “reason extracts from me *immediate* respect”. (GMS, AA 04:403.25-26, emphasis added)⁴⁵ In the second *Critique*, Kant says that respect is “*inseparably* connected with the representation of the moral law in every finite rational being” (KpV, AA 05:80.6-7, emphasis added)⁴⁶, and even claims that the idea of the moral law within us, “without promising or threatening anything with certainty, *demand*s of us disinterested respect” (KpV, AA 05:147.30-31)⁴⁷.

⁴¹ “Wie ist aber auch das Bewußtsein jenes moralischen Gesetzes möglich? Wir können uns reiner praktischer Gesetze bewußt werden, eben so wie wir uns reiner theoretischer Grundsätze bewußt sind, indem wir auf die Nothwendigkeit, womit sie uns die Vernunft vorschreibt, und auf Absonderung aller empirischen Bedingungen, dazu uns jene hinweist, Acht haben. (KpV, AA 05:30.3-7)

⁴² That we *become* conscious of the moral law in this way does not conflict with Kant’s famous claim that we are conscious of the moral law as a “Factum der Vernunft” (KpV, AA 05:47). Kant’s doctrine of the fact of reason concerns the justification of the *bindingness* of the moral law, which is intrinsic to agents who regard themselves as having a will and practical reason, and as such is a ‘fact’ of their reason. This does not imply that all human beings are innately conscious of the fundamental law of practical reason; indeed, it is only once we start to reflect on maxims (i.e., once we begin acting as practical agents with a will) that this fact presents itself to us. For a helpful discussion of this issue, see Kleingeld (2010, esp. 67-72). I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer at *Kant-Studien* for encouraging me to clarify this point.

⁴³ Respect not only follows necessarily from our awareness of the moral law, it also follows necessarily from our recognition of persons who exemplify the law. Kant emphasizes this in a well-known passage from the second *Critique*: “before a humble common man in whom I perceive uprightness of character in a higher degree than I am aware of in myself my spirit bows, whether I want it or whether I do not”; “Vor einem niedrigen, bürgerlich gemeinen Mann, an dem ich eine Rechtschaffenheit des Charakters in einem gewissen Maße, als ich mir von mir selbst nicht bewußt bin, wahrnehme, bückt sich mein Geist, ich mag wollen oder nicht” (KpV, AA 05:77.1-4).

⁴⁴ “die Vernunft so hochachtungswürdig vorstellt“ (GMS, AA 04:405.6-7)

⁴⁵ “zeigt mir die Vernunft unmittelbare Achtung ab“. (GMS, AA 04:403.25-26)

⁴⁶ “unzertrennlich mit der Vorstellung des moralischen Gesetzes in jedem endlichen vernünftigen Wesen verbunden.“ (KpV, AA 05:80.6-7)

⁴⁷ “ohne uns etwas mit Sicherheit zu verheißen, oder zu drohen, von uns uneigennützig Achtung fordert“. (KpV, AA 05:147.30-31) For similar statements about the *inseparability* of the awareness of the law and the attitude of respect for it see: MS, AA 06:402-3; RGV, AA 06:27-8; RGV, AA 06:181.

But what does it mean to ‘respect’ the moral law, and what kind of attitude is this? On a fundamental level, Kant repeatedly stresses that, as a kind of “consciousness” or awareness of the moral law, respect is a kind of *recognition*. In the *Groundwork* footnote cited above, for example, Kant says that “What I recognize [erkenne] immediately as a law for myself I recognize [erkenne] with respect, which signifies merely the consciousness [*das Bewußtseyn*] of the *subordination* of my will to a law, without mediation of other influences on my sense.” (GMS, AA 04:401fn) In the second *Critique* as well, Kant refers to respect as the “Recognition of the moral law”. (KpV, AA 05:79.10)⁴⁸ In the *Religion* he claims that respect is connected to “the morality alone of the law” as “recognized through reason” (RGV, AA 06:114.5-6)⁴⁹, and in the *Metaphysics of Morals* that “Respect for the law, which in its subjective aspect is called moral feeling, is identical with consciousness of one’s duty.” (MS, AA 06:464.5-6)⁵⁰ These passages also indicate what exactly we recognize when we regard the moral law with respect, namely the supreme authority of the moral law; respect for the moral law is to be conscious of the “*subordination*” of one’s will to the law, i.e. that the law is a law *for me*, and consists in our consciousness of being obligated by it.

As the recognition of the moral law’s supreme authority over our conduct, Kant’s conception of respect for the law is a specific kind of attitude, namely what Stephen Darwall has called “moral recognition respect.” (1977, 40) As opposed to “appraisal respect” which “consists in an attitude of positive appraisal” directed primarily towards a person, “either as a person or as engaged in some particular pursuit” (Darwall 1977, 38), and which comes in degrees given it must be “earned” (ibid., 41), Darwall describes “recognition respect” as “giving the appropriate recognition to a fact in one’s deliberations about how to act.” (ibid., 40) “Moral” recognition respect in particular is as follows:

some fact or feature is an appropriate object of [moral recognition] respect if inappropriate consideration or weighing of that fact or feature would result in behaviour that is morally wrong. To respect something is thus to regard it as requiring restrictions on the moral acceptability of actions connected with it. (ibid., 40)

For Kant, respecting the moral law is just such an attitude: it is to regard the moral law as placing restrictions on action where, if disobeyed, it would result in action that is morally wrong. The

⁴⁸ “Die Anerkennung des moralischen Gesetzes [...]”. (KpV, AA 05:79.10)

⁴⁹ “die bloße Moralität des Gesetzes [...] durch die Vernunft erkannt“. (RGV, AA 06:114.5-6)

⁵⁰ „Die Achtung vor dem Gesetze, welche subjectiv als moralische Gefühl bezeichnet wird, ist mit dem Bewußtsein seiner Pflicht einerlei.“ (MS, AA 06:464.5-6) See also e.g. V-NR/Feyerabend, AA 27:1327; V-MS/Vigil, AA 27:549; V-MS/Vigil AA 27:582

attitude of respect for the moral law is thus a kind of recognition, namely “the immediate recognition of its [the moral law’s] authority” (Reath 1989, 287) or a subject’s recognition of themselves as “intrinsically bound by it” as a moral agent. (see Berg, forthcoming)⁵¹

Respect is not only an attitude, of course; it is also a feeling. Respect is in fact a special kind of feeling in that it is not “*received* by influence [durch Einfluß *empfangenes*]” (GMS, AA 04:401n) and thus is neither a feeling of pleasure nor displeasure (KpV, AA 05:77). On the contrary, respect is a feeling “*self-wrought* by a rational concept [durch einen Vernunftbegriff *selbstgewirktes*]” (GMS, AA 04:401n) in that it is connected to the attitude that *necessarily* results from consciousness of the moral law, and as such it is not passively received, but actively produced by reason. As such, respect is a rational⁵² or “moral feeling [ein moralisches Gefühl]” (KpV, AA 05:75.18), as opposed to a pathological feeling. As Kant says in the second *Critique*, respect is a feeling “that is not of empirical origin [das nicht empirischen Ursprungs ist]” (KpV, AA 05:73.33) and has an “intellectual cause [intellektuellen Ursache]” (KpV, AA 05:79.8).

The feeling of respect also functions as what Kant has famously called “the sole and also the undoubted moral incentive”. (KpV, AA 05:78.20-21)⁵³ As previously mentioned, the feeling of respect and its role as the incentive of moral action is one of the most controversial aspects of Kant’s moral philosophy. A major part of the controversy has surrounded the question of *whether or not* and *in what way* a psychological state like a feeling could play a role in moral motivation for a philosopher like Kant whose purpose is “to work out for once a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything empirical and belongs to anthropology.” (GMS, AA 04:389.7-9)⁵⁴ I cannot enter into this controversy here, but by calling the feeling of respect an incentive, Kant is signaling that respect is not only just a feeling and an attitude, but is also in some way involved in action

⁵¹ The limited literature that directly addresses the nature of the attitude of respect for the moral law includes Reath 1989, Berg, forthcoming, Wood and Schönecker 2015, Noller 2019, DeWitt, 2014, and Bratu 2017.

⁵² For a recent discussion on the possibility of rational feelings in Kant’s philosophy, see Cohen 2018.

⁵³ “die einzige und zugleich unbezweifelte moralische Triebfeder“. (KpV, AA 05:78.20-21)

⁵⁴ “einmal eine reine Moralphilosophie zu bearbeiten, die von allem, was nur empirisch sein mag und zur Anthropologie gehört, völlig gesäubert wäre”. “to work out for once a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything empirical and belongs to anthropology.” (GMS, AA 04:389.7-9) Some commentators, such as Reath, suggest that it is not the feeling at all, but the attitude of respect, or what Reath calls its “intellectual” or “practical” aspect, that functions as the incentive, and the feeling of respect is merely “epiphenomenal” and part of the experience of acting morally (see Reath 1989, 287 and Sytsma 1993, 121) The majority of the recent literature distances itself from this interpretation, however, and is overwhelmingly in agreement that the feeling of respect plays a positive role in Kant’s empirical psychology of moral motivation. (See e.g. Guyer (2010), McCarty (2009), Ware (2014), and Wood and Schönecker (2015)). I side with this latter group of interpreters. Frierson has done the most work to explain *how* exactly this works on the level of empirical psychology (see 2005 and 2014).

performed for the sake of the moral law alone, whether it plays a positive, contributing role or is merely a part of the experience of acting morally.

The important feature to highlight about respect is that Kant understands its two core aspects, i.e. its nature as both an attitude and a feeling, as intimately related. Kant says this explicitly in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, where he states that they are identical: “Respect for the law, which in its subjective aspect is called moral feeling, is identical with consciousness of one’s duty”. (MS, AA 06:464.5-6)⁵⁵ This means that having the attitude of respect for the moral law is at one and the same time to experience a particular feeling. Reath has described this fact about respect as follows:

though distinguishable, these aspects of respect need not be phenomenologically distinct, but would be experienced together. As a result, the immediate recognition of the Moral Law and the feeling which it produces represent connected aspects of what is in us a single phenomenon. (1989, 290)

Accordingly, although the attitude of respect comes first in the sense that we *necessarily* regard the moral law in this way as soon as we are conscious of it, on Kant’s view having the attitude is inseparable from experiencing a particular feeling.⁵⁶

The question now is: to what degree is this understanding of *Achtung* similar to what Smith calls regard and the sense of duty, and which were translated as *Achtung* and *das Gefühl der Pflicht*? Are they similar in such a way that Kant might have adopted core elements of the concept of *Achtung* as it appears in the first German translation of the TMS for his own purposes, for example in order to deal the problem of moral motivation?

⁵⁵ “Die Achtung vor dem Gesetze, welche subjectiv als moralisches Gefühl bezeichnet wird, ist mit dem Bewußtsein seiner Pflicht einerlei.“ (MS, AA 06:464.5-6)

⁵⁶ That we necessarily take the attitude of respect towards the moral law as soon as we are conscious of it, and that the feeling of respect necessarily results from the attitude, should not suggest that Kant believes that one need only be aware of the moral law to possess the good disposition. It only means that anyone who is aware of the moral law must recognize that it is supremely normative, i.e., they must acknowledge that the moral law commands how we *ought* to act, all things considered. Thus, even Kant’s “most hardened scoundrel” (4:454.21), who presumably does *not* possess the good disposition, nonetheless wishes to have such a disposition, and therefore recognizes that this is what they ought to strive for. In order to actually possess a good disposition, we must not only recognize the law and act in accordance with how we recognize we ought to, rather we must also ‘incorporate’ an incentive into our maxim, i.e., become the kind of person who does their duty from respect for the moral law consistently, reliably, and as a matter of principle. I thank an anonymous reviewer at *Kant-Studien* for encouraging me to clarify this point.

4.2 *Achtung* in Kant and Smith

In the first section of this paper I illustrated that ever since Kant rejected what has been called the ‘continuity thesis’ and came to think of intellectual and sensible cognitions as different in *kind* he was faced with a problem concerning moral motivation that would persist into the Critical period. Without any continuity between the intellect and sensibility, it becomes impossible to explain how a purely intellectual recognition of moral obligation could bring one to *feel* a corresponding sensible incentive to act accordingly. Kant’s early solution to this problem was to say that we are faced with the task of forming habits and training sensibility in a way that corresponds to our intellectual grasp of moral obligation. I argued that this solution is unsatisfactory because it assigns the intellectual grasp of obligation little, if any, role in moral practice. I also illustrated that even in the first *Critique* Kant had not yet developed his characteristic view of respect for the moral law as the incentive of morality. It is only in the mid-1780s, the Feyerabend lecture notes on natural law and the *Groundwork*, that Kant’s mature concept of respect makes its first appearance.

In section 2 I illustrated that a reader of Smith’s TMS in its first German translation would have encountered a concept that we are now in the position to see is very similar to what we find in Kant’s mature moral philosophy. In Rautenberg’s edition of the TMS, *Achtung* is the attitude towards the general rules of conduct that Smith calls “regard” and it signifies our recognition of the authority and action-guiding character of these rules. Not only this, but *Achtung* is identified with what Smith calls the ‘sense of duty’, translated as *das Gefühl der Pflicht*, and as a “motive” it is dubbed both a *Bewegungsgrund* and a *Triebfeder*. In Kant’s mature moral philosophy, Kant’s technical use *Achtung* is similarly both the recognition of the authority of the moral law and a feeling that is identified with this attitude and which functions as the incentive (*Triebfeder*) of moral action. This is a technical understanding of *Achtung* and is distinct from any of the more ordinary uses of the term that we find in Kant’s pre-Critical writings, before his exposure to Smith. Not only is this similarity striking, but these concepts are similar in such a way that, faced with the problem of moral motivation, *Achtung* in the first German translation of the TMS would have presented Kant with an interesting way to deal with this problem: although it is impossible to explain *how* objective, intellectual judgement can bring about a subjective, sensible incentive, the concept of *Achtung* links these two components in a single complex phenomenon. It is thus perhaps no surprise that we find the same concept in Kant’s mature moral philosophy with a similar conceptual structure. For Kant, *Achtung* also has both a cognitive and a sensible component. As a cognitive attitude, both regard and respect are types of

recognition, namely the recognition of a moral command. Furthermore, both of these attitudes are *identified* with a ‘feeling’ that functions as a motive or incentive.

There are of course significant differences between the moral philosophies of Kant and Smith more generally, and also their moral psychologies in particular. There are too many to address here in detail, but there are a select few that are important to mention. First, Kant’s moral philosophy is centered around one supreme, unconditionally binding, a priori practical law, namely the moral law. Smith, by contrast, is a moral particularist who holds that there are many ‘general rules of conduct’ that we are conditionally bound by on the basis of two pre-existing natural desires: 1) the favour of others, and 2) our interest in virtue for its own sake. Second, and importantly, the concept of autonomy is entirely absent from Smith’s TMS and indeed is a concept sometimes regarded as having been ‘invented’ by Kant (see Schneewind 1998, 3).⁵⁷ Third, and lastly, Kant’s understanding of *Achtung* is in certain respect more developed and at the very least adapted by Kant to fit within his broader philosophy and moral psychology. Whereas Smith leaves out many details about how the attitude and the feeling of *Achtung* are connected, Kant specifies that reason *causes* the feeling of respect, and he has a story to tell about how exactly cognition, feeling, and desire interact such that a cognition can produce a feeling, which functions as an incentive in the sense of an impelling cause of desire. (see Frierson 2005 and 2014) Nonetheless, the core structure of the concept of *Achtung* in Rautenberg’s translation of the GMS is what Kant would have found appealing as a way to deal with the problem of moral motivation: it is a complex concept that links two mental faculties that Kant’s broader philosophical commitments drastically separated, namely the intellect and sensibility.⁵⁸ Although the concept of respect may still be wanting in that it does not

⁵⁷ It is important to note that, similar to respect, the concept of autonomy makes its first published appearance in the *Groundwork* as well and only elements of it appear in unpublished writings between 1770 and 1785. (see Sensen 2018) The concept of respect is of course closely linked to the concept of autonomy, in that it is only the moral law that we autonomously subject ourselves to that *necessitates* that we regard it with respect, so it is no surprise that they both appear in Kant’s writings around the same time. A question that arises is whether respect or autonomy is the primary discovery in Kant’s intellectual development in the sense that the discovery of the one lead to the discovery of the other. I cannot answer this question here, but it is worth noting that a third option has recently been argued for by Oliver Sensen that agrees with the developmental story that I have described in this paper, namely that’s Kant’s evolving understanding of moral motivation leading up to the mature view that we find in the *Groundwork* onwards might be the key to them both, i.e., it was only once Kant settled on his mature understanding of moral motivation that the key pieces of respect, which I have claimed was influenced by Smith, and autonomy could fall into place. (see Sensen 2018)

⁵⁸ If Kant adopted core features of Smith’s concept of *Achtung* as I have suggested here, then Kant must have returned to Smith to Smith during the 1780s – after the first *Critique*’s “semi-Critical” conception of moral motivation and prior to the first appearance of Kant’s technical understanding of respect in *Feyerabend* and the

help explain *how* these two aspects of our being our related, as commentators have complained since the first publication of Kant's moral philosophy⁵⁹, the concept of *Achtung* would have offered Kant a way in which to express *that* these two aspects of our being *are* intimately, and inextricably, related.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that Kant's concept of respect for the moral law as the incentive of action with moral worth has its roots in Smith's understand of the attitude of regard for the general rules of conduct and the related motive of the sense of duty. Not only this, but I have suggested that, given Kant was struggling to solve a problem concerning the workings of moral motivation at a time when he would have been exposed to Smith's TMS, the concept of *Achtung* in Rautenberg's translation of Smith's text would have provided Kant with a more appealing way to deal with the problem than the strategy Kant employed during the 1770s. I thereby hope to have illustrated an important and underappreciated way in which Smith's moral philosophy had a lasting and significant impact on an important part of Kant's mature moral philosophy.⁶⁰

Groundwork. However, as Norton and Kuehn have stated, scholars agree that Kant likely read Rautenberg's translation of the TMS soon after it appeared in 1770. (2000, 978) If the account I have offered in this paper is correct, one might thus be tempted to ask why Kant took so long to incorporate an idea he was presumably already familiar with in the 1770s, and should have been appealing as a solution to the problem of moral motivation much earlier than the mid-1780s. A likely answer here is that even if Kant had already noticed Smith's concept of *Achtung* soon after he was first exposed to the TMS in the early 1770s, he simply had not yet settled on the right solution to the problem of moral motivation. Indeed, during the 1770s Kant's attention was directed towards finishing the first *Critique*, not his moral philosophy – he had already been putting off the task of a *Metaphysics of Morals* for some time already (see Kuehn 2010). It would therefore not be surprising that, once the monumental task of writing the first *Critique* was finished, Kant turns his attention towards moral philosophy and revisits the moral writers he earlier found so inspirational. In fact, Clemens Schwaiger has argued that Kant undertook a re-reading of other British philosophers in the mid-1780s because we suddenly find a number of references to Hutcheson, Hume, and especially Shaftesbury in his lecture notes that stem from this time period. (see Schwaiger 1999, 190-191, note 719; and V-NR/Feyerabend, AA 27:1325; V-NR/Feyerabend, AA 27:1325; V-NR/Feyerabend, AA 27:1330; V-Phil-Th/Pölitz, AA 28:1073, V-Phil-Th/Pölitz, AA 28:1081) Perhaps Kant revisited Smith during this time as well. If he did so, he would have re-encountered the concept of *Achtung* and would have realized that it functions as a fitting way to deal with a problem he was still trying to solve.

⁵⁹ See Rehberg, 1788 for one of the earliest criticisms of Kant's concept of respect in this direction.

⁶⁰ The author would like to thank audiences at the St. Andrews/Stirling Kant Reading Party, the Mainz Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, the British Society for the History of Philosophy Conference in York, the Atlantic Canada Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, as well as the University of Western Ontario Graduate Student Colloquium for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. Special thanks are due to Michael Baumtrog, Corey Dyck, Lorne Falkenstein, Heiner Klemme, Dennis Klimchuk, Robert Loudon, Michael Bennett McNulty, Sonja Schierbaum, John Walsh, and two anonymous reviewers at *Kant-*

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