

## Kant and Hutcheson on the Psychology of Moral Motivation

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Abstract: In this paper I argue that Kant’s psychology of moral motivation has less in common with Hutcheson’s view than interpreters have traditionally thought. I first offer an interpretation of the role that feeling, desire, and cognition play in Kant’s account of moral action. I then outline the essential features of Hutcheson’s understanding of desire before arguing that although Kant and Hutcheson share the trivial similarity that even moral action springs from a desire, Kant conceives of the desire at the root of moral action as qualitatively different from all other desires in a number of important ways.

Keywords: Hutcheson, Kant, moral motivation, desire, respect

### Introduction

Kant’s account of moral motivation is arguably one of the more controversial aspects of his practical philosophy. More than anything else, the controversy has concerned the extent to which psychological states like feelings and desires play a role in the production of moral action, if they do at all. Indeed, early discussions of this topic in English-language scholarship focus on *whether or not* moral action involves feelings and desires, with some claiming that Kant’s rationalism even excludes the possibility of empirical states playing such a role altogether.<sup>1</sup> Ever since scholars have begun to extensively consult the many student notes from Kant’s lectures on moral philosophy, anthropology,

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<sup>1</sup> The classic position in this direction is that of Andrews Reath (1989). See also Wolff (1973), Allison (1990), O’Neill (2013), and Sytsma (1993). I wish to note at the outset that, for reasons of space, this paper cannot refer to the entire body of secondary literature on Kant’s account of moral motivation. I therefore limit myself to referencing only the material that is directly relevant to my discussion.

and metaphysics<sup>2</sup>, however, and especially since selections of these notes have been translated into English, the secondary literature has been overwhelmingly in agreement that feelings and desires *do* play a positive role in moral action for Kant.<sup>3</sup> In recent years the question has thus not been *whether or not*, but *in what way* feelings and desires play a role in moral motivation.<sup>4</sup> The following paper seeks to contribute to this more recent discussion by determining the extent to which Kant's psychology of moral motivation is similar to the view of Francis Hutcheson, one of Kant's most important eighteenth-century British predecessors.

Comparisons between Kant and eighteenth-century British philosophy on the topic of moral motivation are not new. Among those interpreters who claim that psychological states like feelings and desires play a positive role in Kant's account of moral motivation, many suggest that he assigns such states this role because of the lingering influence of his British predecessors. Melissa Zinkin, for instance, claims that the role Kant assigns to feeling in moral action illustrates that he 'is making a concession to the philosophers of moral sense.' (2006, 32) Similarly, Ido Geiger argues that Kant believes 'the effective forces driving naturally affected beings ... are feelings,' and claims that '[t]his is the insight that Kant, surprisingly perhaps, takes from the empiricist view of agency.' (Geiger 2001, 289) A number of other interpreters make similar claims,<sup>5</sup> and many single out David Hume as the appropriate figure, with whom one should compare Kant's psychology of moral motivation. A.T. Nuyen, for example, argues that Kant 'adopts' the moral psychology of David Hume, according to which 'it is a passion that provides the psychological push for every action.' (1991, 40) Lara Denis and Eric Wilson have also compared Kant with Hume and claim that they 'appear to share a view of human action according to which feelings ... are needed for motivating action.' (Denis and Wilson 2018) Stephen Engstrom goes even further and claims that because Kant believes an effect on feeling is necessary for the moral law to become practical, Kant is 'in agreement' with Hume's claim that 'reason is "perfectly inert."' (2010, 97)

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<sup>2</sup> As Patrick Frierson rightly notes (2005, 6) the initial confusion over *whether* feelings and desires play a role in Kant's account of moral motivation is (at least in part) Kant's own fault, for he does not systematically lay out his empirical psychology in his main published works. It is only in Kant's lectures on metaphysics in particular that we find a detailed discussion of his empirical psychology, including his most complete statement on the psychology of moral motivation.

<sup>3</sup> Among those who have more recently argued in favour of this interpretation are Guyer (2010), McCarty (2009), Ware (2014), and Wood and Schönecker (2015).

<sup>4</sup> The person who has done the most work to provide a convincing account in this direction is Patrick Frierson (see 2005 and 2014).

<sup>5</sup> See MacBeath (1973, 312-13), Morrison (2008, 135), Beck (1960, 212), Broadie and Pybus (1975, 63), and Guevara (2000, 102-3).

There is good reason why so many interpreters compare Kant and Hume in particular: Hume's philosophy was well-known in late eighteenth-century Germany,<sup>6</sup> and Kant himself owned many of Hume's works in translation (see Warda 1922, 50). Another more general reason is that, at least in the twentieth century, Hume was often considered the only Scottish philosopher of any importance with the result that he was thought to be *the* representative of the Scottish Enlightenment, especially by scholars whose interests were not historical (see Garrett and Heydt 2015, 77). There are also more *systematic* reasons why Hume is singled out as the appropriate figure, with whom one should compare Kant's psychology of moral motivation in particular: many twentieth-century philosophers considered Hume to be the historical figure who most obviously upheld what has been called the 'standard view' of human motivation, namely the view according to which intentional action can be explained solely by belief/desire pairs (see Arpaly 2018). Robert Audi, for example, sees the contemporary discussion surrounding moral motivation as inspired by Hume (see Audi 1973 and Vasiliou 2016, pg. 14). It is thus no surprise that when attempts are made to relate Kant's view of moral motivation to contemporary debates surrounding various varieties of motivational internalism and externalism, for example, comparisons between Kant and Hume are not far behind.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, if the question is the extent to which Kant's view exhibits the influence of his British predecessors, there is reason to believe we should compare Kant not with Hume, but with Francis Hutcheson. In his early 1804 biography of Kant, for example, Ludwig Borowski states the following: 'In the years when I belonged among his [Kant's] students, Hutcheson and Hume were of exceptional worth, the former in subjects of morals, the latter in his deepest philosophical investigations. ... He recommended both of these writers to us for a most careful study' (1804, 170). More recently, Lara Denis and Eric Wilson have correctly noted that 'Kant often indicated that he saw Hutcheson as more significant to ethics than Hume.' (Denis and Wilson 2018) Indeed, although Kant himself does not explicitly say that Hutcheson was a bigger influence on the development of his ethics and moral psychology than Hume, it is relatively easy to confirm from just a brief glance at his writings: Kant engages with Hutcheson's moral philosophy relatively extensively, whereas

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<sup>6</sup> For Hume's reception in Germany as well as his reception by Kant, see Gawlick and Kreimendahl (1987), Henrich (1957/58 and 1994), Jessop (1938), Kuehn (1987), Hatfield (1990), and Watkins (2005, 160-70, 232-7, 362-422).

<sup>7</sup> For discussions of whether Kant was a motivational internalist or an externalist, see Klemme (2007) and Sargentis (2012).

Hume's ethical views are hardly discussed at all.<sup>8</sup> In Kant's categorization of all other moral theories in the second *Critique*, for example, it is not Hume that is identified as the representative of a moral theory based on feeling, but Hutcheson (see 5:40).<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, and relevant to my purposes here, while Kant does not engage with Hume's theory of the passions, he was impressed with Hutcheson's distinction between the affects and passions. In the student lecture notes on anthropology, for example, Kant claims that 'An English author,' who in other places Kant identifies as Hutcheson (see 25:589 and 25:1115) 'distinguished, and rightly so, the affects and the passions.' (25:212-13)<sup>10</sup> The studies that have been done on the development of Kant's moral philosophy confirm the importance and influence of Hutcheson in particular, as opposed to Hume.<sup>11</sup> Thus while it is without a doubt useful to compare Kant's conception of moral motivation with Hume's, at the very least there is also good reason to suspect that comparing Kant with Hutcheson on this matter would be just as fruitful, if not more appropriate given Hutcheson's role in Kant's philosophical development. It is thus surprising that no concerted attempt has been made to clarify Kant's account of the psychology of moral motivation by comparing it with Hutcheson's. This is precisely the task that I wish to accomplish in this paper. I argue that while previous interpreters are correct to note that Kant has a view similar to his British predecessors in that he too believes that moral action proceeds from desire, Kant's psychology of moral motivation has less in common with a figure like Hutcheson than usually thought.

Given the complicated and controversial nature of Kant's psychology of action, my focus in this paper is necessarily limited. I cannot provide a complete account of Kant's empirical conception of both moral and non-moral action.<sup>12</sup> Nor can I offer a comprehensive picture of Kant's faculty

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<sup>8</sup> In fact, there are only two instances I have found where Kant mentions Hume's moral philosophy directly: first in the 'Announcement' from the 1760s where Kant claims that '[t]he attempts of *Shaftesbury*, *Hutcheson*, and *Hume*, although incomplete and defective, have nonetheless penetrated furthest in the search for the fundamental principles of all morality' (2:311), and second in the *Mronovius II* lectures from the mid 1780s, where Kant makes the following passing remark: 'Hume even believes even more smaller feelings lie in the moral feeling. But morality cannot even be felt' (29:625).

<sup>9</sup> All references to Kant's works cite the volume and page number of his *Gesammelte Schriften* (see Kant 1900). In general, I use the translations of Kant's texts available in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, and I indicate where these translations are modified.

<sup>10</sup> For an excellent discussion of Kant's account of the affects and passions, and its relation to Hutcheson, see Frierson (2014b).

<sup>11</sup> See Henrich (2009 and 2014), Menzer (1897), (1898), (1899), Schilpp (1938), Schmucker (1961), Schwaiger (1999), and Ward (1972).

<sup>12</sup> For an excellent account of this topic see Frierson 2005.

psychology.<sup>13</sup> Rather, I focus on a few specific questions given my overall aims. After providing a brief overview of Kant's faculty psychology as well as what he considers to be the 'problem' of moral motivation, in the first section I focus on explaining one very specific feature of Kant's psychology of moral motivation that has vexed interpreters, namely *why* he claims that moral motivation takes place by means of the moral law bringing about a specific kind of mental state in the mind of an acting agent, namely a feeling, i.e., the feeling of respect for the moral law. Focusing on Kant's most developed account of moral motivation in the second *Critique*, I argue that Kant claims the rational recognition of the moral law brings about the feeling of respect because, for Kant, feelings function as an 'incentive,' which I suggest should be understood as an 'impelling cause of desire.' I thereby illustrate that Kant's psychology of moral motivation has a specific structure, whereby cognition leads to feeling, and feeling to desire.<sup>14</sup> After explaining Hutcheson's conception of desire in section two, in the third and final section of the paper I argue that although Kant and Hutcheson share the trivial similarity that even moral action springs from a desire, I argue that Kant conceives of the desire of morality as qualitatively different from all other desires in a number of important ways, which makes his view significantly distinct from Hutcheson's. I thereby show that Kant has less in common with a figure like Hutcheson than interpreters have suspected. At the same time, these differences illustrate the nuances of their respective positions and do much to clarify the role that psychological states like feeling and desire play in Kant's account of moral motivation.

## 1. Kant's Psychology of Moral Motivation

### 1.1 Kant's Faculty Psychology

Kant's faculty psychology is an aspect of his thought that is best understood in its historical context, in that it is at once both consistent with and diverges from the psychology of some of his most important German predecessors. First, Kant disagrees with Christian Wolff's claim that all mental phenomena reduce to the activity of one fundamental power of the soul, namely the power

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<sup>13</sup> For some recent discussions of Kant's psychology, both rational and empirical, see Dyck 2014, Frierson 2014a, and Wuerth 2014. For a number of recent and wide-ranging discussions of the faculty of feeling in particular, see Sorensen and Williamson 2018.

<sup>14</sup> My interpretation of Kant on this score is informed by the work of Frierson (see esp. 2005 and 2014a) but supplements it in certain ways that I explain below.

of representation.<sup>15</sup> Instead, Kant follows Moses Mendelssohn and Johann Nicolaus Tetens (see Beck 1969, pg. 415-17) in claiming that the human mind has *three* fundamental faculties. For Kant, these are cognition, feeling, and desire. Kant's most straightforward statement of this commitment is in the *Critique of Judgement*:

all faculties or capacities of the soul can be reduced to the three that cannot be further derived from a common ground: the faculty of cognition [*das Erkenntnißvermögen*], the feeling of pleasure and displeasure [*das Gefühl der Lust und Unlust*], and the faculty of desire [*das Begehrungsvermögen*]. (5:177, see also 20:205-6 and 10:513-6)<sup>16</sup>

These three faculties are fundamentally distinct because they perform different functions in the sense that they are subjective mental states that relate to objects in distinct ways. Cognition and desire are similar because they both relate to objects, although in inverse ways. Kant says that cognitions are representations in so far as they 'are related merely to the object' (20:206), i.e., cognitions are representations of the object in the subject. Desires, on the other hand, are representations that are 'the cause of the reality of this object' (20:206), i.e., desires are mental states that bring about an object outside of the subject. Feelings, on the other hand, are drastically different from both cognitions and desires insofar as they don't relate to objects at all. Feelings, rather, relate 'merely to the subject' (20:206).

Although Kant disagreed with Wolff that there was only one fundamental power of the soul, Kant nonetheless adopted an important distinction used by both Wolff and Alexander Baumgarten, namely that between the superior [*ober*] and inferior [*unter*] versions of the three fundamental faculties.<sup>17</sup> Again, however, Kant conceived of these terms in a drastically different way. According to Wolff and Baumgarten, superior and inferior cognition, for example, are distinguished by their *degree* of clarity and distinctness. As Baumgarten states in the *Metaphysics*: 'the faculty of knowing something obscurely and confusedly, or indistinctly, is the INFERIOR COGNITIVE FACULTY' (Baumgarten 2013, pg. 202), and the faculty of knowing something clearly and distinctly is the superior cognitive faculty (see Baumgarten 2013, 228). Rather than base the distinction on the *degree* of clarity and distinctness possessed by cognition, Kant conceived of not only superior and inferior

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<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of Wolff's view on this matter and Kant's disagreement with it, see Dyck 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Kant subscribed to this tripartite division of the mind from very early on his intellectual development. See e.g., Wuerth 2014, pg. 71 n2, who suggests Kant held this view at least since the early 1770s.

<sup>17</sup> Although the Cambridge Edition of Kant's works adopts 'higher' and 'lower' to render Kant's reference to the *obere* and *untere* faculties respectively, in this paper I refer to the 'superior' and 'inferior' faculties to remain consistent with Wolff's and Baumgarten's Latin terms of *inferiori* and *superiori*, on which Kant's German terms are based.

cognition, but also of both superior and inferior feeling and desire as distinct in *kind*. For example, superior cognition, for Kant, is purely *intellectual* cognition that involves nothing sensible. Superior and inferior cognition thus have distinct *sources*: superior cognition comes from the superior cognitive faculties, which Kant identifies as understanding, judgement, and reason (see e.g., 7:197). Inferior cognition, on the other hand, comes from the inferior cognitive faculties, namely those of sensation, broadly speaking (see e.g., 7:140-1). The superior and inferior faculties of feeling and desire are similarly distinct in kind. Feelings of pleasure can be ‘sensuous’ or ‘intellectual’ (7:230) based on their source: sensuous pleasure comes from the senses or the imagination, and intellectual pleasure from concepts, ideas, or reason (see 7:230). Similarly, the superior and inferior faculty of desire (see e.g., 28:228-9) refer to sensuous and intellectual desires (see e.g., 29:895).<sup>18</sup> As I discuss further below, Kant’s psychology of moral motivation is possible only on the assumption of purely rational feelings and desires, i.e., feelings and desires that have their *source* in reason alone. Indeed, Kant’s psychology of moral motivation is essentially the story of how cognition, feeling, and desire interact and relate to one another where moral action is the result. I offer such a story in the following, beginning with cognition.

## 1.2 The Problem of Moral Motivation

During the 1760s Kant had not yet made up his mind about which fundamental faculty determined the principles of morality. In the ‘Prize Essay’ from 1762-4, for example, Kant claims ‘*it has yet to be determined* whether it is merely the faculty of cognition, or whether it is feeling (the first inner ground of the faculty of desire) which decides its first principles.’ (2:300, my emphasis) From the time of the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770 onwards, however, Kant seems to have decided that it is the faculty of cognition that decides the principles of morality. Not just any cognition, but the pure or superior faculty of cognition. As he says in the *Inaugural Dissertation*: ‘*Moral philosophy ... in so far as it furnishes the first principles of adjudication [principia diiudicandi], is only cognized by the pure understanding and itself belongs to pure philosophy*’ (2:396, translation modified). According to Kant’s most considered statement of this view in the second *Critique*, cognition of the moral law can be characterized as a ‘fact of reason’ because it is a cognition which ‘forces itself upon us of itself as

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<sup>18</sup> For a more general discussion of these faculties, as well as a near-exhaustive list of the passages in Kant’s published and unpublished writings that mention these faculties, see Wuerth 2014, pg. 221–228.

a synthetic a priori proposition' (5:31).<sup>19</sup> Kant believes we cognize the moral law via the superior cognitive faculty for good reason, of course: as he argues in the *Groundwork*, the principles of morality *must* have their source in pure cognition, and reason in particular, if there is such a thing as a moral law that commands with absolute necessity and universality (see 4:389).

Once Kant determined that the principles of morality were determined by the superior faculty of cognition, he considered himself to be faced with a unique problem, however, which we might call the *problem of moral motivation*. As this problem is described in the early *Kaehler* lecture 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' (Kant 2004, 68). The problem here is that it is not clear how a pure cognition, having no relation to anything empirical, can relate to action, which is necessarily empirical. In fact, this is such a significant problem that Kant thinks it is impossible to solve. As he explains in *Kaehler*: 'nobody can or will see that the understanding is supposed to have a moving power to judge' (Kant 2004, 68-9) and for this reason Kant calls this problem 'the philosopher's stone' (Kant 2004, 68-9).

This characterization of the problem of moral motivation, and Kant's belief that the problem is insoluble, persists through his mature, Critical moral philosophy as well. As he explains in the second *Critique*:

*how* a law can be of itself and immediately a determining ground of the will (though this is what is essential in all morality) is for human reason an insoluble problem and identical with that of how a free will is possible. What we shall have to show a priori is, therefore, not the ground from which the moral law in itself supplies an incentive but rather what it effects (or, to put it better, must effect) in the mind insofar as it *is* an incentive. (5:72, my emphasis)

This passage illustrates two important points about Kant's account of moral motivation. First, Kant's 'solution' to the problem of moral motivation, i.e., that of the relation between a purely intellectual cognition and empirical action, is not meant to explain *how* cognition of the moral law moves human beings to act. This is impossible to explain.<sup>20</sup> Rather, Kant's account of moral

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<sup>19</sup> There is much debate about how to precisely understand Kant's account of the fact of reason, and part of the controversy concerns whether the fact of reason should be understood not *only* as a piece of cognition, but *also* as a 'deed' or activity. For a helpful overview of the controversy, see Kleingeld 2010.

<sup>20</sup> It is impossible to explain both how a pure cognition leads to empirical action as well as how freedom of the will is possible because explanation involves giving reasons, grounds, or a causal story, which we can only do for events in the natural world. Freedom and purely intellectual cognition, however, are by definition not empirical, i.e., they are not subject to causal explanation. Accordingly, we can *explain* neither freedom itself, nor how a free choice relates to empirical action. This is the subject of the subsection in *Groundwork* III entitled 'On the extreme boundary of all practical philosophy' (4:455-463).



motivation amounts to the narrower and more modest task of explaining ‘what it [the moral law] effects (or, to put it better, must effect) in the mind insofar as it *is* an incentive’ (5:72, my emphasis). The notion of an incentive will be discussed further below. The second point illustrated by the above passage is that Kant’s account of moral motivation assumes or starts from the claim that our awareness of the moral law *can* and *does* become an incentive, i.e., is capable of moving human beings to act. Indeed, it only makes sense to address the question of what happens in the mind when we are motivated by the moral law once we have already proven that the moral law is in fact binding and obligates us to act in accordance with it. This is why Kant’s most considered account of moral motivation, namely that which we find in the third chapter of the *Analytic* of the second *Critique*, entitled ‘On the incentives of pure practical reason,’ occurs *after* Kant takes himself to have already proven the bindingness of the moral law via his doctrine of the ‘fact of reason.’ (see 5:31)<sup>21</sup> Once this is established, if the recognition of the moral law alone *can* impel us to act, even though we cannot explain in detail *how* this is possible, we at least need an account of what happens in the human mind, i.e., psychologically, when it does so move us, and this is what Kant’s account of moral motivation attempts to offer.

### 1.3 Incentives, Feelings, and Desires

With this brief account of Kant’s more general faculty psychology and his understanding of the problem of moral motivation in hand, we can now turn to the details of his position. Kant claims that what happens in the mind when the intellectual cognition of the moral law moves human beings to act is that certain feelings are brought about. In particular, Kant claims that the recognition of the moral law brings about the feeling of ‘respect [*Achtung*],’ which Kant identifies as ‘the sole and also the undoubted moral incentive’ (5:78). Not only this, but our recognition of the moral law *necessarily* brings about this feeling; just as I cannot avoid bowing to an individual with uprightness of character, so I cannot avoid feeling respect for the moral law. (see 5:77)<sup>22</sup> Already, however, we need to ask an important question: what is significant about feelings such that they are the appropriate mental state for a pure cognition to bring about, if the end result is being motivated to act in

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<sup>21</sup> See Allison (1990, 121) and Beck (1960, 212).

<sup>22</sup> For more on the ‘necessity’ of respect, see 5:80, Timmermann (2007, pg. 182), and Wood and Schönecker (2015, pg. 80).

accordance with that cognition? Understanding Kant's answer to this question will explain his conception the psychology behind moral motivation.

An early but influential interpretation of the role played by the feeling of respect in moral motivation holds that this feeling is merely part of the *experience* of moral action and plays no role in the motivational process directly. According to this 'intellectualist' reading, the recognition of the moral law alone is sufficient for motivation and any feelings that may be involved are "epiphenomenal" (see Reath 2006, 10 and Sytsma 1993, 121). In the introduction to this paper I illustrated that especially once scholars began extensively utilizing the many student notes from Kant's lectures on moral philosophy, anthropology, and metaphysics, the intellectualist interpretation has come under serious criticism. Indeed, the student notes offer a detailed picture of Kant's empirical psychology, which unambiguously states Kant's commitment to the view that all action, moral action included, involves the psychological states of feelings and desires. In *Anthropologie Friedländer* for example Kant claims that 'living things do something according to the faculty of desire, and lifeless beings do something when they are impelled by an outside force.' (25: 577) Kant makes many other statements to a similar effect (see e.g. 25:1514, 29:1012, 29:1024, 6:211, 399 and 7:251), which recent interpreters (see esp. Ware 2014 and Frierson 2005 and 2014a) have taken to conclusively argue *against* any kind of epiphenomenal reading of feelings, and *for* a more 'affectivist' reading, according to which Kant's account of moral motivation necessarily involves feelings and desires. In recent years, Patrick Frierson has done the most extensive work on Kant's empirical psychology (see 2014a and 2005) and has offered a detailed account of Kant's psychology of action more generally.<sup>23</sup> My aim here is to supplement Frierson's account of the psychology of moral motivation by explaining the role of feeling and desire in Kant's most famous account of moral motivation in his published writings, namely that contained in the 'Incentives' chapter of the second *Critique*. More specifically, I focus on explaining the concept at the centre of this chapter and which has vexed many interpreters, namely that of an incentive (*Triebfeder*). I argue that Kant understands this concept similar to Baumgarten, namely as an 'impelling cause of desire,' which illustrates the important relation Kant sees between feeling and desire, and which thereby explains why Kant's account of moral motivation involves a feeling being brought about in the mind of the acting agent.

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<sup>23</sup> In his earlier work Frierson acknowledges that he does not focus much on respect (see 2005, 30), and although he discusses moral motivation extensively in his more recent work (see 2014a, Ch. 4), Frierson's focus is more broadly the view Kant presents throughout his published and unpublished writings.

Kant defines an incentive [*Triebfeder*] in the second *Critique* as follows: ‘by *incentive* [*Triebfeder*] (*elater animi*) is understood the subjective determining ground of the will of a being whose reason does not by its nature necessarily conform with the objective law’ (*KpV* 5:72). Kant’s inclusion of the Latin expression ‘*elater animi*’ would have been a signal to his eighteenth-century readers that he was using a technical term used by another philosopher, in this instance the reference being to Baumgarten, the author of textbooks on metaphysics and ethics that Kant used in the classroom. In Baumgarten’s *Metaphysics*, incentives are defined as follows:

Whoever desires or averts intends the production of some perception. Hence, the perceptions containing the ground of this sort of intention are the impelling causes of desire and aversion, and thus they are called the INCENTIVES OF THE MIND <*ELATERES ANIMI*>.

(Baumgarten 2013, 241)

For Baumgarten, incentives are thus perceptions, i.e., mental states, that function as the impelling cause or ground of desire and aversion. The relevant question for my purposes is whether Kant understands incentives in the same way. I wish to briefly suggest that he does<sup>24</sup>, and in order to illustrate this we should look at the kinds of mental states Kant identifies as incentives and then explain how they might function as the impelling cause of desire. As we have already seen, Kant classifies the feeling of respect, which is *necessarily* produced by the intellectual cognition of the moral law, as *both* a feeling *and* as the incentive of morality (5:78). This suggests that feelings can function as incentives. Our task is therefore to determine the relationship between feelings and desire to see if feelings might function as the impelling cause of desire for Kant as well.

Although a *fundamental* faculty in the sense it is not reducible to any other kind of mental state, feeling is nonetheless intimately related to both cognition and desire. We have already been introduced to one way in which feelings are related to cognition, namely when our awareness of the moral law *necessarily* brings about the feeling of respect. If our goal is to understand whether, and how, a feeling can be an incentive in the sense of an impelling cause of desire, however, we are more interested in how feelings are related to desires, and Kant explains this relation by means of the concept of ‘life.’ As Kant clarifies in the *Metaphysik L<sub>1</sub>* notes:

Life is the inner principle of self-activity. Living beings which act according to this inner principle must act according to representations. Now there can be a promotion, but also a hindrance to life. The feeling of the promotion of life is pleasure, and the feeling of the

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<sup>24</sup> For a more extensive argument of this point, see Walschots (forthcoming).

hindrance of life is displeasure. Pleasure is thus a ground of activity, and displeasure a hindrance of activity. Pleasure thus consists in desiring; displeasure, on the other hand, in averting. (28:247)

Kant's claim here is that feelings of pleasure and displeasure represent the promotion or hindrance of life, i.e., what promotes or hinders survival. As this passage also clarifies, however, these same representations also ground activity: the representation of what will promote life encourages me to bring about (i.e., desire) the object of that representation, and the representation of what will hinder life encourages me to avoid (i.e., be averse to) the object of that representation. Feelings, then, understood as representations of what promotes or hinders 'life,' are intimately related to desire in this way. Indeed, Kant makes this relationship between feeling and desire clear in the second *Critique* as well:

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

As the kind of representation that signals the agreement (or lack-there-of) of an object with the subjective conditions of life, feelings of pleasure (or pain) therefore function as the ground or impelling cause of desire (or aversion), i.e., the representation that functions as the ground for bringing about (or avoiding) the reality of such objects. It therefore makes sense for Kant to call a feeling an incentive, given that feelings just are the kind of representation that function as the impelling cause of desire.

We are now in a position to return to the main question of this section: *why*, in explaining what happens in the mind when the moral law is an incentive and moves us to act, does Kant say that feelings are produced? The answer is that, given the way in which Kant understands the three fundamental faculties, some<sup>25</sup> feelings play the role of the ground of desire. As already mentioned, Kant defines the faculty of desire as "a being's faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations" (5:9n), but we are not always in a state of desire, nor do we desire indiscriminately. We need an indication of *what* to desire (or be averse to) and *when*. Feelings of pleasure (or pain) are the representations that signify when an object is present that promotes (or the hinders) life. Desires and aversions thus require grounds or impelling causes. Accordingly, it makes sense for the cognition of the moral law to *necessarily* bring

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<sup>25</sup> Not all feelings function as the impelling cause of desire, of course. For example, the *rational* feelings associated with pure judgements of beauty are 'disinterested.' See 5:205.

about a feeling, because, as Kant's empirical psychology illustrates, if we are to act we need a desire, but in order to desire we need an impelling cause of desire, and feelings are the kind of mental state that functions as the impelling cause of desire. Kant therefore believes that the moral law brings about a feeling because feelings are a required step in the psychological structure of action. Indeed, moral action, for Kant, has a specific structure: the rational cognition of the moral law necessarily causes us to experience the feeling of respect, which, as a feeling, functions as an impelling cause of desire, and thereby encourages us to be the cause of the reality of an object, i.e., to desire.<sup>26</sup>

In this section my aim was to offer an account of the psychology underlying Kant's account of moral motivation. I accomplished this by means of explaining why Kant says we experience a feeling, namely the feeling of respect for the moral law, when we rationally cognize the moral law. After an initial overview of Kant's faculty psychology and a description of the specific problem Kant wishes to solve when offering his account of moral motivation, I offered an interpretation of Kant's notion of an incentive, according to which it is an impelling cause of desire, and I illustrated how feelings perform this function by representing what promotes or hinders life. Kant's psychology of moral motivation therefore has a certain structure, according to which a superior cognition, the rational recognition of the moral law, produces the *superior* feeling of respect, which is an incentive in the sense that it is an impelling cause of desire, which can then move us to act. In the next section I briefly explain Hutcheson's account of moral motivation before arguing in the final section that the picture of Kant's view that I have painted here has less in common with Hutcheson's view than scholars have claimed.

## 2. Hutcheson on Affects, Passions, and Desires<sup>27</sup>

Hutcheson's philosophy of action begins with the claim that only intentional action is subject to moral evaluation: 'external Motions, when accompany'd with no Affections toward God or *Man*, or evidencing no Want of the expected Affections toward either, can have no moral Good or Evil in them' (Hutcheson 2008, 101) Mere external motions, such as the twitches that result from

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<sup>26</sup> It is not surprising that moral action has this structure, for as Frierson has painstakingly and convincingly argued, this ordering of cognition – feeling - desire is how Kant understands the structure of *all* action, moral and non-moral alike. (see Frierson 2014a, pg. 140-60)

<sup>27</sup> The sketch of Hutcheson's view that I provide in this section is not meant to be controversial. Offering a novel interpretation of Hutcheson would require a separate paper. At the same time, I hope that the angle at which I approach Hutcheson and the comparison I proceed to make with Kant is equally illustrative of the nuances of Hutcheson's view.

a nervous disorder, are not the proper subject of *moral* evaluation because they are not directed toward anything at all. Only those dispositions that are directed toward God and other human beings are the subject of moral evaluation, and these dispositions are the affections.

Hutcheson defines both affections and passions collectively as ‘those *Modifications, or Actions of the Mind consequent upon the Apprehension of certain Objects or Events, in which the Mind generally conceives Good or Evil*’ (Hutcheson 2002, 15). In the first instance, affections and passions are ‘actions of the mind’, i.e., mental states, that arise based on the ‘apprehension’ or cognition of an object or event that is good or evil. Affections and passions differ, however, when it comes to their apprehension of this good. Hutcheson defines affections as ‘*Perceptions of Pleasure or Pain, not directly raised by the Presence or Operation of the Event or Object, but by our Reflection upon, or Apprehension of their present or future Existence; so that we expect or judge that the Object or Event will raise the direct Sensations in us*’ (Hutcheson 2002, 30). Affections therefore arise from the apprehension of the goods of pleasure and pain, which either presently exist or are expected in the future. Passions, on the other hand, are ‘a sub-class of Affections’ (Scott 1900, 201), and signify ‘a strong brutal Impulse of the Will, sometimes without any distinct notions of Good, public or private ... attended by some violent bodily Motions, which keeps the Mind much employed upon the present Affair, to the exclusion of everything else.’ (Hutcheson 2002, 31 and see 209) In contrast to affections, then, passions are impulsive, violent, and without much thought. (see Jensen 1971, 26) Furthermore, and most importantly, they often lack a distinct notion of good. This means that passions are not intentional actions, at the very least not nearly to the same degree as affections. When it comes to the actions that are the proper subject of moral evaluation, Hutcheson mainly has in mind the affections, i.e., the mental states that arise from distinct notions of good and involve deliberation or forethought about our conduct, and not the passions.

At the centre of Hutcheson’s understanding of motivation is not only the concept of affections and passions, but also more generally that of desire. (see Scott 1990, 201) Hutcheson defines desire as follows:

Desires arise in our Mind, from the Frame of our Nature, upon Apprehension of Good or Evil in Objects, Actions, or Events, to obtain for *ourselves* or *others* the *agreeable Sensation*, when the Object or Event is good; or to prevent the *uneasy Sensation*, when it is evil. (Hutcheson 2002, 18)

As one can see, Hutcheson understands desire as nearly identical to affection. Both involve ‘[t]he Apprehension of Good, either to ourselves or others, as attainable’ (Hutcheson 2002, 50) and thus a

positive or negative attitude towards something, as well as an inclination to obtain what is positive, and an aversion to what is negative. This similarity between desire and affection means that desires are distinct from passions in the same way as affections, namely because both desire and affection involve a degree of reflection or a notion of good or evil, whereas passions do not. Accordingly, the psychological states capable of moral evaluation, for Hutcheson, are affections and desires.

According to Hutcheson, '[t]he Affections which are of most Importance in *Morals*, are commonly included under the Names Love and Hatred' (Hutcheson 2008, 102). Love and hatred are reducible to three different affections: self-interest, benevolence, and malice. Falling under love is, first, self-interest or 'self-love,' which is simply the 'Desire of *private Interest*' (Hutcheson 2008, 102). The second kind of love is benevolence or the desire of another's interest, but what is essential about benevolence, for Hutcheson, is that it is 'disinterested' (Hutcheson 2008, 103). When we desire the good of another, it is only true benevolence when we desire their good as an end in itself and not as a means to our own pleasure. Falling on the side of hatred is malice, i.e., 'a sedate delight in the Misery of others' (Hutcheson 2008, 105), and true malice is disinterested as well. Hutcheson claims, however, that such an affection is something 'Human Nature seems scarce capable' (Hutcheson 2008, 105); our reason for hating others is *always* because their interests are opposed to our own. Hatred, then, is always 'interested' as opposed to 'disinterested,' and malice as a motive reduces to self-interest. For this reason, Hutcheson denies that disinterested malice is a motive that human beings possess. As a result, human nature has two fundamental affections, both of which are types of love, namely self-interest and benevolence.

As human nature's two fundamental affections, all action is reducible to either self-love or benevolence. This view has important implications about Hutcheson's view of human action more generally. A first implication is that reason is not a potential source of action. Indeed, Hutcheson ridicules those who claim that "Virtue should wholly spring from Reason;" as if Reason or Knowledge of any true Proposition could ever move to Action where there is no *End* proposed, and no Affection or Desire toward that End' (Hutcheson 2008, 243). Hutcheson thus not only denies that reason is capable of moving us to act on its own, but is also claiming that reason cannot propose an end on its own; it is affection or desire that proposes an end. This is an important point, to which I return in the next section.

A second important implication of the view I have sketched above concerns the claim that self-interest and benevolence are the two fundamental affections of human nature. Although at first glance straightforward, this view requires some unpacking. As human nature's two fundamental

affections, these are what Hutcheson calls the two kinds of ‘ultimate desire’ (Hutcheson 2008, 152). In the *Essay* Hutcheson argues that our ‘ultimate ends’ are those things we desire for their own sake and in themselves, i.e., what we desire ‘with no further view’ (Hutcheson, 2002, 140). One of Hutcheson’s main goals, especially in the *Inquiry*, is to show that benevolence cannot be reduced to self-interest. In other words, Hutcheson wants to argue that benevolence is the desire for the good of others as *an end in itself*, and not as a means to some further end. This is the sense in which the good of others is an ‘ultimate end’ of ours. These two ‘ultimate ends,’ our own private advantage and the good of others, comprise an exhaustive list of those things we desire as ends in themselves. Our ultimate ends therefore correspond to our two foundational desires or affections. This is the case because our ends are a function of, or are dictated by, our affections, for Hutcheson, and therefore our *nature*. This is significant, for, as mentioned above, it implies that reason cannot assign ultimate ends. Reason can propose both means and intermediary ends subordinate to our ultimate ends, but reason cannot propose an ultimate end on its own. This makes it clear why Hutcheson denies that ‘Reason, or the Knowledge of the Relations of things, could excite to Action when we proposed no *End*, or as if *Ends* could be intended without *Desire* or *Affection*’ (bid., 139).

Of these two fundamental affections, Hutcheson argues that benevolence is the affection of virtue. Indeed, he argues that we recognize benevolence as a distinct kind of good, namely a moral good. Moral goodness is fundamentally different from another kind of goodness, namely natural goodness. A natural good is what is advantageous, i.e., what is in our private advantage or self-interest (Hutcheson 2008, 89), examples being: a fruitful field, houses, lands, gardens, strength, and wealth (see Hutcheson 2008, 89). Moral goodness, on the other hand, is associated neither with private advantage nor self-interest, but is rather what is good *independently* of what is in our personal interest, examples being: kindness, friendship, generosity, and benevolence (see Hutcheson 2008, 90). More generally, moral goodness consists in *benevolent* actions, affections, or characters<sup>28</sup>, where benevolence, again, is understood as the ‘disinterested’ (Hutcheson 2008, 103) desire for the happiness of others. That we still recognize benevolence as a good despite it not being a *natural* good is evidence, Hutcheson suggests, of a distinct sense that makes it possible for us to receive the idea of moral goodness, which he calls the moral sense. If we did not have a moral sense then we would

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<sup>28</sup> According to Scott (1900, 190), although Hutcheson fairly clearly stresses that it is the affection or motive we approve of as morally good, he claims that Hutcheson is at times ambiguous whether it is one’s character that we approve, or the properly motivated actions. It is my view that Hutcheson believes that actions, characters, as well as affections are capable of being morally good.



not distinguish between the goodness of a fruitful field and a benevolent friend – they would be good in the same sense (see Hutcheson 2008, 90).

If we remember that desires and affections, for Hutcheson, arise from the apprehension of an object or event recognized as good, we can see that self-love and benevolence, the two fundamental desires of human nature, apprehend different goods. When I reflect upon the fact that an object or event will make *me* feel pleasure, and will be to *my* advantage, i.e., will bring about a natural good, this will raise a self-interested desire or affection in me to bring about that object or event. When I reflect upon the fact that an object or event will make *someone else* feel pleasure or be to *their* advantage *independently of its relation to my advantage*, i.e., will bring about a *moral* good, this will raise a benevolent desire in me to bring about that object or event. As such, the objects of these two fundamental desires correspond to Hutcheson's two types of goods.

There is of course more that can be said about how moral motivation works, for Hutcheson. There is an interesting story to tell, for example, about how a judgement of moral goodness leads to benevolence.<sup>29</sup> My aim here, however, was the narrow one of explaining only those aspects of Hutcheson's psychology of moral motivation that are relevant for a comparison with Kant, and to this end I focused on Hutcheson's understanding of affection and desire as well as the related distinction between natural and moral good. In the next section I argue that Kant's conception of the psychology of moral motivation has only a trivial feature in common with Hutcheson's view and that the differences are much more illustrative of the nuances of their respective positions.

### 3. Kant and Hutcheson on the Psychology of Moral Motivation

I began this paper with the observation that a number of scholars argue that Kant's account of moral motivation contains features which illustrate the lingering influence of his British predecessors. I also illustrated that for a long time the discussion surrounding Kant's account of moral motivation focused on the surface-level question of *whether or not* moral action involves psychological states like feelings and desires. Due to this limited focus, most interpreters suggest that the specific feature that Kant's view has in common with that of his British predecessors is the idea that even moral motivation springs from a desire (see Zinkin 2006, Geiger 2001, Nuyen 1991, Denis

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<sup>29</sup> Although quite an interesting topic to explore, addressing it is a paper-length project in its own right. This is such a large task in part because it involves determining whether Hutcheson is a cognitivist or a non-cognitivist with respect to moral judgements, an issue of intense debate in the literature. See Frankena (1955) for a discussion.

and Wilson 2018, Engstrom 2010). In the first section of this paper, I illustrated that this is indeed true. Considering the above sections I now wish to argue that despite this trivial similarity, Kant's view has less in common with Hutcheson's view than interpreters have thought. In this final section of my paper, I discuss five major differences between Kant and Hutcheson's psychology of moral motivation.

A *first* initial difference concerns how Kant and Hutcheson understand the mental faculties in general. As we have seen, for Kant there are three fundamental faculties: cognition, feeling, and desire, and each of them have a superior and a inferior version distinct in *kind*, namely in terms of being sensible (inferior) or intellectual (superior). Although Hutcheson too reflects on the nature of faculties like reason (see Hutcheson 2002, 176-7) and sensation (Hutcheson 2008, 19), Hutcheson's faculty psychology is distinct from Kant's in a very important way: for Hutcheson there is no distinct faculty of feeling. As we saw in the previous section, for example, Hutcheson defines affections as 'Perceptions of Pleasure or Pain' (Hutcheson 2002, 30), and in the first instance he therefore makes no hard distinction between desire and feelings of pleasure and pain.<sup>30</sup> Not only this, but Hutcheson also makes no hard distinction between sensation, i.e., sensible cognition, and feelings of pleasure and pain. For example, he defines the senses themselves, i.e., the faculties responsible for sensations, as 'Determinations to be pleas'd with any Forms, or Ideas which occur to our Observation' (Hutcheson 2008, 8). In fact, Hutcheson believes '[t]here is scarcely any Object which our Minds are employ'd about, which is not thus constituted the necessary Occasion of some Pleasure or Pain' (Hutcheson 2008, 8), a view he has in common with Locke.<sup>31</sup> A first important difference, therefore, is that for Hutcheson both cognition *and* desire involve feelings of pleasure and pain, and as such there is no hard distinction between feeling and cognition, on the one hand, and feeling and desire, on the other. For Kant, by contrast, feeling is its own distinct and irreducible fundamental faculty.

A second major difference between their views is that although Kant and Hutcheson agree that all action ultimately proceeds from a desire, the desire at the root of moral action for Kant is of a fundamentally different *kind*, and for Hutcheson all desires are qualitatively similar in important ways. There are three essential points to mention here. The first relates to the fact that what distinguishes the superior and inferior faculty of desire for Kant is their source. In the case of moral action, its psychological structure is such that the purely rational cognition of the moral law

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<sup>30</sup> Frierson makes the similar claim that Hutcheson treats feeling and desire as synonymous (see 2014b, pg. 96).

<sup>31</sup> See Book II, Chapter VII, §2 of Locke's *Essay* where he writes that 'Delight, or Uneasiness, one or other of them join themselves to almost all our Ideas, of both Sensation and Reflection.' (1975, pg. 129)

necessarily produces an a priori feeling, the feeling of respect, which functions as an ‘incentive,’ i.e., an impelling cause of desire, which thereby leads to a desire. In that the source of this desire is an intellectually produced feeling, this qualifies the desire at the root of moral action as belonging to the superior faculty of desire, i.e., a distinct *kind* of desire. For Hutcheson, on the other hand, all desires are similar, in the first instance, because they are all brought about by *sensible* cognition. As a reminder, Hutcheson claims that ‘Desires arise in our Mind, from the Frame of our Nature, upon *Apprehension* of Good or Evil in Objects, Actions, or Events’ (Hutcheson 2002, 18, my emphasis), and even moral goodness is cognitively apprehended by a sense, namely the moral sense. Furthermore, we have also seen that Hutcheson denies that reason alone can be a source of action. (Hutcheson 2008, 133) As a result, Kant and Hutcheson view desire in fundamentally different ways such that, in the first instance, the desire at the root of moral action is produced by a purely intellectual cognition and feeling for Kant, but for Hutcheson all desire is preceded by a sensible cognition only.

The second way in which the desire at the root of moral action is qualitatively distinct in kind for Kant, and a *third* main difference, concerns the *objects* of desire, namely the type of goodness that desire aims at for each philosopher. For Hutcheson, the desire at the root of morality is benevolence, i.e., the disinterested desire for the happiness of others, and natural good is distinguished from moral good in that the latter is goodness *independently* of what is good *for me*. At the same time, however, the object of the desire of benevolence is similar to the object of self-love, the other fundamental desire of human nature, in an important way: both benevolence and self-interest aim at the same fundamental type of goodness, namely pleasure. The only difference between natural and moral good is that moral good is the pleasure or advantage of *someone else*. Put another way, and as Stephen Darwall has argued, at the end of the day all affections, for Hutcheson, ultimately pursue natural good only (see Darwall 1995, 224). This is not to say that Hutcheson’s distinction between natural and moral good is not preserved: benevolent actions, affections, and characters are morally good because they disinterestedly pursue the happiness of another, and not one’s own happiness. The end of benevolence is nonetheless still happiness or pleasure, however, just not one’s own.

This marks an important difference between Hutcheson and Kant that we have not yet seen. For Kant, the superior faculty of desire is distinct not only because its source is reason, but because it is also directed towards a distinct kind of object in a more radical sense than Hutcheson’s distinction between natural and moral good. Kant argues this point most explicitly in chapter two of the

Analytic in the second *Critique*, entitled ‘On the concept of an object of pure practical reason.’ In this chapter Kant argues that we can distinguish between two types of goodness: first ‘our state of *agreeableness* or *disagreeableness*, of gratification or pain’ (5:60), i.e., pleasure and displeasure (see also 5:58), which is judged by experience, and second moral goodness which refers to ‘the way of acting, the maxim of the will, and consequently the acting person himself’ (5:60), which is judged by reason. The important point for my purposes is that the desire of morality, for Kant, has an object that is *qualitatively* distinct in *kind* from all other desires, namely actions themselves as opposed to pleasure or agreeableness. Indeed, one of Kant’s main criticisms of moral sense theory is precisely on this point: Kant argues that it is because all desires ultimately have the same *type* of goodness as their object that, according to ‘those who assume a certain special moral sense...everything is still reduced to the desire for one’s own happiness’ (5:38 and see 4:442n). For Hutcheson, all desires pursue the same *kind* of object, namely pleasure, whether it be my own (natural good) or that of another (moral good). For Kant, the desire of morality pursues a different kind of object altogether: rather than pleasure moral action aims at a certain type of action as an end in itself.

A further difference between the *kinds* of desire at the root of moral action for Kant and Hutcheson, and which marks a *fourth* main difference, concerns the fact that the desire of morality for Kant is *produced* by reason in the sense of being newly created, whereas all other desires are *pre-existing*. Kant makes this point by claiming the moral law moves us by bringing about a particular kind of ‘interest’:

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

The distinction Kant makes here is between *taking* an interest and *acting from* interest. When I act *from* interest, I am interested not in the action itself, but in ‘the object of the action,’ thus in these cases I *act* in a particular way only in order to attain a particular object. As Kant indicates in the passage above, when we act *from* interest, this object is pleasure or agreeableness.<sup>32</sup> In the case of *taking* an interest in an action directly, however, I act in a particular way not as a means to securing an object such as pleasure, rather I am interested in acting that way as an end in itself. As one can see, the objects associated with acting *from* interest and *taking* an interest correspond to the previous two

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<sup>32</sup> To be sure, there is some disagreement in the literature concerning Kant’s ‘non-moral hedonism’ i.e., the claim that all non-moral desires aim at pleasure or agreeableness. For a discussion see Frierson (2014a, 148).

types of goods, namely pleasure and a type of action itself. The important point here, however, is that if it is possible to *take an interest* when acting morally and to desire to act in a particular way as an end in itself *immediately* and not as a means to another end, this suggests that we can *choose* additional ‘ultimate’ ends, to use Hutcheson’s language. This is a significant and underappreciated point, which distinguishes Kant from Hutcheson in an important way, especially if we remember that, according to Hutcheson, we desire self-interest and benevolence as ultimate ends *by nature*. (see e.g. Hutcheson 2002, 18) For Hutcheson, our ultimate ends of action are fixed by nature and we cannot set ourselves additional ultimate ends. Indeed, we have already seen that Hutcheson ridicules the idea that ‘Reason or Knowledge of any true Proposition could ever move to Action where there is no *End* proposed’ (Hutcheson 2008, 243), i.e., any *pre-existing* end proposed by our own nature. Kant argues precisely the opposite, and in the *Metaphysics of Morals* he even goes so far as to claim that ‘[t]he capacity to set oneself an end ... is what characterizes humanity (as distinguished from animality)’ (6:392, see also 6:387 and 6:26-7). In this text Kant then proceeds to argue the well-known claim that we even have a duty to set ourselves two additional ends, namely one’s own perfection and the happiness of others (see 6:385). Kant therefore allows for the possibility of setting oneself additional ultimate ends that we do not desire by nature, whereas Hutcheson believes the extent of our ultimate ends are limited by our nature.

A *fifth* and final overall difference concerns the nature of obligation, which can also be illustrated via the concept of an interest. In the case of acting *from* interests, Kant says an object interests me ‘in so far as it is agreeable to me’ (4:414n), i.e., I am committed to pursuing an object *because* I have experienced it to be agreeable in the past, for example, and have recognized that this agreeableness ‘hold as a general rule’ (6:212). In the case of *taking* an interest in an action immediately, however, I do so not *because* of any kind of agreeableness, rather I take an *immediate* interest in the action in and of itself. As Kant says in the *Groundwork*:

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

Acting *from* interest, being interested in an action *mediately* and only *because* of the pleasure or agreeableness it promises me is to be *conditionally* interested in the action. If I desire to do as I ought only *from* a pre-existing interest, then I am obligated only hypothetically. For Hutcheson, *all* desire functions this way, precisely because our ultimate desires are fixed by nature: if we can only ever act

on the basis of a pre-existing desire, because this is the only kind of desire human nature possesses, then all obligations are hypothetical because I would only ever do as I ought *because* I already desire something. For Kant, on the other hand, taking an interest in an action *immediately* and desiring to perform it in and of itself is a kind of desiring distinct in kind from desiring to act *for the sake of* a pre-existing interest. Indeed, taking an interest in action immediately is precisely how to psychologically account for unconditional obligation. Indeed, if it is psychologically possible for the categorical imperative to command *unconditionally*, the desire at work in this instance *cannot* be pre-existing. On the contrary, the desire at the root of unconditional obligation *must* come about *after* and be *produced* by the recognition of this command. As we have seen, this is precisely what the structure of the psychology of moral action accomplishes for Kant: moral action takes place from cognition, to feeling, to desire. This is the structure that moral action *must* have in order to psychologically account for unconditional obligation.

## Conclusion

There is much more to say about the differences between Kant and Hutcheson on moral motivation. Perhaps the most interesting topic that is absent from the above discussion is freedom: Kant defines an incentive the way he does, namely as ‘the subjective determining ground of the will of a being whose reason does *not* by its nature necessarily conform with the objective law’ (5:72, emphasis mine), because cognition of the moral law or what is best, all things considered, does not *necessitate* that we act in accordance with it, as is the case for Wolff and Baumgarten, for example.<sup>33</sup> An incentive is merely an *impelling* rather than a *necessitating* cause of desire, because an incentive is merely one *reason* for us to act in a particular way. Actually acting in the way in which we recognize we ought to requires that we then *choose* to do so. For Hutcheson, on the other hand, the concept of freedom or personal liberty does not play a central role in his writings.<sup>34</sup> My aim was not to provide an exhaustive discussion of all the differences that exist between how Kant and Hutcheson conceive of moral motivation, nor was it to compare how they view morality more generally. My goal, rather, was to argue that Kant’s *psychology* of moral motivation has less in common with Hutcheson’s view than commentators have traditionally imagined. I have argued that while it is true that Kant and

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<sup>33</sup> See Wolff’s *German Metaphysics* (Wolff 2003), §492 and §509–10, and Baumgarten’s *Metaphysics* (2013), §726.

<sup>34</sup> In fact, the only mention of freedom of choice or ‘election’ in the texts under discussion here is in the *Essay*, see Hutcheson 2002, 179–80.

Hutcheson agree on a trivial level that all action springs from desire, their views contain many more significant differences. I have discussed five core differences, central among which is the idea that the desire of morality, for Kant, is qualitatively distinct in kind from all other desires in a number of ways. It is my hope that the above leads to a richer appreciation of the extent to which Kant's understanding of moral motivation both exhibits and diverges from the thought of his British predecessors and clarifies his understanding of moral motivation as a result.

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