Moral Realism By Other Means:
The Hybrid Nature of Kant's Practical Rationalism

Stefano Bacin

1. Moral realism in eighteenth-century moral philosophy

"A philosopher who asserts that she is a realist about theoretical science, for example, or ethics, has probably, for most philosophical audiences, accomplished little more than to clear her throat," as Crispin Wright once observed.[1] Such an observation effectively conveys the familiar uneasiness with these terms of art, along with a kind of prejudice against views apt to be considered as realist. In a similar vein, Korsgaard writes that "[t]here is a trivial sense in which everyone who thinks that ethics isn't hopeless is a realist."[2] In this perspective, examining a philosophical view with regard to these terms risks being not very productive. 'Realism' and 'anti-realism' are maybe even more ambiguous than similar terms of art, to the extent that merely declaring a view realist or not-realist does not amount to a helpful statement. Things may become especially problematic when such labels are applied to philosophical views of the past, as in discussing Hume's or Kant's own thought, since they did not employ these terms to characterize their perspectives. Here the risk of anachronism seems difficult to avoid. As John Skorupski has recently remarked, the very attribution of the label 'moral realism' (or 'moral realist') to views which do not share specific philosophical assumptions with the current debates, for instance regarding the semantics of moral words or the truth-value of judgments, is hardly appropriate, since it connects or even equates views that are in fact heterogeneous in important respects.[3]

In light of these difficulties, a helpful way to gain a clearer understanding of the questions at issue with regard to Kant is, I believe, to briefly consider what moral realism could be taken to

---

[1] Wright (1992, p. 1).

[2] Korsgaard (1996, p. 35).

[3] Skorupski (2012, pp. 18 ff.).

mean in eighteenth-century discussions and whether such terms are applicable to them at all. The risk of anachronism, in this case, is mitigated by the historical emergence of the use of the term 'realism' with regard to the foundations of morals. The first philosopher who characterized a position as realism regarding morals, and explicitly endorsed it, was probably Shaftesbury. In *The Moralists*, he distinguishes philosophers who "hold zealously for Virtue, and are Realists in the Point" from those who "are only nominal Moralists by making Virtue nothing in it-self, a Creature of Will only, or a mere Name of Fashion."[4] The explicit history of the concept of moral realism begins here. Notably, when the label 'realism' was used again about a century and a half later to characterize a specific view in moral philosophy, it happened exactly with reference to this passage.[5] According to Shaftesbury, the realist about virtue "endeavours to shew, 'That it is really something in it-self, and in the nature of Things: not arbitrary or factitious, (if I may so speak) not constituted from without, or dependent on Custom, Fancy, or Will; not even on the Supreme Will it-self, which can no-way govern it: but being necessarily good, is govern'd by it, and ever uniform with it.'"[6] The opposition between moral realism and moral anti-realism is thereby construed in a fairly straightforward way as simply concerning the fundamental contrast between views holding that moral properties (virtue, merit, goodness) are entirely independent from the activity of any mind and views holding, on the contrary, that they are dependent on the activity of minds. According to this understanding of the terms, the two conceptions are mutually exclusive.

Now, it might still appear unwarranted to directly apply this understanding of the terms at issue to Kant, if only because no analogous definitions of 'moral realism' are to be found in eighteenth-century German moral philosophy. Indeed, that those labels carried the risk of some misunderstanding even then becomes clear when one considers the German translation of Shaftesbury's remarks. If Johann Joachim Spalding's translation has 'Realisten' for 'realists,' it renders 'nominal Moralists' with 'Titularsittenlehrer,' that is, 'moralists only by name.' Thereby Spalding alters the opposition, which, put in those terms, does not contrast moral realists with anti-realists, but genuine moral philosophers with merely pretending ones.[7] Spalding's mistake indicates a difference between German and British terminology in this respect. Unlike Shaftesbury, German eighteenth-century philosophers mostly employed 'realism' and its antonym

---

[4] Shaftesbury (1711? , II, p. 145).

[5] Whewell (1852, p. 91). Cf. Irwin (2015).

[6] Shaftesbury (1711, II, p. 151).

[7] Shaftesbury (1745, pp. 98 f.).

'idealism' as metaphysical terms, not extending their use to the discussions on the foundations of morals. Nevertheless, we can safely discuss moral realism and anti-realism also with regard to Kant and other eighteenth-century German writers, since we thereby understand the fundamental issue concerning the independence of moral criteria and principles from the activity of any mind.[8]

Approaching Kant's view from this angle is helpful not only to avoid anachronisms and conceptual confusion, but also to highlight how his view relates to the alternatives that characterize the previous discussion. First of all, we should recognize that Kant shares with earlier moral realists some of their core theses. Against voluntarist accounts of morality, pre-Kantian moral realists argued that understanding morality as dependent on commands issued by an authority makes them arbitrary and contingent.[9] Moral realism developed out of the aim of defending the objective and necessary status of moral truths, which are regarded as firm and 'eternal' as mathematical truths, and like these are equally shared by finite rational beings and God. In Leibniz' formulation, for instance, the "formal reason" that "should teach us what justice is […] must be common to God and to man," the difference between them being "only one of degree."[10] Finally and most importantly, moral requirements are fully cognizable by human reason, either because they are evident to the mind or because they can be known as grounded in the nature of things. In the most optimistic version of this thought, there are no genuine epistemic hindrances to moral cognition, but only "corruption of Manners, or perverseness of Spirit"[11] can interfere with it. This kind of moral realism, therefore, does not merely consist in affirming the reality of moral distinctions, but in maintaining that they are expressions of a mind-independent order.[12] The underlying assumption is that only such an order, since it is not contingent, can provide the proper basis for accounting for three fundamental ideas: morality is objective, necessary, and cognizable by every rational being.[13]

---

[8] Moral realism is characterized in the same terms, as mind-independence of morality, also by Rauscher (2015, p. 17 f.), with regard to the current state of the art. See Rauscher (2015, pp. 11 ff.), for a careful discussion of the issue.

[9] Cf. e.g. Leibniz (1703, pp. 45 f.).

[10] Leibniz (1703, p. 49).

[11] Clarke (1738?, vol. II, p. 609).

[12] Gill (2006, p. 296) suggests a corresponding distinction between a "Copernican or anti-egoist realist" and a "Ptolemaic or mind-independent realist." The former "holds that there is a difference between the motives of those people we judge to be virtuous and the motives of those people we judge to be vicious," while the latter "holds that moral properties exist independently of the human mind and that our moral judgments represent those properties accurately."

[13] Here I cannot discuss the assumption. For a critical examination see Gill (1998).

Kant shares all of these three main points, which he seems to take as included in the common understanding of morals. Against voluntarist accounts, Kant employs much the same arguments as Cudworth and Leibniz, arguing that also divine-commands conceptions of morality are unable to vindicate its absolute necessity and make of the moral laws merely positive laws (cf. e.g. 29: 627).[14] Much like previous realists, Kant maintains a rationalist view on the Euthyphro question, holding that "suicide is not abominable because God has forbidden it, but because it is abominable He has forbidden it" (NK: 174, cf. 38 f. and MC: 262). He even deploys the traditional analogy between morality and mathematics to stress that moral laws are "immutable," so that not even God can change their content (cf. NK: 79 = 27: 283, 27: 547, 27: 137, 29: 634).[15] In the later essay *The End of All Things*, Kant even observes that the moral law "as an unchanging order lying in the nature of things, is not to be left up to even the creator's arbitrary will to decide its consequences thus or otherwise" (ED: 339). When he remarks that both God and finite rational beings are subject to the same moral law, even if in modally different terms (cf. GMS: 414, KpV: 32), he elaborates the same thesis. Furthermore, as with earlier realists, Kant holds that the common human reason as such can easily cognize moral principles (cf. KpV: 152 ff., G: 255 f.).

A possible objection to this way of framing the matter at issue is that Kant's main aim regarding the foundations of practical philosophy is shared not only by previous moral realists, but by previous anti-realists as well, as long as they are not willing to give up the idea that moral judgments and their criteria have to be regarded as objective and universally valid. In other words, according to the objection, the only aim would be to guarantee the objectivity of morals, and that would not be enough to commit to moral realism in any specific sense. However, Kant's aim is not simply to account for the pretensions of realism, as this task is understood in current debates,[16] but more specifically to argue for strong realist theses and their implications, only on different grounds and through a different strategy than earlier moral realists.

However, while Kant shares with traditional moral realists several fundamental claims about morality, he believes that those claims must be argued for in a radically different way than it had been before. A crucial part of Kant's main aim in practical philosophy is to defend the distinctive contentions of moral realism – i.e., that moral criteria are objective, necessary, and

---

[14] On Kant's criticisms of moral voluntarism, see Bacin (2017, § 3).

[15] On the analogy and its pre-Kantian usage, see Gill (2007).

[16] Cf. e.g. Star (2013, p. 820).

epistemologically accessible – through a novel philosophical strategy, quite different from the strategies deployed by previous moral realists.

2. The weaknesses of pre-Kantian moral realism

Other means are needed when a certain way of managing things proves insufficient or is inadequate with regard to the intended goal. On the reading I suggest, this also holds with respect to Kant's practical philosophy, which can be interpreted as arising out of dissatisfaction with the previous versions of moral realism. The standard variants of moral realism can be regarded as unable to defend its basic tenets, which thus require following a different path. The reasons why Kant deemed it necessary to reject the traditional realist approach can be summarized in three main points.

First, in Kant's view, moral realism faces significant difficulties in moral epistemology. On the traditional approach, status and possibility of moral cognition often remain unclear, or exceedingly demanding.[17] If the cognition of moral principles requires an insight into the fabric of reality, it seems that it must be as demanding as metaphysical knowledge. In spite of the insistence on the evidence of moral principles, traditional moral realism faces serious issues in explaining this evidence. Especially from the standpoint of Kant's critical philosophy, an insight into the nature of things is not possible beyond the limits of experience. Furthermore, since in traditional realist accounts moral obligation is intrinsically linked with the awareness of the natural law, the difficulty in clarifying the possibility of an adequate cognition of the nature of things also affects any attempt to vindicate moral obligation.

Second, the tendency of traditional moral realism to conflate theoretical and moral knowledge has another important implication that must be regarded as a fatal flaw from Kant's standpoint. On the traditional realist view, the difference between theoretical cognition and practical cognition gets lost because both are merely representational, since they provide the mind with the representation of some aspect of the reality of things. On the contrary, Kant holds that moral cognition is to be understood as essentially practical and that, therefore, it must be construed in non-descriptivist terms as being not about states of affairs, but about grounds for actions (cf. JL: 86, KpV: 20). Traditional moral realism appears unable to explain how the

---

[17] I will not go into the details of the differences among the various instances of traditional rationalist moral realism. Here it suffices to my purpose to provide a brief sketch of their characteristic features, in order to assess Kant's attitude towards their basic project.

cognition of features of reality immediately provides grounds for action, if not by assuming a prior desire for the object regarded as good. Therefore traditional moral realism falls under the general principle of the heteronomy of the will.

Third, the limits of that conception of moral knowledge lead to an additional reason for dissatisfaction with traditional realism. Since practical cognition is not about states of affairs, but about grounds of action, Kant has to also reject the thought that moral qualities are to be understood as properties of actions, which is characteristically maintained by traditional moral realists in opposition to the sentimentalist thesis that goodness and rightness of actions are nothing but "perceptions in the mind."[18] In Kant's view, this conception does not reflect ordinary moral thinking and misses again the essentially practical character of moral concepts and judgments, which do not describe anything but rather express requirements. The concepts of good and bad that we apply to actions do not refer to objects and their qualities but follow from a "determination of the will a priori" (KpV: 65) that requires actions. Again, traditional moral realism can ground requirements only by referring back to some prior desire for an object with specific features. Accordingly, a view capable of accounting only for a heteronomous determination of the will ends up regarding some features of objects as good-making properties.

Finally, all of Kant's reasons for dissatisfaction with traditional moral realism ultimately lead to highlighting what must be, in Kant's eyes, its crucial limit, namely the inability to adequately account for moral obligation. Traditional moral realists characteristically hold that the natural law immediately entails moral obligation, which is understood as part of the reality of things as much as the law itself. Intrinsically normative facts immediately impose an obligation, without an obligating subject. Thus, for instance, Clarke declares that the "eternal and necessary differences of things make it fit and reasonable for Creatures so to act; they cause it to be their Duty, or lay an Obligation upon them, so to do; even separate from the consideration of these Rules being the positive Will or Command of God."[19] Similarly, Wolff maintains that the natural law is binding by a "natural obligation" independent of any act of imposition, because "nature has connected motives with men's inherently good and bad actions."[20] In Kant's view, however, features of reality cannot give rise to obligations that satisfy the requirements of universality and necessity. The immediate transition from a fundamental law to a genuine moral obligation, in his eyes, is unwarranted, at least in the relevant case of finite rational subjects. Kant's remark that the

---

[18] Hume (1739-1740, III.I.i).

[19] Clarke (1738, vol. II, p. 608).

[20] Wolff (1733, § 9).

concept of obligation had not been made clear yet and that the central issue of practical philosophy remains unsolved (cf. UDG: 298 and GMS: 450) certainly holds with regard to traditional moral realism and its difficulties in accounting for the binding character of moral requirements.

For these reasons, I suggest that in Kant's view the traditional versions of moral realism are not able to meet the demands that motivated them in the first place. Since those philosophical and practical demands still hold for him, it is necessary, from his standpoint, to develop different means to meet them in order to build a satisfying conception.

3. Kant's non-realist strategy: The outline

Instead of the immediate connection of natural law and obligation, which is characteristic of earlier moral realism, Kant's conception revolves around a two-level model, centered on the distinction between law and obligation, that is, between the principle of moral normativity and the binding validity of moral demands. His development of that model makes of his novel defense of the tenets of moral realism a hybrid view on the foundations of morals.

On the one hand, much like earlier realists, Kant still maintains that the moral law must be understood as non-positive and "practically necessary," [21] that is, fully independent, both as to its existence and its content, of the action of any mind, even of God's, as I mentioned before. On the other hand, Kant combines this feature of the traditional realist view with a non-realist conception that makes moral obligation dependent on the action of the finite rational will. Departing from previous moral realists, Kant argues that the moral law does not carry an obligation in itself, since the obligation generates only through the practically necessary consent of the finite rational beings subject to the moral law. The genuine source of moral obligation is, in this view, the autonomy of pure practical reason (cf. GMS: 439 f., KpV: 33).

The combination of realist and non-realist elements in Kant's view is reflected in his use of the distinction between the role of author of the law and the role of author of the obligation. The distinction was already present in previous writers like Baumgarten and Meier,[22] but Kant deploys it to put forward a different view than theirs. According to Kant, the author of the law

---

[21] Cf. e.g. MC: 283.

[22] Cf. Baumgarten (1760, §§ 71, 100), and Meier (1764, § 140).

and the author of the obligation correspond in the case of positive laws, generated through a contingent imposition of the will, which determines both their normative content and the corresponding obligation. In the case of non-positive (i.e., "natural") laws, as is the moral law, the two roles are to be kept distinct, since the content of the law is not dependent on any imposition, whereas the corresponding obligation is.[23] For Kant "moral laws have no author" (PPP: 145), if they are to be understood as necessary and unconditionally valid. The only authorship that can be claimed for such non-positive laws is the authorship of obligation. Now, to be author of the obligation is precisely the function of a legislator, who makes the law binding through the consent of his or her will (cf. e.g. MSV: 544 and 583, also R 6187, AA 18: 483).

Kant's solution to the problem of defending moral realism revolves around a very close connection between cognition of the moral law and legislation, that is, on the thought that moral subjects can have access to the law only through the practically necessary recognition of grounds for acting. Generally, most earlier moral realists were rationalists because, some minor differences notwithstanding, they regarded reason as the faculty of the mind, i.e. "the capacity to have insight into the interconnection of truths."[24] Such a view is for Kant not a viable option. First, his transcendental idealism argues against the possibility of adequate knowledge of the features of reality beyond the boundaries of possible experience.[25] Second, Kant also has a specifically moral objection to such views, which construe moral cognition as knowledge of some feature of reality. As long as they make the cognition of moral demands dependent on facts and features of the world, they make moral demands heteronomous. In contrast with such views, Kant's novel moral rationalism is centered on the idea that access to the moral law can be only provided by the same faculty to which moral demands are addressed.

Traditional realist positions were essentially descriptivist, as they tracked the source of both moral normativity and obligation back to some metaphysical feature of reality, conflating the fundamental principles of morality with their obligation. In contrast to such positions, Kant's account can accommodate both descriptive and non-descriptive aspects in morality, making sense of its action-guiding nature. As practical cognition, moral cognition does not represent features of things, but is about prescriptive grounds for acting. These grounds are essentially prescriptive

---

[23] Cf. MS: 227 and 19:131, 19:156, 19:247, MC: 283, 27:1433, MSV: 544 f., NK: 79, and also Päd: 494.26-33. For a detailed analysis of this distinction, see first and foremost Kain (2004, 282 ff.). On the same point, considered from different perspectives, see also Reath (2006, 145 f.), Irwin (2004, pp. 151 ff.), Irwin (2009, pp. 156 f.), Reath (2012, pp. 37-40).

[24] Wolff (1751, § 368).

[25] See also Rauscher (2015).

only as a consequence of "the subjective constitution [*Beschaffenheit*] of our practical faculty" (KU: 403, cf. GMS: 414) of finite rational beings. At the same time, the fundamental law on which prescriptive moral demands are based is not prescriptive per se, as it describes a perfectly rational will, to which as such no obligation applies.[26] Obligation is the mode of morality only for beings whose maxims are not eo ipso universally valid like laws. The conceptual distinction between the moral law (*moralisches Gesetz*) as the fundamental law of pure practical reason and the prescriptive principle of morality "that we call *Sittengesetz*" (KpV: 31), i.e., the categorical imperative, is a crucial clue for the proper understanding of Kant's view.[27] The former is the principle of practical rationality as such and does not contain any prescription, since it expresses the constitution of the perfect rational will. The latter is the principle legislated through the autonomy of pure practical reason in finite beings, upon which it imposes an obligation. Prescriptions and imperatives can only enter the stage once the moral law is recognized by finite rational agents as binding.

On the reading I am proposing, Kant elaborates a hybrid view of moral obligation structurally similar to the one put forward by some previous writers, such as Suárez and Barbeyrac. Suárez distinguishes between the natural law as belonging to the nature of things and full-fledged, binding moral demands. The latter do not directly derive from the natural law, but require God's command, in order to become laws proper through an imposition. The natural law as such is merely a lex indicans, which presents normative contents, but is not binding yet until the authoritative imposition of the divine will generates genuine prescriptions drawing on the perfectly rational content of the natural law.[28] Closer to Kant's time, Barbeyrac had made some points that suggested a similar conception. Moving, as it were, in the opposite direction than Suárez, Barbeyrac tried to defend Pufendorf's position from Leibniz' criticisms by incorporating naturalist elements into a voluntarist account.[29] Barbeyrac argued that, if "one grounds the obligation (properly so-called) to practice the rules of justice in the will of God," "this supreme being's right of command is founded in reasons whose justice is immanent." In fact, for

---

[26] Cf. e.g. KpV: 32: "In the supremely self-sufficient intelligence, choice is rightly represented as incapable of any maxim that could not at the same time be objectively a law, and the concept of holiness, which on that account belongs to it, puts it, not above all practical laws, but indeed above practically restrictive laws and so above obligation and duty." (I have corrected the translation, which misses a few words in the last sentence.)

[27] See e.g. Wolff (2009, p. 524 f.).

[28] A related analogy between Kant's and Suárez's views regarding the relation has been suggested by Ludwig (1997). Here I cannot directly address the question.

[29] See Stern (2012, pp. 71 ff.).

Barbeyrac, God "wants us to conform our external and internal acts" to the "relations of propriety, order, beauty, honesty, […] to which justice reduces," that reason reveals to us.[30]

Similarly with Suárez and Barbeyrac, Kant distinguishes between a fundamental principle of rationality and the principle of moral obligation imposed by an authoritative will, thereby combining insights of the traditional realist views with a voluntarist take on obligation. Now, I do not contend that either Suárez or Barbeyrac should be regarded as direct sources of Kant's view. In fact, the basic distinctions on which Kant draws in developing his account of the foundations of morals (i.e., law vs. obligation, author of the law vs. author of the obligation) were available in the conceptual vocabulary of pre-Kantian discussions on natural law, so that it was not necessary to refer to Suárez or to Barbeyrac as such to be aware of the possibility of distinguishing the two levels of the normative principle and its obligation. After Suárez other writers deemed it necessary to combine rationalist and voluntarist approaches in explaining moral obligation. However, taking into consideration the paradigm exemplified in those earlier hybrid views helps us see in Kant's a similar pattern, which makes the complexity of his novel conception apparent. At the same time, the contrast with the pre-Kantian examples of the hybrid paradigm is helpful to highlight three features distinctive of Kant's own new view, which regard the meaning of the concept of law, the role of the legislator, and the character of moral cognition.

(1) In contrast to the Suárezian hybrid view, in Kant's view the concept of law is basically a metaphysical notion. Following a tradition culminating in Aquinas, Suárez still understood laws in general in a primarily political sense and holds that in the proper meaning of the word laws are addressed to rational beings and are intended to govern their behavior. For Suárez, if we speak of a law of nature, it is only by analogy in a derivative, metaphorical sense.[31] In contrast to this conception, Kant understands the concept of law in primarily descriptive terms, that is, as a rule expressing a non-contingent regularity (or normativity) in a given domain. While the commentators have often interpreted Kant's talk of moral laws stressing the analogy to political laws, he in fact always parallels moral laws with laws of nature.[32] For him, the concept of law

---

[30] Barbeyrac (1735, pp. 296, 302).

[31] Cf. Suárez (1612, I.i, 2): "This third acceptation of law is […] metaphorical, since things which lack reason are not, strictly speaking, susceptible to law, just as they are not capable of obedience" (*Haec tertia acceptio [scil. lex ordinis seu propensionis naturae] metaphorica est: nam res carentes ratione non sunt proprie capaces legis, sicut nec obedientiae*); I.i, 5: "The name 'law' is properly applied, in an absolute sense, to that which pertains to moral conduct" (*Propria et absoluta appellatio legis est, quae ad mores pertinet*).

[32] The analogy with political laws has led some interpreters to (mistakenly, in my view) characterize Kantian moral laws as positive laws: cf. e.g. Korsgaard (1996, p. 66), Rauscher (2002), Krasnoff (2012, pp. 64 f.).

belongs to metaphysics as well as to practical philosophy, so that the distinction between laws of nature and moral laws, or laws of freedom (cf. e.g. GMS: 387) differentiates between two species of the same kind, thereby highlighting that both are "principles of the necessity of that which belongs to the existence of a thing" (GMS: 469, cf. KrV: A113).[33] It is in virtue of the fundamental univocal meaning of the concept of law that Kant can regard as entirely appropriate introducing the form of a law of nature as a schema or a 'type' of the moral law in the application to particular cases (cf. KpV: 69).[34] Kant's understanding of natural laws in general develops further a conception present in previous German rationalists, who defined as law any rule that states a determination, in contrast with the voluntarist understanding of laws as commands.[35] By elaborating such an anti-voluntarist concept of natural law, Kant accentuates the fundamental realist assumption that moral laws do not originate from any act of imposition by a subject, but express non-contingent normative features of reality. Moral laws must therefore be regarded as independent of any will, as to their authority and content.

(2) The most apparent difference from the earlier hybrid paradigm, however, is that, in Kant's conception, the role of legislator is not (only) played by God, but also by reason in finite subjects. The categorical imperative qua imperative is a "command (of reason)" (GMS: 414), and is in fact the only genuine command that reason issues, as it is unconditional and necessary. It is not an external legislator, but pure reason that "gives (to the human being)," as well as "all finite beings that have reason and will," the moral law (the *Sittengesetz*) (KpV: 31 f.). Unlike earlier rationalists, Kant stresses that the character of command belongs to moral demands not simply subsidiarily, but essentially. The crucial legislative role of reason lies in determining the moral demands as commands. Thereby Kant holds that finite reason is not merely able to grasp the contents of the moral law, as previous realists had already maintained, but that that ability is sufficient to determine the obligatory character of moral demands. The inherent normativity of the moral law as internal law of practical rationality suffices to establish imperatives without needing the authority of a "third being" to impose the law, to borrow the formulation Kant sometimes deploys in his lectures (cf. e.g. MC: 277, NK: 61).

---

[33] For an analysis of Kant's concept of law that stresses its univocality across theoretical and practical contexts, see Watkins (2014).

[34] See Klotz (2001).

[35] Cf. Wolff (1733, § 16), Wolff (1736, § 475), Baumgarten (1757, §§ 83-84). For an explicit contrast with Crusius, see Meier (1764, § 111).

However, regarding not the divine will, but pure reason in finite subjects as the legislator of the moral law does not merely amount to an internalization of moral lawgiving. In fact, here lies Kant's most significant departure from traditional moral realism. The role of the legislator does not consist in the mere transmission of the normative content of the law, as if his function were only about applying it to a particular domain.[36] Lawgiving entails the recognition and the confirmation of the law through the will of the legislator (cf. e.g. MC: 283, NK: 79). This is precisely what pure reason does in Kant's view: It recognizes the moral law as its own fundamental law, which inescapably demands consent. Through the necessary consent to the fundamental law, reason recognizes its validity, if only in prescriptive terms, because of the limits of finite beings. For Kant, moral obligation is not a given, but only arises through this lawgiving activity. Since he understands obligation as "necessitation of a rational being by the mere cognition of the law," the moral law can bind a rational being only insofar as the subject "cognizes its universal validity for every will, hence also the necessary consent [*die nothwendige Einstimmung*] of his will" (R 6187, AA 18: 483).

In contrast to traditional realist views, therefore, moral obligation is not detected and then applied to specific moral requirements, but is established through an imposition of the rational will, rather along the lines of voluntarist conceptions. Only an authoritative will can institute a valid obligation, and the rational will is authoritative because of the moral law. Kant does not explain moral obligation through the limits of finite rational beings, but through their being rational, which warrants them an access to the fundamental moral law. They can thus institute moral obligation according to the constitution of their own practical faculty. Therefore, the transition from a conception where the divine will legislates the moral law to a conception where pure reason plays that role allows Kant to account not simply for the phenomenological fact that moral demands have prescriptive character, but also for their binding authority as grounded in the fundamental law of practical reason.[37]

(3) In Kant's view, furthermore, the lawgiving of the moral law also plays a crucial epistemological role, which marks a significant difference from earlier conceptions. Unlike traditional moral realists, Kant does not maintain that moral cognition can be explained as a sort of knowledge of facts or features of the world. In fact, he develops the voluntarist idea that the

---

[36] Here I refer to Baxley (2012, pp. 571 ff.), who has aptly remarked, against Stern (2012), that the question concerning the authority of morality and the question concerning the experience of morality in prescriptive terms must be kept separated.

[37] I have presented in greater detail a reading of Kant's conception of the self-legislation of the moral law in Bacin (2013a).

promulgation of the law belongs to lawgiving and is an essential part of establishing it as binding. For instance, Suárez had remarked that "the lawmaker should manifest, indicate or intimate this decree and judgment of his, to the subjects to whom the law itself relates." If he does not do so, his will "could not be binding."[38] It is necessary to the bindingness of the law that the subject have access to it, and the lawgiving act, establishing obligation, satisfies also this essential condition. Kant's view follows this voluntarist conception of moral lawgiving in order to make full sense of moral obligation and to account for the simplicity of moral cognition, overcoming the limits of traditional moral realism. Although, for Kant, no valid factual cognition is warranted beyond the domain of possible experience, moral subjects can gain a proper access to moral demands in virtue of their partaking in the moral lawgiving. "We can become aware of pure practical laws […] by attending to the necessity with which reason prescribes them to us and to the setting aside of all empirical conditions to which reason directs us" (KpV: 30). Kant's solution to the epistemological problem affecting traditional moral realism revolves around the idea that moral cognition is to be achieved only through autonomy and the resulting obligation. The difficulty of accounting for the possibility of a fully adequate cognition of moral requirements is overcome by abandoning the basic descriptivist assumption of traditional moral realism. For Kant, moral cognition is neither to be understood as knowledge of facts, nor as knowledge of properties of its objects, but rather as the cognition of principles providing inescapable normative grounds for actions, which are specifications of the categorical imperative legislated by pure reason as a general principle of moral obligation. Moral cognition is thereby vindicated not as the cognition of something real, but as the cognition of something constructed by the activity of reason, supported by its fundamental constitutive principle. Moral cognition is not about external reality, but is in fact centered on "the self-consciousness of a pure practical reason" (KpV: 29). Autonomy as self-legislation of a fundamental law of rationality is what explains that "what is to be done […] is seen quite easily and without hesitation by the most common understanding" (KpV: 36).

The comparison with the previous hybrid paradigm first introduced by Suárez's view thus underscores three crucial innovative features that give to Kant's new hybrid view a different character, determining the peculiar nature of his defense of moral realism through a radical transformation of the philosophical strategy. I shall highlight the main features of the resulting position in the final section.

---

[38] Suárez (1612, I.iv.12, 57; cf. I.xi).

4. Kant's idealist transformation of moral realism

On the interpretation I am suggesting, Kant's view on morality should be seen as marking a turning point in the history of moral realism and its confrontation with different variants of anti-realism, since he undertakes a transformation of moral realism into a more complex hybrid view. After such elaboration, in Kant's view moral realism can no longer be merely defined as the thesis of the mind-independent nature of morality in general. More precisely, after Kant moral realism as the thesis of the mind-independence of moral criteria, and moral anti-realism as the thesis of their mind-dependence can no longer be regarded as mutually exclusive. In fact, the combination of both is distinctive of Kant's new conception.

A characterization of Kant's position that only focuses on its distance from traditional moral realism would offer only a partial explanation. For instance, because Kant's view cannot be reduced either to realism or to voluntarism, some commentators have suggested that Kant should be understood as maintaining a form of cognitive irrealism. However, although this reading rightly highlights the novelty of Kant's approach with regard to simpler options, it obscures that Kant's rejection of factualism, that is, of the thesis that (moral) propositions are made true by corresponding facts that obtain, does not amount to a full rejection of realism.[39] Even if for Kant moral principles are not propositions whose truth conditions are provided by their correspondence with facts, this does not entail that his position is ipso facto irrealist, but only that his conception of practical cognition is non-descriptivist. In fact, if realism consists in affirming the mind-independent status of some fact or principle, as I have proposed at the outset, this leaves open the possibility of acknowledging in Kant's view a significant element of moral realism in that every practically necessary principle enjoys mind-independent authority, although he holds to non-descriptivism. According to the interpretation of Kant as a cognitive irrealist, he cannot hold a realist view because "we can only know the noumena as they appear to us, and that they appear to us only through receptivity."[40] Also, this remark neglects the relevant differences between theoretical and practical cognition. Not only does Kant maintain that practical cognition is not about what appears and in fact is possible in virtue of the activity of reason, but he also states that our cognition of the moral law presents exactly a crucial instance of something that can be acknowledged as real without being empirically known.

---

[39] Skorupski (2010, pp. 11 ff.).

[40] Skorupski (2010, p. 487n15).

A further significant level of Kant's moral realism lies in the fact that he strongly holds that the cognition of the moral law opens up the possibility to refer (albeit in non-theoretical terms) to an order of reality that he clearly does not understand as mind-dependent. On some occasions, Kant even refers to an "order of things," deploying an almost Malebranchian formulation (cf. e.g. KpV: 42, 49). It is understandable that later attempts at elaborating Kant's views have downplayed, if not utterly dismissed, this aspect, which is, within Kant's philosophical outlook, intrinsically connected with demanding metaphysical and epistemological theses and with a robust conception of reason.[41] Nevertheless, Kant's view in its complexity would lack an essential component if that connection were severed.[42]

While a substantial part of Kant's aim is to defend the contents of common moral thinking against inadequate philosophical accounts, the elements of realism in his view are not confined to the realm of experience. He develops a new view without abandoning a realist conception of the fundamental moral law.[43] In this respect, Kant does hold to a strong realist view. If robust realism is the thesis that "there are objective irreducibly normative truths,"[44] Kant holds a robustly realist position about the moral law. This is not the whole story, of course, as he holds at the same time that the mere existence of normative data (or facts) is neither sufficient to provide the specific kind of normativity that we call moral obligation nor sufficient to make the cognition of moral obligation possible. However, if we define our understanding of moral realism by referring to a distinction between procedural realism and substantial realism,[45] we should argue that Kant does not merely hold a procedural realism but a substantial realism about the moral law as well. That is, Kant does not merely argue that "there are answers to moral questions; that is, that there are right and wrong ways to answer them," as procedural realists are supposed to, according to Korsgaard's definition, but in fact also believes, like the substantial realist, that "there are answers

---

[41] On the latter, see e.g. Watkins (2010).

[42] See Ameriks (2003, p. 269).

[43] Sensen (2013) has also pointed out a realism of the moral law in Kant's position.

[44] Cf. Enoch (2011, p. 4).

[45] Cf. Korsgaard (1996, pp. 35 f.).

to moral questions because there are moral facts or truths, which those questions ask about".[46] This holds for him only with important qualifications, though. The basic normative truth consists in the fundamental law of practical reason, which cannot be directly grasped. The answers to moral questions refer to that basic normative truth, but cannot be simply derived from it. In Kant's view the reference to those normative data cannot possibly be immediate, but is constitutively mediated by the way in which pure practical reason is able to cognize them, that is, is able to become aware of the moral law through autonomous lawgiving. Kant thus combines a substantial realism about the moral law with a quite different view about moral obligation, which in fact builds the core of his new conception.

The complexity of his view with regard to the terms of current debates also stands out clearly if we consider another distinction between weaker realism, which holds that moral properties are independent of any particular experience, but are "waiting to be perceived," and stronger realism, which holds that moral properties are not constituted by the possibility or a (human) response.[47] Kant holds a stronger realist view regarding the fundamental moral law, since he argues that it is independent of any response at all. On the other hand, his view on moral obligation cannot be construed as a form of realism, even of the weaker kind, because, if moral obligation does not presuppose any particular interest and is cognizable by every moral agent as such, neither moral obligation nor any other moral notion are "waiting to be perceived," according to Kant. All of them are in fact dependent upon the activity of reason. A further significant weakness of the characterization of Kant's view as irrealist is that it obscures this crucial point, namely, that the standards of moral cognition do not lie in the correspondence to external facts but that they arise from the activity of reason.

---

[46] Bojanowski denies that Kant's view can be regarded as a case of substantial realism. However, he lists a number of aspects on which it would appear that it can be, after all. In fact, Bojanowski does remark that "Kant and the substantial realist both agree that moral cognition is a case of 'immediate' cognition (5:29). Kant also agrees with the substantial realist in thinking that the 'data' ('datis'), the given, is not something cognized by us empirically." (Bojanowski 2012, p. 15). On the other hand, Bojanowski argues that "Korsgaard's procedural realism does not go far enough. Practical reason does not simply cognize some procedure or criterion for distinguishing between good and bad maxims. What I cognize is not a mere procedure for making choices, but the good itself. Since this is not an appearance, but a noumenon, Kant's position shares with substantial realism the conviction that practical cognition is cognition of an object that is independent of the arbitrary choices of individual subjects" (Bojanowski 2012, p. 18). The significant differences separating Kant's view from substantial realism are: that (a) Kant understands these "data," as "given by the activity of reason itself, rather than by some source external to it" (Bojanowski 2012, p. 15, cf. p. 17), and (b) that Kant maintains that "the existence of this object depends on individual, empirical subjects" (Bojanowski 2012, p. 18). On my reading, both these differences depend on Kant's new conception of moral obligation, through which he aims at emending traditional moral realism, in fact, profoundly modifying it.

[47] Dancy (1986).

The interpretation I am putting forward can be further clarified by pointing out an analogy with Kant's view in the theoretical domain. In spite of the differences between morality and knowledge, the combination of a realism of the moral law with a non-realist account of moral obligation suggests an analogy with Kant's perspective on the theoretical use of reason, which helps us see the multi-layered combination of realism and non-realism in his conception of the foundations of morals. As the analogy with the theoretical domain shall suggest, the non-realist aspect can be characterized as idealist, to use a Kantian term that allows a clearer contrast with the elements of realism within Kant's position without implying that they should be seen as mutually exclusive.[48] Kant seems to follow his German contemporaries in that he never uses the notions of realism and idealism with regard to morals, mostly employing these terms only for metaphysical and epistemological views.[49] Nevertheless, I believe that these terms can be safely applied here to show how Kant's view on the foundations of morals merges theses holding the mind-independent character of some elements and theses holding the mind-dependent character of others.[50]

If empirical realism in epistemology is the view that our judgments correspond to something real in the world (cf. KrV: A375, A491/B520) in accordance with the common understanding of the objectivity of knowledge, Kant defends in moral philosophy the idea that moral judgments correspond to what he sometimes calls the constitution (*Beschaffenheit*) of the

[48] Bojanowski (2012) has also proposed to understand Kant as an idealist about morality, but on partially different grounds than those that I suggest here. He argues that Kant is committed to moral idealism because he holds that the practical use of reason and practical cognition aim at bringing their objects about (see esp. Bojanowski 2012, pp. 18 and 21; cf. KpV: 15, 46). He therefore insists more on the opposition between idealism and realism.

[49] One exception is Kant's contrast between idealism and realism about natural ends in KU: 391 ff.

[50] By using 'idealism,' I do not mean to imply any significant contrast with the more often used label 'constructivism.' Insofar as it maintains the mind-dependent character of moral principles, constructivism, in its Kantian version, can be construed as a form of idealism, in the sense I am using the term here. (For a detailed comparison between the labels of idealism and constructivism and their implications, see Rauscher 2015, pp. 23 ff.). Still, it is important to underscore a difference between 'idealism' and 'constructivism.' Unlike idealism, constructivism should be not understood in opposition to realism, as has been often pointed out against realist-minded critics of constructivism and constructivist interpretations of Kant, since constructivism as a general view about morals does not intend to deny every kind of reality to moral principles and values (see Bagnoli 2011 and Rauscher 2015). I have discussed the relationship between Kant's view and moral constructivism in Bacin (2013b). See also Sensen (2013).

action (cf. e.g. NK: 39).[51] Lying is fundamentally wrong, and it would be so even if it would have never been disapproved or never have been regarded as the violation of a principle. Moral realism is vindicated if we are able to explain how the moral subjects are capable of such judgments about the moral worth of actions.

In theoretical philosophy, transcendental idealism centers on the thesis that the forms through which we are able to have knowledge of objects are not derived from the nature of things and that the features of objects are not represented as belonging to the things in themselves (cf. e.g. KrV: A27 f./B44). In practical philosophy, Kant analogously maintains that the criteria of moral judgment and the moral notions like 'good' and 'bad' are not acquired by an insight into the nature of things, but are obtained by the practical use of reason. Like the pure concepts of understanding are "self-thought a priori principles of our cognition" (KrV: B167), the basic criterion of morality, that is, the categorical imperative, is self-given, i.e., self-legislated in the practical use of pure reason. Kant's conception is thus characterized by an idealism about obligation. Following the parallel with theoretical philosophy, here I call idealism the view that moral obligation is dependent on some (necessary or constitutive) operation of the agent's mind, so that there is no such thing as moral obligation outside the dimension of finite rational subjects as co-legislating the moral law. The obligation not to lie arises only from the practical necessity to recognize that in virtue of the fundamental moral law, lying is wrong. Accordingly, we know that lying is wrong only through the unconditional command not to lie. An account of moral obligation as dependent on pure practical reason is, for Kant, the key to preserving an account of moral demands as objective, necessary and not dependent on any contingent human interest or desire, which can be called in turn a realism of the contents of common moral thought.

One remarkable aspect of Kant's idealist conception is that it rejects the talk of moral properties as inappropriate or merely superficial. In this respect Kant's view appears more strongly anti-realist than Hutcheson's or Hume's, since both of them had stressed the analogy between moral properties and secondary qualities, as I mentioned before. The so-called moral properties are in fact, for Kant, just the outcome of the imposition of principles.[52] Drawing on a voluntarist

---

[51] Although I am largely in agreement with Rauscher's reading, I do not follow him in adopting the qualifications 'empirical' and 'transcendental' for realism and idealism (see Rauscher 2015, pp. 19 ff. and 244 ff., as well as his chapter in the present volume), since I suspect that they might be equivocal with regard to practical philosophy. When Kant mentions empirical realism, the qualification is referred to the realm of possible experience, which is not directly relevant in the practical use of reason. Also using 'transcendental' in this context would require examining Kant's remarks on the separation between transcendental philosophy and practical philosophy. (I discuss the issue in Bacin 2006, pp. 159-164.)

[52] See also Rauscher (2015, p. 4).

conception, Kant holds that concepts as 'good' cannot be construed as designating natural, mind-independent properties, but only as determining a moral qualification of actions through obligation, that is, through the legislation of autonomy. 'Good' is a predicate that we ascribe to actions whose maxims conform to the categorical imperative and are thus recognized as universally valid (cf. KpV: 68 f.).[53] Therefore, while Kant aims at a stronger position than merely maintaining the reality of moral distinctions, he does not go so far as holding that such distinctions directly correspond to mind-independent qualities.[54]

The distinction between levels of realism and levels of idealism in Kant's conception would be incomplete, however, if it did not include the strong realism about the moral law as the fundamental law of practical reason, which I have already pointed out. Since Kant strongly holds to the idea that the fundamental law of practical reason is independent from any mind's activity, he can argue that the access to the same moral law allows finite rational beings to cognize, if only partially, God's mind, much like previous rationalists had maintained. However, Kant's solution to the epistemological issue of traditional moral realism entails a modification of that thesis about the moral law. While there is an important conceptual distinction between moral law and categorical imperative, there is no corresponding real difference at hand, since finite rational beings can cognize the moral law only as the categorical imperative through its bindingness. Kant's realism about the moral law is inseparable from his idealism about obligation. Since this connection centers on the thesis that the moral law is the fundamental law of practical reason, which can be cognized only by virtue of the autonomy of practical reason, I suggest that it would be appropriate to call this a practical realism of the moral law.

This brief reconstruction of the different aspects of Kant's position concerning the foundations of morals shows how it cannot be regarded as an instance of either moral realism or moral anti-realism in their simplest variants. On the contrary, as I have argued, an appropriate understanding of Kant's view has to take into account that his basic philosophical aim is largely convergent with traditional realism and with several of its assumptions. Kant's view is the position of a moral realist who believes that traditional moral realism is unable to solve the central issue of practical philosophy, that is, to vindicate moral obligation while holding to the

---

[53] Against Stern (2012, pp. 35 ff.), thus, I do not hold Kant's view to be compatible with value realism.

[54] In the terms suggested by Gill (2006, p. 296), Kant is certainly not merely an anti-egoist realist, but he is not a traditional "Ptolemaic realist" either, since he does hold that "moral properties exist independently of the human mind and that our moral judgments represent those properties accurately." His distinctive view introduces a mediation regarding our access to the real ground of moral distinctions, which are not merely reflected in our moral concepts and judgments.

basic tenets of moral realism. At the same time, it is at least equally important to realize that his philosophical strategy is different and that it is not only novel but also especially significant, since this strategy contributes to the solution of the main issue of clarifying the source of moral obligation, adopting solutions that are incompatible with traditional moral realism. Since this non-realist or idealist strategy provides the core of Kant's answer to the moral question of the validity of moral obligation, the idealist component has a priority and in fact modifies the fundamental moral realism. Kant's conception revolves around the central innovation of a non-realist account of moral obligation in terms of the autonomy of pure practical reason. This is what allows Kant to defend realist theses.

As his solution to the central problem of moral obligation combines elements of realism with elements of mainly voluntarist descent, Kant's position cannot be simply ascribed to the one or the other camp according to the neat division made by Shaftesbury. If Kant is certainly not a "nominal moralist," he does not intend to explain that morality is "really something in it-self, and in the nature of Things" either. His view could be characterized as an idealist version of moral realism or, more specifically, as the combination of a strong realism about the moral law with an idealist account of moral obligation.[55]

Literature

Kant

ED	Das Ende aller Dinge, AA 8
G	Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis, AA 8
GMS	Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, AA 4
JL	Jäsche Logik, AA 9
KpV	Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, AA 5
KrV	Kritik der reinen Vernunft, AA 3 (B) und 4 (A)
KU	Kritik der Urteilskraft, AA 5
MC	Moralphilosophie Collins, AA 27

MS   Die Metaphysik der Sitten, AA 6 (*Vorrede* und *Einleitung in die Metaphysik der Sitten*, 205-228)

MSV   Metaphysik der Sitten Vigilantius, AA 27

NK   Nachschrift Kaehler (Immanuel Kant: *Vorlesung zur Moralphilosophie*. Herausgegeben von Werner Stark mit einer Einleitung von Manfred Kühn, Berlin/New York 2004.)

Päd   Pädagogik, AA 9

PPP   Praktische Philosophie Powalski, AA 27

R   Reflexionen, AA 14-19

UDG   Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral, AA 2

English translations are taken from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant.*

Secondary Literature

Ameriks, Karl (2003): *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bacin, Stefano (2006): *Il senso dell'etica. Kant e la costruzione di una teoria morale*. Bologna/ Napoli: Il Mulino.

Bacin, Stefano (2013): "Legge e obbligatorietà: la struttura dell'idea di autolegislazione morale". In: *Studi Kantiani* 26, pp. 55-70.

Bacin, Stefano (2013b): "Kant: ragioni e limiti del costruttivismo morale". In: Carla Bagnoli (ed.): *Che fare? Nuove prospettive filosofiche sull'azione*. Roma: Carocci, pp. 101-128.

Bacin, Stefano (2017): "A New Moral Rationalism against the Older Ones: Kant's Criticism of Rationalist Moral Theories". In: Stefano Bacin/Oliver Sensen (eds.): *The Emergence of Autonomy in Kant's Moral Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bagnoli, Carla (2011): "Constructivism in Metaethics". In: Edward N. Zalta (ed.): *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (on the web).

Barbeyrac, Jean (1735): "Jugement d'un anonyme sur l'original de cet abrégé". In: Samuel Pufendorf: *Les Devoirs de l'Homme et du Citoien*. Vol. II. Amsterdam, pp. 379-435. (English translation in: Ian Hunter/David Saunders (eds.): *Samuel Pufendorf. The Whole*

Duty of Man, According to the Law of Nature. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003, pp. 267-305.)

Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb (1757): *Metaphysica.* Editio tertia. Halle: Hemmerde.

Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb (1760): *Initia philosophiae practicae primae*. Halle: Hemmerde .

Baxley, Anne Margaret (2012): "The Problem of Obligation, the Finite Rational Will, and Kantian Value Realism". In: *Inquiry* 55, pp. 567-583.

Bojanowski, Jochen (2012): "Is Kant a Moral Realist?" In: *Kant Yearbook* 4, pp. 1-22.

Clarke, Samuel (1738): *The Works of Samuel Clarke*. 4 vols. London: Verlag.

Dancy, Jonathan (1986): "Two Conceptions of Moral Realism". In: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*. Supplementary 60, pp. 167-187.

Enoch, David (2011): *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gill, Michael B. (1998): "On the Alleged Incompatibility Between Sentimentalism and Moral Confidence". In: *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 15, pp. 411-440.

Gill, Michael B. (2006): *The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gill, Michael B. (2007): "Moral Rationalism vs. Moral Sentimentalism: Is Morality More like Math or Beauty?" In: *Philosophy Compass* 2, pp. 16-30.

Hume, David (1739-1740): *A Treatise of Human Nature*. (Edited by David F. Norton/Mary J. Norton. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.)

Irwin, Terence H. (2004): "Kantian Autonomy". In: *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 55, pp. 137-164.

Irwin, Terence H. (2009): *The Development of Ethics. A Historical and Critical Survey*. Vol. III: *From Kant to Rawls*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Irwin, Terence H. (2015): "Shaftesbury's Place in the History of Moral Realism". In: *Philosophical Studies* 172, pp. 865-882.

Kain, Patrick (2004): "Self-Legislation in Kant's Moral Philosophy". In: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 86, pp. 257-306.

Klotz, Christian (2001): "Gesetzesbegriffe in Kants Ethik". In: Volker Gerhardt/Rolf-Peter Horstmann/Ralph Schumacher (eds.): *Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung. Akten des IX. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*. Vol. III. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 55–62.

Korsgaard, Christine M. (1996): *The Sources of Normativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Krasnoff, Larry (2012): "Voluntarism and Conventionalism in Hobbes and Kant". In: *Hobbes Studies* 25, pp. 43-65.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm (1703): *Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice*. (English translation in: Patrick Riley (ed.): *Leibniz. Political Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.)

Ludwig, Bernd (1997): "Die ,praktische Vernunft' – ein hölzernes Eisen? Zum Verhältnis von Voluntarismus und Rationalismus in Kants Moralphilosophie". In: *Jahrbuch für Recht und Ethik* 5, pp. 9-25.

Meier, Georg Friedrich (1764): *Allgemeine practische Weltweisheit*. (Reprint Hildesheim/New York: Olms, 2008.)

Rauscher, Frederick (2002): "Kant's Moral Anti-Realism". In: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40, pp. 477-499.

Rauscher, Frederick (2015): *Naturalism and Realism in Kant's Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reath, Andrews (2006): *Agency and Autonomy in Kant's Moral Theory. Selected Essays.* Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

Reath, Andrews (2012): "Kant's Conception of the Autonomy of the Will". In: Oliver Sensen (ed.): *Kant on Moral Autonomy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 32-52.

Sensen, Oliver (2013): "Kant's Constructivism". In: Carla Bagnoli (ed.): *Constructivism in Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 63-81.

Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of (1711): *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times.* (Edited by Douglas Den Uyl. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001.)

Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of (1745): *Die Sitten-Lehrer, oder Erzehlung philosophischer Gespräche, welche die Natur und die Tugend betreffen.* (Translated by Johann J. Spalding. Berlin: Haude und Spener.)

Skorupski, John (2010): *The Domain of Reasons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Skorupski, John (2012): "Aristotelianism and Modernity: Terence Irwin on the Development of Ethics". In*: European Journal of Philosophy* 20, pp. 312-337.

Star, Daniel (2013): "Moral Metaphysics". In: Roger Crisp (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 818-842.

Stern, Robert (2012): *Understanding Moral Obligation. Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Suárez, Francisco (1612): "Tractatus de legibus ac Deo legislatore." In: *Opera omnia*. Paris: Vivès 1856-1878. Vols. V-VI. (English translation in: *Francisco Suárez. Selections from Three*

Works. Prepared by Gwladys L. Williams/Ammi Brown/John Waldron. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1944.)

Watkins, Eric (2010): "The Antinomy of Practical Reason: Reason, the Unconditioned and the Highest Good". In: Andrews Reath/Jens Timmermann (eds.): *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason. A Critical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 145-167.

Watkins, Eric (2014): "What is, for Kant, a Law of Nature?". In: *Kant-Studien* 105, pp. 471-490.

Whewell, William (1852): *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England*. London: Parker.

Wolff, Christian (1733): *Vernünfftige Gedancken von der Menschen Thun und Lassen zur Beförderung ihrer Glückseligkeit (Deutsche Ethik)*. (English translation of selections in: Jerome B. Schneewind (ed.): *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.)

Wolff, Christian (1736): *Philosophia prima sive ontologia methodo scientifica pertractata qua omnis cognitionis humanae principia continentur.* (Reprint edited by Jean École. Hildesheim/ New York: Olms, 1962.)

Wolff, Christian (1751): *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt (Deutsche Metaphysik)*. (Reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 1983.)

Wolff, Michael (2009): "Warum das Faktum der Vernunft ein Faktum ist. Auflösung einiger Verständnisschwierigkeiten in Kants Grundlegung der Moral". In: *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 57, pp. 511-549.

Wright, Crispin (1992*): Truth and Objectivity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.