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SENSE-DEPENDENT RATIONALISM:
FINDING UNITY IN KANT'S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

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To my parents,
my teachers,
and especially to Amos.

“But in fact no moral principle is based, as people sometimes suppose, on any *feeling* whatsoever. Any such principle is really an obscurely thought *metaphysics* that is inherent in every human being because of his rational predisposition”

—Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*
(MS 6:376)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR KANT'S TEXTS	xi
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Finding Unity in Kant's Philosophy	1
1.2 Resolute Hylomorphism	4
1.3 Overcoming Dualism through Metaphysics	11
1.4 Chapter Summary	20
 PART I: KANT'S THEORY OF PRACTICAL REASON	
2 THE METAPHYSICS OF PRACTICAL SUBJECTIVITY	25
2.1 Two Worries and the Need for Metaphysics	25
2.2 Intuitive and Discursive Intellects	30
2.2.1 The Intuitive Intellect	30
2.2.2 The Discursive Intellect	33
2.3 Understanding and Sensibility as Form and Matter	37
2.4 Practical Discursive Cognition	42
2.4.1 Holy and Non-Holy Wills	45
2.4.2 The Form and Matter of Practical Discursive Cognition	47
2.5 Human Practical Discursive Cognition	56
3 RESPECT AS THE FORM OF PRACTICAL SENSIBILITY	62
3.1 The Role of Respect in Kant's Practical System	62

3.2 What Makes a Practical Representation <i>Practical</i> ?	63
3.2.1 Sensible Representations	64
3.2.2. Representations of the Understanding	67
3.2.3. Representations of Reason	73
3.3 Respect, the Moral Incentive	76
3.4 The ‘Aesthetic’ of Pure Practical Reason	87
3.4.1 Space and Time as the Forms of Theoretical Sensibility	89
3.4.2 Respect as the Form of Practical Sensibility	97
3.5 Sensible Conditions on Practical Discursive Cognition	100
4 RESPECT AND THE POSSIBILITY OF EVIL	104
4.1 Must We Break the Analogy for Evil?	104
4.2 Two Senses of Respect	110
4.2.1 Respect in the <i>Religion</i>	116
4.3 Practical Reason’s Natural Dialectic	119
4.3.1 Natural Dialectics of Discursive Reason	120
4.4 Three Grades of the Propensity to Evil	124
4.4.1 Frailty	126
4.4.2 Impurity	137
4.4.3 Depravity	140
4.5 Conclusion	144
5 PRACTICAL REASON AND THE CALL TO FAITH	146
5.1 Introduction	146

5.2 Practical Reason’s Search for the Unconditioned	150
5.3 Resolution Through the Practical Postulates	162
5.3.1 Theoretical Propositions Grounded in Pure Practical Reason	165
5.3.2 The Postulate of Freedom	168
5.3.3 The Postulates of Faith: Immortality and God	178
5.4 The Immanent Use of Pure Practical Reason	190
PART II: SECONDARY LITERATURE	
6 AGAINST DUALISM: Transcending the Intellectualist/Affectivist Framework.....	194
6.1 Introduction	194
6.2 Respect and Moral Motivation	196
6.2.1 The First Generation of Debate: Intellectualism vs. Affectivism	197
6.2.2 The Second Generation of Debate: Non-mechanical Affectivism	204
6.2.3 Respect as the Formal Element of Sensibility	212
6.3 The Possibility of Evil	216
6.3.1 Intellectualist and Affectivist Interpretations of Frailty	217
6.3.2 Finding the Middle Path: Frailty and Affect	224
6.4 The Practical Postulates	230
6.4.1 Intellectualist and Affectivist Interpretations of the Practical Postulates	231
6.4.2 The Unified Account of Motivation	238
REFERENCES	241

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in working on Kant's philosophy developed rapidly while I was an undergraduate at the University of Toronto. In my third year, I took Arthur Ripstein's course on the *Critique of Pure Reason* and from then on, it seemed clear to me that I was in for the long haul. But my interest in Kant was at this time very narrow. Going into my graduate studies at the University of Chicago, I thought I'd focus solely on the theoretical philosophy. My only experience with the practical side had come from an ill-timed two-week stint with the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* as an 18-year-old first year. I hated it, scoffing at the idea that a man who had never left his remote hometown could have articulated the most universal moral principle. Gripped by the relativism that side-lines so many young students, Kant's ethics seemed to me archaic and best left alone.

Thank goodness for Candace Vogler and the course on Kant's Ethics she taught in the first year of my doctoral studies. Reading the *Groundwork* again, I seized on the passages centered around moral feeling. They seemed so foreign to the gross caricature of Kant's position I had learned about and, regrettably, even found immortalized in some corners of the secondary literature. In the pages of the *Groundwork* that mean the most to me, I found the metaphysically complex Kant of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and a delicate understanding of the way our dependence on the senses necessarily shapes cognitive and moral life. I have been thinking, talking, and writing about the relationship between reason and sensibility ever since, and this dissertation is the seven-year result.

Having arrived at the end of this part of my education, there are many people to thank. Beyond that first course, Candace Vogler stayed with me as a committee member, and our conversations have continued to be the source of much philosophical growth. I often invoke particular insights of hers when I'm struggling to make sense of Kant's view. They are like anchors for my interpretive efforts. Robert Pippin, my chair, also contributed greatly to my early orientation as a graduate student. His paper "Reason's Form," was presented to members of the Philosophy department soon after I arrived in Chicago. In it, he outlines and

calls for the synoptic understanding of Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy that it has been my aim to present here. I hope that I have done justice to his central concerns. His mentorship and support through the many stages of my degree has been invaluable. (I must also go way back, and thank him for allowing me to avoid talking shop as a nervous prospective graduate student sitting in his office for the first time. That welcome encounter made me think I could be happy under his tutelage.) Before asking Dan Brudney to join the project, I was assured by my fellow graduate students that he would be an ideal committee member, and that has certainly been the case. His ability to both challenge and support his students is remarkable in its balance. When I think of objections to my view, they are often given Dan's voice. Finally, I cannot imagine how different this project would look without Stephen Engstrom's work and guidance. The first time I read his book, *The Form of Practical Knowledge*, it was impenetrable to me. Now it forms the backbone to my thinking. It was an incredible stroke of luck (as he says, emphasizing the "hap" in "happiness") that he came to Chicago to teach a course during the formative stages of my dissertation. As a committee member, he went above and beyond with his attention to detail and willingness to dedicate hours-long conversations to individual chapters.

I also owe thanks to Jim Conant and Michael Kremer. I have benefitted so much from the academic bridges Jim has built between the philosophy departments at Chicago, Potsdam, and Leipzig, not to mention his inspiring reading of Kant. I feel very lucky to have had Michael Kremer teach my first-year seminar and PE workshop, and be the first faculty member I was assigned to as a teaching assistant. He is a model for virtuous dedication to the profession, as a teacher, administrator, thinker, and researcher.

The saddest part about the end of graduate school is the eventual scattering of the members of the student community. I am confident that were I to spend my whole life in the profession, I would never find another like the one I have been a part of at Chicago. The non-competitive openness and support, the genuine interest in one another's work, and the deep philosophical and personal bonds that I've witnessed and shared in over the last seven years have permanently shaped me and my sense of what philosophical inquiry should look like. The classes, conferences, and workshops we've attended together, the reading

groups we've started, have led to countless conversations that focused my thinking and provided me with so much motivation. I especially owe thanks to Daniel Smyth and Nic Koziolk, mentors to whom I have often turned, and Simon Gurofsky and Andy Werner, my fellow German Idealists who have been with me since day one. Your philosophical passion and acuity has meant so much, and your friendship has meant even more.

I would also like to thank my parents, Sandi and Rick Tizzard, and my sister, Tori Tizzard, for their endless support. Once I chose this path for myself, way back in my undergraduate days, they never let me think I wouldn't get to the end of it. I'm sure I don't understand just how much this has spurred me on. I also thank my parents for the long-term financial support that allowed me to begin my graduate studies in the first place. There are so many senses in which I wouldn't be here without them.

Finally, my partner Amos Browne has done more for me in the last seven years than I could say in a few sentences. Having a family member who, as a fellow philosophy student, understands my day-to-day life has made a lonely endeavor far less lonely. Through his loving support, he has been the source of much of my growth and confidence over the last several years. But even more than this, he has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to earnest and piercing philosophical questioning that I find inspiring, especially when it draws me (somewhat painfully) outside the philosophical framework in which I am most comfortable. I must also thank him for the emotional labor he has put in, which is so crucial, and so often goes unrecognized by those who depend on it. He has been and continues to be the person to turn to in moments of crisis and anxiety. Most of all, I owe my gratitude to him.

Chicago, September 2017

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
FOR KANT'S TEXTS

PUBLISHED WORKS

- ApH *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1785)
G *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785)
KpV *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788)
KU *Critique of Judgment* (1790)
MS *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797)
R *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793)

LECTURES

- LE *Lectures on Ethics* (1775-1780)
LR *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion*
(1783-1786)

The above works are cited in the standard format, by referencing the volume and page number from the German Academy Edition of Kant's Collected Works first published in 1900.

ADDITIONAL WORKS

Critique of Pure Reason

The *Critique of Pure Reason* is cited in the standard format, by referencing both the A and B edition page numbers when applicable (e.g., A79/B105). These correspond to the first and second editions of the text, published in 1781 and 1787 respectively.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Finding Unity in Kant's Philosophy

Since its first reception in the 1780s, Kant's project has been framed as one attempting a great unification of two diverse schools of thought. The arrival of the critical works after a silent decade of reflection bear the fruit of a sustained and systematic attempt to unite the rationalist school he was trained in, with the empiricist school that stirred his mature thinking into consciousness. The result is a philosophy that is as concerned to emphasize reason's autonomy as it is to recognize its dependence on the senses. But it is equally true that since its first reception, Kant's unified vision has struck many as fated to bottom out in a dualistic conflict, one which expresses itself most fundamentally through a rigid distinction between the incommensurable realms of the intelligible and the sensible. Many have objected that to understand reason as both free and sensibly dependent is to embrace an oxymoronic account of our mental life that divides rather than unifies, reducing both knowledge¹ and action to pale imitations of their common-sense counterparts. With this dualism, the possibility of knowing the world and acting from knowledge of the good are both marred by our dependence on subjective sensible representations that reflect the nature of our particular constitution rather than the nature of objective reality, truth, or goodness. Because this dependence cannot help but influence the activity of reason, human

¹ I will typically follow standard translation practices, which render '*Wissen*' as 'knowledge,' and '*Erkenntnis*' as 'cognition'. Kant gives both concepts technical senses with different scopes. *Wissen* is that variety of *Erkenntnis* which is grasped systematically, hence the German word for the concept of science, '*Wissenschaft*' (JL 9:72). Thus while all *Wissen* is *Erkenntnis*, not all *Erkenntnis* is *Wissen*, as a result of which Kant uses '*Wissen*' much less frequently. The fact that Kant reserves a special place for the term '*Wissen*' does not, however, mean that he thinks our everyday *Erkenntnis* fails to amount to what English speakers would call knowledge.

knowledge is thought to be somehow less than, beholden to the strict objective standards set by reason and yet haplessly wedded to the unstable subjective contingencies constitutive of the sensible realm. From this vantage point, it is easy to conclude that Kant's rationalism is ill-suited to human life.

In the last few decades, there have been numerous attempts to read Kant in a way that cuts against this narrative, and recaptures the unifying vision he took himself to have articulated. The best of these attempts recognize that it is the seemingly contradictory fact of reason's self-determining activity which accounts for the possibility of our dependence on the sensible.² For it is this activity which transforms sensibility and its deliverances so that they can serve as objects in acts of cognition. So understood, our spontaneous rational and receptive sensible capacities do not stand opposed, with the former conditioning the possibility of cognition and the latter handicapping this possibility, rendering it subjective, as if filtered through rose-tinted glasses. Instead Kant's position is taken to show how the sensible element of cognition is at once a marker of our finitude—a sign of our embodiment, our physical inhabitation—and yet not antithetical to reason's endeavor to systematically know ourselves and much else besides. On this view, sensibly dependent reason is not doomed to enjoy only a pseudo-cognition tainted by our subjectivity. To

² **Robert Pippin**, *Kant's Theory of Form: An Essay on the Critique of Pure Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); **John McDowell**, "The Logical Form of an Intuition," in *Having the World in View: Essays on Kant, Hegel, and Sellars*, 23-42 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); **Stephen Engstrom**, "Understanding and Sensibility," *Inquiry* 49 (2006): 2-25; **Stephen Engstrom**, *The Form of Practical Knowledge: A Study of the Categorical Imperative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); **James Conant**, "Kant's Critique of the Layer-Cake Conception of Human Mindedness," unpublished; **Thomas Land**, "Kantian Conceptualism," in *Rethinking Epistemology: Vol. 1*, eds. Günter Abel and James Conant, 197-240 (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012); **Robert Pippin**, "Reason's Form," in *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought*, Volume I: Philosophy and Natural Sciences, ed. Karl Ameriks, 373-394 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); **Thomas Land**, "Nonconceptualist Readings of Kant and the Transcendental Deduction," *Kantian Review* 20 (2015): 25-51.

be sure, we can and often do fail to know things, we are liable to be ignorant and to misjudge. As I will argue at length in the chapters to come, our dependence on the senses is a condition on the possibility of such failure. Had we a different kind of intellect, one which was not reliant on the senses for cognition, miscarriages in judgment would be logically impossible. But when we do judge well, we enjoy real cognition of objects that is not the worse for being sensibly dependent. Insofar as such judgments are constituted through the activity of the higher cognitive capacities—reason and understanding—they bear the essential features of cognition as such. The sensibly dependent activity of reason and the understanding may be contingent in important ways that mark our cognitive faculty as fallible, but contingently won cognition is still cognition in the full sense of the term. In this respect, Kant’s views reflect our pre-theoretical understanding of what it is to have knowledge. We need not occupy God’s perspective, take up the view from nowhere, or have perfect intellects in order to know anything.

The present study is a partial defense of this view, which claims we can salvage Kant’s unifying vision by rethinking the relationship that holds between our spontaneous cognitive and receptive sensible capacities. Key to my defense is the claim that the autonomous activity of the former determines the nature of the latter, transforming sensibility into a capacity that at once conditions the possibility of knowing and failing to know. As Kant describes this relationship in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, “sensibility, when subordinated to understanding, as the object upon which the latter exercises its function, is the source of real modes of cognition. But the same sensibility, in so far as it influences the operation of understanding, and determines it to make judgments, is the ground of error” (B351). To develop this idea, I join those who emphasize that we should understand these elements of our cognitive faculty to relate to one another as form to

matter.³ The concept of form, of that which determines, applies to the spontaneous capacities, principles, and concepts which make cognition possible by articulating the grounds for combination that enable a systematically connected body of judgments. The concept of matter, of that which is determinable, applies to the receptive sensible capacity and its deliverances, which individuate these combinatory acts.⁴ Far from being that which alienates us from the possibility of cognition, sensible matter is what enables discrete acts of cognition to occur. Without it, reason and understanding would have nothing to determine, nothing upon which to exercise their function.

1.2 Resolute Hylomorphism

Of course, Kant himself often emphasizes the importance of the concepts of form and matter. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, they are indispensable to his analysis of space and time as forms of sensible intuition in the Transcendental Aesthetic; and in the Transcendental Analytic, he declares that form and matter underlie all concepts of reflection on the nature of the understanding, “so inseparably are they bound up with all [its] employment” (A266/B322). In the practical writings, he distinguishes between the form and matter of practical principles of reason, insisting that he is the first philosopher to recognize that moral worth must rest on their formal rather than material features (KpV 5:39). Accordingly, it is common for Kant commentators of all stripes to draw on these concepts to explain his system. What sets the current strand of thinking apart is its commitment to a resolute hylomorphism which alone can safeguard the unified vision that is my focus here. On this view, we cannot take the concept of sensible matter to refer to stand alone

³ Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form*; McDowell, “The Logical Form of an Intuition”; Engstrom, “Understanding and Sensibility”; Engstrom, *The Form of Practical Knowledge*; Pippin, “Reason’s Form”; Conant, “Kant’s Critique of the Layer-Cake Conception of Human Mindedness”.

⁴ See A266/B322 in the *Critique of Pure Reason* for Kant’s formulation of form and matter as determination and determinable.

representations that are intelligible to the subject independently of formal determinations from the higher cognitive capacities. One of my central claims will thus be that there is no mere matter, only representations that are more or less cognitively determinate, more or less informed by spontaneity. Put another way, we do not first enjoy a feeling or sense an object without formal determinations, and then apply the forms of understanding and reason in order to have cognition. This is what makes the view resolute in its commitment to the concepts of form and matter, and the unity they enable: any reference to matter is necessarily reference to the material part of a capacity, act, representation, or object comprised of both a spontaneous formal and a receptive material element. It is relatively uncontroversial to claim that Kant thinks all sensible matter is *determinable*, but the hylomorphism that I argue for here goes further, insisting that there can be no matter which is not already subject to a formal determination of some kind. As I will claim, even sensibility's own form as a capacity cannot be regarded independently of this determining activity. Because it is to serve as matter to the forms of reason and the understanding, the entire capacity must be understood as determined by the latter's spontaneous activity. This resolute hylomorphism thus claims that our sensibility, the sensibility of a rational being capable of cognition, is always already transformed by the determining activity of the higher cognitive capacities. It could not provide matter for either theoretical or practical cognition were this not the case.

If we do not make this commitment, the Kantianism that results, however distinguished or sophisticated, remains open to the objections with which I began. To salvage Kant's unifying vision, we cannot think of his philosophy as a selective aggregation of the truths in rationalism and empiricism. This is exactly what we do if we take his emphasis on the role of experience to entail a commitment to the consciousness of mere matter that bears no rational form, excluding the

influence of reason from sensible nature in a move that cannot help but result in a divided and untenable view. Instead, we must understand Kant to develop a sensibly dependent rationalism which recognizes our reliance on the senses, but insists that sensible matter as such depends on the formal elements constitutive of cognition for its intelligibility. The sensible world in which we live is thus already a unified totality of objects that, insofar as they are objects for us, bear some trace of the form of cognition, the form of intelligibility. To transcend this world, to exclude the senses and contemplate the thing-in-itself, is therefore to abstract from this unity, not to cross a great divide.

I know of no other work that states the above view in precisely these terms, but I take myself to have expressed a position whose features, so broadly stated, would be shared by a small number of Kant interpreters. Strikingly, however, these interpreters typically use issues in Kant's theoretical philosophy to articulate their commitments.⁵ My principal contribution to the development of this strand of Kantianism will thus be to turn to the practical philosophy, and show how it too can be read as exhibiting a resolute hylomorphism that enables Kant's sensibly dependent rationalism, his unifying vision, to extend to our practical life. The result is an account of practical reason which takes its structure to closely parallel that of theoretical reason, so that each of reason's two uses can be taken to represent a more determinate version of the same form, that of sensibly dependent reason itself.

This treatment of the practical philosophy is certainly called for, and not just for the sake of completeness. For Kant has often been accused of arguing an indefensible moral psychology

⁵ The two exceptions I know of, which are a great source of inspiration for the present work, are Pippin, "Reason's Form"; and Engstrom, *The Form of Practical Knowledge*. Neither of these works give a sustained treatment of how sensibility relates to reason, which is my focus here.

rooted in his rigoristic rationalist commitments.⁶ On the view commonly attributed to him, human nature conditions needs and desires that, while in principle determinable by the form of practical reason, resist such determination as a matter of course. So when Kant says that our moral life is fixed around a system of imperatives, he implies that the moral order which springs from the nature of reason itself must be forced upon our unruly sensible nature. Here again, we have not a unified picture of human mindedness, but form being imposed upon an independently intelligible sensible matter. Only in this case, the picture is more determinate in that it is distinctly practical in nature: the form is that of practical reason's a priori moral law, and the matter is that of sensible desire, desire which has been determined independently of reason, through basic facts about our physical, biological, and psychological nature.

Even those who are sympathetic with Kant's position have articulated his view in these terms. One of the world's most prominent English-speaking interpreters of Kant, Paul Guyer, insists that Kant has "a profoundly dualistic conception of human nature."⁷ From the fact that Kant identifies reason and sensibility as two logically distinct capacities with different laws and characteristics, Guyer concludes that,

"Kant conceives of us as creatures who must and can act in accordance with the laws valid for all rational creatures, but he never conceives of us as creatures who can act in accordance with these laws by means of our reason alone, without also recognizing our sensibility and inducing this sensibility to act in accordance with the demands of reason by means appropriate to sensibility."⁸

⁶ The first contemporary reading which argues that Kant has an overly simplistic, divided moral psychology is widely attributed to T.H. Green, whose view became known through Terence Irwin, "Morality and Personality: Kant and Green," in *Self and Nature in Kant's Philosophy*, ed. Allen Wood (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984). For a helpful survey and refutation of this criticism, see Andrews Reath, "Hedonism, Heteronomy, and Kant's Principle of Happiness," in *Agency and Autonomy in Kant's Moral Theory*, 33-66 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). For a more widely known objection along the same lines, see Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 15.

⁷ Guyer, *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 365.

⁸ Guyer, *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness*, 366.

Of course, Guyer is right to say Kant thinks we need to look beyond reason to sensibility to give a full philosophical account of human action. Nor should he deny that sensibility has certain distinct characteristics and laws which make it possible for us to have inclinations that tempt us to act contrary to the moral law. His misstep is to conclude from this that the only workable conception of moral sensibility involves treating it like a completely independent capacity that can only be soothed on its own terms, as he says, “by means appropriate” to it. The language of inducing or nurturing sensibility as a means to morality suggests that sensibility can only function as an external factor, one that must be brought into line for the sake of an end determined independently of the sensible capacity’s own interests. To be sure, we must sometimes take this stance towards ourselves and our moral progress. Breaking bad habits or creating good ones can involve treating desire as something to be trained through methods that focus on one’s particular sensible constitution, employing inducements that make self-improvement bearable rather than focusing on the rational standing of our end. Kant is also insistent that we should cultivate those aspects of our sensible nature—feelings of beneficence, gratitude, and sympathy—that are conducive to acting well (MS 6:452-9). But these aspects of his account do not necessarily fix the general relationship between reason and sensibility as one of dualistic conflict. If practical cognition and, more ambitiously, practical wisdom are to be at all possible for us, we must understand the relationship between reason and sensibility in a completely different way. Instead of a wholly independent capacity that must be brought into line through the foreign demands imposed by reason, we must think of sensibility as an integrated part of the rational subject whose function is to provide matter for practical reason. If we give up on this unified vision, we give up on the possibility of practical life as Kant himself understands it. My aim is thus to articulate a reading

of Kant's practical philosophy that is completely free of Guyer's dualist reading and the impositionism⁹ it implies, and so in a unique position to represent Kant's actual view.

The heart of my account is a version of the claim made above, namely, that fully committing to Kant's hylomorphism requires thinking of sensibility itself as transformed by the higher cognitive capacities. As I will show, we must posit form/matter relations not just between the various elements of a representation, but also between the capacities of mind that make these possible. The latter are in fact primary: the relationships determined amongst the capacities themselves dictate the nature of the particular activities and representations that are characteristic to each of them. With reason's practical use, sensibility takes on a distinctive form insofar as it is determined by the moral law, the self-conscious form of pure practical reason.¹⁰ As we will see, the sensible element germane to the practical use of reason is subjective sensation or feeling, which serves as the material aspect of sensible desire. The portion of the *Critique of Practical Reason* dedicated to sensibility must thus concern practical reason's ability to determine and transform our capacity for feeling. In Kant's own words, it must be about "the relation of pure practical reason to sensibility and about its necessary influence upon sensibility to be cognized a priori, that is, about *moral feeling*" (KpV 5:90).¹¹ The interpretive position I develop here claims that we need to think of reason's influence on our capacity for feeling as what secures the unity of Kant's view. In short, we can cognize a priori that practical reason must have an effect on feeling because this is the structure our mindedness must have if practical cognition, cognition of the good, is to be

⁹ I borrow this term from Pippin, "Reason's Form," 376.

¹⁰ See KpV 5:29, where Kant rhetorically suggests that unconditional or moral law is "the self-consciousness of a pure practical reason."

¹¹ See also 4:460 in the *Groundwork*: "In order for a sensibly affected rational being to will that for which reason alone prescribes 'the ought,' it is admittedly required that his reason must have the capacity to induce a feeling of pleasure or of delight in the fulfillment of duty, and thus there is required a causality of reason to determine sensibility in conformity with its principles."

possible for us. Relating as form to matter, as that which determines to that which is determinable, practical reason conditions sensibility, giving it the character it must have as the sensibility of a moral being whose capacity to feel is responsive to practical demands. In this way, the receptive capacity that is not inherently rational—and as such can be possessed by both rational and non-rational animals alike—is transformed, so that its deliverances possess the form that makes them suitable for serving in acts of practical cognition. We can understand this determining activity as working on two levels. At the level of capacities, practical reason determines sensibility itself. But it is equally true that through this activity, sensibility acquires a distinctly rational form that stands as the determining element to its own matter. Thus, both our general capacity for practically oriented feeling, and the particular feelings themselves bear this rationally determined form.

Because this analysis is concerned with practical reason's influence on feeling, the experienced reader of Kant will not be surprised to find that the concept of respect functions as its keystone. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant describes respect as the positive aspect of moral feeling (KpV 5:75), the result of pure practical reason's law influencing sensibility by ordering or limiting it so that its deliverances can serve as the material element of practical cognition. Given that respect plays this role, I claim that it should be thought of as the form of practical sensibility in an argument that draws a close analogy to space and time as the forms of theoretical sensibility. Though of course not all of our actions are motivated directly by respect for the moral law, our sensibility is *respectful* in character because it is inherently sensitive to the demands of morality. Even when we fall short, as we often do, our sensible capacity still bears the form of rational determination that makes good action possible. Thus reason does not either impose or fail to impose its rigid form upon sensibility, resulting in good action that has sprung from reason, or evil action that has sprung from our sensible needs. The way we think about action

cannot be fractured in this way. Insofar as Kant argues that our sensibility is necessarily determined a priori by moral interest, that we have a natural predisposition towards the good (R 6:26), that we feel pleasure or pain upon seeing how our actions meet or fail to meet the moral demands that do so interest us (G 4:460; MS 6:399), he shows us that our capacity for feeling is already rational in form, and indeed that it must be, for otherwise there would be no unified subject capable of knowing the good.

1.3 Overcoming Dualism through Metaphysics

If the central claims of my reading can be upheld, the unified conception of sensibly dependent reason that results allows us to rethink the role of sensibility and thus of motivation within Kant's practical philosophy. As we will see, Kant's discussion of the relationship between our higher and lower capacities is concerned to make sense of the moral *Triebfeder*, a concept typically translated as 'incentive' but which more literally breaks down to 'driving spring,' capturing what motivates the subject to action. Interpreters have held that Kant's commitment to the concept of a sensible incentive betrays his interest in moral sentimentalism, an empiricist strand of moral theory that occupied him during his developmental years.¹² How we think of moral sensibility and motivation is thus directly connected to how we interpret the attempted unification of rationalist and empiricist thought that I attributed to Kant above. His own mature stance on the respective gains of each school is well expressed in a letter to Marcus Herz written in 1773:

“the highest ground of morality must not simply be inferred from the pleasant; it must itself be pleasing in the highest degree. For it is no mere speculative idea; it

¹² See, for example, Karl Ameriks, “Kant, Hume, and the Problem of Moral Motivation,” in *Kant and the Historical Turn: Philosophy as Critical Interpretation*, 89-107 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Paul Guyer, “Reason, Desire, and Action,” in *Knowledge, Reason, and Taste: Kant's Response to Hume*, 161-197 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Owen Ware “Kant on Moral Sensibility and Moral Motivation,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52 (2014): 727-746.

must have the power to move. *Therefore, though the highest ground of morality is intellectual, it must nevertheless have a direct relation to the incentives*” (10:145, emphasis mine).

We can take two important points from Kant’s claims here. First, we must not underestimate Kant’s radical conception of *practical* reason and the moral imperative. However intellectual the claims of morality might be, their basis in reason does not relegate their status to static, merely speculative claims about the nature of good and evil. The moral law must itself be capable of moving us, independently of any other incentive to act. Second, the motive power of pure practical reason’s law cannot be secured without establishing its relation to sensibility and some kind of incentive. Our minds are possessed of both reason and sensibility, and our dependence on the latter requires that we account for the sensible element of practical reason, regardless of the ultimate source of motivation. If we are not careful here, the air of oxymoronic self-defeat can take hold again, this time assuming the specifically practical guise. For Kant thinks we must both grasp the complete autonomy of reason, casting off the sentimentalist view which places the ultimate source of morality in feeling, *and* acknowledge that as embodied finite beings, we are sensibly dependent and so cannot fully explain the possibility of moral motivation without an appeal to the senses.

These two necessary and seemingly irreconcilable features of Kant’s view have proven to be the departure point for a prominent debate about Kant’s theory of motivation. Contributions are typically framed through an *intellectualist vs. affectivist* framework whose parameters are set by the question of whether respect, the moral feeling produced by practical reason, should be understood as primarily affective or cognitive in nature.¹³ Some commentators argue that the purpose of respect is best explained by concentrating on its nature as a feeling with affective force

¹³ For a helpful summary, see Ware, “Kant on Moral Sensibility and Moral Motivation”.

and varying intensity.¹⁴ Others argue that Kant's tendency to distinguish respect from merely pathological feelings suggests that we need to understand it in cognitive terms, as indicative of the subject's ability to grasp the authority of the moral law, an act which is itself sufficient to bring about action.¹⁵ The debate is thus split between those who emphasize the role of sensibility in explaining the possibility of motivation, holding that we need something like the vivid push of sensible desire to account for our interest and action; and those who hold that we must understand respect as motivating because of the spontaneous cognitive activity that grounds it, and so as fundamentally different from merely sensible desire. Though both of these positions seizes upon fundamental aspects of Kant's view, they are necessarily misleading insofar as each misinterprets sensibility's relation to practical reason in its own way. The affectivist embraces the dominant dualistic reading commonly attributed to Kant, holding that the autonomy of pure practical reason is compatible with a need to account for sensible motivation in terms fixed by an independently intelligible view of empirical psychology. The intellectualist, wary of the seeming contradiction this implies, pulls back from the economy of sensibly determined motivation that the affectivist takes to be necessary to Kant's picture. But in so doing, she obscures the fact that sensibility has any real role to play, painting it as a capacity whose deliverances merely serve to get in the way of what would otherwise be perfectly executed rational activity. In either case, we have a view that fails to uphold Kant's unified conception of sensibly dependent reason and do justice to both our spontaneous and receptive capacities. Both views have taken up a dualistic conception of human nature, and thus cannot emphasize the role of one capacity without obscuring the other. When

¹⁴ I will draw primarily on affectivist accounts offered by Richard McCarty, Paul Guyer, Jeanine Grenberg, and Owen Ware.

¹⁵ I will draw primarily on intellectualist accounts offered by Andrews Reath, Henry Allison, and Allen Wood.

reason and sensibility are set against one another in an impositionist framework, explaining moral motivation requires either descending to the level of empirical psychology or retreating into a rationalism that neglects the role of feeling.

The view I argue for instead allows us to maintain both the autonomy of reason and the importance of sensibility without a dualistic conception of human nature. It does so by raising the so-called empiricist element of Kant's view to the level of metaphysics. The central arguments sketched above—that there can be no matter without rationally determined form, and that we must therefore think of the capacity to feel as possessing its own such form—are founded in a priori claims about the nature of cognition and what our minds must be like insofar as we are capable of it. The account of sensibility that forms a crucial part of Kant's practical philosophy is thus not based in a naturalistic account involving appeals to our psychology, or empiricist tenets which claim the vivid immediacy of the senses can be the only true source of motivation. It has been replaced by a metaphysical account of discursive cognition, the kind of cognition enjoyed by a finite being whose intellect is not capable of cognizing objects through the spontaneous activity of reason alone. Allen Wood is particularly good at formulating this point, though as I will argue, he too ultimately fails to grasp its full significance and the implications that it has for Kant's view. In his introduction to *Kant's Moral Religion*, Wood cites Heidegger's claim that "Kant was the first to arrive at an ontological, non-sensuous concept of sensibility,"¹⁶ adding that "man's sensibility is not for Kant the reason we call man a 'being of needs.' Rather, it is man's *finitude* which gives *transcendental* significance to the sensible factors in human volition."¹⁷ Thus when we turn to the

¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 19; cited by Allen Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 3.

¹⁷ Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion*, 4.

issue of sensibility and motivation in Kant's practical philosophy, we have not left behind the terrain of metaphysics to descend to that of empirical psychology. We preserve Kant's unified vision only insofar as we recognize that his emphasis on sensible dependence does not counter his rationalism, it proceeds from it, forming a necessary part of any critical investigation into the nature and limits of our cognitive faculty.

Though others have sought to undercut the accusations of dualism leveled against Kant and argue for a non-empirical account of moral motivation, only the hylomorphic conception of reason and sensibility sketched above can secure this position. To successfully raise Kant's discussion of sensibility to the level of metaphysics, we need a transformative conception of sensibility, one that grasps its necessary features in light of its role as the receptive part of a cognitive faculty. Specifically, we must understand our capacity to feel to be rationally determined and so essentially responsive to the demands of reason. This is what the concept of respect secures for Kant's position. As the marker of sensibility's rational transformation, respect is both affective and intellectual in character: that we feel it shows that our capacity to be affected is sensitive to the claims of reason. If we cannot secure this view, motivation remains beyond reason's influence, a dualistic conception of human nature will prevail, and our best hope will be a moral psychology that proceeds by either overpowering or placating independent sensible desires in the service of moral ends. If, however, we take sensibility to be always already determined by reason, and thus necessarily responsive to its claims, we can argue that motivation is as dependent upon the objective standards of reason as it is upon subjective conditions of sensibility. Because the latter has been rationally determined, to recognize the cognitive content, the rational standing of a practical command is to be motivated by it.

Of course, we do not automatically do something simply insofar as we judge it to be good. The necessary connection between objective cognitive content and subjective motivation that I argue for cannot be construed in such simplistic terms. In fact, to propose this kind of intellectual determinism would destroy Kant's complex yet unified account of sensibly dependent reason. Our practical reasoning is much subtler in character: judgments can be more or less determinate, more or less efficacious, and we are always prone to the kind of rationalization and self-deceit which weakens our grasp on what is to be done. This subtle approach to the possibility of moral struggle and evil action is consistent with an outlook that starts from the broadly unified account of agency I have been outlining. We can overturn dualistic interpretations of Kant's philosophy without having to deny that we often struggle to do what we recognize as right. In fact, it is only with this unified account that we can safeguard this rich picture of moral life. If we isolate reason and sensibility from one another and settle upon some variety of impositionism, there will be no good explanation for the kind of uncertainty, confusion, indeterminacy and struggle that colours our practical experience. Only the sensibly dependent rationalism I propose can adequately account for our finitude, showing how our sensible dependency conditions the possibility of failure in judgment without infringing upon reason's autonomy. If, as on the dualistic view, reason's activity is taken to be wholly self-sufficient, and sensibility is set over and against it as the source of our failure, its only explanation will be a crude conception of self-interest that fixes the struggle for goodness in terms of a clear-eyed choice between good and evil. Since Kant is adamant that our moral interest is irrevocable, and sensibility cannot determine reason against itself, we cannot take this voluntarism to reflect his view.

Finally, the account of moral motivation that I argue for also allows us to make sense of another controversial aspect of Kant's practical philosophy: namely, the practical postulates of

freedom, immortality, and God. Kant argues that belief in the reality of these three ideas of reason is subjectively necessary, since only through this belief can the final end of pure practical reason, the highest good, be grasped as possible. There is much at stake in this argument, for Kant holds that if we lose sight of the highest good's possibility, the influence of the moral law and thus our motivation to pursue good ends will suffer (KU 5:452). Morally determined faith thus comprises a necessary part of Kant's practical philosophy, and to account for it, we must draw upon his theory of motivation and the way in which certain beliefs can influence the moral disposition. Here again, we find the interpretive terrain dominated by a divided conception of human nature. Those who account for moral motivation by appealing to its affective psychological force interpret the postulates as beliefs that encourage moral action by appealing sensibility on its own independent terms. For example, Guyer separates Kant's account of motivation and the postulates from his rationalist metaphysics, insisting that "the entire doctrine of the postulates of practical reason is stated within the limits of human psychology."¹⁸ Disconnected from our rational capacities, belief in freedom, God, and immortality "have no recommendation except that they are effective in motivating creatures like us to act in the way and toward the end that reason demands."¹⁹ Opposing this view are those who shy away from a psychological reading and think Kant's doctrine of the highest good and the practical postulates must be grounded in his conception of practical reason. Taking up the same perspective as those who would argue for the intellectualist conception of motivation, these commentators are concerned to distance themselves from any reading which understands the postulates as additional incentives which are designed to placate our sensibility

¹⁸ Guyer, *Kant on Freedom Law and Happiness*, 367.

¹⁹ Guyer, *Kant on Freedom Law and Happiness*, 367. For another account along these lines, see Lara Denis, "Autonomy and the Highest Good," *Kantian Review* 10 (2005): 33-59.

and increase the chances of moral compliance. These interpretations thus often take pains to show how morally grounded religious belief could be rational independently of any hope for God-given happiness. For example, in an oft-cited argument, Andrews Reath locates the concept of the highest good squarely in the domain of reason, describing it as “a construct of reason” that introduces systematic unity into our various ends by organizing them according to the dictates of morality.²⁰ Grasping the possibility of this systematic unity of ends is necessary for the subject because without it, moral conduct might appear to be irrational: morality can seem to place contradictory demands upon us; acting well might leave us vulnerable to exploitation by others; or our action may just prove ineffective in bringing about the good.²¹ If moral conduct appears pointless in this way, the moral disposition will be damaged. Belief in the postulates thus helps secure moral motivation insofar as it safeguards the rationality of moral conduct.²²

I claim we must reject both of these views and the two forms of dualism they represent. Guyer falls on the affectivist side of the moral motivation debate, framing sensibility as an extra-rational capacity and arguing that the possibility of moral motivation depends upon the conditions of empirical psychology. Reath lands on the intellectualist side, giving no account of how sensibility figures substantively in motivation and falsely depicting moral conduct as something that needs to be defended against claims of irrationality. Neither view represents the unified vision Kant calls for in his letter to Herz, which can only be secured through a sensibly dependent rationalism that takes our capacity to feel to be fully transformed by reason’s activity. The central

²⁰ Andrews Reath, “Two Conceptions of the Highest Good in Kant,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26 (1988): 597.

²¹ Reath, “Two Conceptions,” 618.

²² See Wood’s *Kant’s Moral Religion*, for a different argument that defends the postulates on rational grounds. Wood claims that an agent implicitly commits herself to certain beliefs in willing her ends, beliefs which she cannot refuse on pain of irrationality. He then makes a case for the postulates being beliefs of this kind (29-30).

idea that morality is grounded in reason but must move us by relating directly to sensibility is nowhere to be found. Guyer takes motivation to be secured on grounds that hold independently of reason, while Reath, wary of embracing the dualism that Guyer so willingly attributes to Kant, takes motivation to be wholly disconnected from the sensible, grounding it solely in the recognition of rational authority and allowing any substantive role for sensibility to drop out of the picture. So his position, too, ultimately bottoms out in a kind of dualism which sets sensibility against reason and effectively erases the former's part in accounting for moral motivation. Hence we must conclude that neither the intellectualist nor the affectivist can give an adequate account of how the practical postulates are supposed to motivate us.

If, alternatively, the unity of sensibly dependent reason can be secured in the way I propose, we can draw on my claim about the necessary inseparability of rational standing and sensible motivation to give a new reading of the postulates. I argue that the ideas of freedom, God, and immortality safeguard our moral motivation by adding practically grounded cognitive content to our representation of the highest good and its possibility. They do not, as Reath claims, help secure the rationality of acting well—insofar as the moral law always already interests us, good willing can never appear pointless. But the postulates can motivate on rational grounds by solidifying our concept of the highest good and thereby bolstering the moral disposition, making us less prone to quibble with the moral law and conjure up illusory conceptions of how to realize its final end. In short, by helping to secure the right moral outlook, the postulates help to secure moral motivation.

Articulating the right relation between our spontaneous and receptive cognitive capacities thus has far reaching consequences for Kant's practical system. The unified conception of mindedness that I call for fixes a certain general view of cognition which stretches across both Kant's theoretical and practical thought; a theory of motivation; an explanation of the possibility

of evil; and a particular understanding of the role of moral faith. At the heart of each of these issues is the question of how our rational and sensible capacities relate. To address these questions in the Kantian spirit, we must take up the hylomorphic reading I propose. This is the only way to dissipate the air of paradox surrounding Kant's project, which sets the affectivist and intellectualist on opposing paths that both end by destroying the possibility of unity, placing an insurmountable gap between reason and the senses.

1.4 Chapter Summary

I develop this project in six chapters, including the present introduction. The next four chapters are constitutive of my positive reading of Kant's practical philosophy, while the sixth places this reading in relation to prominent positions in the secondary literature. In the second chapter, I outline the structure of discursive practical reason by relating it to the form of discursive reason as such. Taking seriously Kant's claim that "there can, in the end, be only one and the same reason, which must be distinguished merely in its application" (G 4:391), I pursue the idea that finite reason has a general form which admits of two determinate uses. Through an analysis of the different ways that cognition can relate to its object, I determine first the concept of a finite, discursive faculty of reason, taking up as a contrast case the concept of an infinite, intuitive faculty. The upshot of this analysis is an account of our spontaneous and receptive capacities of mind which singles out Kant's claim that they relate to one another as form to matter. I then proceed to an analysis of discursive practical reason in particular, grounding the concept in this more general structure. Through this methodology, I lay the foundations for both Kant's cognitivism and his commitment to the hylomorphic structure of sensibly dependent reason.

In the third chapter, I take up the relation between reason and sensibility more directly, giving an analysis of how these two capacities relate with respect to practical reason. Continuing to build on the claims established in the previous chapter, I argue that we should understand our spontaneous and receptive capacities to relate in analogous ways across both uses of reason. Taking up Kant's analysis of the forms of space and time in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I claim we should think of the concept of respect for the moral law as playing a parallel role in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Other commentators give unsatisfactory accounts of the feeling of respect that emphasize its affective aspect at the expense of its intellectual one, or vice versa. In contrast, I argue that Kant's hylomorphic commitments suggest we should understand respect as the form of practical sensibility, the result of reason determining the sensible capacity for feeling so that its deliverances can serve in acts of practical cognition.

In the fourth chapter, I address an important worry that threatens the broadly uniform conception of reason under development. Unlike its theoretical counterpart, practical sensibility can appear fundamentally resistant to the form of practical reason. Theoretical cognition cannot even get off the ground if its sensible representations do not possess the unity bestowed by the categories of nature. One of the principal achievements of the first *Critique* is Kant's argument that all sensible representations of objects must possess categorial form. But on the practical side, Kant is adamant that we can have cognition from pure a priori grounds of reason and nevertheless experience sensible desire that cuts against these grounds. As Kant insists in the introduction to the second *Critique*, practical reason is dialectical in its empirical use: principles based in sensible desire strive to overthrow the moral law and make themselves the only valid determining grounds of the will (KpV 5:16). This fact can make the idea of a systematically unified conception of finite

reason appear beyond our reach, as it suggests that respect for the moral law cannot be an a priori necessary formal element of sensibility.

Against this worry, I continue to develop the argument that we should think of respect as the form of practical sensibility, claiming that we can distinguish between respect as the actual incentive or determining ground of the will, and respect as the formal element of our capacity to feel which signifies the latter's responsiveness to the demands of practical reason. This argument fleshes out some of the promissory notes sketched above: though we often fail to act from respect as the pure, moral incentive, our human action is respectful in character because it is sensitive to the demands of practical reason. Even when we fail to act well, our reasoning and action is still that of a moral being whose sensible desire is more or less efficacious based on its relation to principles of reason. This is a fundamental requirement on the very possibility of practical cognition and moral agency. Regardless of whether or not we fail in our efforts, it must be possible for us to act from cognition of the good, and this is what respect secures as the rationally determined formal element of sensibility. Thus although not every human action is motivated by respect for the moral law as the pure formal incentive, our sensible nature is always already shaped by practical reason. Having preserved the uniform, hylomorphic view I have been outlining, I go on to develop the implications this position has for a detailed account of the possibility of evil.

In chapter five, I continue to discuss practical reason's dialectical nature, turning to the practical postulates of freedom, God, and immortality. I argue that the theory of moral motivation emerging from the previous chapters allows us to interpret the postulates as ideas that motivate good moral character by rendering our representations of the moral law and its final end, the highest good, more conceptually determinate. On this view, belief in the reality of the postulates is required first and foremost because of limitations on theoretical, not practical, reason. Because

of these limitations, which Kant articulates in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the subject cannot grasp the theoretical possibility that virtue could be causally connected with happiness. This uncertainty about the possibility of the highest good opens the door to doubt and despair that weakens moral resolve. As I argue, the practical postulates help by adding conceptual determinacy to the content of the highest good, showing how it can come about through grounds whose objectivity is safeguarded by the moral law itself.

One can think of these four chapters as relating in two different ways. As the above summaries suggest, each addresses a different issue relating to Kant's practical philosophy. While chapter two grounds the cognitivist outlook that permeates the entire project, the subsequent chapters offer mutually consistent accounts of the feeling of respect and moral motivation, the possibility of evil, and the practical postulates. In addition, one can also understand each of these chapters as specifying a new limit to the analogy I develop between practical and theoretical reason as specific determinations of sensibly dependent reason. Chapter two begins with the most obvious limit, which is brought out in Kant's description of each use: while theoretical cognition determines an already existing object, practical cognition brings the object it determines into existence (KpV 5:46; Bix-x). In chapter three, I bring out the implications of this important point. Since the object of theoretical cognition must be given, the act of cognition itself must involve a synthesis of sensible matter to yield objective representations. Practical cognition, however, requires no such sensible synthesis. As that species of cognition that produces its object, practical cognition only relates to representations of objects insofar as these representations are efficacious or motivating. This limit anticipates the way that sensibility functions in accordance with each use of reason. In the next two chapters my concern shifts to the dialectical use of practical reason, and the analogical limits specified by this use. The fourth chapter takes up Kant's most basic

determination of the two uses of reason in their dialectical use: while theoretical reason is transcendent in its pure use, practical reason is transcendent in its empirical use (KpV 5:16). The fifth chapter explores the implications of this inversion. Because sensibly dependent practical reason is immanent in its pure use, it is licensed to assume the objective reality of the ideas required for it to realize its necessary ends, even if such objects are ideal and thus transcendent for the same faculty in its theoretical use. Suitably developed, these four limits delineate a broadly unified and systematic account of theoretical and practical reason that only diverges along principled lines required by fundamental differences in the way that practical and theoretical cognition relate to their objects. The progression of this project thus safeguards the systematic unity of Kant's philosophy while defending a novel view of its practical part.

Finally, in chapter six, I turn directly to the secondary literature, providing a more detailed version of the structural analysis introduced above. I canvass a number of prominent views from the field, organizing them in terms of whether they occupy an intellectualist or affectivist version of the dualistic conception of reason and sensibility. Prominent affectivists include Richard McCarty, Jeanine Grenberg, and Paul Guyer; intellectualists include Andrews Reath, Henry Allison, and Allen Wood. I trace these interpreters' dualistic commitments as they appear in relation to different issues, showing the various problems they give rise to, and highlighting the way my own view can sidestep them.

PART I: KANT'S THEORY OF PRACTICAL REASON

CHAPTER 2

The Metaphysics of Practical Subjectivity

2.1 Two Worries and the Need for Metaphysics

Kant's moral system is commonly thought distinctive for its claim that the goodness of an action rests on its being done from one's recognition of duty. From this foundational thought, it is just a few steps to the more controversial claim that goodness, for Kant, is a concept that is applied on the basis of objective criteria that hold for any and all rational beings. To recognize it as one's duty to act in such and such a way is to recognize that the proposed way of acting is grounded in practical principles that hold with absolute necessity and thus admit of no exception. For Kant the need for necessary practical principles, or practical laws, simply follows from consideration of the concept of morality, and is reflected in the pre-philosophical moral knowledge exhibited by mature human beings. Moral demands, he thinks, are intrinsically regarded as necessitating, and such as to trump all other merely contingent demands that one might face. It is, however, a corollary of this seemingly uncontroversial claim that such principles, in virtue of their absolute necessity, are valid for all rational beings, regardless of contingent facts about their subjectivity. For if duties were ultimately based in empirical particularities, even generalizable ones that could arguably characterize something like a human nature, such duties would in fact be merely conditional and thus not duties at all. As Kant concludes, "unless we want to deny to the concept of morality any truth and any relation to some possible object, we cannot dispute that its law is so extensive in its

import that it must hold not only for human beings but for all *rational beings as such*, not merely under contingent conditions and with exceptions but with *absolute necessity*” (G 4:408).

This emphasis on necessary and universal laws holding for all rational beings can be taken as grounds for claiming that Kant’s moral philosophy fails to acknowledge the complexity and particularity of the human moral experience. In placing too much emphasis on the pure will, or our transcendental rational nature, he ultimately fails to provide a convincing account of the role that moral knowledge plays in the lives of embodied, fallible creatures like ourselves.

To push back against the claim that Kant neglects our particular form of subjectivity to the detriment of his moral theory, one needs to remind oneself that the concept of duty—often taken to be the very foundation of Kantianism, the paradigm example of deontological moral theory—is itself a moral concept constituted by subjective considerations. Just a few pages into the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), the first work to exemplify Kant’s mature moral theory after the critical turn, readers are introduced to the concept of duty in order to more fully explain the concept of the good will, which at this point in Kant’s argument is taken to be the fundamental concept in moral judgment. Here he defines the concept of duty as that “which contains [the concept] of a good will though under certain subjective limitations and hindrances” (G 4:397). The concept of duty is thus used to specify the generic concept of the good will in a way that admits of more determinate characterizations and examples, and this specification is carried out on the basis of subjective features that pertain to a particular set of wills. In the definition of duty provided in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), Kant describes the subjectivity at issue as that belonging to a natural, physical being with desires and needs who can, in their pursuit, be tempted to turn away from what morality requires:

“The very *concept of duty* is already the concept of necessitation (constraint) of free choice through the law...Such constraint, therefore, does not apply to rational beings as such (there could also be *holy* ones) but rather to *human beings*, rational *natural* beings, who are unholy enough that pleasure can induce them to break the moral law, even though they recognize its authority; and even when they do obey the law, they do it *reluctantly* (in the face of opposition from their inclinations), and it is in this that such *constraint* properly consists” (MS 6:379).¹

Inherent in this characterization of duty and the human beings to which it applies is the distinction between principles and conditions that stand in objective relations, and those that stand in subjective relations to a particular being. As a practical principle, the moral law is, as we shall see, expressive of the form of practical rationality, so it applies objectively to a particular human being just insofar as she herself has practical reason. This law captures the essence of something about her, namely, her capacity for practical cognition, and she thus necessarily ‘stands under the law’ as its object in the same way that a rock stands under laws of physics. But, as already noted, her ability to act on the basis of this law is conditioned by subjective factors, what Kant in the above passage calls ‘inclinations,’ that she experiences as a result of her physical existence in the natural world. From her perspective as a cognizing subject, these inclinations can appear to be constitutive of good reasons to act contrary to what the law of practical reason requires. Hence Kant’s claim that for human beings, “actions that are cognized as objectively necessary are subjectively contingent, and the determination of such a will in conformity with objective laws is *necessitation*” (G 4:413). It is thus because of our particular subjective constitution that the moral law is represented to us as an imperative that commands observance, rather than a law that necessarily

¹ See also Kant’s definition in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788): “an action that is objectively practical in accordance with this law, with the exclusion of every determining ground of inclination, is called *duty*, which, because of that exclusion, contains in its concept practical *necessitation*, that is, determination to actions however *reluctantly* they may be done” (KpV 5:80).

describes our actions, and the notion of duty, as good willing under subjective limitations, becomes relevant.

Against the claim that Kant over-emphasizes our rational nature to the detriment of what is unique to our humanity, we can thus argue that his distinction between objective and subjective conditions on the exercise of practical reason affords us the opportunity to take up the human perspective as cognizing subject—with all the particular needs, values, desires, reluctance, and struggle that this brings—without having to give up on the objectivity inherent in the idea of practical knowledge and its object, the good. Following this path can, however, lead to the opposing objection that in accounting for the contingency of human experience, Kant goes too far and effectively severs any useful ties between his metaphysics of morals, a system of pure rational concepts independent of any subjective conditions of feeling (MS 6:375-6), and his practical anthropology, a body of claims about human action based in experience (MS 6:406). Were Kant to do this, he would contradict his own claim that “a metaphysics of morals cannot be based upon anthropology but can still be applied to it” (MS 6:217). His account of human experience would be muddled with subjective contingencies, bearing no resemblance to the universal picture of rational nature and morality we are introduced to in the *Groundwork*.²

² This is effectively a less technical articulation of the tension inherent in the intellectualist vs. affectivist framework that structures so much contemporary Kant scholarship. If we remove all trace of sensibility from his a priori metaphysics—as the intellectualist is inclined to do—we give an impoverished account of moral experience. But if we turn too much towards the sensible realm and the empirical forces that shape our lives—as the affectivist says we must—we stray from the a priori, metaphysical account of morality whose objective universality must ground any properly Kantian account of moral life. I will develop this framework in much more detail in Chapter 6.

To keep clear of both objections, then, it is important to show that in accounting for our particular form of subjectivity, Kant draws on a series of metaphysical distinctions in the service of making a priori claims about the nature of our mindedness. Mapping out these distinctions, beginning with the most abstract and descending to the more determinate, will allow us to draw two related conclusions. First, we can show that the only proper motivation for acting is that of respect for the moral law, a concept that can be laid out completely a priori on the basis of the metaphysical distinctions in play. Second, and more generally, we can make room for the idea of sensible conditions on acts of practical reason without having to concede that such conditions are based in empirical contingency. As Kant's *Anthropology* suggests, there are particular empirical facts and laws that we can invoke to give a psychological explanation of the way we struggle and err in cultivating virtue. But we can nevertheless claim that the general form of our subjectivity has firm footing in Kant's a priori philosophical system, and is not merely constituted by a collection of fragmentary empirical claims.

I will begin, some distance from the idea of human moral experience, with the idea of cognition as such, the different ways in which it can relate to its object, and the distinct forms of subjectivity entailed by the latter. We must start here, because it is essential to Kant's account of practical reason and the beings who possess it that practical cognition shares the fundamental features of cognition in general. Comprising the subject matter of §2.2, this discussion will center around the distinction between the intuitive and the discursive intellect. The latter of these—which describes our kind of intellect—relies on sensibility, allowing me to introduce the possibility of sensible conditions on cognition. Exploring these in §2.3, we will find that the discursive intellect's cognitive capacity divides into two uses, one theoretical, the other practical. Taking up the idea of the latter in §2.4, I articulate the form of subjectivity associated with the specifically practical use

of the discursive cognitive capacity. Finally, in §2.5, I will turn to human subjectivity in particular, and the extent to which it is conditioned by both metaphysics and contingent empirical facts. This will require attending to the metaphysical conditions placed on those beings with a capacity for practical discursive cognition, and the extent to which they leave room for contingency rooted in human psychology.

2.2 Intuitive and Discursive Intellects

2.2.1 The Intuitive Intellect

The first and most general distinction that can be applied in characterizing our practical subjectivity is that between the intuitive and the discursive intellect. Kant typically introduces this distinction when he is already in the process of describing our discursive form of cognition. By abstracting from the particular way that our cognition relates to its object, Kant introduces the possibility of another, intuitive intellect defined in negative contrast to ours (that is, as non-discursive) (KU 5:406). Thus the distinction originates from reflecting on the different ways in which cognition can relate to its object; namely, on (i), whether the cognitive capacity at issue is capable of producing its object independently of any external conditions, and (ii), whether it stands in a relation of agreement with its object that is subjectively necessary or merely contingent.

Though the idea of the intuitive intellect is secondary insofar as we can only grasp it through reflection on our own cognitive capacity, it is in another sense primary insofar as its cognitive capacity exhibits a more complete unity and thus involves fewer distinctions in its characterization. This is the case insofar as the intuitive intellect exemplifies what Kant calls “a complete spontaneity of intuition” (KU 5:406). Put in the simplest terms, it is an intellect “which

would not represent given objects, but through whose representation the objects would themselves at the same time be given, or produced” (B145). The intuitive intellect thus produces a distinct form of cognition because it creates the objects it cognizes in the very act of cognizing them. Put in more distinctly Kantian terms, the intuitive intellect is characterized as “that understanding through whose self-consciousness the manifold of intuition would at the same time be given, an understanding through whose representation the objects of this representation would at the same time exist” (B138-9). This description highlights two elements that Kant takes to be essential to cognition in general: a faculty of understanding and a manifold of content that is either produced or given.³ Without the former, there would be no cognizing subject, without the latter there would be no cognized object. Kant defines the understanding in general as “the faculty for bringing forth representations itself, or the *spontaneity* of cognition” (A51/B75); and “the faculty for cognizing an object by means of...representations” (A50/B74). Through exercises of the understanding, we enjoy representations that have the active and self-conscious character of cognition, as opposed to merely conscious affection.⁴ As regards the manifold or object of cognition, it follows from the very notion of cognition as objective representation⁵ that it must be in agreement with its object

³ At this stage, I mean to abstract from the question of whether the manifold is intelligible *as* content in isolation from the spontaneous faculty that represents it. Moving forward, we will see that these two fundamental aspects of cognition—that which cognizes and that which is cognized—are not as separable as one might think. I thank Stephen Engstrom for pointing out the potential for misunderstanding inherent to the above formulation.

⁴ The contributions that the understanding makes as spontaneity will be more closely examined below and in subsequent chapters. See also, Stephen Engstrom, “Understanding and Sensibility,” *Inquiry* 45 (2006): 2-25.

⁵ In the famous *Stufenleiter* passage at (A319/B376), Kant defines cognition as “objective perception.” This is, however, insufficiently general for the level of abstraction being considered here insofar as perception implies that the representation is sensible, and, as we will see, the intuitive intellect would not possess a capacity for sensibility. I thus use the more general term “representation.”

by somehow standing in immediate relation to that object. In the case of the intuitive intellect, this relation is secured simply insofar as the self-conscious activity of the understanding is itself productive of the manifold of content and the object that it represents.⁶ Because this cognitive content stands in immediate relation to its object through being its cause, it is aptly called ‘intuitive’ as opposed to ‘discursive’.⁷ And again, because these intuitive representations issue from the understanding, they are spontaneous. Hence the identification of the intuitive intellect as a “complete spontaneity of intuition” (KU 5:406).

On the basis of the above characterization, we can conclude that the intuitive intellect functions independently of any external conditions. The two general conditions requisite for cognition, that there be a capacity for spontaneous representation, and a manifold of content to represent that is suitably related to its object, are met simply through reflection on the idea of an intellect capable of spontaneous intuition. It is also an important corollary of this statement about independence that these conditions are necessarily met in any actualization of the subject’s cognitive capacity. In other words, because the intuitive intellect produces the objects that it cognizes unconditionally, the conditions on cognition identified above cannot fail to be met. Such

⁶ Because the cognitive capacity belonging to the intuitive intellect secures agreement through causal relation to its object, I take this to be good reason to think that Kant intends for this relation of agreement between cognition and its object to be causal in every case. Otherwise the difference between intuitive and discursive intellects would not just be that each realizes the basic conditions on cognition in different ways, rather, what cognition actually is would differ fundamentally. It would no longer be necessary to hold that discursive cognition is cognition of actually existing objects, and a subjectivism that most find objectionable would find its way in.

⁷ The first line of the Transcendental Aesthetic defines intuition as follows: “In whatever manner and by whatever means a mode of cognition may relate to objects, *intuition* is that through which it is in immediate relation to them, and from which all thought gains its material” (A19/B33).

an intellect is thus infallible, an attribute expressed through the idea that the relation of agreement between cognition and its object is subjectively necessary.

2.2.2 The Discursive Intellect

In contrast, the characterization of the human intellect as discursive and fallible stems from reflection on the kind of cognitive capacity that *is* dependent on external conditions, thus securing only subjectively contingent agreement between cognition and its object. Such reflections begin with the idea of an understanding that is not capable of independently⁸ producing its own object, necessitating the further distinction between spontaneous and receptive capacities of mind, and the idea of the two-stemmed cognitive power with which Kant opens the Transcendental Logic in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

“Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is *given* to us, through the latter it is *thought* in relation to that representation (as a mere determination of the mind)” (A50/B74).

Unlike the intuitive intellect whose understanding is itself capable of producing the manifold of content it cognizes, the discursive intellect relies on a separate capacity that receives the manifold in virtue of which cognition stands in agreement with its object. It is, however, important not to over-emphasize the role that receptivity plays in presenting the object of cognition to the understanding. As a companion claim to the thought, introduced above, that understanding is essentially the spontaneous power of producing representations from itself (A51/B75), Kant claims

⁸ This is an important qualification, as practical discursive cognition is productive of the object that it cognizes. But as we will see, it cannot do so without certain external conditions being met (specifically, it relies on being provided with a manifold of sensible desire).

that sensibility is “the *receptivity* of our mind to receive representations insofar as it is affected in some way” (A51/B75). With these two remarks he specifies, first, that sensibility, the receptive capacity, only accounts for whatever element of passive affection figures constitutively in cognition;⁹ and second, that understanding, as the spontaneous capacity more basic to cognition, produces objective representations through its own activity. That this is the case relates to the earlier thought about the capacity for understanding in general being what distinguishes cognitive representations, as self-conscious, active and objective, from merely passive conscious affection. As we will see, Kant takes it that reflection on what it is for a representation to amount to something more than the latter reveals, first, that the essential activity of the understanding is that of synthesis, or combination into a unity, and second, that all cognitive representations, even those which rely on sensibility for their content, involve this activity.

There is much to be said in a Kantian spirit about the concept of self-consciousness and the role it has to play in constituting the possibility for cognition as such. The point that is perhaps most basic for Kant, however, comes from reflection on the concept of cognition as a systematic body of representations. The idea of a system brings out that cognitive representations stand in relations of mutual reinforcement that exclude the very possibility of discord. This distinguishes cognition from something like an accumulated series of representations that, however sophisticated, form only an aggregate or collection whose members do not stand in logical relation to one another. As Kant insists, “if every individual representation were entirely foreign to the

⁹ Kant simply takes for granted that human receptivity is sensible in character. For an argument on Kant's behalf that shows the sensible character of receptivity follows from (i) the assumption of our finitude, and (ii) a causal condition on cognition which assumes there must be a causal connection between representation and its object, see Marcus Willaschek, “The Sensibility of Human Intuition: Kant’s Causal Condition on accounts of Representation,” in *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*, ed. Rainer Enskat, 129-150 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

other, as it were isolated and separated from it, then there would never arise anything like cognition, which is a whole of compared and connected representations” (A97). This feature can be summed up by saying that cognition is essentially a unity.

That the self-conscious activity of the understanding is responsible for the constitution of this unity is apparent from Kant’s formulation of its ultimate source in §16 of the Transcendental Deduction in the B edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Here he says, “the ‘I think’ must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all” (B131-2). It is thus unity in one consciousness that is constitutive of the essential unity of cognition. Though difficult in its abstractness, this thought amounts to the claim that a subject who cannot represent itself as the unifying source of all its representations could not recognize the relations between representations in virtue of which they form a body of cognition. It is thus the first personal character of acts of cognition, that they can be accompanied by the ‘I think’, which bestows unity through uniting them in one consciousness. But here it is important to note that it is not each cognition's being *in* one subject that confers systematic unity—a series of conscious affections can also be united in one subject. It is rather the self-conscious nature of this subject that accounts for the unity: the subject, in virtue of possessing a power of understanding, is able to recognize acts of cognition as such, namely, as systematically unified objective representations. So unity is bestowed not in virtue of these representations being attributable to one subject, but in virtue of the subject being able to attribute these objective representations, as objective representations, to itself. Self-consciousness is thus essential to the

unity of cognition: without the ‘I think,’ there could be no systematic unity for cognition and thus no cognition at all.¹⁰

So it is the self-conscious combination of content by the understanding as spontaneity that accounts for the possibility of cognition. But it would not be enough to claim that this possibility is met insofar as the understanding can relate already self-standing acts of cognition to one another. There arises the additional question of what gives unity to these individual acts, and further still, the sensible manifold that such acts rely on for their content. For Kant, the understanding’s synthetic activity permeates all the way down the hierarchy of cognitive representations, from cognition as a whole, to the judgments that make up its parts, and the various representations that make up their parts. It is thus to be taken as a central condition on the two-stemmedness of the discursive cognitive capacity that every conscious representation involves the activity of the understanding. Though we rely on sensible affection, it is in virtue of understanding’s activity that the manifold of sensible content can be combined to represent something that has the unity of an object. Thus even when Kant speaks of sensible representations, it is at least implicit that the manifold of content given through them has been organized through synthetic activity that can only arise from the understanding. If this combination were simply given to us as part of that content, it could not be the source of the kind of unity required for cognition. “Since it is an act of its self-activity,” Kant insists, combination “can be executed only by the subject itself” (B130). Thus it emerges as one of the central tenets of Kant’s theory of cognition that “we can represent

¹⁰ It is not easy to overestimate the worth that Kant attaches to self-consciousness as a human achievement. In his anthropology lectures, he declares: “the fact that the human being can have the ‘I’ in his representations raises him infinitely above all over living beings on earth. Because of this he is a person, and by virtue of the unity of consciousness through all changes that happen to him, one and the same person” (ApH 7:127).

nothing as combined in the object without having previously combined it ourselves” (B130). It is this tenet which leads Kant to claim that sensibility can provide nothing other than mere affection, and understanding must be the ultimate source of objective representations which, as such, exhibit synthetic unity. As we will see, it is this insight that paves the way for the resolute hylomorphism I outline in §1.2 of the Introduction.

2.3 Understanding and Sensibility as Form and Matter

From these reflections on the nature of cognition in general and discursive cognition in particular, it emerges that the understanding is best understood as relating to sensibility as form relates to matter. This thought, suggested by Kant and emphasized by many of his commentators, is helpful insofar as it points the way towards understanding how cognition can be constituted through two distinct elements and still form a unified activity. Recall the two conditions on cognition that we have been working with: first, it must issue from a capacity for spontaneous representation. We are now in a better position to see why this is so, for without the acts of synthesis performed by the understanding there could be no cognition as a systematic unity of representation. Thus we could reformulate this condition as the requirement that cognition exhibit self-conscious unity. Second, cognition must represent a manifold of content that stands in agreement with its object. For the discursive intellect, these conditions are met through the actualization of two distinct capacities, understanding and sensibility, so it can be difficult to see how these capacities relate to one another in such a way that the actualizations of each can contribute to one unified representation, be this representation a judgment or the sensible

representation of an object.¹¹ What the concepts of form and matter enable is the thought that sensibility and understanding interact as two stems of the same discursive cognitive capacity. This interaction takes place insofar as understanding—which as self-conscious spontaneity is essentially the power of cognition—determines sensibility by structuring its deliverances in such a way that they can serve as objects of cognition. A hylomorphic unity, a unity of form and matter, is one that emerges insofar as form determines or performs its essential function on matter, resulting in a being or object or activity exhibiting that form. In the case of discursive cognition, we can conceive of self-conscious unity as the essential form of cognition, a form which the understanding, through its synthetic activity, confers on the deliverances of receptivity that function as its matter. This structuring activity results in a product that in some way bears the form of cognition, for example, a judgment or an objective representation that could figure in a judgment. The actualizations of understanding and sensibility can thus amount to cognition insofar as the former account for the activity of cognition, ensuring that something (or, less misleadingly, someone) is cognizing, and the latter provides matter that individuates this activity, ensuring there is something to cognize.¹²

These form/matter unities that characterize the two-stemmed nature of discursive consciousness hold at various levels of abstraction, the characterization of which requires the introduction of a few more pieces of Kant’s terminology. On the more concrete, determinate side of the spectrum, we have concepts and the sensible representations on which they perform their

¹¹ Kant defines judgment as “the mediate cognition of an object, hence the representation of a representation of it” (A68/B93).

¹² See, for example, (A295/B351): “Sensibility, subordinated to understanding, as the object to which the latter applies its function, is the source of real cognition.”

functions.¹³ On Kant's picture, the understanding is primarily a faculty of concepts, whose function is defined as “the unity of the action of ordering different representations under a common one” (A68/B93). Conceptual acts can thus be understood as more determinate acts of unity through which the understanding constitutes its body of cognition. We can think of a concept’s function as bestowing unity insofar as different representations are brought together under a more general representation in virtue of one or more features that they share. This activity of concept application can be understood in terms of rules: every concept has its own unifying function that is described in terms of its rule of application, which enumerates the features or marks constitutive of that concept. In distinguishing whether or not an object can be subsumed under a concept, the subject essentially distinguishes whether or not an object stands under the relevant rule (A132/B171). For Kant this is the distinctive activity of judgment, “the faculty of subsuming under rules” (A132/B171). Because with this activity the understanding is essentially producing general representations that can apply to any more determinate representation with the relevant features, conceptual cognition is by nature general. And this it must be, for were we unable to unify particular representations under more general ones, we could not relate the contents of our thoughts to one another in the way required for cognition.

As we proceed up the chain of abstraction to less determinate instantiations of hylomorphic unity, that which previously served as form now stands as matter to a more abstract form. Thus the concepts of the understanding, as formal rule-based functions, become the matter on which a still higher unifying activity performs its function. For as explained above, the unity of cognition

¹³ In fact we can begin at an even more determinate level, with the activity of the understanding that renders the passive material of sensibility into a contentful, unified representation that purports to be of an object. For our purposes here, however, it is enough to begin with concepts and sensibly given representations of objects.

requires not just that sensible representations of objects are systematically combined; rather, this systematic combination must itself possess unity. Otherwise, the subject could not fully reflect upon and grasp the character of the understanding's rules, and the way these rules relate to one another—they could not be brought to self-consciousness. Such an incomplete form of representation would lack the fully systematic character of cognition. For Kant, this higher function of unity is performed by reason: “if the understanding may be a faculty of unity of appearances by means of rules, then reason is the faculty of the unity of the rules of understanding under principles” (A302/B359). Reason, as the faculty of principles, thus accounts for the ground of the unity of concepts, while the understanding accounts for the ground of the unity of objects. Because concepts are only used in judgments, insofar as reason governs the use of concepts it structures the logical relations in which judgments stand to one another. It is thus only through the activity of reason that we can articulate the complete unity of discursive cognition.

Returning to the two questions posed above, we can determine the character of discursive cognition more precisely by asking (i), whether the cognitive capacity at issue is capable of producing its object independently of any external conditions, and (ii), whether it stands in a relation of agreement with its object that is subjectively necessary or merely contingent. As regards (i), we are now in a position to affirm that discursive cognition is not capable of producing its object independently of external conditions.¹⁴ As a two-stemmed cognitive capacity, discursive cognition relies on the contributions of sensibility to stand in a relation of agreement to its object, and sensibility is, properly speaking, logically independent from the spontaneity that is essential

¹⁴ Even more precisely, the two forms of discursive cognition—theoretical and practical—do not produce their objects independently of external conditions because (a), theoretical discursive cognition does not produce its object at all, and (b) practical discursive cognition does so only insofar as certain additional sensible conditions have been met. Unpacking (b) will be a central aim of the present project.

to cognition. The answer to our second question also follows directly from the dependence that characterizes discursive cognition: because it is dependent on the workings of another capacity to meet the material condition on cognition, it is logically possible that this condition might not be met. Put differently, because discursive cognition depends on the matter of sensibility to perform its function, there arises the possibility that concepts might be misapplied to the logically independent deliverances of another capacity. This would result in the mere semblance of unity where there is in fact none.¹⁵ This is just to say that the agreement between understanding and sensibility, concept and sensibly determined representation, cognition and its object, is subjectively contingent. It could fail to obtain—an assertion that follows simply from reflection on the two-stemmedness of discursive cognition.¹⁶ The logical possibility of erring thus emerges for the discursively cognizing subject insofar as its understanding is not wholly self-sufficient.

We can now take stock of the conditions on discursive cognition in a way that anticipates the further distinction between theoretical and practical discursive cognition that will be the topic of the following section. From reflection on our subjectivity as beings whose cognitive capacity is discursive in nature, we have gathered the following: 1), the formal condition on cognition is met

¹⁵ See the rest of the passage from (A295/B351) quoted in fn. 17 above:

“Sensibility, subordinated to understanding, as the object to which the latter applies its function, is the source of real cognition. But this same sensibility, insofar as it influences the action of the understanding and determines it to judgments, is the ground of error.”

N.B. Kant is speaking loosely here when he talks of sensibility determining understanding. As we have already seen, understanding, as spontaneity, is self-determining, and sensibility, as receptivity, is essentially passive. The point to take away is that it is in virtue of discursive cognition’s dependence on sensibility that error can arise.

¹⁶ Kant emphasizes this contingency and its tight connection to our subjectivity as discursive cognizers in the *Critique of Judgment*: “our understanding is a faculty of concepts, i.e., a discursive understanding, for which it must of course be contingent what and how different might be the particular that can be given to it in nature and brought under its concepts” (KU 5:406).

in virtue of the spontaneity of understanding, which in our case is a faculty of concepts; 2), the material condition on cognition is met in virtue of the receptivity of sensibility, which contributes the sensibly given manifold on which the understanding performs its synthetic activity; and 3), in virtue of the twofold nature of our cognitive capacity, cognition does not establish agreement with its object by causing it to exist unconditionally, i.e., its spontaneity is not completely self-sufficient. Nevertheless, there must be a different way to characterize the agreement between cognition and its object, one which establishes cognition as actual and its object as existing.¹⁷ In fact, as we will see, there are two ways for this agreement to be established, corresponding to the division between theoretical and practical discursive cognition. Either the subject's cognitive activity determines an already existing object, or the subject's cognitive activity determines an object in such a way that the subject is moved to bring about that object's existence (Bix-x). The former can be glossed as cognition of what is, the latter as cognition of what ought to be.

2.4 Practical Discursive Cognition

Because we are here concerned with the nature of our practical subjectivity and the extent to which it can be grounded in Kantian metaphysics, the current section will only concern itself with one half of the distinction, focusing on the structure of practical discursive cognition, or what we now know amounts to the same for our purposes, practical cognition as actualized in sensibly dependent fallible beings.¹⁸

¹⁷ Cf. Engstrom, "Understanding and Sensibility," 11.

¹⁸ I say "for our purposes" because some would argue that there is not a strict identity between discursive cognition and cognition as actualized in sensibly dependent fallible beings. While all physical beings existing in nature require sensibility insofar as they need to be affected by objects to have material cognition,

Now that we are focusing exclusively on the practical use of the discursive cognitive capacity, we have a new concept to weave into the discussion. Like many philosophers before and after him, Kant made extensive use of the term ‘will’ (*Wille*) in developing his practical philosophy. In grasping what Kant means by ‘the will’ or ‘acts of willing’, it is important to recognize that this concept does not function as an extra element in his account of practical discursive cognition that does not have its analogue in the theoretical case. For in the Kantian system, the will is simply to be identified with practical reason, and acts of willing are to be identified with practical judgment, as the application of the concept ‘good’ in accordance with principles.

In a well-known passage from the *Groundwork*, Kant defines the will as follows: “only a rational being has the capacity to act *in accordance with the representation* of laws, that is, in accordance with principles, or has a *will*. Since *reason* is required for the derivation of actions from laws, the will is nothing other than practical reason” (G 4:412). We saw above that reason, as the faculty of principles, is that which brings unity to the conceptual functions of the understanding, which in turn bring unity to the manifold of matter given in sensibility. The ground of the unity provided by reason is a principle on the basis of which the universal is apprehended in the particular through concepts, i.e., a principle on the basis of which a particular object is

there could conceivably be a variety of discursive cognition associated with the conceptual possibility, i.e., the mere idea, of non-sensible beings like angels. In this case, there would still be a two-stemmed cognitive capacity, but the receptivity branch would not as such be sensible. What this kind of cognition would be like is inaccessible to us and difficult to describe. Setting this possibility aside, I will continue to treat discursive cognition and sensibly dependent fallible cognition as the same. For Kant on the sensible nature of all earthly beings in contrast to angels, see, LE 27:490 and LE 27:519. See also Kant’s affirmation that all sensible, created rational beings are fallible at KpV 5:72

brought under a concept.¹⁹ Kant's above definition of the will can thus be glossed as the distinctly practical determination of discursive reason, for it is simply a more determinate example of this same structure. In the practical case, the particular is cognized in the universal insofar as the subject judges a particular action to be necessary on the basis of a general principle. Kant suggests that this act of apprehension, and the determination of the will that results, looks something like the following. Practical principles are "propositions that contain a general determination of the will" (KpV 5:19), that is, they specify ends to be pursued. For example, the subject might adopt as a practical principle that all debts should be repaid, or that no insult should pass unavenged. If the subject recognizes that a particular action is subsumable under a given principle, the action is recognized as good on that basis, i.e., it is subsumed under the concept 'good' in an act of judgment.²⁰ This act of distinctly practical judgment can be identified with an act of willing insofar as the former determines the subject to realize the end in question, i.e., the action is pursued or supported in whatever way the context specifies.²¹ We can thus see that Kant identifies the will with practical reason because willing is nothing other than a principled representing that is itself capable of bringing about what it represents. The will cannot be understood as something extra, over and above the power of representing actions as good on the basis of principles, because this

¹⁹Apprehending the universal in the particular through concepts is the fundamental activity of the discursive intellect (KU 5:406).

²⁰ Recall too that Kant also defines judgment as the faculty of subsuming under rules or "determining whether something stands under a given rule" (A132/B171). So in the practical case we could gloss the role of the understanding as the faculty of subsuming under the concept good (or evil).

²¹ Judgment, as opposed to willing, is however in some respects a more helpful characterization of this distinctive activity, insofar it makes more evident that the end is being pursued, not because the subject has been moved by forces like instinct or a certain conception of animal desire, but because the subject recognizes the action as good on the basis of its being grounded in the practical principle at issue.

act is itself practical, i.e., such as to bring about, attempt to bring about, or otherwise support the bringing about of the object so represented. Hence as Kant says, “the will is nothing other than practical reason” (G 4:412).²²

2.4.1 Holy and non-holy wills

Now that we have the practical use of our cognitive capacity in view, it is helpful to introduce a more determinate version of the distinction between infallible and fallible intellects discussed above. Because we are here concerned with practical cognition, or “cognition insofar as it can itself become the ground of the existence of objects” (KpV 5:46), we are only concerned with one of the two ways in which discursive cognition relates to its object, namely, through bringing about its existence. The helpful contrast case to our fallibility in this instance would thus be a will that never brings about anything except insofar as it is actually cognized as necessary, i.e., as good, in accordance with principles of reason. Kant calls such a will “holy” (G 4:414). Central to the way that Kant develops the distinction between holy and non-holy wills in the *Groundwork* are the features used above to characterize the difference between the intuitive and discursive intellect. Of the holy will, he says “if reason infallibly determines the will, the actions of such a being that are cognized as objectively necessary are also subjectively necessary, that is, the will is a capacity to choose *only that* which reason independently of inclination cognizes as practically necessary, that is, as good” (G 4:412). Here Kant ascribes to the holy will the second of the two defining features of infallibility described above in §2.2, namely, that cognition and its

²²From this point forward, I will use the terminology of acts of practical cognition and acts of willing interchangeably, switching between the two based on what is called for by context.

object stand in a relation of subjectively necessary agreement. Through his characterization of the non-holy sensibly dependent will, we can gather that he also ascribes to it the first defining feature.

Of the non-holy or fallible will he says,

“if reason solely by itself does not adequately determine the will; if the will is exposed also to subjective conditions (certain incentives) that are not always in accord with the objective ones; in a word, if the will is not *in itself* completely in conformity with reason (as is actually the case with human beings), then actions that are cognized as objectively necessary are subjectively contingent” (G 4:412-13).

Here Kant implies that it is the presence of sensible incentives that conditions the possibility of error in a non-holy will. Insofar as we are not holy, we err in exercising our capacity for practical cognition by acting on the basis of sensible incentives that have been improperly grounded in principles of reason.²³ This should not be surprising, insofar as we have shown that the practical discursive cognition at issue in this section is just practical cognition as actualized in sensibly dependent and therefore fallible beings. Thus, a holy will never errs by subjective necessity insofar as sensibility could not possibly provide it with a ground for erring.²⁴ In the paradigm case of holiness that is simply a more determinate version of the intuitive intellect, this is because the holy will does not rely on a receptive capacity at all, but is rather completely spontaneous in its cognitive activity.²⁵

²³ The details surrounding the possibility of error will be explored at more length in §2.5 of this paper, as well as in subsequent chapters. For now it is sufficient to recognize that sensibility is a condition on the possibility of error, however it might be realized.

²⁴ Recall the passage at (A295/B351) concerning sensibility as the ground of error in judgment.

²⁵ We can understand the angels described in footnote 18 as possessing another kind of holy will, which is finite but non-sensible (though this is a mere conceptual possibility we cannot say much about). It is a matter of interpretive controversy whether Kant recognizes the real possibility of a finite, sensible holy will. I tend to doubt that he does, but do not offer an argument for this in the present work.

As Kant implies above, sensibly dependent fallible beings, in contrast, do rely on the deliverances of receptivity for cognition. This can seem especially difficult to grasp in the case of practical cognition, since Kant also emphasizes over and over again that pure practical reason must be capable of determining itself in accordance with universal laws without relying on any sensible incentive.²⁶ The task in the following section will be to develop the role that sensibility plays in the exercise of practical discursive cognition without infringing on Kant's claims regarding the autonomy of pure practical reason. This will require returning to the language of form and matter developed above.

2.4.2 The Form and Matter of Practical Discursive Cognition

In §2.3, I attempted to make the nature of discursive cognition more graspable by drawing on the well-known thought that understanding and sensibility relate to one another as form and matter. This general thought led to the articulation of a number of more particular form/matter unities involving spontaneous representations and sensible content, culminating in the discussion of reason as that faculty of thought which provides the highest form of unity, bringing unity to the functions of the understanding. Because I was there trying to explain the possibility of there being sensible objects for discursive cognition in a general sense, I paid no attention to the order of analysis, i.e., whether we began with reason and proceeded through the understanding to sensibility, or vice versa. The task was merely to explain how the various functions of mind could produce a unified body of cognition. Once we proceed to the particular determinations of

²⁶ See, for example, (KpV 5:21): "It is requisite to reason's lawgiving that it should need to presuppose only *itself*, because a rule is objectively and universally valid only when it holds without the contingent, subjective conditions that distinguish one rational being from another."

discursive cognition, however, the order of analysis is of considerable importance, insofar as it captures the way in which cognition relates to its object in each case. Since theoretical cognition must be given its object, it is more appropriate to characterize it as beginning with objects given in sensibility.²⁷ Practical cognition, in contrast, concerns the determining grounds of the will as practical reason, and hence must begin with the possibility of practical principles containing general determinations of the will and the extent to which we can understand these as having their origin in reason alone (KpV 5:89-90). That is, it must begin with the possibility of an a priori, necessary law of pure practical reason, known more commonly as the moral law.²⁸

Thus although it is true of both forms of discursive cognition that reason accounts for the highest level of unity in organizing the functions of the understanding, which in turn provide unity to the sensible manifold, the precise way in which discursive cognition makes use of these activities in order to build a unified body of cognition is indicative of whether it is practical or theoretical. And although practical discursive cognition, as discursive, must grow insofar as it apprehends new objects, extends concepts, formulates principles and the like, this activity must be grounded in one fundamental a priori determining principle without which it could not function as it is, namely, a unified cognitive activity capable of producing its own object.

²⁷ See A298-9/B355: “All our cognition starts from the senses, goes from there to the understanding, and ends with reason, beyond which there is nothing higher to be found in us to work on the matter of intuition and bring it under the highest unity of thinking.”

²⁸ See KpV 5:90: “the Analytic of reason, insofar as it is to be a practical reason..., must begin from the *possibility of practical principles* a priori. Only from these could it proceed to *concepts* of objects of a practical reason, namely to the concepts of the simply good and evil, in order to first give them in keeping with those principles..., and only then could the last chapter conclude this part, namely the chapter about the relation of pure practical reason to sensibility”.

Thus, following the relevant order of analysis, we will get a more concrete sense of the role that sensibility plays in practical discursive cognition by articulating a series of form/matter unities beginning, as Kant does, with reason and proceeding through the understanding to sensibility.

Recall that a form/matter unity is constituted insofar as form determines or performs its essential function on matter, resulting in an object or being or activity exhibiting that form. In the case of practical discursive reason, the faculty of practical principles, the relevant form is captured by the fundamental formal principle of pure practical reason: “so act that the maxim²⁹ of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law” (KpV 5:30). This ultimate formal principle is expressive of the form of practical cognition insofar as it captures what is essential to it as an activity, namely, that it determine itself to act on the basis of grounds that are universal and thus objective. The form of the practical principle is thus universality (G 4:43); that is, practical principles, insofar as they serve to unify and ground the activity of the understanding, prescribe ways of acting that hold as valid, (1) not just for one cognizing subject, but for all of them, and (2) not just on one wholly unique, unrepeatable occasion, but on all relevantly similar occasions. For cognition, as representation that determines an object, is by nature sufficiently general that it can be shared by more than one subject, and extended to any relevantly similar object. If it is correct to judge that ϕ -ing would be good on this occasion, then other cognizing subjects should also judge as such. Furthermore, we should all grasp that ϕ -ing would also be good if the features of the occasion that make it good to ϕ were repeated. These formal features of cognition are captured in the fundamental principle of pure practical reason, which calls

²⁹A maxim is a subjective practical principle, that is, a principle which is practical for the subject insofar as it has been endorsed or taken up as a general determination of that subject's will.

for action that can be grounded in a practical law prescribing a general determination of the will that holds for all beings capable of practical cognition.

In keeping with the idea of nested form/matter unities introduced in §2.3, we can anticipate that the matter of practical discursive reason, as that upon which form exercises its activity, is provided by the understanding. Kant describes the matter of a practical principle as both “the object of the will” (KpV 5:27) and an end (G 4:436). He defines the former as “the representation of an object as an effect possible through freedom” (KpV 5:57), and the latter as “the object of a concept insofar as the latter is regarded as the cause of the former (the real ground of its possibility)” (KU 6:219-20). Central to both definitions is the idea that an end, as the object of practical reason, is the representation of something that can be brought about through the act of representing it. The former uses the language of ‘representing as’ to capture that the object has been determined as something the subject can bring about through free choice,³⁰ while the latter specifies that it is the conceptual representation of the object as an end that is or would be the cause of its existence. It is this representation of an object by the understanding as a possible effect of practical reason that stands as matter to the formal principle of pure practical reason. Insofar as the object has been determined by the principle, it is represented as good or evil on the basis of whether or not it stands in agreement with the latter. So it is not just the representation of an end but the representation of an end as good or evil, through its being determined by form, that is properly speaking the object or matter of practical reason. Thus Kant claims that the only objects of practical reason are the concepts of good and evil (KpV 5:58), which do their determining, unifying work through standing

³⁰ We have not yet touched upon the issue of practical freedom, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Though closely related, it is not to be identified with the spontaneity of cognition in general. Cf. Dieter Henrich, “The Concept of Moral Insight,” in *The Unity of Reason: Essays on Kant's Philosophy*, ed. Richard L. Velkley, trans. Manfred Kuehn, 55-88 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

under the formal principle of practical reason (KpV 5:67). This is in keeping with what we already know about practical reason, as it is not the representation of an object as a possible end that is such as to move the subject to bring it about, but the representation of that end as good, that is, as necessary.³¹

We now have in view the first form/matter unity constitutive of practical discursive cognition: the moral law, as the supreme principle of pure practical reason, functions as form and performs its activity on the understanding's representation of a possible end as matter. The result of this activity is the determination of the end through the principle of reason. If the end is cognized as good, it bears the form of pure practical reason: it is grasped as universal and objective, and thus becomes a necessary end for the practically cognizing subject. Moving on to the next relation of form and matter, we can now ask, what does the concept of a good end unify? This is where the role of sensibility in practical cognition emerges, since, as we saw in our general account of discursive cognition, concepts provide rules that bring unity to sensible representations.

Sensibility was introduced above as the power of receiving representations through being affected (A51/B75). A representation that does not purport to be objective, which is merely the effect of an object on sensibility, is sensation (A19-20/B34). In accordance with the division between theoretical and practical discursive cognition, we can recognize two different kinds of sensation. Both, as sensation, are merely subjective insofar as their content refers only to the subject as a modification of its state (A320/B376). However, despite the fact that all sensations are properly speaking subjective, Kant further divides the category between objective sensations whose content is an object of sense, as with, e.g., a sensation of colour; and subjective sensations

³¹ Kant equates the good with practical necessity at G 4:412 and KpV 5:58.

whose content features no object, but merely represents the effect an object has on the subject with regard to pleasure or displeasure (KU 5:206). ‘Subjective sensation’ is thus just another name for ‘feeling’.³² I must introduce the concept of feeling for my purposes here, because it is feeling, specifically the feeling of agreeableness or pleasure, that stands as matter to the concept of an end as form. For it is through the feeling of pleasure, as the matter that individuates form, that practical discursive cognizers come to have particular ends at all. The moral law, as expressive of the form of pure practical reason, may be substantive enough to determine certain general ends as necessary, but the will must be put in relation to a possible end as the particular, material effect of willing in order for acts of the will to individuate themselves as such. As Kant notes, the faculty of discursive reason by itself cannot discover objects of the will (G 4:460, footnote). Thus, in order for there to be an object of cognition for the subject to grasp as good and be moved to bring about, sensible matter that can be taken up by the understanding is required. This process is initiated insofar as the subject is conscious of a feeling of pleasure in response to an object, which is taken up by the spontaneous activity of the understanding and conceived as something to be brought about. It is thus the experience of the agreeable that provides the manifold of sensible matter upon which the understanding exercises its unifying function, in this case through the concept of an end.

It should be noted that this is not a condition of practical cognition generally, but only practical discursive cognition. As we have emphasized, the formal conditions of practical cognition are contained in the expression of the moral law, and insofar as this law is capable of immediately determining the will to produce its object, that is, insofar as the representation of an

³² It is helpful to introduce this kind of representation under the name ‘subjective sensation’ in order to show its relation to the structure of cognition in general and theoretical cognition in particular, but it should be noted that in general Kant actually uses the term ‘feeling’ in order to avoid confusion. I will follow him in this practice. The nature of feeling will be discussed in much more detail in subsequent chapters.

object as good is capable of moving the subject to act without any further subjective condition, the possibility of practical cognition is fully accounted for. For such a being, explaining what it means to say that pure reason is practical of itself alone is a much more straightforward endeavor. That said, even for discursive practical beings, this formal condition stands: the recognition that the practical principle governing the will is universal, is what brings the subject to will a given end. It is the form and not the matter of the practical principle at issue that constitutes the condition under which the subject acts. Kant makes this point in a particularly vivid way at the beginning of the *Religion*:

“since its law binds through the mere form of universal lawfulness of the maxims to be adopted in accordance with this lawfulness as the highest condition (itself unconditional) of all ends, morality needs absolutely no material determining ground of the free power of choice, that is no end, either in order to recognize what duty is or to impel its performance; on the contrary, when duty is the issue, morality can perfectly well abstract from ends all together, and ought to do so” (R 6:3-4).

Nevertheless, as sensibly dependent beings, our form of cognition requires reference to matter—in this case, an end with sensible content—in order for our actions to be individuated as such. Without an end, form would have nothing upon which to perform its activity. So for sensibly dependent beings, acts of willing require ends in order to become recognizable as doings (or non-doings). Hence Kant’s claim that all willing requires an object and thus a matter that rests in part on subjective, i.e., sensible, conditions (KpV 5:34).

We now have in view the second form/matter unity constitutive of practical discursive cognition: the understanding, as the faculty of concepts, confers unity on the sensible manifold of desire through bringing it under the concept of an end. Starting from the sensible manifold and working our way up, we can articulate the whole structure of practical discursive cognition as follows: “the agreeable, which as such represents the object solely in relation to sense, must first

be brought under principles of reason through the concept of an end before it can be called good as an object of the will” (KU 5:208). This formulation captures the extent to which the concept of the good, as the object of practical reason, confers objectivity on merely subjective ends through its relation to principles of reason. In its emphasis on objectivity, however, the above formulation can seem to miss another important aspect of practical cognition, namely, that it is such as to move the subject to act. So, we need another way of laying out the structure of practical cognition, one which emphasizes the practicality or efficacy of practical reason. We find this in Kant’s articulation of the practical syllogism, which he thinks is expressive of the way practical discursive cognition begins with reason and proceeds through the understanding to sensibility. This syllogism proceeds,

“from the universal in the *major premise* (the moral principle), through undertaking in a *minor premise* a subsumption of possible actions (as good or evil) under the former, to the *conclusion*, namely, the subjective determination of the will (an interest in the practically possible good and in the maxim based on it)” (KpV 5:90).

With this formulation, Kant brings out the extent to which recognizing an object as good does not just involve sensibility insofar as sensible representations are presupposed as matter. Recognizing an object as good also has a different but related effect on sensibility: through this recognition, the will is determined to realize the good end by producing an interest, or a representation capable of moving her to act. Though it is not yet clear how, this interest somehow involves sensibility. So, the sensible capacity does not just offer up matter for cognition: in determining this matter, reason produces a sensible incentive, a driving force, that moves.³³ This is what accounts for the efficacy of practical reason in a sensibly dependent being.

³³ The concept of an incentive (*Triebfeder*) will be examined in much more detail in Chapter 3.

This condition on practical cognition affirms that it is not the agreeable which is the ultimate source of motivation. What moves us, rather, is the recognition that our end is to be acted upon, or made actual, in accordance with objective principles of reason. Kant is unequivocal that meeting this condition must involve saying something about sensibility:

“In order for a sensibly affected rational being to will that for which reason alone prescribes the ‘ought,’ it is admittedly required that his reason have the capacity to *induce a feeling of pleasure* or of delight in the fulfillment of duty, and thus there is required a causality of reason to determine sensibility in conformity with its principles” (G 4:460).

Kant ultimately thinks we cannot provide a causal explanation for how consciousness of a principle of reason can have an effect on sensibility (G 4:460), but there is nevertheless much more to be said about this important condition on practical cognition. The details of this picture will be unpacked in more detail in what follows. For now, it suffices to say that we have finally arrived at the concept of respect, a distinctive kind of sensible motivation that is grounded in the recognition of practical law. This is the unique kind of motivation that is required for a sensibly dependent being if we are to understand it as having a will, i.e., the capacity to act on the basis of laws (G 4:412). Kant thus thinks we can conclude that respect, a rationally grounded sensible response to the moral law, must be an important part of the structure of practical discursive cognition. Because of the latter’s fundamental nature, we must understand the moral law as “an object of the greatest *respect* and so too the ground of a positive feeling that is not of empirical origin and is cognized a priori” (KpV 5:73).

The peculiar nature of respect as the proper incentive to action, and its role in Kant’s practical philosophy will be explored at length in what follows. For now, I am merely outlining the structure of practical discursive cognition with a view to seeing how much of our specifically human subjectivity can be grounded in Kant’s metaphysics without relying on empirical facts

about human nature. Through reflection on the nature of cognition in general and discursive cognition in particular, we have gathered that discursive practical cognition, simply in virtue of its discursivity, requires that certain sensible requirements be met. Though the will, as practical reason, is capable of producing its own objects, it does not do so in the absence of sensible conditions. Two such conditions have emerged. First, practical reason produces its own object, but which object it produces is specified through the sensible representation of possible objects as agreeable. This representation of agreeableness is, however, as matter, not the ground for determining the will. Because it is the recognition of an end as good that motivates, we cannot understand the agreeableness of an object to fully account for what is practical or motivating for the subject. Instead, and this is the second sensible condition, sensibility is determined by the moral law and the subject is thereby motivated by nothing other than the law insofar as it expresses the form of practical cognition. That the structure of practical discursive cognition requires sensibility to be determined in this way, through the feeling of respect, is as we will see especially important for our task of articulating Kant's account of human practical subjectivity.

2.5 Human Practical Discursive Cognition

We saw above that discursive cognition as such is opened up to the logical possibility of error in virtue of its dependence on sensibility. In the specifically *practical* form of discursive cognition, our fallibility is conditioned through the will's dependence on feeling for the discovery of subjective ends. That we are fallible, however, only grounds the possibility, not the actuality, of our erring. That we actually do err is a fact discovered in the experience of oneself and others. Hence, certain characteristics having to do with our fallibility insofar as it is actualized have to do

not with sensibly dependent cognizing beings in general, but humans in particular as an example of the latter.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant warns against arguing directly from mere logical possibility to real possibility.³⁴ Logical possibility implies only that the thought does not contradict itself. In the case at hand, because practical discursive judgment depends on having sensible matter to determine, it is at least conceivable that judgment could fail to bring its matter into agreement with its form. Insofar as the form of practical reason is normative—and of course it must be, insofar as it is constitutive of a universal moral imperative—there must be the possibility of disagreement between form and the matter it determines.³⁵ Real possibility implies something stronger: namely, that the synthesis through which such judgment would come about is proved to be possible. Because we are talking about freely self-determined action, this stronger form of possibility is only shown in experience. It cannot be determined in advance, for this would be incompatible with freedom—we cannot predict that a particular misuse of practical reason will necessarily come about. We thus only know for certain that practical wrongdoing is really possible through experiencing particular instances of it.

Kant discusses the real possibility, the actuality, of practical wrongdoing in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Because practical cognition concerns the grounds upon which we act, Kant refers to our practical fallibility as a propensity to evil. Accordingly, he does not take it that only some but not all humans exhibit an evil nature—the term as he uses it does not track what we often mean by ‘evil’ in more common speech. For Kant, the concept of human evil simply

³⁴ C.f. the footnote at (A587/B625).

³⁵ Cf. Engstrom, *The Form of Practical Reason*, 131

captures the real possibility of our practical fallibility, something which applies to all of us: “ ‘the human being is evil’ cannot mean anything else than that he is conscious of the moral law and yet has incorporated into his maxim the (occasional) deviation from it” (R 6:32). He thus takes it to be uncontroversial and a simple matter of experience that evil, so described, is a propensity characteristic of human nature in general: “according to the cognition we have of the human being through experience...we may presuppose evil as subjectively necessary in every human being, even the best” (KpV 5:32). It is because of this propensity that the cultivation of virtue, as the capacity to withstand that which opposes the moral law within us (MS 6:380), is so important for human beings.

Taken on their own, it is this set of claims that can lead to the view that Kant has separated his treatment of us as human, i.e., as empirically knowable beings, from the claims of his metaphysics in a way that is problematic for his moral philosophy. But the preceding sections have laid the groundwork to show that we cannot think of human weakness or fallibility in moral matters as having no grounding in how Kant thinks about the structure of practical cognition. For through reflection on the nature of cognition in general and practical discursive cognition in particular, we can gather the following about our practical subjectivity on a priori grounds:

First, as subjects capable of practical cognition, we have the power to determine ourselves to act merely on the basis of the representation of an end as good. Even in a sensibly dependent being, the will does not require a material ground to be determined; it can determine itself in virtue of form alone. Hence, we are transcendently free.

Second, as subjects whose form of practical cognition is discursive, we must be given a sensible manifold to have consciousness of the ends that we represent as good and freely bring about. Thus, while we do not require a material ground for the determination of the

will, we do rely on feeling to individuate the subjective ends that figure in practical reasoning.³⁶

Third, as subjects whose form of practical cognition is discursive, sensibility must be determinable by reason in order for us to be motivated to act. The possibility of this motivation, which Kant calls respect for the moral law, ensures that the objective determining grounds of the will can at the same time be the subjective determining grounds for the will of a sensibly dependent being.³⁷

From the first point, we can gather that no empirical facts about the sensible constitution of a human being can ground their propensity to evil. For as Kant states, the real ground of evil is not that one has evil incentives, but that one elects to make the material incentives that are otherwise natural and even necessary the determining ground of the will. This point was foregrounded insofar as it was shown above that dependence on sensibility is a condition on the logical possibility of practical wrongdoing, but is not as such constitutive of its actuality. What does account for the latter is an act of willing or practical judgment through which the will is determined on the basis of a practical principle. Hence Kant's claim that "*sensuous nature* therefore contains too little to provide a ground of moral evil in the human being, for, to the extent that it eliminates the incentives originating in freedom, it makes of the human a purely *animal* being" (R 6:35). Much more will be said about our a priori nature and the real possibility of evil in Chapters 4 and 5. For now, the

³⁶ Kant is especially helpful on these two points at KpV 5:34 : "Now it is indeed undeniable that every volition must also have an object and hence a matter; but the matter is not, just because of this, the determining ground and condition of the maxim".

³⁷ Once again, see G 4:460 : "In order for a sensibly affected rational being to will that for which reason alone prescribes the 'ought,' it is admittedly required that his reason have the capacity to *induce a feeling of pleasure* or of delight in the fulfillment of duty, and thus there is required a causality of reason to determine sensibility in conformity with its principles."

key conclusion is that—though it is only revealed in experience—we cannot ground the human propensity for evil in biology, psychology, or any other discipline that considers the human being as an object of empirical science.

From the third point, we can gather that respect as the moral incentive is a requirement, not for human beings insofar as they exhibit an empirically observable propensity for evil, but for all sensibly dependent beings as such. The determinability of sensibility by reason in general, and the generation of the feeling of respect in particular, are especially important to the concept of virtue, which thereby reveals itself to be a priori in origin. In fact, it is only insofar as action is motivated by respect that it can be called virtuous: “since the moral capacity to constrain oneself can be called virtue, action springing from such a disposition (respect for law) can be called virtuous (ethical) action” (MS 6:394). Thus, what is essential to virtue is articulated on the basis of what is metaphysically necessary for a sensibly dependent being in general to act well.

In addition, the second and third points articulated above helps to prevent us from swinging back towards the objection with which we started in §2.1: namely, that in focusing on the nature of rationality as such, Kant’s account fails to capture what is distinct about the human experience of morality. Requiring that sensibility be determinable by reason, and respect be present as the moral incentive goes some way towards countering this objection: Kant’s acknowledgment of the crucial role played by our capacity for feeling helps off-set the worry that Kant over-emphasizes the role that reason plays in our practical considerations. However, it is our dependence on feeling for the articulation of subjective ends that ultimately fills out Kant’s account of the human being as an individual with particular goals, passions, and projects that motivate insofar as they are recognized as good.

Given that the foundation of ethics as the cultivation of virtue is grounded in a metaphysical account of the practical subjectivity of sensibly dependent beings, we can thus conclude that it is more faithful to Kant's texts to understand his claims about humanity as largely shaped by the idea that we are the only available example of rational beings marked by such sense-dependence. So, to claim that it is only humans who have a propensity to evil is to claim that we are the only group of sensibly dependent beings known, through experience, to put our sensibly determined needs above the moral law. But this is more owing to a lack of knowledge of other beings than anything specific about our biological, psychological, or historical make-up. We are just the only sensibly dependent beings who can be seen to make really possible what is otherwise the merely logical possibility of error that is inherent to discursive cognition as such. Because of this, the shape that ethics takes for us can be metaphysically grounded. But lest this seem to hold human experience at arm's length, it is equally true that the role of sensibility, in providing the matter to be taken up by the spontaneity of reason and the understanding, opens the door to contingency and complexity in a way that takes the variability and struggle of human experience into account. We thus have grounds to defend Kant against both the objections articulated at the outset of this chapter. He is neither consigned to an impoverished account of sensibility, nor guilty of severing his consideration of human moral experience from his rationalist metaphysics, effectively treating it as a separate subject better explained by empirical science. In short, the development of Kant's practical philosophy as a unique ethical system that can account for the universality and objectivity of practical cognition, while at the same time maintaining a viable account of human agency, thus appears to be a worthwhile project. As I have begun to show, however, this development is only possible to the extent that we understand his rationalism as sense-dependent in a unique way that warrants much additional exploration.

CHAPTER 3

Respect as the Form of Practical Sensibility

3.1 The Role of Respect in Kant's Practical System

In the previous chapter I introduced the structure of practical discursive reasoning, taking special care to highlight what it shares in common with its theoretical counterpart. Beginning in §2.2 with the idea of discursive cognition in general, its possibility was grasped through the idea of reason, understanding, and sensibility standing in various determining relations to one another. In §2.3 these relations were developed using the concepts of form and matter, beginning with the idea that sensibility provides the material conditions that individuate particular acts of the cognitive capacity, acts whose distinctive form traces back to reason as the capacity to self-consciously grasp the necessary relations between its objects. In §2.4, I examined the structure of practical discursive cognition as a more determinate species of discursive cognition. There the concepts of the agreeable and respect for the moral law were introduced as subjective sensations or feelings that meet specific sensible conditions on practical discursive reason. At this point, little has been said about the nature of either of these feelings or how they relate to one another. All we have in view is that practical discursive reason must simultaneously rely on sensibility for matter, and determine it in accordance with its own form. The present chapter's main concern is to spell out the details of this picture. Insofar as respect has been identified as that feeling which represents sensibility's capacity to be determined by practical reason, it will be my main focus here.¹

¹For the idea of practical reason determining sensibility, see page 55 of the present work, which quotes (G 4:460).

Understanding respect and the role it plays in Kant's system will involve saying something about its phenomenology, whether it should be thought of as primarily affective or intellectual in character, and whether it should be considered an essential part of or merely an important auxiliary to Kant's account of practical reason. My account will, however, differ from prominent examples in the literature insofar as my central focus is not the special character of respect, but its position within Kant's system.² Understanding this position requires thinking of respect as representative of the form of practical sensibility in a way that closely parallels Kant's account of theoretical sensibility. Having this structure in view will help us to answer some of the questions that typically motivate the discussion of respect, but answering these questions is not my aim here. Rather than providing helpful entry-points to understanding Kant's concept of practical discursive reason, I take them to be symptomatic of a fundamental misunderstanding that will be the focus of my final chapter.

3.2 What Makes a Practical Representation *Practical*?

To develop a properly systematic understanding of practical sensibility grounded in the idea that the two uses of discursive reason share a common form, we must be careful to attend to the differences through which these uses constitute themselves. Any account looking to bring out the unity inherent in Kant's system must be equally careful to grasp the various points at which the analogy between theoretical and practical reason must be limited. This is especially true when

² Such examples include Andrews Reath, "Kant's Theory of Moral Sensibility: Respect for the Moral Law and the Influence of Inclination," in *Agency and Autonomy in Kant's Moral Theory*, 8-32 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Richard R. McCarty, "Kantian Moral Motivation and the Feeling of Respect," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31 (1993): 421-435. For a more recent example that cites extensively from the literature, see Owen Ware, "Kant on Moral Sensibility and Moral Motivation," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52 (2014): 727-746.

giving an account of practical sensibility and the feeling of respect, for if we take on an overly theoretical view of practical reason, one which is more concerned with the objective content of representations than their ability to move the subject to act, sensibility's role will be unfairly diminished. On such a view, practical reason will also seem susceptible to objections and worries that only get a grip with respect to theoretical reason.

We must therefore continue to bear in mind Kant's definition of practical cognition as "cognition insofar as it can become the ground of the existence of objects" (KpV 5:46), and "cognition having to do only with determining grounds of the will" (KpV 4:20). These descriptions were briefly invoked in the previous chapter to explain the various ways in which discursive cognition can relate to its object, but some of their more important implications still need to be examined. In particular, it is crucial to note that the practical use of reason, as rational causality or will, is unlike its theoretical counterpart in that its characteristic activity does *not* involve the synthesis of matter to represent already existing objects given to reason from elsewhere. As that cognition which brings its object into existence, practical cognition only concerns objective representations insofar as they are efficacious or motivating.

3.2.1 Sensible Representations

We can see the influence of this distinction between theoretical and practical cognition throughout Kant's elaboration of the practical system. Attending to the characteristic activity of sensibility, understanding, and reason in their practical use reveals that each is associated with a different kind of efficacious representation which Kant contrasts with its theoretical counterpart. This contrast is exhibited most vividly if we begin with sensibility and the nature of sensible desire. At 5:206 in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant characterizes the representation of the agreeable, the

object of sensible desire, as “subjective sensation,” marking it out as related to but distinct from the “objective sensation” that figures in theoretical representations of objects. As noted in §2.4.2 of the previous chapter, sensation itself does not constitute a properly objective representation: as the characteristic representation of sensibility, our capacity for receptivity, it is nothing more than mere affect, the effect of an object on the subject that does not purport to have validity of any kind (A19-20/B34). Nevertheless, Kant still finds the subjective/objective distinction useful here. The kind of sensation that figures in acts of theoretical reason can be called ‘objective’ in order to capture that it represents the object that causes it,³ while its practical counterpart is called ‘subjective’ to capture that the sensation is related only to the subject, representing a modification of that subject which is brought about by an object without thereby representing it (KU 5:206). Because subjective sensation does not represent an object through a manifold of sensible matter, Kant emphasizes that it can never figure in the theoretical cognition of that object, and distinguishes it from theoretical sensation, sensation proper, with the name ‘feeling’.⁴

It is the subjective, or subject-directed, character of feeling that marks it off as distinctly practical. As Kant notes, the feeling of the agreeable does not simply denote affirmation or agreement; to understand it this way would be to conflate it with acts of theoretical judgment. Feeling is something else altogether, it is the ground or condition of sensible desire. Kant affirms this in the same passage from the third *Critique*: in recognizing an object as agreeable, “it is not mere approval that I give it, rather inclination is thereby aroused” (KU 5:207). Feeling is thus

³ Though to be clear, it does not represent it *as* an object, with all the complex conceptual activity and synthetic unity this requires.

⁴ Using the experience of a meadow as his example, Kant helpfully relates these terms to one another in a single sentence: “the green color of the meadows belongs to objective sensation, as perception of an object of sense; but its agreeableness belongs to subjective sensation, through which no object is represented, i.e., to feeling, through which the object is considered as an object of satisfaction (which is not a cognition of it)” (KU 5:206).

subjective insofar as it tells us something about the subject, namely that she desires the given object. And the notion of desire under discussion here must be understood in a radical Kantian sense: as he hints when he says that agreeableness is not akin to approval, to say that one finds an object agreeable is to say that the object is practically efficacious for the subject. Rather than representing an object whose manifold of representation includes the mark of agreeableness, feeling denotes that the object itself is such as to move the subject, to arouse inclination and stir the faculty of desire into activity. It is this movement, this efficacy, that is communicated through the concept of feeling.⁵

Understanding subjective sensation as subject-directed, efficacious representation entails one more important difference that emerges in comparison with objective sensation. Although feeling can seem quasi-perceptual insofar as its paradigm instance is occasioned by the direct physical presence of an object, its nature as subject instead of object-directed precludes any straightforward analogy with theoretical perception. While we rely on testimony in the absence of the latter, how we feel about a particular object or action is accessible to us regardless of whether it is physically present or not. This should not surprise us: practical reason brings its object into existence, so it would be absurd to claim that this same object must always be perceptually present to the subject who has yet to act or otherwise engage in practical reasoning. Indeed, it is a central tenet of Kant's theory of moral education that feeling can and should be aroused through reading historical or even literary accounts of virtue and vice that describe distant or fictitious ends and actions. So although vivid sensible presentations may lead to more lively feelings and thus more

⁵ So described, the agreeable does not strictly speaking even have articulable content. It is a conscious representation relating to the subject, but feeling does not represent the subject as being a certain way (e.g., as disposed to want the object). As merely receptive, feeling cannot represent at all. It must instead be understood as an affect that stirs the subject to represent objects in a certain light, namely, as potential ends or objects of practical reason.

efficacious representations of ends, the perceptual presence of the object is not a necessary condition on feeling. Insofar as feeling captures the sensible aspect of practical and therefore efficacious representing, it need not be causally related to some present and existing object.

3.2.2 Representations of the Understanding

We find the same distinction between practical and theoretical representations at work in Kant's discussion of the practical use of the understanding, located in the second chapter of the analytic in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. This is where he introduces the categories of freedom (KpV 5:66), pure concepts of the understanding relating to the determination of the will, which correspond directly to the theoretical categories of nature introduced in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. As pure concepts, both sets of categories determine a fundamental kind of unity for experience, providing a highly general, individuating framework for sensibly given matter. As explained in §2.2.2 of the previous chapter, it is the self-conscious unifying activity of the understanding that grounds the possibility of cognition; without it, the systematic character of cognition could not be accounted for. This activity can be described at various levels of abstraction, the highest of these being the transcendental unity of apperception, the notion of the pure self-consciousness or 'I think' which must be able to accompany every representation. We also saw, in §2.3, that concepts exercise a more determinate form of unifying activity. Amongst these concepts are the pure concepts or categories which represent the most fundamental functions of the understanding, those without which we could not have theoretical or practical representations of objects. These functions are both constitutive of the objects themselves, as well as the relations in which they stand to one another, and are thus indispensable to the self-conscious unity of cognition. In short, the categories represent those a priori acts of synthesis that make the idea of an

interconnected body of self-conscious cognitions possible. Having this in common, the distinction central to this section emerges insofar as the categories of nature account for the unity of sensible intuitions, which take objective sensations as their matter; while the categories of freedom account for the unity of sensible desires, which take subjective sensations as their matter.⁶ In doing so, the latter essentially explain the possibility of organizing our sensible desires in accordance with principles of reason.⁷

We can see just how different the activity of the understanding is in the practical case by unpacking the function of the categories of freedom. What we have here is not just a straightforward parallel between theoretical and practical reason, with experience on one side and desire on the other. The activity of the understanding in its practical use is fundamentally different: here pure concepts delineate conditions that are constitutive of ends, or representations of objects as effects possible through freedom (KpV 5:57). As with theoretical reason, the possibility of representing such objects is dependent on pure concepts whose functions govern their most basic determinations. But since we are here concerned with ends, effects possible through a free causality, what conditions the possibility of these objects of cognition is not a set of concepts relating to them as objects of experience, but a set of concepts relating to them as effects of a rational causality determined by the representation of laws.⁸ The categories of freedom thus

⁶ See KpV 5:65, where Kant declares that the categories of nature “bring a priori the manifold of (sensible) *intuition* under one consciousness” while the categories of freedom “subject a priori the manifold of *desires* to the unity of consciousness of a practical reason commanding in the moral law.”

⁷ This is not to say that all of our desires stand in systematic unity with one another—only a holy being could claim this. To say that the categories of freedom bring unity to experience means only that we can relate to our desires by organizing them according to certain practical concepts. This is true even of our most wayward, alienating desires.

⁸ Hence Kant’s description of the categories of freedom as “*modi* of a single category, namely that of causality, insofar as the determining ground of causality consists in reason’s representation of a law of causality which, as a law of freedom, reason gives to itself and thereby proves itself a priori to be practical” (KpV 5:65).

concern the activity of willing that produces these objects of practical reason, picking out the formal aspects of the principles or laws that determine this activity.

So as with sensibility, the representations most basic to the practical understanding are subject-directed or subjective representations: in this case, such representations are constitutive of the self-conscious framing of an object as to-be-brought-about by the subject, i.e., as an end. This activity can be described as unifying insofar as it is in virtue of these categories that the subject's manifold desires can be organized into a system governed by practical principles of various levels of abstraction. But in this case, the understanding does not organize a sensible manifold to represent given objects; instead, it brings conceptual order to a manifold of subjective dispositions, determinations of the faculty of desire described above as being efficacious for the subject. The practical understanding, with its categories of freedom, thus accounts for our ability to represent objects of sensible desire as objects of the will or practical reason, and it does so by containing the conceptual determinations in virtue of which ends are brought into existence on the basis of self-consciously recognized grounds for action.

The categories of freedom thus include, among others, the concepts of subjective and objective motivation, rules of commission and omission, and permitted, forbidden, and dutiful action. In short, they enumerate the concepts required for the subject to be able to act in accordance with the self-conscious representation of principles. Kant is clear about how wide this range of concepts needs to be: because we are dealing with sense-dependent beings, the categories of freedom are constitutive of the use of practical reason in general, including both its pure and empirical applications (KpV 5:66). Divided into subsets of three under the same four headings as the categories of nature, each subset of the categories of freedom proceeds from concepts that are "as yet morally undetermined and sensibly conditioned to those which, being sensibly

unconditioned, are determined only by the moral law” (KpV 5:66). Under the heading “Of quantity,” for example, we have the concept of merely subjective agreement with practical principles, a category which concerns an action’s agreement with practical principles only insofar as they are legislated by the subject, making no reference to their objective standing in relation to the moral law. Under the heading of modality, Kant includes “the permitted and the forbidden,” which concern that which harmonizes or conflicts with a possible practical precept. This category allows the subject to grasp how her ends relate to some practical principle, regardless of whether it is actually held by any subject, or, furthermore, necessary in accordance with the moral law. As Kant points out in the preface to the second *Critique*, this category is thus indispensable for practical reasoning as such, regardless of whether it has a pure use conditioned by a priori necessary laws (KpV 5:11, footnote). The categories of freedom are thus concepts that condition the possibility of acts of practical reasoning in general. Without such a priori concepts, the subject could not incorporate sensibly determined objects into her will as the matter of practical reasoning.

Importantly, however, the categories of freedom are not just a priori concepts that allow the subject to amass ends willy-nilly, like a tumbleweed growing in size. As concepts which make it possible for there to be objects of practical reason, the categories of freedom ground the possibility that ends can be incorporated into the will in a systematic way. To see this, we can turn to an example. Imagine our subject takes up an end on the basis of a subjective maxim. Thus, she may go for a walk because she recognizes that she happens to find walking pleasant. To fully understand what she is doing, however, we cannot simply rest with this explanation. For her ability to come to recognize and act on this rule in turn depends on the recognition that there are not different ends which should move her to act instead. If she is to be motivated on the basis of the rule described above, she must also understand the extent to which it precludes other conflicting

ends, and have some idea of which end should be subordinated to the other. Hence the need to be able to grasp whether a certain end is permitted with respect to a possible practical principle. To be able to explain her activity as that of a practical reasoner, the subject needs not only to recognize that she can go for a walk because she finds it pleasant, she also needs to grasp that walking is the kind of activity people can pursue in certain situations, for example to the extent that it does not conflict with other possible, actual, or necessary ends. So the subject does not grasp each category individually, independently of reference to any of the others. The categories stand in a network of conceptual relationships with respect to one another, and to grasp these relationships is to have command of the categories themselves. The subject can thus only individuate ends through the categories insofar as she relates her ends to one another in what we can call a 'practical cognitive system'.

From §2.3 of the previous chapter, we are already familiar with the idea that cognition's form is essentially that of a unified system of representations. Each practical cognition agrees with every other, and does so through a network of conceptual relations that allows the manifold of sensible desire to be incorporated into the activity of a practical consciousness governed by the moral law. So as with cognition of any kind, practical cognitions form a system that is determined through the activity of the understanding and reason. But because we are talking about distinctly practical representations here, we cannot simply understand an end's membership in this system as a metaphysical fact about it. When the subject acts from practical cognition, she at least implicitly recognizes her end as part of this system, and it is this consciousness which is practical or efficacious. Thus, a practical cognitive system is distinct from a theoretical one insofar as the objects of the former are brought about by the subject on the basis of her recognition that they occupy their place in the system. This understanding of practical cognition may not seem to reflect

the character of common moral consciousness that Kant values so highly, but in fact it does not presuppose any special metaphysical cognition on the part of the subject.

For Kant, to have practical cognition, to identify an object as good, is to identify it as practically necessary in virtue of its agreement with the moral law. This law functions as the unifying principle of practical consciousness, that which articulates the conditions on practical cognition. When applied to the understanding, this highest form of unity yields a more determinate form: we get the concepts required to unify the manifold of desire under practical consciousness. Now, instead of the abstract formulation of the categorical imperative, we have, in addition, the concepts that allow us to organize particular desires with respect to this principle and the conditions on practical cognition it expresses. So, to judge that it would be good to pursue this desire, and act based on this judgment, is to implicitly grasp that one's end stands in agreement with the conditions on practical cognition, an agreement that is reflected in that end's relationship to other ends. This implicit or explicit understanding manifests itself in a number of ways that mutually reinforce one another. For example, consider the subject who enjoys taking walks in her free time. Insofar as she acts from practical cognition in going for a walk, she recognizes that her end is good only insofar as it does not infringe upon or exclude other necessary ends. She also sees that what makes her end good is not some fleeting relation to her sensible desire, but its relation to the constraints of morality. She thus grasps that it is not the pleasure she gets from the walk that ultimately makes it a good end, though this is an important aspect of its goodness. What ultimately makes it good is the fact that it agrees with other ends, not accidentally, but in virtue of meeting the conditions on practical cognition expressed by the moral law. And the subject shows that she recognizes this agreement—with other good ends and the law that determines them—insofar as she understands that her action can be captured by objective principles, principles which explain why she acted as

she did, and can be grasped by other subjects, even those who do not enjoy walking as much as she.

So when I say that the categories of freedom allow the subject to incorporate ends into a practical cognitive system, I mean that they make it possible for her to act on the basis of her at least implicit recognition of one particular end's position within a system of ends, all of which are governed by the moral law. This recognition of an end's place in a system governed by objective laws is expressed through the judgment that it is good as opposed to merely agreeable, i.e., that it is not the object's relation to sensible desire, but its relation to concepts of the understanding and principles of reason that determine her to act. Moreover, to return to our central point in this section, because this self-conscious recognition is what determines the subject's causality, we must say that the categories of freedom are distinctly practical concepts in the sense that they represent the determinations in virtue of which one is motivated to act. They condition the possibility of causally efficacious representation for a rational being with a will. In short, the practical categories are not practical simply insofar as they carve up the world of actions analogously to the way that the theoretical categories carve up the world of experience. Rather, they show how sensibly dependent reason itself can be practical, bringing about that which it represents.

3.2.3 Representations of Reason

While we look to the understanding to characterize practical reason's objects, we look to reason itself for the principles that express its activity. The practical principle thus incorporates the representations of sensibility and understanding discussed above, and captures the heart of the distinction between practical and theoretical representations that is our focus here. It is common to both uses of reason that all cognition from principles can be characterized as cognition through

which the subject apprehends the particular in the universal through concepts (A300/B357), or determines the particular through the general (20:201).⁹ This abstract characterization of reason captures the way that it accounts for the highest form of unity in our cognitive faculty. While the spontaneous synthesis of the understanding is required to account for the unity of sensible representations, the activity of reason represents an even higher form of spontaneity, one which accounts for the unity of the understanding and its synthetic activity (G 4:452; see also §2.3 of the previous chapter).

We can see that practical reason and its principles exhibit a more determinate version of the above structure by looking to Kant's argument that the will is identical with practical reason. He defines the will as "the capacity to act *in accordance with the representation* of laws, that is, in accordance with principles," concluding that "since *reason* is required for the derivation of actions from laws, the will is nothing other than practical reason" (G 4:412). In the practical case, the particular is cognized in the universal insofar as the subject derives the necessity of a particular action on the basis of a general principle. Practical principles thus possess the purest form of efficacy for the subject: for it is this recognition of the practical necessity or goodness of an action that ultimately determines the will and leads the subject to act. As that which brings unity to practical consciousness, the moral law represents the highest practical principle, expressing the general form of practical cognition which unites more determinate practical principles possessing this form into a system. Whether we think of the moral law itself or one of these more determinate practical principles with material content as the source of action, it is ultimately the subject's recognition that a particular end can be incorporated into this principled system that is the source

⁹Apprehending the universal in the particular through concepts is the fundamental activity of the discursive intellect (KU 5:406), so it is fitting that it should be common to both uses of reason.

of its efficacy, what brings about action. This is the idea at stake in Kant's insistence that it must be the form and not the matter of a practical principle which determines the will. Hence although both practical and theoretical reason share the common form of cognizing the particular through the general, we can recognize the core difference between the two uses insofar as practical reason brings about the existence of what is unified through its principles, while theoretical reason formulates principles in order to bring unity to what already exists.

This represents the purest formulation of the focal distinction for this section. Theoretical principles organize particular representations of existing objects to form a cognitive system. Practical principles bring particular objects into existence by representing them as part of an organized system of cognition. The former constitutes the activity of science, the latter that of morality. Both operate by determining objects according to laws. But the inverse relation just described requires the following crucial difference: theoretical principles characterize objects given from elsewhere and thus require a manifold of sensible intuition, while practical principles require no such object-directed manifold. The sensibly determined objects of practical principles are instead brought into existence insofar as they are recognized as necessary in accordance with the universal form of practical cognition, expressed by the supreme principle of pure practical reason, the categorical imperative. Hence Kant's definition of practical principles as "propositions that contain a general determination of the will" (KpV 5:19). By expressing the conditions under which the objects of practical cognition are to be realized, such propositions determine the subject who grasps them to will that their objects be brought about.¹⁰

¹⁰ The account of practical principles I have developed here also helps us to understand the hypothetical imperatives, or merely material principles, that specify means to ends (G 4:416, and KpV 5:19-21). These say nothing about the objective standing of an end relative to the moral law, but instead determine how to

3.3 Respect, the Moral Incentive

Now that we have a more detailed understanding of the specifically practical use of reason and the various practical representations constitutive of its activity, we can turn to the concept of respect and the idea that it represents reason's determination of sensibility. Though Kant identifies respect as a feeling in its own right, he describes it in more detail as "an effect on feeling and hence on sensibility" (KpV 5:76), as well as the result of the moral law having an "influence" on sensibility which "effects a feeling conducive to the influence of the law on the will" (KpV 5:75). Though his analysis of respect is much more extensive in the second *Critique*, the point behind these formulations is perhaps best articulated in book three of the *Groundwork*:

"in order for a sensibly affected rational being to will that for which reason alone prescribes the 'ought,' it is admittedly required that his reason have the capacity to *induce a feeling of pleasure* or of delight in the fulfillment of duty, and thus there is required a causality of reason to determine sensibility in conformity with its principles" (G 4:460).

From the fact of our sensibly determined nature, Kant infers the need to show that reason can determine sensibility in order to produce the objects of practical cognition. My central claim in this section will be that respect represents reason's determination of the sensible capacity mentioned in the above passage, and that insofar as it does represent this, respect can be understood as the form of practical sensibility. This form's essential function is to order the efficacy of sensible

realize a given end that has already been adopted. Since actually adopting an end involves the kind of practical rational activity described above, we can conclude that hypothetical imperatives possess only an indirect kind of efficacy. Whether or not they are capable of moving us to act depends on whether we actually will the ends they determine. And whether we do this depends on a given end's relation to the moral law, the most fundamental practical principle which characterizes the nature of practical cognition. So, we can make room for hypothetical imperatives in the practical cognitive system I have been describing without conceding the fundamental character of this system, or suggesting that instrumental action requires a completely different framework.

desire, and the result of this activity is motivation to act that is properly limited by the conditions of practical cognition expressed by the moral law.

As we proceed, the previous section will allow us to further develop this key aspect of practical reason by comparing it to the theoretical use while keeping in mind where the analogy must be limited. I will claim that in both cases sensibility, our capacity for receptivity, is determined by a spontaneous cognitive capacity so that its deliverances can be incorporated into a system of cognition. Nevertheless, the central distinction between these two uses of reason will remain. For practical reason, the requisite relationship between spontaneity and receptivity is secured insofar as sensibility is determinable by reason so as to produce the feeling of respect, the incentive that determines the will to bring about good ends, the objects of practical cognition. For theoretical reason, it is secured insofar as sensibility is determinable by the understanding so as to produce spatiotemporally ordered representations of the world, the objects of theoretical cognition.

In the previous chapter, I introduced the idea that the feeling of respect represents the subjectively motivating aspect of willing for sensibly dependent beings. Drawing predominantly from Kant's discussion of incentives from the third chapter of the analytic in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, we can develop this idea to arrive at the concept of respect as the form of practical sensibility.

Kant begins his discussion of incentives by reintroducing the distinction between objective and subjective determining grounds of the will. This distinction was initially developed in §2.4 of the previous chapter, where I argued that our sensible dependency grounds the logical possibility of our acting contrary to the moral law. It does this by subjecting the will to empirically conditioned sensible motives that do not necessarily accord with what the law commands. Because of this possibility, we need to distinguish between objective and subjective determining grounds of the

will when talking about beings with practical discursive reason. Only the representation of universal and necessary laws of pure practical reason which hold for every rational being can count as objective determining grounds, grounds which express how the will *should* be determined. But given our susceptibility to error, we also need to introduce the idea of subjective determining grounds which are expressive of what *actually* determines the subject's will. This makes room for the idea that the subject can act based on both good and bad, objective and non-objective grounds of willing. Kant's term of art for these subjective determining grounds is '*Triebfeder*'. In English, this term is typically rendered as 'incentive'. Though the translation can lead us to think otherwise, what is captured by this term is not the object that motivates but the actual motivation itself. In any given act of willing, the *Triebfeder* is the driving spring, the efficacious representing that brings about what it represents.

In the case of good willing, the driving spring is nothing other than the moral law itself, so the subjective determining ground of pure practical reason just is the objective determining ground. The main task of the third chapter of the analytic is to lay out what must obtain if the moral law is to serve as *Triebfeder* for a sensibly dependent being (KpV 5:72). This requires giving an account of practical discursive reason on which pure practical reason can determine sensibility. As we shall see, the feeling of respect emerges at the center of this account.

Many commentators interpret this requirement as a vestige of Kant's interest in moral sentimentalism, an empiricist strand of moral theory that occupied him during his formative pre-Critical years.¹¹ In particular, those who seek to bring out the empiricist commitments in Kant's

¹¹ Cf. Karl Ameriks, "Kant, Hume, and the Problem of Moral Motivation," in *Kant and the Historical Turn: Philosophy as Critical Interpretation*, 89-107 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Paul Guyer, "Reason, Desire, and Action," in *Knowledge, Reason, and Taste: Kant's Response to Hume*, 161-197 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Owen Ware, "Kant on Moral Sensibility and Moral Motivation," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52 (2014): 727-746.

position take his discussion of incentives to show that he thinks of motivation as predominantly a mechanical issue, one having to do with our sensible nature as it functions independently of reason. For example, Paul Guyer argues that the positions of Hume and Kant are alike insofar as Kant “also assumes that some sort of what Hume would call an ‘affection’ must be the proximate phenomenal or empirical cause of any action, and therefore infers that pure reason must produce a moral feeling that can in turn cause the action that reason requires.”¹² On this view, the concept of an incentive in general and respect in particular are necessary for Kant insofar as they facilitate an empirical explanation concerning the causal mechanics of human action in the sensible world. So, while the moral law is regarded as an object of reason, the incentive it produces is something very different, an object of the natural world which can be characterized in terms of its role in the economy of mechanical causes. Such a view exemplifies the dualistic conception of human nature it has been my aim to overcome from the opening pages of this project.

Instead, I am building towards the claim that the affective sensible element of moral motivation which Kant undeniably recognizes is meant to fulfill a metaphysical condition on the possibility of practical cognition, or cognition having to do with the determining grounds of the will (KpV 5:20). This requirement concerns what the nature of sensibly dependent reason must be like if the deliverances of sensibility are to figure in acts of practical reason as Kant understands it. As sensible beings, our practical principles depend on sensible determinations for their matter. As I have argued, while pure practical reason provides the form our principles must have, sensibility provides the material. The activity of willing, of practical reasoning, takes place insofar as this sensible matter is incorporated under a principle that bears the requisite rational form. To

¹² Guyer, “Reason, Desire, and Action,” 165.

make this picture feasible, however, a further requirement must be met, one which was not accounted for in the previous section's study of practical representations. For sensibility itself, considered wholly independently of reason, is merely a receptive capacity to be affected by objects. Were we simply to rest with this conception of sensibility, we would have to conclude that it operates according to its own laws, and is not responsive to the demands of reason. In this case, practical cognition would not be possible, because the subject's sensible desire would not be responsive to her recognition of what morality requires, and her representation of the good could not move her. The metaphysical requirement I have been circling around can thus be put as follows: if we are to be understood as subjects capable of producing objects through the recognition that they agree with practical principles of reason, Kant must have an account as to how the efficacy of sensible desire can be conditioned based on its relation to such principles. This is a fundamental requirement for his position. Otherwise, dependent beings could have no effective way of organizing their sensibly conditioned desires. The categories of freedom may enable us to relate our desires to one another as the objects of principles, but absent this further sensible condition, the efficacy or motivating power these desires have could not be altered on the basis of such rational activity. We would have reason on the one hand, sensibility on the other, and the former's influence could not reach the latter. Such an outcome would completely undermine the practical system: our sensible inclinations could not be limited by the moral law, and only action that accidentally agrees with its command could result. My claim is that Kant's discussion of respect fulfills this metaphysical requirement, accounting for the fact that sensibility must be rationally determined and so responsive to the demands of reason in order to serve in acts of practical cognition, acts whose efficacy springs from the recognition of principles rather than the pull of sensible affect. Far from the domain of empirical psychology and causal mechanics, Kant's

account of moral motivation is thoroughly metaphysical in nature. It is spurred by a priori reflections on the nature of cognition and the faculty of sensibly dependent reason.

We can see these reflections at work in Kant's description of the moral incentive. If the moral law is to determine the will, he concludes we must posit, a priori, that its representation can have an effect on feeling, the affective element of practical reason. Importantly, this effect is explained in cognitive rather than mechanical terms: it occurs insofar as the subject recognizes the formal conditions on practical cognition expressed by the law, and grasps that practical representations of sensible desire based merely in the efficacy of feeling do not as such meet these conditions. When this recognition takes place, what would be an unchecked instance of the subject pursuing the object of her desire acquires limits. Insofar as these limits are recognized, the efficacy associated with the representation of an object simply insofar as it agrees with sensible desire is altered and diminished. Kant describes this in terms of a negative infringement upon the inclinations which effects a feeling of pain:

“for all inclination and every sensible impulse is based on feeling, and the negative effect on feeling (by the infringement upon the inclinations that takes place) is itself feeling...hence we can see a priori that the moral law, as the determining ground of the will, must by thwarting all our inclinations produce a feeling that can be called pain” (KpV 5:72-3).

Because it is feeling that accounts for the efficacy, the moving force, of sensible desire, limiting its scope involves restricting the feeling it is based on. This restriction, however, does not occur insofar as the feeling of pleasure associated with inclination is itself diminished: one can of course still find that which is not good agreeable. Rather, what is restricted are the conditions under which feeling can figure in practical activity. Insofar as it is limited by the moral law, it is feeling's efficacy, its ability to move the subject, that is affected and rendered less powerful. We see this

reflected in Kant's talk of consciousness of the moral law "excluding the influence of self-love" (KpV 5:74) and restricting it "to the condition of agreement with the law" (KpV 5:73).

Given this picture, the pain that is produced as a result of the restriction of desire, though sensible in character, should not be thought of as akin to any other feeling of displeasure. This pain is produced insofar as the subject recognizes that her propensity to act on sensible desire, to represent its efficacy as grounds for action, needs to be subject to a further condition to be in agreement with practical reason. So what appeared to stand in agreement with one's capacity to produce an object by representing it, and was thus a source of pleasure, is now represented as being in disagreement with this same capacity, and thus a source of pain.¹³ This pain, however, comes from a source other than our empirically conditioned sensible relation to the object, lying instead in our capacity to recognize disagreement or wrongfulness based upon laws of pure practical reason. Hence Kant's re-description of this sensible feeling as "humiliation" and "intellectual contempt" for our propensity to be moved by merely sensible desire (KpV 5:75).

In this way, Kant accounts for the need to show how the efficacy of feeling, the object of sensible desire, can be ordered through the activity of reason. Consciousness of the moral law determines sensibility in such a way that sensibly conditioned objects of the will, though potentially or actually the ground of pleasure, are efficacious for the subject in virtue of something other than the feeling they bring about. The moral law that we cannot help but acknowledge forces us to grasp that our propensity to make sensible desire the condition of action can never be the ground of practical cognition, cognition of the good. As a result of this understanding, the efficacy

¹³ In a footnote in the preface to the second *Critique*, Kant describes the feeling of pleasure as "the representation of the agreement of an object or of an action with the subjective conditions of life, i.e., with the faculty of the causality of a representation with respect to the reality of its object (or with respect to the determination of the powers of the subject to action in order to produce the object)" (KpV 5:10, footnote).

sensible desire would otherwise have is limited, and compliance with the law becomes the real incentive, the ground that determines the subject's will. This activity thus has both a negative and a positive aspect: by giving new limits to sensible desire, it effects humiliation; but, equally, in positioning the moral law as the only truly worthy incentive, it allows the subject to recognize her true vocation as a moral being.

Respect is the name Kant gives to the positive aspect of this activity, through which reason determines sensibility and the law is grasped as the will's only valid determining ground. Though he also identifies it as a feeling, it has a special status as non-pathological and "produced solely by reason" (KpV 5:76). As such, respect is not a feeling we have toward the law, not a subjective sensation directed towards an idea of reason—this would be impossible since the law cannot be an object for sensibility. Rather, as the result of reason determining sensibility in accordance with the law, the feeling of respect is representative of reason's structuring effect on sensibility, and the efficacy that the true law of pure practical reason has in virtue of this structuring. Kant thus claims that "there is indeed no feeling for this law, but inasmuch as it moves resistance out of the way, in the judgment of reason this removal of a hindrance is esteemed equivalent to a positive furthering of its causality" (KpV 5:75). So respect both has a sensible character, it is a feeling that can only be experienced by sensible and thus fallible beings for whom inclination can serve as a ground of motivation; and it is brought about insofar as sensibility is determined by reason. So described, respect is not a feeling in the usual sense. It is prior to all other merely pathological feelings, capturing how we relate to sensible desire in general insofar as we are beings with practical reason. As Kant puts it, respect is not just a feeling in the token sense, "respect is an effect on feeling (*Gefühl*) and hence on the sensibility of a rational being" (KpV 5:76).

This special character of respect has been a key part of Kant's position since the

Groundwork. In a footnote in the first section, he defends himself against the objection that his emphasis on the feeling of respect mires his philosophy in the very sentimentalism he would like to avoid, facilitating an account that seeks motivation in feeling rather than concepts of reason. Against this he claims, “respect is a feeling self-wrought by means of a rational concept and therefore specifically different from all feelings [received by means of influence], which can be reduced to inclination or fear” (G 4:402, footnote). Here Kant again emphasizes that respect should be thought of as an effect of the law, rather than its cause—an outcome that would affirm sentimentalist principles. As Kant will go on to claim in the second *Critique*, respect is thus not an incentive to morality in the sense that it provides sensibly determined grounds for action that precede the law; rather, respect is “morality itself subjectively considered as an incentive inasmuch as pure practical reason, by rejecting all the claims of self-love in opposition with its own, supplies authority to the law, which now alone has influence” (KpV 5:76). Respect thus represents practical reason’s determination of the sensible capacity: without it, we could not account for the need to demonstrate that sensibility stands within reason’s purview and is responsive to its demands, a condition which must be met if we are to understand human beings as subjects moved to act through practical cognition.

Before moving on to the next section, we should take a moment to recognize just how much this a priori relationship between reason and feeling transforms the character of desire and practical thinking about action.¹⁴ The account I am describing goes well beyond the thought, which prevails

¹⁴ I owe this technical and evocative use of the term ‘transform’ to Matthew Boyle, who distinguishes between additive and transformative accounts in roughly the same way as I distinguish between dualist and non-dualist accounts. Cf. Matthew Boyle, “Additive Theories of Rationality: A Critique,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 24 (2016): 527-555. Cf. also Barbara Herman, “Transforming Incentives: Feelings and the Making of the Kantian Moral Agent,” *Philosophical Aspects of the Emotions*, ed. A. Carlson (Stockholm: Thales, 2005), for similarly minded use of the language of transformation.

in dualistic interpretations, that reason subordinates or infringes upon the sensible inclinations through the feeling of respect. It is true that Kant often uses this and similar language to describe the interaction between practical principle and inclination, but there is also much more at stake which the dualist does not and cannot account for. Through practical reason's determination of sensibility and the feeling of respect, Kant accounts for the human capacity to be motivated by the practical principle itself. With this capacity, what changes is not just the set of ends that we can be motivated to act upon—this is all the dualist can claim—but the very nature of our practical activity, the way we desire and set ends.

As we saw in §3.2, the ability to recognize the validity of the moral law enables us to organize our sensible desires into a hierarchical system which possesses objective validity. On this picture, we recognize that our sensibly determined ends relate to one another not just on the basis of how strongly we desire them, or how mutually attainable they are. We also relate them as ends commanded, permitted, and prohibited by the moral law which expresses the formal conditions of practical reason. The account of moral motivation I'm attributing to Kant holds that this rational activity completely transforms the kind of efficacy that sensible desire has. For non-moral agents like relatively sophisticated animals and perhaps very young humans, sensible desire operates as the driving force of the faculty of desire. Its presence is sufficient to explain the appropriately related action—if we can point to the presence of some relevant desire, we have the whole story, we know what moved the agent. In contrast, for the moral agent who is responsive to the demands of practical reason and capable of feeling respect, sensible desire only has efficacy, only moves the agent, in a much more diminished sense. To explain the action of a moral agent, to capture what motivates her, the aforementioned system of ends organized by moral principles must be called upon. For it is her recognition that a proposed end agrees with these practical principles that

ultimately explains why she acted as she did. That said, however, sensible desire still has *some* important characteristic efficacy, for it is feelings of pleasure and pain, and the desires they occasion, which highlight possible ends to pursue, candidates to be organized with respect to the moral law. So sensible desire is not so much subordinated as it is transformed: the role it plays in the system of desire is radically altered for a rational, moral agent. Instead of capturing the essential form of her faculty of desire—as it does for the animal—it indicates only the material element, picking out the object of action, but not the action’s fundamental character.

Compare the view just outlined to that of the dualist like Guyer, who thinks that all or even part of respect’s primary function is to fulfill an empirically determined, mechanistic requirement on the possibility of action.¹⁵ On this picture, sensible desire, isolated from reason, represents the paradigmatic case of motivation for the human being. The empirical causal laws that pick out the relationship of desire which obtains between subject and object are no different in kind from analogous laws characterizing merely animal desire. In this context, the feeling of respect does not signify rational transformation, it is invoked as a placeholder which explains how reason can occupy the same empirical causal terrain as sensible desire. However we fill out the details of this picture, this general approach ensures that practical reason, through the feeling of respect, can only subordinate or impose upon inclination, giving the agent new, morally determined ends to pursue, but without any fundamental change to the structure and function of sensible desire. The metaphysical account of motivation I am arguing for rejects this picture and the strange amalgamation of rationalist and empiricist principles it is based upon.

¹⁵ As we will see in Chapter 6, Guyer’s view is representative of the affectivist version of dualism.

3.4 The ‘Aesthetic’ of Pure Practical Reason

We now have the main features of Kant’s account of respect in view. At this point, it is common to seek to better understand this account by asking questions about the character of respect as a feeling that is nevertheless intellectual in origin, and the role that it occupies within Kant’s system. While some commentators emphasize its nature as feeling, concluding that respect has to be primarily affective and sensible in order to constrain the inclinations; others argue that only the idea of rational grounding can accomplish this goal, instead emphasizing respect’s intellectual character as the subjective aspect of a rationalist moral theory. Such questions are usually closely connected with views about its relative importance. Some take respect to represent the affective consequence of an otherwise accessible, purely rational consciousness of the law; others maintain that it must be understood as an essential part of this original consciousness, without which human beings could not fully grasp the authority of the law.¹⁶ Rather than wade into the debate at this point, I want to avoid these issues and attempt to develop a better understanding of Kant’s account of respect by looking to the theoretical philosophy and constructing an analogy that tracks the relationship between our spontaneous and receptive capacities across both uses of reason. By turning our attention towards the relevant similarities and their limits, we will emerge with an account of respect that is not beholden to the range of positions demarcated by the above questions, which are commonly taken to set the parameters of the debate.

¹⁶ Cf. the following views, which will be discussed in Chapter 6: **Reath**, “Kant’s Theory of Moral Sensibility”; **McCarty**, “Kantian Moral Motivation and the Feeling of Respect”; **Ware**, “Kant on Moral Sensibility and Moral Motivation”; and in addition, **Henry Allison**, *Kant’s Theory of Freedom*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 233-239; **Larry Herrera**, “Kant on the Moral Triebfeder,” *Kant-Studien* 91 (2000): 395–410; **Jeanine Grenberg**, “Making Sense of the Relationship of Reason and Sensibility in Kant’s Ethics,” *Kantian Review* 16 (2001): 461–72; **Anne Margaret Baxley**, *Kant’s Theory of Virtue: The Value of Autocracy*, (New York: Cambridge, 2010); **Janelle DeWitt**, “Respect for the Moral Law: the Emotional Side of Reason,” *Philosophy* 89 (2014): 31-62.

Kant himself alludes to the possibility of this analogy at the end of the analytic in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Comparing the second *Critique* to the first, he notes that the conditions on the use of pure practical reason are articulated analogously (*analogisch*) with those of theoretical reason, only in the reverse order (KpV 5:90). While the *Critique of Pure Reason* is divided into a Transcendental Aesthetic and a Transcendental Logic, “that of practical reason, reversely, into Logic and Aesthetic of pure practical reason (if I may be allowed to use these otherwise quite unsuitable terms here merely for the sake of analogy)” (KpV 5:90).¹⁷ As Kant suggests with his talk of unsuitable terms, he does not actually use the heading of ‘Logic’ to group the first and second chapters of the practical analytic, which deal respectively with principles of reason and concepts of the understanding; nor does he give the title ‘Aesthetic’ to the third chapter, which deals with incentives of sensibility.¹⁸ But he nevertheless takes it that a suitably specified analogy is appropriate. Both analytics can be divided insofar as they specify conditions on the use of various capacities of mind: reason, understanding, and sensibility. In the case of the first two capacities, the structure of both practical and theoretical reason can be articulated in terms of principles of reason and concepts of the understanding. For sensibility, however, things turn out somewhat differently. While the transcendental aesthetic divided itself into two parts “because of the twofold kind of sensible intuition,” the structure of practical sensibility admits of only one, for “here sensibility is not regarded as a capacity for intuition at all but only as feeling (which can be

¹⁷ I have significantly modified Gregor’s translation of the text inside the parentheses, which reads as follows in the original German: “(wenn es mir erlaubt ist, diese sonst gar nicht angemessene Benennungen, bloß der Analogie wegen, hier zu gebrauchen)” (KpV 5:90). Gregor translates this as, “(if I may be allowed, merely by an analogy, to use these terms, which are not altogether suitable)” (page 212 of the Cambridge edition).

¹⁸ The reason for this is that the practical use of reason, understanding, and sensibility relate, instead, as the three steps in a practical syllogism. These steps proceed from a universal law, to the subsumption of an object under this law via the concept ‘good’, to the subjective determination of the will to action through the feeling of respect (KpV 5:90).

a subjective ground of desire), and with respect to it pure practical reason admits of no further division” (KpV 5:90). Here, Kant touches upon the fundamental distinction between practical and theoretical reason that I emphasized throughout §3.2. The practical use of reason, as rational causality or will, is unlike its theoretical counterpart in that its characteristic activity does *not* involve the synthesis of matter to represent objects given to reason from elsewhere. Practical reason brings its objects into existence, so in relation to it, sensibility is not regarded as a capacity for intuition at all. Taken instead as the capacity for feeling, practical sensibility concerns representations only insofar as they are efficacious or motivating. In what follows, this will serve as the fundamental limit to the analogy being constructed. Keeping this limit in mind, we can go on to explore the parallels between theoretical and practical reason in a way that will illuminate Kant’s understanding of respect and the role that it plays in his practical system. Specifically, I will argue that for both uses of reason, a particular form of sensibility emerges insofar as the sensible capacity itself is determined by other spontaneous capacities of mind so that its deliverances can be incorporated into a cognitive system.

3.4.1 Space and Time as the Forms of Theoretical Sensibility

As Kant mentions in the passage just quoted, his account of theoretical sensibility in the Transcendental Aesthetic divides itself into two parts, as the manifold of sensible object-directed content is both spatially and temporally structured. Hence the conditions of its possibility must have a twofold form, with one part addressing the possibility of spatially structured, the other the possibility of temporally structured representations. For my purposes here, I want to bring out two important features of this account. First, as the forms of theoretical sensibility, the concepts of space and time bring uniquely sensible elements into the picture, elements that could not be

provided by the spontaneous capacities of mind. Second, despite their logical independence, such forms are perfectly suited to contribute towards the capacity for theoretical cognition. Importantly, this is no accident. By enabling systematizable sensible representations of objects, i.e., representations of objects that can be connected with one another in space and through time, the forms of theoretical sensibility make it possible for us to represent a sensible world that can be organized according to laws, which is, not incidentally, the object of theoretical cognition. This is no accident because it is the work of the understanding to determine sensibility, the object of its unifying activity, in accordance with its own form. So, while the spatiotemporal nature of sensible representations is contributed by sensibility, their unity, their fitness to be objects of cognition, comes from the understanding. Hence the idea of spontaneity determining receptivity so that its deliverances can be incorporated into a system of cognition.

Returning to the first feature of Kant's account of theoretical sensibility, space and time account for something unique about the character of theoretical representations that could not be attributed to any other capacity. To bring out what this something is, Kant introduces the language of form and matter. As the capacity to be affected by objects, sensibility provides the matter, the object of theoretical cognition. If we distinguish the merely material element of its deliverances, we have what I have been calling 'objective sensation'. This term captures "the effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it" (A20/B34). But importantly, Kant thinks we must also account for the formal element of these representations, reserving the term 'form' for "that which allows the manifold of appearance to be intuited as ordered in certain relations" (A20/B34). The verb 'intuited' here refers to a special kind of theoretical representation, intuition, which Kant describes as "that through which [a cognition] relates immediately to [objects]" (A19/B33). So while the term sensation identifies the mere matter of sensibility, the

sensible manifold insofar as it is not organized and not an object for theoretical cognition, the term ‘form’ here picks out the ordering relations in virtue of which the subject can enjoy sensibly determined representations of objects, or intuitions. Citing the well-known Kantian dictum that unity cannot be given but must rather lie a priori in the subject’s cognitive capacity, Kant concludes that the a priori form of intuition can and must be considered separately from sensation (A20/B34). We arrive at this form by dividing off both what is given a posteriori, and what is accounted for through the concepts of the understanding:

“if I separate from the representation of a body that which the understanding thinks about it, such as substance, force, divisibility, etc., as well as that which belongs to sensation, such as impenetrability, hardness, color, etc., something from this empirical intuition is still left for me, namely extension and form. These belong to the pure intuition, which occurs *a priori*, even without an actual object of the senses or sensation, as a mere form of sensibility in the mind” (A21/B35).

The idea of extension and form arrived at here gets expressed in a twofold manner: space represents the form of outer sense, determining how intuitions are ordered, both internally and with respect to one another. When we subtract what is contributed by empirical sensation and the understanding, we are left with space as an ordering principle that accounts for the fact that objects are represented as outside us and related to one another: “in space their form, magnitude, and relation to one another is determined, or determinable” (A22/B37). Space thus represents “the form of all appearances of outer sense, i.e., the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible for us” (A26/B42). Time represents the form of inner sense, through which the mind intuits its own activity, accounting for the possibility that its representations are connected to one another. Time is a necessary, a priori form of sensibility because “only under its presupposition can one represent that several things exist at one and the same time (simultaneously) or in different times (successively)” (A30/B46). Without time, we could not

comprehend the possibility of change, and thus relate successive states of affairs and our judgments about them to one another.

To secure his theory that space and time represent a priori forms of sensible intuition, Kant provides several arguments as to why each must be thought of as an a priori intuition and not a concept, emphasizing their respective characters as singular, immediate, and infinite. These features stand in opposition to the defining marks of concepts, which are by nature universal and mediate insofar as they specify rules for combination that can be applied to any number of representations. A concept can contain an infinite set of representations under itself as objects determinable by its rule, but because this rule for combination must be articulable, at least in principle, a concept cannot contain an infinite set of representations within itself as marks (A25/B40). Space and time thus jointly represent subjectively necessary a priori formal conditions on the possibility of sensible representation that, owing to their character, must be attributed to sensibility.

Moving on to the second feature of Kant's account that needs to be developed here, we have just acquired what we need to see how the form of sensibility allows sensibly determined representations to be incorporated into a system of theoretical cognition. As I just argued, the spatiotemporal structure of sensible intuition makes it possible for us to represent objects that are related to one another in space, and successive to one another in time. These sensible conditions enable the subject to have an interconnected body of representations of objects, or what amounts to the same, theoretical cognition of nature. We might marvel at sensibility's being so well-suited to its role as the receptive element of theoretical cognition, were Kant not explicit that the unity these intuitions possess, in virtue of which they enable us to represent spatiotemporally structured objects, must be traced to the understanding as a spontaneous faculty of mind. Thus, it is no

accident that the deliverances of sensibility can be incorporated into a system of theoretical cognition. They can be, because understanding determines sensibility at multiple levels, as form determining matter. Hence Kant's claim that "sensibility, subordinated to understanding, as the object to which the latter applies its function, is the source of real cognitions" (A294/B351, footnote). More prominently discussed examples of this subordination include empirical concepts, which unify already given sensible representations of objects in acts of judgment; and the a priori categories of nature, which unify the matter of sensible intuition to yield representations of objects, or theoretical experience.¹⁹ What is still missing, however, is the thought that sensibility's own form, which stands as form to the matter of sensation, itself stands as matter for the unifying activity of the understanding. That is, space and time, as intuitions that determine the form of theoretical sensibility, are themselves subject to acts of synthesis that are constitutive of their very possibility.

As Kant claims in an oft-cited series of passages from the B-edition of the Transcendental Deduction, the synthetic unity belonging to these a priori sensible representations of space and time, on which every spatiotemporal representation depends, "can be none other than [the unity] of the combination of the manifold of a given **intuition in general** in an original consciousness, in agreement with the categories, only applied to our **sensible intuition**" (B161). So the a priori representations of space and time that determine the forms of theoretical sensibility have unity only insofar as a sensibly given manifold—in this case, the manifold of pure space and time—is combined in accordance with pure concepts of the understanding. Kant is more up front about this

¹⁹ This was the subject matter of Chapter 2, §2.3. For additional reading, see Thomas Land, "Nonconceptualist Readings of Kant and the Transcendental Deduction," *Kantian Review* 20 (2015): 25-51. Land offers an account of the Transcendental Deduction—the heart of the *Critique of Pure Reason*—that is compatible with many of the general claims I make here. I consider his work to be another example of what I called 'resolute hylomorphism' in Chapter 1.

in a footnote on the same page, where he admits that it may not always have been clear that sensibility's form is in part determined by the activity of the understanding: "in the Aesthetic I ascribed this unity merely to sensibility, only in order to note that it precedes all concepts, though to be sure it presupposes a synthesis, which does not belong to the senses but through which all concepts of space and time first become possible" (B161, footnote). At this point he plainly describes such synthesis as the activity of the understanding determining sensibility: the unity of space and time presuppose synthesis, and "through it (as the understanding determines the sensibility) space or time are first **given** as intuitions" (B161). Summing up this activity at an earlier point in the Transcendental Deduction, Kant concludes, "the understanding therefore does not **find** some sort of combination of the manifold already in inner sense, but **produces** it, by **affecting** inner sense" (B155). Here Kant is speaking only of time, but we can extend the point to space as well. These a priori forms of intuition thus stand as both matter and form in their relation to different capacities. As the product of synthesis, they stand as matter to the form of the understanding—they are the material upon which the form of understanding exercises its function. As the structuring element of sensibility, they stand as form to the matter of sensation. Hence, we can conclude that the form of theoretical sensibility is itself the result of a spontaneous capacity of mind determining a receptive one, an activity which yields unique forms of sensible representation that are necessary for theoretical cognition.²⁰

²⁰ Because, as I have pointed out above, the practical analogue I aim to develop does not involve synthesizing a manifold of content to represent objects given from elsewhere, I have abstracted from the details Kant gives to describe the exact nature of the synthesis that produces space and time as formal intuitions possessing unity. For these details, we should look to §24 of the Deduction. Here Kant describes that action through which the understanding "is capable of itself determining sensibility internally with regard to the manifold that may be given to it [the understanding] in accordance with the form of its [sensibility's] intuition" (B153). That is, he describes the synthesis that determines the a priori unity of the manifold of sensibility. Though the nature of this unity is in part dictated by the

Before moving on to complete the analogy with practical reason, we can again pause to recognize some important implications the above reading carries for Kant's conception of theoretical reasoning and human experience more generally. Through the understanding's determination of sensibility, which produces the formal unity of space and time, Kant accounts for the sensible conditions that must be met if we are to actually cognize, and not just sense, the world around us. As I have said, the objective unity possessed by the forms of theoretical sensibility is a condition on the possibility of our experiencing a world of objects which relate to one another in space and through time. Without this unity, we would enjoy only a series of unconnected representations that could be related associatively, i.e., subjectively. A systematically ordered body of objectively valid representations would be beyond our grasp. The activity of the understanding thus transforms our capacity to sense in a radical way, marking the difference between those beings who merely enjoy subjective sensible representations, and those who perceive an ordered world which possesses the unity of cognition explored in the previous chapter. This difference goes well beyond the mere possession of concepts and the ability to judge. On the view I am suggesting, what makes us cognizing beings is not that our independently intelligible sensible experiences—the deliverances of sensibility—can be taken up as the objects of theoretical judgment. Rather, our

spatiotemporal nature of sensibility itself, Kant ascribes its active formation to the transcendental synthesis of the imagination:

“insofar as its synthesis is still an exercise of spontaneity, which is determining and not, like sense, merely determinable, and can thus determine the form of sense *a priori* in accordance with the unity of apperception, the imagination is to this extent a faculty for determining the sensibility *a priori*, and its synthesis of intuitions, **in accordance with the categories**, must be the transcendental synthesis of the **imagination**, which is an effect of the understanding on sensibility and its first application (and at the same time the ground of all others) to objects of the intuition that is possible for us” (B151-2).

Though this synthesis is an act of the understanding, its dependence on sensibility means it is not merely intellectual, so Kant reserves a separate term—figurative synthesis—for it (B151).

cognitive relationship to the world is even implicated in the way we sense, which is altered through sensibility's a priori relationship to the understanding. So just as our capacity to feel respect marks us as distinctively moral agents whose desire functions in an entirely new way, our capacity for unified spatiotemporal representation marks us as cognizing beings whose capacity for sensible representation takes on a completely different character.

Consider, again, the case of the non-rational animal or human infant who does not (or does not yet) reason. For such a creature, mere sensation, unrelated to a faculty of cognition, operates as the essential object of its power of representation. We need only point to such sensations to explain the fundamental form of sensory consciousness at work. In contrast, for the being who can enjoy experience—theoretical cognition of nature—in the full-blown Kantian sense, the appeal to sensation only partially explains the character of her sensory consciousness. To capture what goes on when her power of representation is activated, we must appeal to the synthetic activity of the understanding and the unified, spatiotemporal world it makes it possible for us to experience. That said, however, sensation still plays *some* important characteristic role, for it is sensation that provides the matter for sensible experience. So just as in the practical case, our capacity to sense is transformed—acquires a new form—while its deliverances make a key contribution to the activity of a higher, spontaneous capacity. With this transformation, instead of capturing the essential form of our power of representation—as it does for the non-rational animal—sensation indicates only its material element, marking that aspect of representation which the object affects in us, but not the power of representation's fundamental character as cognitive, as capable of objective unity.

3.4.2 Respect as the form of practical sensibility

We now have in hand Kant's accounts of respect and space and time, as well as some general thoughts about the way these representations function to transform the fundamental activity of sensibility in both its practical and theoretical uses. At long last, we are finally in a position to articulate an analogy between the two uses of reason, as always taking care to recognize its limits. In the above section, we saw that theoretical sensibility fulfills a necessary condition on theoretical discursive cognition by providing an organized manifold of spatiotemporally structured content. Were this condition not met, the subject could not have interconnected representations of the sensible world, or theoretical cognition. As we have seen, such representations always involve the spontaneous synthetic activity of the understanding, but their spatiotemporal form, and the matter organized by this form, are nevertheless uniquely sensible, and cannot be attributed to anything other than a receptive capacity. Drawing on our work in §3.2, we can see that sensibly determined practical representations differ insofar as the requisite sensible conditions do not concern object-directed sensible manifolds, but subject-directed sensations, or feelings. Because representations of feeling do not contribute to the cognition of already existing objects in the world, our account of sensible form will differ substantially. Given the way sensibility relates to practical reason, the formal aspect of practical sensibility must concern only the character of sensible efficacy, or that which accounts for the subjective motivation of a sensibly dependent being.

As we saw, Kant describes the form of theoretical sensibility as "that which allows the manifold of appearance to be intuited as ordered in certain relations" (A20/B34). These sensible ordering relations allow theoretical representations to be directed towards a world of interconnected, law-governed objects. In contrast, the form of practical sensibility, as that which allows the manifold of sensible desire to be ordered in certain relations, accounts for sensible

conditions on the possibility of practical cognition. As cognition that brings its object into existence through the representation of laws, practical cognition creates its object by recognizing it to be part of a law-governed system of cognition. So if respect is to be understood as the form of practical sensibility, it must be constitutive of the sensible conditions that make this variety of cognition possible.

The account of respect developed in §3.3 provides us with the resources to make this argument. We saw that Kant thinks of respect as the effect that consciousness of the moral law has on sensibility, an effect which conditions sensible desire, bringing it into agreement with the moral law. Insofar as the efficacy of desire is so ordered, the propensity to act based on merely sensible desire is diminished and the efficacy of the law is thereby increased. This structuring effect manifests itself subjectively in terms of feeling: as the subject's representation of the law is rendered efficacious, she experiences a positive feeling that is the sensible, subjective aspect of the will's determination to action, what Kant calls "a positive furthering of its causality" (KpV 5:75). This moving force or incentive is respect, the result of reason determining sensibility to yield a unique sensible representation that is necessary for practical cognition.

Drawing on the hylomorphic language of the Transcendental Aesthetic, the analogy unfolds as follows: just as space and time can be understood as a priori forms of theoretical sensibility which allow objective sensations to be ordered in certain relations, respect can be thought of as an a priori form of practical sensibility which allows subjective sensations to be ordered. Only instead of conditioning the spatiotemporal relations that are necessary for theoretical cognition, respect conditions the relations between desires necessary for practical cognition. As we saw above, if the will is to be immediately determined by laws of reason, it must be possible for the subject to organize and pursue her sensible desires based on the recognition of such laws.

This is precisely what respect makes possible, by ordering the efficacy of sensible desire in accordance with the demands of morality. With both theoretical and practical reason then, we can characterize sensibility in terms of form/matter unities that arise insofar as form determines or performs its essential act on matter, resulting in a representation exhibiting that form. While space and time stand as form to the matter of objective sensation, respect stands as form to the matter of subjective sensation. In the latter case, respect's essential activity is the ordering of sensible desire; and the result of this activity is a sensibly determined, efficacious representation that manifests the objective unity of practical cognition.

Drawing on the above passages from the Transcendental Deduction, the analogy continues: with both uses of reason, the form of sensibility stands as matter to the activity of a spontaneous capacity of mind. This characterization brings out the source of these formal representations, marking the transformative activity indicative of the non-dualistic, unified reading I am arguing for. While space and time depend on the synthetic activity of the understanding, respect depends on the activity of reason. As we have seen, Kant speaks of both space and time and respect as the result of a spontaneous cognitive capacity determining sensibility (B161 footnote; G 4:460). Moreover, these formal representations can be thought of as both constituted through and capable of enabling the characteristic activities of these capacities. Space and time as pure intuitions are constituted through the synthetic activity of the understanding (B161), and as forms they enable this synthetic activity by allowing the manifold of sensation to be intuited as ordered in certain relations, thereby ensuring that theoretical cognition can be given an object to cognize (A20/B34). Respect is brought about through the determination of the will by pure principles of reason, and as form it enables this determination by limiting sensible desire to the condition of compliance with such principles, thereby ensuring that practical cognition can produce the object it cognizes. For

each use of reason, insofar as sensibility is determined by spontaneity, the possibility that there can be the appropriate matter for cognition is ensured. We can thus think of both forms of theoretical and practical sensibility as fulfilling necessary conditions on cognition, conditions which work by structuring the deliverances of sensibility so that they can be incorporated into the relevant cognitive system. The forms of theoretical sensibility condition the possibility of organizing particular representations of given objects into a system of theoretical cognition. The form of practical sensibility conditions the possibility of bringing objects into existence by representing them as part of an organized system of practical cognition.

Thus, although Kant does not officially introduce his discussion of practical sensibility under the heading of an ‘Aesthetic’ of pure practical reason, we can see why he thought it appropriate to draw a limited analogy with the aesthetic of pure theoretical reason when talking about respect. In what follows, this analogy will be used to flesh out the idea of sensible conditions on practical cognition introduced at the end of Chapter 2, in §2.5.

3.5 Sensible Conditions on Practical Discursive Reason

Now that the idea of practical sensibility having both a form and a matter has been developed, we can express the upshot of our analogy with theoretical reason in more succinct terms that will prove useful in the coming chapters. While we already had in hand the concept of sensible conditions on willing at the outset of this chapter, we can now distinguish between formal and material sensible conditions. This will allow us to make sense of Kant’s project in a new and fruitful way that sidesteps many of the problems interpreters are commonly faced with.

Material sensible conditions capture the need for sensible content that was introduced in Chapter 2. There I argued that our ends depend on the contributions of sensibility in order to be

individuated as objects for practical reason. In the present chapter, this idea reappeared throughout §3.2 in various forms. In §3.2.1, it was argued that subjective sensation or feeling, the object of sensible desire, is required to represent possible ends. Through the sensible efficacy of feeling, the faculty of desire is awakened and practical reason is put in a position to incorporate new objects into itself. We also met with the need for sensible content in §3.2.2, during our brief discussion of the categories of freedom. There, I discussed how practical cognition depends on a manifold of sensible desire that is to be organized into a system of rationally determined ends. Finally, in §3.2.3, we saw how this system is organized insofar as these ends are incorporated into the will on the basis of practical principles of reason. So, although practical reason determines itself through such principles, and does not rely on sensibility for the ground or condition of such incorporation, subjective sensation or feeling is still a necessary component for the activity of practical discursive reason. Insofar as the paradigmatic instance of feeling is captured through Kant's concept of the agreeable, we can say that the agreeable, the object of sensible desire, functions as an a priori material sensible condition on willing.

In contrast, formal sensible conditions capture what must be the case for material sensible conditions to be realized in acts of practical cognition. That is, they capture what must take place for the will to be able to incorporate sensible matter into itself in accordance with its own a priori law and only valid determining ground. Using the language from the theoretical philosophy adopted above, formal sensible conditions on practical reason articulate that aspect of sensibility which allows the manifold of sensible desire to be ordered in certain relations. Insofar as the system of cognition that results is a practical one, these ordering relations are reflected through the relative efficacy that the practical representations in the system have for the subject. Through the work of §3.3, we have been set up to recognize that the concept of respect is uniquely suited to fulfill this

formal condition. Insofar as it represents practical reason's determination of the capacity to feel, the feeling of respect is what allows the efficacy of sensible desire to be ordered in relation to the moral law. We can thus identify the concept of respect as what fulfills this a priori formal sensible condition on willing. Together, our two sensible conditions express that there must be sensible content, and that this content must, in virtue of its form, be suitable for practical cognition. Insofar as respect limits the efficacy of the agreeable, both of these conditions are met and the possibility of practical discursive cognition is secured from the sensible point of view.

This newfound sense of the position that the concept of respect occupies within Kant's system will prove beneficial as we approach various interpretive puzzles in the chapters to come. As I will argue, we can develop the implications of the view I give here to rethink Kant's general account of motivation. As I promised above, we can also re-frame the secondary literature about respect: furnished with the notion of respect as the form of practical sensibility, questions about whether respect should be thought of as primarily intellectual or affective in character reveal themselves to be limited and misleading. So do questions about the relative importance of respect within Kant's system, which put one at risk of overemphasizing Kant's rationalism, or making too much of his sympathy with sentimentalist theories and their emphasis on feeling.

Before we get to these issues, however, we must consider another one suggested by and framed through our analogy with theoretical reason. One of the central claims made so far has been that our sensible dependency conditions the logical possibility of error. This is as true in the theoretical as it is in the practical case. However, due to differences inherent in these two uses of reason, our account of error must also vary across the two. As we will see, error does indeed have a common form. But the practical case appears unique insofar as instances of moral error or wrongdoing seem to take on a more radical departure from the form of practical cognition that

should determine acts of practical judgment or willing. We can cash this out in the terms developed here by saying that theoretical intuitions, though often the object of erroneous judgment, always agree with the pure categories of the understanding and exhibit the spatiotemporal sensible form that characterizes our sensibility. Kant takes great pains to show that this is the case in the Transcendental Deduction in the first *Critique*. It is, however, less clear that the analogous version of these requirements holds in the case of practical reason. Owing to our propensity to evil, it appears that sensible matter is more resistant to reason's form. Actions that flout the law appear instead to have a form of their own, one conditioned not by respect for the moral law, but concern for oneself. Indeed, Kant seems to be affirming this very possibility through his description of the propensity to evil as the propensity to invert the claims of morality and self-love, so that the moral law is subordinate to that of sensibility, and the form of one's maxim is the inverse of what it should be (R 6:36). So, we must ask, are there cases where the matter of practical sensibility can resist its own form? This will be the topic of the next chapter, which deals with moral evil in all its manifestations.

CHAPTER 4

Respect and the Possibility of Evil

4.1 Must We Break the Analogy for Evil?

From the *Groundwork* onwards, Kant is forthright that humans are imperfect beings whose sensible dependency precludes the possibility of a certain conception of virtue. Of course, we are not holy beings: the moral law is not subjectively necessary for us, we can act on evil principles and do evil things. But beyond this, we find in Kant an insistence that however good we manage to become, we must always guard against a deeply rooted threat of moral corruption, a threat that remains very real because it is inseparable from the nature of sensibly dependent reason itself.

We first became acquainted with the possibility of evil in Chapter 2, where I sought to clarify Kant's concept of practical reason by relating it to the concept of discursive reason as such, and being mindful of the structural form common to both practical reason and its theoretical counterpart. The concept of evil emerged in §2.4.1, where we saw that the logical possibility of evil exists for every sensibly dependent being with practical reason, simply in virtue of its sensible dependency.¹ In this respect, practical evil is no different from theoretical error or false judgment. The logical possibility of either can only attach to a discursive intellect, for only discursive intellects possess a receptive, sensible capacity, and sensibility is a necessary condition on the possibility of corruptible cognitive activity.²

¹This argument was made on the basis of G 4:412-13. See also G 4:449, LE 27:519, and LE 27:520.

² Recall the first *Critique* passage at A295/B351 quoted earlier: "sensibility, subordinated to understanding, as the object to which the latter applies its function, is the source of real cognition. But this same sensibility, insofar as it influences the action of the understanding and determines it to judgments, is the ground of error."

I continued to develop the concept of specifically practical wrongdoing in §2.5, arguing that the real possibility of evil only emerges for human beings insofar as a universal *propensity* (*Hang*) to evil can be ascribed to us. Kant incorporates the concept of propensity into his picture to safeguard against the objectionable conclusion that moral evil is simply the result of a natural state of dependency or finitude, instead of an autonomous act of free choice. Thus, although the logical possibility of evil is accounted for just insofar as we are subject to sensibly determined desires that condition possible ends not necessarily in accord with morality, the real possibility of evil requires something more, namely, a ground on the basis of which the subject can actually determine itself to act contrary to the moral law.³ Neither the general fact of our sensible dependency, nor specific objects of desire that press upon the subject because of this dependency can supply the ground in question. For Kant, accounting for the real possibility of moral evil requires showing that the subject can freely adopt maxims which flout the constraints of morality. Sensibly determined desire makes it possible for such maxims to have objects and so is a necessary condition for evil, but it cannot ground the free acts of reason that ultimately cause it. As we saw in Chapter 2, reason is a spontaneous intellectual capacity, and as such it must be self-determining regardless of whether it is intuitive or discursive in nature, theoretical or practical in use. To adequately explain the failures of practical reasoning that warrant the name ‘evil,’ Kant invokes the concepts of frailty (*Gebrechlichkeit*), impurity (*Unlauterkeit*), and depravity (*Bösartigkeit*). Sufficiently developed, these subjective conditions of human reason, which Kant also refers to as “grades” of the propensity to evil (R 6:29), allow us to account for the real possibility of human

³ Kant defines the concept of propensity in general as “the subjective ground of the possibility of an inclination, insofar as this possibility is contingent for humanity in general,” and the propensity to evil in particular as “the subjective ground of the possibility of the deviation of maxims from the moral law” (R 6:29).

evil without giving up the central claim that evil results from the free exercise of practical reason, and not merely our sensuous nature. For although frailty, impurity, and depravity can only take root in sensibly dependent beings, Kant insists that they are the result of a kind of spontaneous rational activity that is at once transcendent and yet completely natural to us. It is our proneness to this rational activity which constitutes the perennial threat of moral corruption we must guard against.

So far, we have a rather skeletal account of human evil that respects the central tenets of Kant's metaphysics of mind, and in so doing, maintains an analogy between practical and theoretical reason that takes as its basis their common form, what we might call the form of discursive reason as such. In Chapter 3, I continued to expand this common form and resultant analogy by proposing that we think of respect for the moral law as roughly analogous to space and time, the forms of theoretical sensibility that Kant develops in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and *Transcendental Deduction* of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Taking his arguments about space and time as my guide, I developed a more abstract account of the concept of sensible form, describing it as the product of a spontaneous activity of mind which structures the deliverances of sensibility so that they can figure in acts of cognition. I then made a case for respect being the result of reason spontaneously determining sensibility, an activity which has the required structuring effect insofar as it limits sensible desire to the condition of compliance with morality. Without respect, the deliverances of practical sensibility, i.e., feelings of the agreeable that attach to objects of the faculty of desire, could not serve the function they do. Their efficacy—their ability to move us—would not be responsive to concepts of the understanding and principles of reason, and practical cognition would be impossible for the sensibly dependent being. There would be no unified subject, and representations of reason could not spur action. The concept of respect thus plays a

role analogous to that of the theoretical forms of sensibility, and we can think of it as constituting the form of practical sensibility whenever helpful.

As we saw at the end of Chapter 3, however, my aim to develop the concept of sensibly dependent reason by articulating a common structure shared by both its uses runs into some difficulty once the notion of a form of sensibility as such is introduced. The difficulty is this: the activity of willing evil maxims appears to depart more radically from the conditions of practical cognition than the activity of judging falsely does from the conditions of theoretical cognition. More specifically, while all objects of theoretical judgment, whether true or false, exhibit the spatiotemporal forms of theoretical sensibility, objects of evil willing do not appear to be conditioned by respect as the form of practical sensibility. In the *Groundwork*, Kant's measure for whether an action has moral worth is whether it has been done out of respect for the moral law, implying that a great many actions are not done from respect. He even goes so far as to declare that we cannot be sure whether there has ever been a single action performed from the moral incentive of respect for law, independently of any other sensible incentive (G 4:407). The sensible matter of practical reason thus seems more resistant to the characteristic form I ascribed to it in Chapter 3. So we must ask, does the propensity to evil make sensible desire naturally resistant to reason? Does it loosen the analogy between practical and theoretical reason, destroying the possibility of a common form that reaches all the way down to sensibility?

In what follows, I will show that the real possibility of evil does not force us to accept a crude impositionism which casts sensibility as resistant to reason, nor does it jeopardize the common form of sensibly dependent reason I have sought to develop. We need not worry that Kant's picture entails either of these results, and the interpretive position articulated in the previous chapter provides the resources needed to show this. Taking up the distinction between formal and

material sensible conditions on practical reason articulated in §3.5, we can account for the possibility that respect figures as a sensible condition even for evil willing. Pursuing this line of argument will effectively elaborate upon Kant's claim from the *Religion* that the human being naturally incorporates both moral and sensible incentives into every maxim because the law imposes itself irresistibly upon all of us, and cannot fail to elicit our respect for it (R 6:36). Hence, despite other fundamental differences between good and evil maxims, both can be said to incorporate the feeling of respect for law. So we must conclude that reason cannot fail to determine sensibility in accordance with its own conditions.⁴ If this determination could not take place, the possibility of practical cognition would be precluded from the start and, as Kant puts it in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, the subject would be "morally dead" (MS 6:400).

So we need not conclude that evil derails our analogy and precludes thinking of respect as the form of practical sensibility. Completing my argument to this effect does, however, require that we recognize a further limit to the analogy between practical and theoretical reason that is a major part of the project at hand. In the Chapter 2, I used Kant's own articulation of the distinction between sensibly dependent reason's two uses, arguing that any analogy between them would be limited by the fact that theoretical cognition determines an already existing object given from elsewhere, while practical cognition can bring the object it determines into existence (KpV 5:46; Bix-x). This limit was further determined in §3.2 of the previous chapter, where I argued that practical and theoretical reason differ fundamentally insofar as practical cognition does not, like

⁴ This is not to say that all sensible matter is necessarily determined by reason to be in accordance with the conditions of practical cognition. Were this the case, all action would be morally good and human beings would be holy by nature. As we will see, the point is only that sensibility cannot fail to be responsive to the dictates of pure practical reason: we necessarily take an interest in morality and feel pain when confronted with our wrongdoing. This is what it is to have the feeling of respect irrevocably shape the character of our sensibility, turning us into autonomous moral beings who have what Kant calls 'personality'.

its theoretical counterpart, involve a synthesis of sensible matter yielding representations of independently existing objects. Rather, practical cognition relates to representations of objects only insofar as these representations are efficacious or motivating, i.e., capable of bringing about the cognitive activity that produces, reproduces, or maintains the object's existence. In addition, as we will see in the present chapter, the two uses of reason also differ insofar as each has a uniquely transcendent application resulting from a natural dialectic of reason. As Kant tells us in the introduction to the second *Critique*, theoretical reason is transcendent in its pure speculative use, while practical reason is transcendent in its empirical use (KpV 5:16). The latter manifests itself insofar as empirical practical reason, in the guise of claims to self-love and the preponderance of happiness, assumes it can provide the supreme determining ground of the will.⁵

It is precisely this propensity to transcendence that is captured by Kant's account of evil in the *Religion*, so developing this new analogical limit will help us see how sensibly dependent reason can have a common form, despite the fact that its two uses differ in respect of their objects, characteristic activities, and natural dialectics. A complete development of the distinctly practical dialectic found in Kant's conception of reason will require an analysis of the different grades of the propensity to evil: frailty, impurity, and depravity. This will be my task in §4.3 and §4.4. First, however, we must return to the topic of respect and make the case for its being an ever-present incentive that shapes the nature of sensibility for dependent rational beings.

⁵ In the second *Critique*, Kant describes this propensity to evil using the term "self-conceit," which he describes as "claims to esteem for oneself that precede accord with the moral law" (KpV 5:73). Commentators often use this term to discuss respect and the possibility of evil, but I will stick to the terminology of the *Religion* here as I take it to be both more evocative and more precise.

4.2 Two Senses of Respect

The task at hand is to provide further support for my claim that respect figures as the form of practical sensibility by showing how it is consistent with the fact that humanity has a necessary propensity to evil, and often acts from incentives other than respect. To do this, we must distinguish between the concept of respect as a singular feeling that has more or less efficacy for subjects in different situations, and the concept of respect insofar as it signifies the sensible aspect of consciousness signifying our responsiveness to morality's constraints. Doing so allows us to recognize how respect can fail to have the requisite efficacy, thus giving rise to evil action, without completely disappearing from the picture. The upshot of this section will be a more determinate version of my argument that respect can be thought of as the form of practical sensibility, one that takes the possibility of evil into account. I am effectively building towards the claim that respect necessarily shapes or determines the sensible aspect of all action, regardless of whether the subject fails to actually take respect for the law as her determining ground. That respect can be understood as a formal condition on sensibly dependent willing in this way belies an ineradicable interest in the good that permeates the objective and subjective aspects of all action, good or evil. This is what allows the deliverances of practical sensibility to figure in a distinctively ethical life, one which is guided by the subject's capacity for practical cognition.

The distinction between respect narrowly construed as actual determining incentive, and respect more broadly construed as a necessary sensible condition on moral personhood is present from the outset of Kant's mature practical writing. As mentioned above, in the *Groundwork* he introduces the concept of respect as an incentive that excludes all other merely material incentives and constitutes the condition of morally worthy action:

“an action from duty is to put aside entirely the influence of inclination and with it every object of the will; hence there is left for the will nothing that could determine it except objectively the *law* and subjectively *pure respect* for this practical law, and so the maxim of complying with such a law even if it infringes upon all my inclinations” (G 4:400-1).

This description of respect as the only legitimate subjective determining ground of the will exemplifies the first use of the concept, the one predominantly taken up in the literature. It focuses on respect as what *ought* to serve as the determining ground for a sensibly dependent, morally necessitated will, to the exclusion of all other merely sensible incentives that arise from inclination.⁶ Used in this context, it is clear that respect often and, for all we know, perhaps always fails to determine the will.

The second sense of respect, the one I am trying to bring out here, emerges in a well-known footnote on the very same page that describes the concept as follows:

“what I cognize immediately as a law for me I cognize with respect, which signifies merely consciousness of the *subordination* of my will to a law without the mediation of other influences on my sense. Immediate determination of the will by the law and consciousness of this is called respect, so that this is regarded as the effect of the law on the subject, and not as the *cause* of the law. Respect is properly the representation of a worth that infringes upon my self-love” (G 4:402, footnote).

Note the subtle differences from the first use of the term: here respect is described as both consciousness of the will’s subordination to the law, and the representation of its worth when compared with principles of self-love. Taken in this sense, respect is not a strictly limited determining ground that may never have actually been taken up into the will of a living being to the exclusion of all other incentives; instead, it is a sensible precondition on the possibility of

⁶ Recall that Kant uses the concepts of incentive and subjective determining ground more or less interchangeably. In the second *Critique*, he defines an incentive as “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).

morality itself. As we saw in §3.3 of the previous chapter, if sensibility cannot be affected by the recognition of laws of pure practical reason, then those laws cannot have efficacy for the willing subject.⁷ Understood as consciousness of the rational force of the law, consciousness that has an effect on sensibility in the form of feeling, the second sense of respect meets this necessary sensible condition. This gets us to the import of my distinction between two senses of respect: as a condition on the very possibility of moral obligation, of being a practical knower capable of grasping and being moved by the concepts of good and evil, the second sense of respect remains an ineradicable constant in the lives of moral beings like us.

We can thus think of the relation between these two senses of respect as corresponding to that between a capacity and its actualization. As I argued in Chapter 3, as practical rational beings our capacity for sensibility must be responsive to reason—if we are to act from cognition of the good, we must be able to order sensible desire in response to the moral law, i.e., we must be able to feel respect. Insofar as this is the case, sensibility always already bears the mark of rational determination. This level of description simply characterizes the capacity itself, its particular form, regardless of how it is actualized. Now, in thinking about the latter, we move to the more determinate sense of respect. Because we are fallible creatures, our sensibility might be improperly actualized in acts of practical reason.⁸ That is, our practical judgment and sensible desire might fail to be ordered so as to move us to act from recognition of the moral law alone. In this case, the

⁷ Recall the pivotal passage at G 4:460: “In order for a sensibly affected being to will that for which reason alone prescribes the ‘ought,’ it is admittedly required that his reason have the capacity to induce a feeling of pleasure or of delight in the fulfillment of duty, and thus there is required a causality of reason to determine sensibility in conformity with its principles.”

⁸ Importantly, it is not that sensibility itself misfires, but that sensible matter is not properly taken up by reason. Error arises from the interaction of two logically separate capacities, not the failure of a single one. More on this below.

subjective determining ground of the will is not what it should be, and I fail to feel respect as the incentive that moves me to act on its own, independently of any other incentive.

In addition to the philosophical reasons I give to make this distinction between respect as the form of a capacity, and respect as a particular feeling, there are terminological reasons to do it as well. When Kant talks of respect having an effect on feeling, he typically uses the term *Gefühl*. Consider the following pivotal passage from the second *Critique*: “respect is an effect on feeling (*Gefühl*) and hence on the sensibility of a rational being” (KpV 5:76). As other commentators have pointed out, and the present quote suggests, Kant is using the term in a way that is more expansive than its English equivalent would suggest.⁹ To fully capture Kant’s use of the term usually translated as feeling, we need to mark and make use of the difference between feeling as it denotes the capacity to feel, and feeling as it denotes a particular sensible episode. When Kant talks of reason having an effect on feeling, he is often talking at the level of capacities and their interaction. Richard McCarty puts the point especially well for my purposes here: “Kant sometimes used the word ‘feeling’ (*Gefühl*) to refer to particular, datable feelings of pleasure and displeasure. But more often he used it to refer to the capacity or susceptibility for such feelings. In the latter sense the feeling of respect for law would constitute a central component of moral character.”¹⁰

The forgoing line of argument that we should distinguish a second, more broadly construed sense of respect can be made for all of Kant’s major practical works. I have mainly drawn from the *Groundwork* so far, but it should be no surprise that we find a similar account in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In the third chapter of the analytic, where the more sophisticated account of

⁹ I thank Stephen Engstrom for emphasizing this point when discussing an earlier version of this chapter with me.

¹⁰ Richard McCarty, *Kant’s Theory of Action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 181. Despite the seeming similarity of our views, McCarty turns out to be a hard-line affectivist. His view will be discussed at length in Chapter 6.

respect I drew upon in Chapter 3 is developed, Kant affirms that respect is a feeling “inseparably connected with the representation of the moral law in every finite rational being” (KpV 5:80). As I suggested above, this feeling arises insofar as reason has an effect on sensibility that gives efficacy to the law by limiting the claims of self-love (KpV 5:75-6). In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, he further substantiates this line of thinking by introducing a set of concepts that “lie at the basis of morality as subjective conditions of receptiveness to the concept of duty,” concepts he also refers to as “antecedent predispositions on the side of *feeling*” (MS 6:399). The first concept named is moral feeling, our ability to feel respect for the law and humiliation in the face of our moral shortcomings. At this point in the text, there remains almost no trace of the first sense of respect. Kant insists that “consciousness of obligation depends upon moral feeling to make us aware of the constraint present in the thought of duty,” and thus all human sensibility is set up to experience this feeling (MS 6:400). Though we must cultivate and strengthen its particular instantiations, and some of us can be more susceptible to respect as a subjective determining ground of the will, it must be the case that “no human being is entirely without moral feeling, for were he completely lacking in receptivity to it he would be morally dead” (MS 6:400).¹¹

We are now in an even better position to see that it is this broader sense of respect which was operative in Chapter 3, when I argued that respect can be understood analogously to the forms

¹¹ Kant’s terminology wavers at this point in the *Metaphysics*. Here he lists respect separately from moral feeling, describing it in terms that suggest he has in mind the related but distinct concept of respect for oneself or self-esteem (MS 6:402-03). In fact, he first introduces the concept as respect for oneself (MS 6:399), though its section is subsequently given the heading of simply “respect” (MS 6:402). It is actually his description of moral feeling that is much more in line with the way he uses respect in the rest of his writings and elsewhere in the *Metaphysics*. This appears less strange when we remember that in the second *Critique*, Kant defines moral feeling as encompassing both the positive practical feeling of respect and the negative feeling of humiliation that also results from reason’s determination of sensibility (KpV 5:75). He also appears to equate the two concepts in the *Religion*, where he says that “this susceptibility to simple respect for the moral law within us would thus be the moral feeling” (R 6:27).

of theoretical sensibility. It cannot be the case that respect represents the form of practical sensibility insofar as it always serves as the sole subjective determining ground of the human subject's will. Our propensity to evil rules out this possibility. But it nevertheless cannot fail to shape the form of our sensibility in a more general sense: our susceptibility to feel respect, the fact that reason can effect this feeling by structuring sensibility, signifies the sensible aspect of a moral interest that cannot be extinguished, and which has influence on every act of will, good or evil. Insofar as respect is representative of the sensible part of our recognition of morality's constraint, it determines the way we feel about practical principles and objects, and the kind of efficacy that merely sensible desire can have. Hence my claim that respect represents the transformation of sensibility, giving it the shape it must have to be the sensibility belonging to a mind capable of having practical cognition, of being moved by principles of reason and concepts of understanding, universal laws and representations of good and evil. If sensibility did not have this character, moral representations would be inefficacious, and we would be stuck with the objectionable account of willing that sets sensibility over against reason as unruly and completely disconnected from its influence.

Accordingly, we can distinguish our two senses of respect as follows: first, and more commonly, we have the narrow sense of respect as subjective determining ground. Here respect represents an actual object of the will, what moves us when the will successfully determines itself through cognition of the good. It is an incentive to act conditioned by the form of pure practical reason itself, which as such excludes all material determining grounds. We could call this first use of the concept 'respect as formal incentive,' capturing the sense in which this incentive is determined by the form as opposed to the matter of practical reason. In contrast, the second, more broadly construed use of the concept captures respect as a formal sensible condition on receptivity

to the concept of duty. At this level of description, it captures the more general form our sensibility, our incentives, must have insofar as they belong to a moral being. Understood at this level of abstraction, respect captures not just something the subject might feel, but the particular mode in which she does feel. Regardless of whether she misjudges or acts badly, her feeling is fundamentally responsive to reason. We might say her capacity to feel is ‘*respectful*’ insofar as she frames what she does in terms of practical principles, and sensible desire has only a relative efficacy in comparison to the reasoning that shapes her life. As I have said, this is what her sensibility must always be like if practical cognition is really possible.¹²

4.2.1 Respect in the *Religion*

We come across a helpful albeit very condensed argument covering the same ground as the above section in the first part of the *Religion*. Because Kant is discussing the human propensity to evil at this point in the text, he relates the concept of respect more directly to the issue of evil by recasting it as a necessary element of our universal predisposition to the good, thus placing the two concepts in juxtaposition. This constitutes a shift in terminology, but one that is nevertheless

¹² This distinction between a formal incentive and the form of incentives parallels what Kant says about the forms of theoretical sensibility at B161 in the first *Critique*. Space “as object” is described as a “formal intuition,” which is juxtaposed with the more general conception of space as form of intuition. We can expand on this analogy as follows: respect as *formal* incentive and space as *formal* intuition each represent a priori objects of practical and theoretical reason. They are the result of the determination of sensibility by a spontaneous capacity of mind—reason, in the practical case; and understanding, in the theoretical. This pure determination produces objects that represent the fulfillment of a priori and necessary conditions on cognition for a sense-dependent being. In the practical case, the formal incentive of respect fulfills the need for an ordered manifold of desire that allows principles of pure reason to have efficacy. In the theoretical case, the formal intuition of space fulfills the need for a mode of sensible synthesis whose product is an ordered manifold. The more general concept of a *form of* sensibility, whether practical or theoretical, captures the nature that deliverances of sensibility must have for the human cognizing subject, the sensible ordering relations that make it possible for the subject to either act on principles of reason, or enjoy representations of objects.

consistent with Kant's earlier formulations of the concept. Insofar as respect functions as the form of a being's practical sensibility, she necessarily takes an interest in morality: objectively, she recognizes her subjection to the moral law; and subjectively, she feels respect for it and what it implies about her nature as a free, autonomous being. Such a being thus also takes an interest in the good, the necessary object of pure practical reason that is determined by the moral law.¹³ So the morally interested being and the being with a predisposition to the good are one and the same. Kant also introduces the term "personality" (*Persönlichkeit*) in reference to this part of our nature, arguing that our ability to feel respect constitutes the person-making aspect of our predisposition to the good—a predisposition which also includes animal, and rational but amoral elements (R 6:26). Without respect, we would lack the capacity for practical cognition that makes us responsible for our actions and cease to be persons in the technical sense.

In the course of making this point, Kant explicitly distinguishes between the two uses of respect developed above. First, he invokes the broader use of respect as form of sensibility, marking off how it is distinct from respect as formal incentive: "this susceptibility to simple respect for the moral law within us would thus be the moral feeling, which by itself does not yet constitute an end of the natural predisposition but only insofar as it is an incentive of the power of choice" (R 6:27). So, we have on the one hand respect as moral feeling, as receptivity to the law; and on the other, respect as end or incentive that actually determines the will to action. Kant goes on to insist again that personality requires this susceptibility to respect, "onto which nothing evil can be grafted" (R 6:27). As a necessary condition on the part of receptivity, we cannot shake off respect and the way it shapes our practical reasoning regardless of how evil our character may become.

¹³ See the second chapter of the analytic in the second *Critique* for Kant's most detailed discussion of the concepts of good and evil. Especially KpV 5:57-65.

This is why respect as form of sensibility is not to be thought of as a predisposition to something we may or may not feel, depending on our general character or situation. Insofar as we are morally responsible persons, respect is an ineradicable constitutive element of our nature: “the idea of the moral law alone, together with the respect that is inseparable from it, cannot be properly called a *predisposition to personality*; it is personality itself” (R 6:28). Actually incorporating respect into our maxim as formally determined incentive is, however, something beyond the general sense of respect as moral feeling, and hence we can also call personality a predisposition, something we are set up to achieve but have yet to, in reference to respect understood in this other sense: “but that we incorporate respect into our maxims as incentive, in this sense the subjective ground appears to be an addition to personality, and hence to this end it seems to merit the name of a predisposition” (R 6:28).¹⁴ Hence it is in virtue of the broader use of respect that we are imbued with personality; and because of the narrower, that we fully actualize it. Kant’s argument at R 6:27-8 thus helps us see why we need two senses of respect. We cannot simply say that the only important concept of respect is respect for the law as a formal incentive, something which should determine the will but often does not. Setting respect up as something we merely aspire to as moral beings fails to capture the sense in which it is also a general effect on feeling that must be coeval with our kind of practical rationality. The fact that not one among us may have ever successfully incorporated it as the sole determining ground of willing does not change this for Kant.

¹⁴ I have altered the Cambridge translation here. The original German is: “Aber daß wir diese Achtung zur Triebfeder in unsere Maximen aufnehmen, der subjective Grund hiez zu scheint ein Zusatz zur Persönlichkeit zu sein und daher den namen einer Anlage zum Behuf derselben zu verdienen.”

4.3 Practical Reason's Natural Dialectic

Of course, despite the fact that the feeling of respect fundamentally shapes our sensible nature, we are still such as to act from material incentives instead of pure respect for the conditions of morality. As we saw, the logical possibility of such evil action arises simply insofar as we are sensibly dependent, i.e., subject to sensible desire and its object, the agreeable, in virtue of our material needs and wants. Because morality does not intrinsically cater to these needs and wants which nevertheless press upon us, sensibly dependent reason finds itself caught up in what Kant calls a natural dialectic. He introduces this concept in the first book of the *Groundwork*. The natural dialectic is

“a propensity to rationalize against those strict laws of duty and to cast doubt upon their validity, or at least upon their purity and strictness, and, where possible, to make them better suited to our wishes and inclinations, that is, to corrupt them at their basis and to destroy all their dignity - something that even common practical reason cannot, in the end, call good” (G 4:405).

Because sensibly dependent reason is at once subject to the efficacy of both formal and material principles of practical reason, there arises a conflict as these struggle for supremacy. There are two ways it can be settled: either the sensibly determined material ends that are jointly constitutive of happiness are subordinated to the moral law, or the law is subordinated to these material ends. This may seem like a straightforward dilemma of good vs evil, but the situation is not so clear cut. As we will see, evil action is brought about through the rational activity of practical judgment, which is always directed at the good. We thus cannot allow any explanation of evil to bottom out in the motivation to pursue self-interest, considered independently of morally interested rational activity. In what follows, I will further develop the practical dialectical activity described above, showing it to share a common form with the dialectic of pure theoretical or speculative reason. This

common form manifests itself differently in each case, however, insofar as practical reason is dialectical in its empirical use, while theoretical reason is dialectical in its pure use.

4.3.1 Natural Dialectics of Discursive Reason

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant introduces the concept of dialectic by describing it as a logic of illusion (*Schein*) that arises from the nature of sensibly dependent reason (B 349). Kant uses the term illusion in a strict sense here, noting that the source of illusion is not in the object of judgment but the judgment itself, a result of the cognitive capacity's relation to its object. Whether or not a given judgment is subject to illusion and prone to error depends on the extent to which sensibility exerts influence on the higher cognitive capacities. As I have stressed since Chapter 2, the determinations that obtain between sensibility and these higher capacities are both the source of much of our cognition, as well as all error.¹⁵ This must be the case, for neither the higher capacities nor sensibility can by themselves be the source of corruption. Understanding and reason have their own laws, and will, without outside influence, determine themselves in accordance with them. Sensibility, in contrast, as merely affective cannot determine itself to cognitive activity at all. Kant thus concludes that "error is brought about solely by the unobserved influence of sensibility on the understanding, through which it happens that the subjective grounds of the judgment enter into union with the objective grounds and make these latter deviate from their true function" (A294/B351). Of course, because sensibility cannot be the ultimate ground of an activity that must be spontaneous and self-determining, this influence takes place insofar as understanding and reason confuse certain sensible and therefore merely subjective conditions with objective ones.

¹⁵ The passage I have been citing in support of this point in fact comes from the beginning of the Dialectic of Pure Reason (A294/B351, footnote).

It is the work of critical philosophy to reveal this influence, as well as its corresponding form of illusion and error, by disclosing the proper functions and principles of each capacity of mind.

The specific type of influence and illusion that Kant is concerned with in the Dialectic of the first *Critique* is unique in that it results from otherwise sound subjective principles that take on a transcendent use. A transcendent principle “takes away [the limits of experience], or even commands us actually to transgress them” (A296/B353). In their transcendent use, such principles are adapted to application that goes beyond the limits of the sensible world to which they are rightly restricted. But this transgression goes unrecognized insofar as reason takes such principles to have objective, and thus universal application in the pursuit its ends. Calling a principle transcendent thus captures that it is prone to being misapplied, given an extended use that passes beyond its proper limits while nevertheless appearing to be legitimate, even necessary. By Kant’s own description,

“the cause of this is that there are fundamental rules and maxims for the employment of our reason (subjectively regarded as a faculty of human cognition), and that these have all the appearance of being objective principles. We therefore take the subjective necessity of a connection of our concepts, which is to the advantage of the understanding, for an objective necessity in the determination of things in themselves” (A297/B353).

The form of illusion made possible by these transcendent subjective principles is also unique in that it can never be properly destroyed, even when it is brought to the light of consciousness and its grounds are understood. This is what Kant means when he calls the respective dialectics of theoretical and practical reason “natural.” Unlike errors that arise from ignorance or sophistry, the kind of error associated with a natural dialectic is unavoidable because it is inseparable from the nature of sensibly dependent reason itself. Though exposing the source of such illusion is invaluable, constituting the most important step that must be taken if reason is to make progress,

this exposure cannot prevent reason from being generally prone to entanglement in traps of its own making. However reduced, however momentary these bouts of illusion may be, we are forever susceptible to them (A297-8/B353-5).

In the second *Critique*, Kant affirms that both uses of reason are subject to their own kind of illusion (*Schein*) (KpV 5:107). A major difference emerges, however, insofar as theoretical reason is dialectical because of illusions that arise with its speculative use, while practical reason struggles in its empirically conditioned use. In the former case, speculative reason's search for the unconditioned burdens it with questions that it cannot answer.¹⁶ Absent a determinate way to proceed, reason takes up more limited, merely subjective principles whose transcendent application can appear to yield truths about such deeply-rooted metaphysical topics as the beginning of the world, the nature of corporeal substance and causality, as well as the existence of God. One of the *Critique of Pure Reason's* most major claims thus emerges: theoretical metaphysics, the traditional province of speculative reason, is thoroughly dialectical in its assertions. Conversely, practical reason fares much better in its pure use. As we see from the beginning of the *Groundwork*, Kant's account of pure practical reason takes on an egalitarian bent. Unlike theoretical reason which easily falls into error when it ventures beyond the limits of experience, pure practical reason is adept at separating out empirically conditioned from purely moral incentives (G 4:404). This must be the case insofar as the moral law announces itself to the consciousness of every human being, and the conditions constitutive of practical reason's pure use

¹⁶ Kant famously makes this claim in the first line of the first edition of the first *Critique*: "human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason" (Avii).

are grasped by all; whether intuitively, or through the more precise and abstract formulations of the categorical imperative (G 4:403). So, while the pure use of theoretical reason is prone to error and speculative cognition is principally negative and limiting in character, pure practical reason offers up its determining principle and the possibility of substantive practical cognition to everyone in whom the capacity is actualized.

But despite this difference, practical reason also finds its natural dialectic insofar as the subjective conditions necessary for practical cognition become transcendent by extending beyond their limits. This activity shares the same form as that of theoretical dialectic articulated in the above quote from A297/B253. As we saw in previous chapters, the subjectively necessary material aspect of practical reason is its dependence on ends that have been determined by sensible desire and its object, the agreeable. These conditions are necessary because it is through experience of the agreeable that finite practical reason has the opportunity to become acquainted with the possible ends that are to be incorporated into the will as objects. Taken together, these material ends are constitutive of the concept of happiness, the subjectively necessary end of sensibly dependent practical life. When properly structured by the moral law, they are objects of practical cognition.¹⁷ So described, the principles of sensible desire or self-love are subjectively necessary if sensibly dependent cognition is to have an object.

And just as with the theoretical dialectic, this advantageous, immanent use for the principles governing sense-dependent practical reason becomes transcendent insofar as reason mistakes subjective necessity for objective necessity, and presumes that such principles hold

¹⁷Kant even goes so far as to cast sensible desire and the ends it discovers as the first aspect of the human predisposition to good. Without this sensible form of desire, which can be presupposed in rational and non-rational animals alike—though, as I have argued, in different forms—the crucial drives towards self-preservation, propagation, and community could not figure in practical rational life at all (R 6:26).

unconditionally. This is effectively to assume, erroneously, that the agreeable needs no further determination in order to be declared good, and that the principles of sensible desire are sufficient for practical cognition and the action it determines. Thus, despite the fact that sensibly dependent practical reasoners like us necessarily take an interest in the moral law, we are also necessarily subject to a natural dialectic that makes it possible for evil to emerge. Insofar as this dialectic is embedded in the nature of sense-dependent practical reason itself, we cannot escape it; but we can minimize its influence by exposing it and developing our grasp of the moral law as the only unconditioned principle of practical reason. This is one of the principal aims of a *Critique of Practical Reason*, which must “prevent empirically conditioned reason from presuming that it, alone and exclusively, furnishes the determining ground of the will” (KpV 5:16).

We now have in hand a metaphysical characterization of our natural propensity to illusory practical reasoning that shares a common form with its theoretical counterpart. There is still much more that can be said about evil, however, for the practical version of this dialectic manifests itself in a variety of different ways. To see what these are, we must turn to Kant’s analysis of our propensity to evil and its three grades, frailty, impurity, and depravity. Developing these concepts will help us better grasp what happens when acts of practical reasoning manifest this dialectical structure and furnish subjective grounds for the will’s self-determination to evil. In other words, their development will grant us more insight into the real possibility of evil.

4.4 Three Grades of the Propensity to Evil

We are already in a better position to understand the description of the propensity to evil with which this chapter began. Recall that Kant defines the propensity (*Hang*) to evil as “the subjective ground of the possibility of the deviation of the maxims from the moral law” (R 6:29).

We now know that this ground is furnished insofar as practical reason mistakes subjectively necessary principles for objectively necessary ones, exhibiting the dialectical rational activity that makes self-love or happiness the unconditional determining ground of the will (G 4:405; KpV 5:16).¹⁸ To further determine this general account of the propensity to evil, Kant introduces its three distinct grades (*Stufen*)—frailty, impurity and depravity—each of which accounts for the subjective ground of evil in a different way. The differences between these grades correspond roughly to the role that sensible desire plays in each of them. That is, we distinguish between them based on the extent to which sensible desire has been incorporated into the will as its sufficient determining ground. The three grades thus represent, in ascending order, increasingly entrenched versions of practical reason’s natural dialectic.

As we proceed, we will find that Kant actually has very little to say about frailty, impurity, and depravity, in the *Religion* or elsewhere. We can, however, expand on these important concepts by developing what he does say about them within the confines of a few basic conditions on his picture of practical reasoning that I have argued for, and that Kant re-articulates in close proximity to the passages in question. Above all, we must remember that reason is self-determining, and that it necessarily determines sensibility to feel respect for its supreme practical law. The first condition rules out the possibility of our attributing the subjective determining ground of evil to sensibility alone; the second rules out the possibility of evil serving as its own ground, thus precluding the idea of a diabolical will that betrays the law simply for the sake of betraying it.¹⁹ Evil must then

¹⁸Kant sometimes uses the verb ‘rationalize’ (*vernünfteln*) to describe this unique activity (G 4:405; R 6:43). I will continue to take up this practice here.

¹⁹ See R 6:35. Covering the first point, Kant says: “the ground of this evil cannot be placed, as is commonly done, in the sensuous nature of the human being, and in the natural inclinations originating from it. For not only do these bear no direct relation to evil...we also cannot presume ourselves

arise from the interaction of reason and sensibility, and reason's assent to the kind of illusion captured by Kant's description of dialectical reasoning — what, in the *Religion*, he calls “perversity of the heart” (R 6:37).²⁰ What follows is a more detailed analysis of the propensity to evil that meets these conditions.

4.4.1 Frailty

The first of the three grades of evil is frailty or weakness (*Gebrechlichkeit*), which Kant describes as follows:

“the frailty (*fragilitas*) of human nature is expressed even in the complaint of an Apostle: ‘What I would, that I do not!’ i.e., I incorporate the good (the law) into the maxim of my power of choice; but this good, which is an irresistible incentive objectively or ideally (*in thesi*), is subjectively (*in hypothesi*) the weaker (in comparison with inclination) whenever the maxim is to be followed” (R 6:29).

The weak or frail subject is one who acts contrary to the moral law that she purportedly takes to be a sufficient determining ground of the will. So with frailty, the conflict or perversity characteristic of evil in general shows itself at the surface level. As we proceed to the later stages, we will see that this conflict gets buried deeper and deeper. In its primary stage, however, perversity is manifest insofar as the agent understands herself to have incorporated the moral law into her will as its only legitimate determining ground, but nevertheless pursues an object of sensible desire that has not been sufficiently limited by that law.²¹

responsible for their existence.” Covering the second, he says: “the ground of this evil can also not be placed in a *corruption* of the morally legislative reason, as if reason could extirpate within itself the dignity of the law itself, for this is absolutely impossible.” The term ‘diabolical’ is the English equivalent of Kant’s own ‘*teuflich*,’ which he uses in this context at R 6:35 and again at R 6:37.

²⁰ At R 6:29, Kant defines the good or evil heart as “the will’s (*Willkür*) capacity or incapacity arising from [the natural propensity to evil] to adopt or not to adopt the moral law in its maxims.”

²¹ As we will see, frailty as Kant conceives it will turn out to be a broader notion than what is normally conveyed with the term ‘weakness of will.’

To develop the concept of frailty, we need to be mindful of the two general conditions for a Kantian account of evil articulated above. It is especially tempting to overlook the first of these here. That is, it is tempting to attribute one's weakness to the overwhelming power of sensible desire. On this explanation, frailty is exhibited when the subject fails to bring about the good despite the fact that she has appropriately recognized the supremacy of the moral law, and despite the fact that in virtue of this law the subject has practical cognition of what she ought to do. Insofar as we make sensibility responsible for frailty in this way, such cognitive achievements are effectively irrelevant if sensible desire is strong enough.²² Despite the fact that Kant's description of frailty may seem to suggest this picture, it is precisely the one that we need to avoid. Though sensible desire is doubtless a necessary material condition on the possibility of frailty, it cannot be its cause. Frailty must be the result of reason's own activity, activity which is influenced by its sensible dependence, but not externally determined by it.²³

It is this influence from sensibility which is captured by Kant's description of practical reason's natural dialectic. Reason leads itself astray by taking up merely subjective principles from sensibility and framing them as objective. More needs to be said, however, for it is not clear how this dialectic can get a foothold, even momentarily, if the subject has acknowledged the supremacy of the moral law and correctly identified what she ought to do. Admittedly, there are not many places where Kant is explicit that we need something over and above the moral law and its attendant feeling of respect in order to both exclude the influence of merely material incentives, and have practically efficacious representations that determine the good as the object of practical

²² This is what prominent commentator Richard McCarty concludes in building what he calls the 'affectivist' interpretation of Kant's view. McCarty's view will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

²³ This is not to deny that affective forces can involuntarily determine human behaviour, just that such behaviour could not constitute frailty, or any other form of evil.

cognition. But we do find one helpful passage in the preface to the *Groundwork* where Kant says something to this effect. Here, he affirms that a priori laws of pure practical reason,

“no doubt still require a judgment sharpened by experience, partly to distinguish in what cases they are applicable and partly to provide them with access to the will of the human being and efficacy for his fulfillment of them; for the human being is affected by so many inclinations that, though capable of the idea of a practical pure reason, he is not so easily able to make it effective *in concreto* in the conduct of his life” (G 4:389).

Read carefully, this passage can offer us a lot of help. From the final clause, we get a restatement of the line of thought currently posing a problem: the dependent will beset with sensible desire finds it difficult to make the moral law its subjective determining ground, to represent it with the efficacy required for concrete action, despite the fact that this same will is moved by the conditions of morality in a more abstract sense. From the first clause, we learn what is required to help with this problem, namely, a power of judgment sharpened by experience. Developing this idea will give us some insight into how one can come to be gripped by frailty.

Kant ascribes a twofold purpose to the cultivation of judgment: first, it prepares us for dealing with concrete, in-the-moment situations where the constraints of morality are felt. To grasp the applicability of moral conditions in the hurly-burly of practical life requires not just an abstract grasp of the law's command to universal maxims, but the ability to read the situation, to differentiate particular incentives of self-love from those of morality, to deal with unforeseen features that give rise to confusion and usher in the dialectical framework we are concerned with here. Second, a cultivated sense of judgment grants more efficacy to the moral law, making it such as to actually move the subject to act on its basis. These may seem like separate aims, but the account of practical reason I have developed so far gives us the resources to see that they are in fact two sides of the same coin, representative of the objective and subjective aspects of the will's

determination. As I have emphasized, practical representations of reason are the source of their own efficacy.²⁴ If reason is to be practical, it must be the act of representing itself that brings about its object. Practical representations are thus more or less efficacious for the subject on the basis of their content, not some other measure of volitional strength that holds independently of this content.²⁵ So one cannot obtain a more determinate grasp of the objective constraints of morality and the ways they can be tested without also increasing the efficacy that the representation of these constraints has for the subject. In short, objective content and subjective efficacy cannot be separated; to develop one is to develop the other. When one gains experience and learns how to better judge the situation, working out a more determinate picture of one's moral commitments, their implications, and how they can be tested, this cognitive achievement strengthens the motivating power of the commitments themselves.

What's emerging is a more sophisticated picture of what moral failure looks like, one which acknowledges there can be a break between the bare idea of a good will and the more determinate, world-directed judgments required for its efficacy. This picture allows us to cast sensible desire in the role Kant so often attributes to it, as an obstacle to good character, without having to conclude that sensibility itself is resistant to morality or the source of evil. It also answers my question about how dialectical illusion can still grip the subject when she acknowledges the moral law and takes herself to have incorporated it into her will as the most general determination of her character. We can now offer the following account: dialectical illusion gets a grip when the subject does not have

²⁴ See, in particular, §2.4 of Chapter 2, where the concept of practical reason and willing is introduced; as well as §3.2.3 of Chapter 3, where the notion of practicality or efficacy is developed through discussion of the characteristic representations of practical reason.

²⁵ This is why we have the capacity to withstand strong feelings of pleasure or displeasure that could lead us to act against the course of action we have resolved upon. Representations of reason have their own efficacy that prevail against the more limited efficacy of sensible desire.

the ability to apply her recognition of the law *in concreto*, when she finds herself in unfamiliar circumstances, brushes up against unforeseen consequences of her commitment, proves unprepared to encounter sensible desire in all its efficacious specificity, or otherwise finds herself caught up in the moment. Absent a more determinate, practiced understanding of what the achievement of good character requires her to give up and why, she is liable to struggle, to fall under the illusion that subjective principles of happiness can lay claim to objectivity, to open the door to exceptions. In fact, we must acknowledge that even if she does have this hard won understanding and sharpened judgment, it can easily be shaken. As sensibly dependent beings our world is a cacophonous place of change and need, in which we constantly meet with new situations, new ends, new conflicts. It cannot be presumed that our unceasing respect for morality will always give us the ability to deftly navigate the infinitely many possibilities that can befall us. Laws of pure practical reason yield substantive judgments about what to do in a given situation, but it is not always so easy to grasp and thereby actualize the more determinate representation of the good that such judgments take as their object.

To ground this reading more firmly in the text, consider one of the two examples of weakness Kant gives in the *Lectures on Ethics*. Discussing the general phenomenon of white lies told in social situations, Kant brings out the motives that may lead us to utter a deliberate untruth. We might represent such lies as permitted because they are told in jest, out of politeness, or indeed out of necessity: to prevent harm, or because others do not want to hear the truth (LE 27:701). Kant suggests that no such lie could ever be justified—though interestingly, he leaves the matter open for careful consideration—concluding that most (if not all) white lies are the result of frailty or weakness:

“There may, in general, be no unpleasantness in social situations that could rightfully seduce us into wrongdoing; yet, given the weakness of human nature, it is true nonetheless that the strict laws of duty must here endure many a jolt. A moral casuistic would be very useful, and it would be an undertaking much to the sharpening of our judgment, if the limits were defined, as to how far we may be authorized to conceal the truth without detriment to morality” (LE 27:701).

Here we see Kant use the language of “sharpening” judgment in the context of identifying and overcoming a particular weakness. Because the limits of truth-telling in social situations are not clearly defined, the subject is likely to meet with situations where a desire to be benevolent or shrewd leads her to lie—either unreflectively, or through explicit reasoning that untruth is called for. In such cases the laws of morality receive a “jolt” as they are bent out of shape to accommodate an end that suddenly manifests itself to the subject. This general picture helps explain why Kant insists that virtue is better captured by talking of the strength of the subject’s principles, as opposed to her dispositions. As he affirms in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, virtue is not the result of mere disposition or habit, but of an approach grounded in careful principles whose application manifests the plasticity needed to grapple with the ups and downs of embodied life: “for unless this aptitude results from considered, firm, and continually purified principles, then, like any other mechanism of technically practical reason, it is neither armed for all situations nor adequately secured against the changes that new temptations could bring about” (MS 6:383-4).²⁶

Kant provides further confirmation of this interpretation of frailty with his discussion of affect in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Here, we get a sustained account of the

²⁶ To capture the idea of moral aptitude, Kant often uses the term *moralische Gesinnung*, usually translated as moral disposition. Recently, scholar and translator Stephen Palmquist has suggested translating *Gesinnung* as “conviction” instead. This would better capture the sense in which moral aptitude or virtue is first borne of carefully considered judgment. Cf. Stephen R. Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant’s Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015).

way in which a sudden sensible desire can influence the activity of reason in the unprepared. Though Kant often uses the term ‘*Affect*’ in a more general sense to describe what sensibility’s object produces in the subject, in this context the term takes on a more specific meaning: “affect is surprise through sensation, by means of which the mind’s composure is suspended. Affect is therefore rash, that is, it quickly grows to a degree of feeling that makes reflection impossible (it is thoughtless)” (ApH 7:252). Unfortunately, the talk of ‘degree of feeling’ can lead us to conclude that Kant is working with an empirical-psychological conception of feeling that focuses on its quasi-mechanical strength of force.²⁷ This would pose a problem for the present reading. The quasi-mechanical view saddles us with a dualistic conception of reason and sensibility, on which feeling is a sensible response to one’s environment that arises completely independently of cognitive mental life. But Kant helpfully clarifies that this is not how he means to use the language of strength: “in general, it is not the intensity of a certain feeling that constitutes the affected state, but the lack of reflection in comparing this feeling with the sum of all feelings (of pleasure or displeasure)” (ApH 7:254). This clarification helps get us to the desired view. Though we can understand the agent’s general capacity to sense and feel—including her more specific dispositions towards particular feelings—in terms of psychological laws that track physical causes and degrees of force, this is not Kant’s focus in his moral philosophy or even his anthropological writings. Instead, we need to consider affect insofar as it relates to our higher capacity to reflect and judge. So Kant’s account of affect is not causal. Affect does not lead to thoughtlessness because it describes feelings that overpower on the basis of their psychological strength. Rather, it picks out the set of feelings we find it difficult to reflect upon. Understanding the scope of this set requires

²⁷ This is Richard McCarty’s view.

looking not into the mechanics of the mind, but into the subject's personal history and ability: the kinds of situations she has found herself in so far; how self-aware she is about which affects she is particularly susceptible to; how she has reacted to similar moments of affect in the past; whether she has resolved to make progress; how attentive she is to the possibility of being caught off guard.

Consider the example Kant gives of the rich man who flies into a rage when his server breaks a rare goblet:

“[he] would think nothing of this accident if, at the same moment, he were to compare this loss of *one* pleasure with the multitude of *all* the pleasures that his fortunate position as a rich man offers him. However, if he now gives himself over completely to this one feeling of pain (without quickly making that calculation in thought), then it is no wonder that, as a result, he feels as if his entire happiness were lost” (ApH 7:254).

What Kant describes here is an inability to appropriately relate one feeling to all the others that help fill out one's practical life. This inability is, to be sure, dependent on one's natural propensity to feel in particular ways—something over which the subject does not have complete control.²⁸ But it is fundamentally a failure of reflection, which one can work to control once it is brought to consciousness. Consider, for example, Kant's discussion of courage: as affect, it captures how one immediately reacts to sudden danger. This disposition or aptitude lies in part with reason and in part with sensibility, expressing both how one feels in representing the sudden appearance of danger, and how this feeling tracks (or fails to track) one's capacity to situate the danger in relation to other circumstances and ends. Kant suggests this much in his description of the affect of courage

²⁸ How Kant sees our dispositional luck to fit with the autonomous activity of reason is best captured through the following statement from the *Anthropology*. Describing those who are not naturally susceptible to affect, he declares: “the natural gift of apathy, with sufficient strength of soul, is, as I have said, fortunate **phlegm** (in the moral sense). He who is gifted with it is to be sure, on that account not yet a wise man, but he nevertheless has the support of nature, so that it will be easier for him to become one more easily than others” (ApH 7:254). We thus must distinguish between feelings that contingently encourage good behaviour, and the cultivation of judgment that leads to the systematically ordered, virtuous soul.

as “consequently belonging *in one respect* to sensibility” (ApH 7:257; emphasis mine). Those who possess timidity as affect are especially prone to exhibit moral weakness in response to sudden danger. Insofar as reason is tripped up by a strong feeling of fear that makes it difficult to judge what is morally required in the present circumstances, one is likely to be moved to do what is perceived to be necessary for self-protection. It is here that illusion gets a grip, self-love appears to carry the rational force of objective law, and frail action results. But one can also learn to control this weakness through the activity of reason. This results in courage, not as affect, but as virtue. The latter is rooted in reason insofar as “it rests on principles,” and thereby the possibility arises that “reason then gives the resolute man strength that nature sometimes denies him” (ApH 7:256-7). So those afflicted by the affect of timidity can work to cultivate the determinate principles and capacity for judgment that allow them to navigate dangerous situations. Through such work, one begins to overcome frailty and cultivate virtue.

We can thus see that Kant makes plenty of room for sensible desire to assert itself and make reasoning difficult. More importantly, we can account for this desire—the visceral feel of frailty—without conceding that its very possibility saddles us with the view that it is the strength of sensible desire, independently of reason, which determines weak action.²⁹ But there is still more to be said: though these considerations set us on the right track, we can see that giving an account of frailty presents additional challenges. As I noted at the outset of our exploration of the concept, frailty is unique in that the perversity inherent to all evil is in this case manifest to the subject: she occupies a position of instability insofar as her representation of the good is inefficacious, and she ends up doing what she acknowledges she should not. Granted, she lacks determinate cognition of

²⁹ In much of his work, this is the starting point for McCarty’s argument that we need a quasi-empiricist, affectivist reading of Kant’s theory of motivation. See Chapter 6 for further discussion.

the good, i.e., a representation capable of bringing about its object, and this makes it possible for the transcendent claims of sensible desire to get a foothold; but she is not totally taken in by self-love's illusory push towards the unconditioned, at least not enough to incorporate these claims into her will as a universal principle capable of moving her to act. So although she acts on an end of self-love that has not been properly limited by moral concern, the frail subject does not pretend that this end is the object of a maxim that she has taken up. Kant provides a helpful description of this kind of case in book two of the *Groundwork*:

“If we now attend to ourselves in any transgression of a duty, we find that we do not really will that our maxim should become a universal law, since that is impossible for us, but that the opposite of our maxim should instead remain a universal law, only we take the liberty of making an exception to it for ourselves (or just for this once) to the advantage of our inclination” (G 4:424).

To make an exception is to effectively reduce the universality of the law in question to mere generality, what Kant in an earlier cited passage referred to as casting doubt on its purity and strictness (G 4:405). This activity of weakening the law is also suggested by Kant's description of frailty from the *Religion*, where he says that the law which should, objectively, be an irresistible incentive is subjectively the weaker in comparison with material incentives of sensible desire (R 6:29).

It might be objected that this kind of explanation fails to capture the pain and self-censure experienced by the frail subject, but Kant does not mean this account to serve as an excuse or justification. As he goes on to say in the same passage from the *Groundwork*, the activity of limiting the law, however minimally, “cannot be justified in our own impartially rendered judgment” (G 4:424). The second concrete example of frailty given in Kant's corpus, from the *Lectures on Ethics*, exhibits the same structure. The subject weakly acts on a material incentive, thus downgrading the status of the law; but one's conscience, the inner judge, remains dissatisfied:

“the inner tribunal is correct; it looks at the action for itself, and without regard to human frailty, if only we are willing to hear and feel its voice; suppose, for example, that I have insulted someone in company, by my words, and return home; it then troubles me, and I wish for an opportunity of repairing the situation. By no means must I rid myself of these inner reproaches, however many plausible excuses I may have, which would certainly be sure to weigh with any earthly judge” (LE 27:295).

Others might be more tolerant of this behaviour, understanding that humanity is often weak and liable to, in the moment, transgress its only unconditional practical law. But the weak individual herself understands that she has subjected herself to the law, and this constitutes a transgression for which frailty is no excuse. The pain she feels upon seeing this failure is evidence of her respect for the law, her recognition that claims of happiness must be subordinated to it, so she must be prone to regret if impartial judgment is able to take hold. In fact, even if she were so caught up in dialectical illusion that she could not yet make this judgment and feel this pain, the structure of her rational activity would still manifest respect for the law. As Kant goes on to argue in the same *Groundwork* passage quoted above, the fact that, at the time of action, we merely weaken the law instead of overthrowing it, shows “that we really acknowledge the validity of the categorical imperative and permit ourselves (with all respect for it) only a few exceptions that, as it seems to us, are inconsiderable and wrung from us” (G 4:424).

We are now in a position to see why Kant casts frailty as the first grade of the propensity to evil. Even people of good character who have incorporated the law into their maxims, and are typically able to act in a way that suggests they need no other incentive, can exhibit frailty insofar as they experience a momentary lapse in judgment spurred by dialectical illusion. Caught off guard, or otherwise situated so that the claims of sensible desire assert their efficacy, the frail subject does not have the cognitive and motivational resources to see through the illusion, and evil is the result. If this frailty is quickly recognized for what it is, as in Kant’s example of the loose-

tongued person who regrets his insulting remark, then the subject is pained to acknowledge that her judgment and, as a result, the efficacy of the law is lacking in her. This could provide an opportunity for improvement, for gaining the valuable experience necessary to cultivate good character. Because of our ineradicable propensity to rationalize, however, our frailty cannot be totally overcome through such improvement. Understood as the subjective ground of the possibility of evil, this manifestation of dialectical reasoning always threatens, no matter how practiced we become. As we will see, it is precisely because of this inescapability that we must be on guard against frailty. If not properly acknowledged for what it is, what appears to be a momentary lapse can progress into something more sinister and pave the way to later stages of evil.³⁰

4.4.2 Impurity

Carrying over the more general reflections on the possibility of evil developed for my account of frailty in the previous section, we can make quicker work of the two remaining determinations of the propensity to evil. Kant describes impurity (*Unlauterkeit*), the second grade of evil, as follows:

“the *impurity* of the human heart consists in this, that although the maxim is good with respect to its object (the intended compliance with the law) and perhaps even powerful enough in practice, it is not purely moral, i.e. it has not, as it should be [the case], adopted the law *alone* as its *sufficient* incentive but, on the contrary, often (and perhaps always) needs still other incentives besides it in order to determine the power of choice for what duty requires; in other words, actions conforming to duty are not done purely from duty” (R 6:30).

³⁰ For further discussion of frailty or weakness, see Chapter 6, §6.3.

This form of evil is more insidious because, unlike frailty, it is realized in the pursuit of good ends. This makes it largely undetectable: for as with frailty, the subject with an impure will still prioritizes the formal incentive of morality over material incentives of self-love. As Kant says above, respect for the law may even be sufficient to determine the will in certain situations. Thus one can exhibit impurity and still pursue the good because the law commands it. Regardless, impurity represents a more entrenched form of evil because the impure will has incorporated material incentives of sensible desire into the will as determining grounds. Although frailty leads to behaviour that manifestly contradicts the law, the illusory framing of sensible desire only gets a grip in passing. With impurity, they have been incorporated as conditions for acting.

This stage of evil takes up the language associated with the concept of respect as a formal incentive that necessarily excludes the determining influence of all material incentives. In doing so, it draws a strict line between the two uses of the concept: however alive one may be to the constraints of morality, something is sorely lacking if they do not constitute the sole determining grounds of the will. This distinction helps us to pinpoint cases where good intentions and favourable circumstances allow us to be complacent in our self-regard, and neglect the kind of scrutiny which asks whether we would have been able to carry out our duty if it were not so easy for us. In the grips of impurity, practical reason is poised to blindly assume that doing the right thing for the right reason in the right situation is good enough; and not stop to consider whether other motivating factors were involved. Dialectical illusion thus becomes more deeply entrenched at this stage, as the transcendent claim that sensible desire provides legitimate determining grounds of the will is internalized to the extent that such claims do not run counter to morality. This may seem acceptable since the commands of morality are still grasped as supreme, but it actually represents a grave threat insofar as the formal incentive becomes covertly dependent on material

incentives in certain situations. This arrangement cannot help but degrade one's power of judgment, as the subject becomes less dependent on the practiced application of a priori law that is, among other things, mindful of subtle distinctions between incentives, and more dependent on the presence of sensible desire for its efficacy. The subject thereby becomes more susceptible to frailty: her capacity for judgment is weakened and she is more likely to falter, once again open the door to dialectical reasoning, and act contrary to law if the requisite sensible conditions of self-love are not met.

Despite the characterization of impurity as a deeper form of evil, however, Kant insists that it is, like frailty, such as to bring an "unintentional guilt" upon the subject (R 6:38). We cannot help that our sensible dependence provides us with material incentives to act. In this respect our sensible desire, viewed as material condition on discursive practical reason, is innocent, even part of our predisposition to the good. Moreover, we cannot help that this dependence makes it impossible to grasp the true character of our maxim, whether its determining ground is principally formal or material. Though the concept of impurity tracks a subjective ground of the possibility of evil that is reached through autonomous acts of reasoning and is therefore imputable, it is written into our sensible nature that it can arise unintentionally. Our true character shows in how we deal with this impurity; whether we attempt to confront it and guard against future cases, or let it pass unnoticed.

We now have a second manifestation of evil in view, one which adds a further determination to the evil heart insofar as the subject's capacity to act from duty is again reduced.³¹ When impurity takes hold as a ground of the propensity to evil, even action that succeeds in

³¹ Recall that Kant defines the good or evil heart as "the will's capacity or incapacity...to adopt or not adopt the moral law in its maxims" (R 6:29).

bringing about the good for its own sake becomes compromised, the subject's power of judgment degrades further, and she is increasingly likely to exhibit frailty in a wider variety of situations. Again, if the subject can come alive to this fact, she is presented with an opportunity to gain experience and increase the law's efficacy. If she ignores it, she is liable to continue on a slippery slope towards the final stage of the propensity to evil.

4.4.3 Depravity

Once the subject makes material incentives of sensible desire the supreme determining ground of her will, she has progressed to depravity (*Bösartigkeit*), the third and final grade of the propensity to evil. Kant describes it as follows:

“the depravity or, if one prefers, the *corruption* of the human heart is the propensity of the power of choice to maxims that subordinate the incentives of the moral law to others (not moral ones). It can also be called the *perversity* of the human heart, for it reverses the ethical order as regards the incentives of a *free* power of choice; and although with this reversal there can still be legally good actions, yet the mind's attitude is thereby corrupted at its root (so far as the moral disposition is concerned), and hence the human being is designated as evil” (R 6:30).

The most advanced examples of depravity constitute the limit for human evil, our corruptibility fully actualized. We cannot progress beyond this stage without completely destroying our moral interest, and as we have seen, Kant declares that this is impossible if we are to remain moral beings subject to the constraints of morality. Accordingly, depravity (*Bösartigkeit*) is not to be understood as malice (*Bosheit*), the pursuit of evil for evil's sake (R 6:37). Depravity is rather the result of the most entrenched form of dialectical illusion, which leads the subject to fully incorporate the subjective principles of happiness that she mistakes for objective principles of reason as unconditional determining grounds of the will. This act of will does not eradicate all

responsiveness to the feeling of respect; it merely subordinates the moral incentive, which is still capable of occupying us, though not to the detriment of our happiness.³²

That depravity constitutes a deeper form of evil is reflected in the fact that it incurs deliberate rather than unintentional guilt. This guilt is built up insofar as the inability to see one's moral shortcomings is now the result of some effort, what Kant calls "a certain perfidy on the part of the human heart (*dolus malus*) in deceiving itself as regards its own good or evil disposition" (R 6:38). The impure will is culpable for not being more vigilant about covert incentives, but these incentives arise quite naturally, and insofar as they are still subordinate to the moral law they can easily slip by unnoticed. The depraved will must be more active in the construction of its illusion: once sensible desire is taken to condition morality; once, as I put it above, the agreeable is taken for the good; it becomes increasingly difficult to represent oneself as possessing good character. Depravity thus represents the highest form of perversity: the will's formal and material determining grounds are reversed, and the subject is less and less capable of seeing this because her power of judgment has degraded even further. As Kant puts it, the propensity to evil has "[put] out of tune the moral ability to judge what to think of a human being" (R 6:38).

It is helpful to return to the *Anthropology* at this point, to consider Kant's account of passion, affect's counterpart. This can help us get a grip on how particular expressions of depravity could take place. While affect is a temporary, sudden sensible response that one has difficulty reflecting upon, "passion (as a state belonging to the faculty of desire) takes its time and reflects, no matter how fierce it may be, in order to reach its end" (ApH 7:252). Placing this distinction in

³² See Kant's remark at R 6:36: "hence the difference, whether the human being is good or evil, must not lie in the difference between the incentives that he incorporates into his maxim (not in the material of the maxim) but in their *subordination* (in the form of the maxim): *which of the two he makes the condition of the other.*"

the context of the narrative I have been developing in this section, we could say: If the frail, affected person does not do the work required to strengthen her judgment, firm up her principles, and thereby cultivate virtue, what starts out as a natural but passing reaction to sudden circumstances becomes a more deeply rooted aspect of one's character. In short, affect turns to passion as one progresses towards the latter stages of evil and incorporates sensible desire into her maxims as an unchecked source of justification.³³ Kant is particularly evocative in describing the difference between these two perversities of the soul:

“affect works like water that breaks through a dam; passion, like a river that digs itself deeper into its bed” (ApH 7:252);

“if affect is *drunkenness*, then passion is an *illness* that abhors all medicine, and it is therefore far worse than all those transitory emotions that at least stir up the resolution to be better; instead, passion is an enchantment that also refuses recuperation” (ApH 7:265-6).

This talk of illness is meant to capture the way that passion distorts reasoning to prioritize one end over all others. Fully entrenched in our character, passion presupposes maxims directed at the ends it prescribes, maxims which rationalize the end in question. Consider, for example, Kant's discussion of the passionate desire for vengeance. He insists that it is one of the most deeply rooted passions the human being is capable of developing, since it can so easily be framed as directed at a just end:

“hatred arising from an injustice we have suffered, that is, the *desire for vengeance*, is a passion that follows irresistibly from the nature of the human being, and, malicious as it may be, maxims of reason are nevertheless interwoven with the inclination by virtue of the permissible *desire for justice*, whose analogue it is” (ApH 7:270).

³³ In this respect, I disagree with Iain Morriison, who builds an interpretation of weakness or frailty around the claim that it functions like a passion. On my reading, passions are too deeply rooted in one's character to be representative of weakness. Since Kant is insistent that we form practical principles around them, passions must reflect a more entrenched form of evil. Cf. Iain Morriison, “On Kantian Maxims: A reconciliation of the Incorporation Thesis and Weakness of the Will,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 22 (2005): 73-89.

This loose talk of subjective and objective principles “interwoven” with one another corresponds to the language of dialectical illusion used above. Insofar as what is really an expression of self-love is fully accepted as directed towards the good, the incentives of happiness and morality are reversed in their order of priority and the passion-afflicted person manifests the deepest form of evil. Even passion for something seemingly benign, like beneficence, belongs at this level. For the reasoning directed at ends of passion, which makes a mere part of one’s final end into the whole, “directly contradicts the formal principle of reason itself” (ApH 7:266). Affects, as sensations that we have difficulty reflecting upon, are “merely unfortunate states of mind full of many ills,” which do “momentary damage to freedom and dominion over oneself” (ApH 7:267). In contrast, passions are always evil, finding “pleasure and satisfaction in a slavish mind” (ApH 7:267).³⁴ To the extent that passion distorts one’s ability to judge, perverts the heart, and thereby reduces one’s capacity to act according to the moral law, it severely impacts our freedom. While some might see affect as possessing a kind of benefit—Kant points to the example of people who wish they could get angry—no one in their right mind would desire passion as Kant describes it: “For who wants to have himself put in chains when he can be free?” (ApH 7:253).

Once moral corruption has progressed to this point, it becomes almost intolerably difficult to recover. The most evil human heart has such a reduced capacity to act from the law, such a distorted power of judgment, that it can be difficult to grasp how far one has fallen and what can be done moving forward. But of course, because our predisposition to the good cannot be totally

³⁴This distinction between affects as unfortunate and passions as resolutely evil corresponds to some of the language Kant uses to describe the difference between frailty, impurity, and depravity in the *Religion*. As I said above, though all evil action is imputable, frailty and impurity can be described as bearing unintentional guilt, while depravity always bears deliberate guilt, owing to the self-deception and more entrenched form of rationalization it requires to take root (R 6:38).

eradicated, there remains hope for improvement. Kant describes the recovery process in biblical terms, invoking the imagery of rebirth and declaring that a revolution must take place in the reason of the would-be reformer (R 6:47-8). But as we know, even if the subject is able to grasp the objective conditions of morality and install them as determining grounds of her will, the inescapable possibility of dialectical illusion remains. Grounded in our sensible dependence and capable of furnishing subjective determining grounds to evil, this rational activity constitutes a fundamental part of our nature.

4.5 Conclusion

My aim here has been twofold: to strengthen the ongoing analogy between practical and theoretical discursive reason, and show how it can be compatible with Kant's view of evil. Continuing to develop the concept of respect as the form of practical sensibility, and introducing the general form of discursive reason's dialectic served both of these aims. As a result of the former, my account of evil meets Kant's condition that incentives of both morality and self-love are necessarily present in all acts of will. Respect for the moral law must be part of the driving force of every maxim. The human being cannot help but take an interest in morality. As the form of practical sensibility, respect is the sensible expression of our practical rational form of life, our ability to act on the basis of reasons rather than through the pull of affect. Accordingly, we can think of the feeling of respect as having a transformative effect on sensibility. Through it, we become the kind of sensible beings capable of being moved by commands.

From the latter project, i.e., developing the concept of reason's dialectic, I was able to flesh out Kant's unique conception of virtue, a conception grounded in his recognition that sensibly dependent reason is by nature apt to entangle itself in a special kind of illusion that leads to vice.

We are thus finally in a position to put Kant's claims about virtue in their proper context. The idea that virtue is "a disposition conformed with law from respect for law, and thus consciousness of a continuing propensity to transgression or at least impurity" (KpV 5:128),³⁵ does not only communicate our radical fallenness, the idea that we are such as to freely bring evil upon ourselves and others. It also implies deep metaphysical reflections about the nature of sensibly dependent reason. Because of this nature, we are at once free, responsible for our own character, and dependent in a way that casts moral struggle as an inevitability. This is, in part, how the concept of grace gains foothold in a philosophical system that decries most theology as empty speculation. Let us now turn to this topic, and Kant's understanding of faith as a necessary element in the life of a sensibly dependent moral being.

³⁵ See also Kant's additional remarks about virtue: "virtue, that is, moral disposition *in conflict*, and not *holiness* in the supposed *possession* of a complete *purity* of dispositions of the will" (KpV 5:84); and "the true strength of virtue is a *tranquil* mind with a considered and firm resolution to put the law of virtue into practice" (MS 6:409).

CHAPTER FIVE

Practical Reason and the Call to Faith

5.1 Introduction

Emerging from the previous chapter is an account of our moral experience that is firmly grounded in Kant's understanding of the structure of sensibly dependent reason. Drawing on what I have been calling his 'metaphysics of mind,' as opposed to claims about our particular psychological constitution, Kant frames our propensity for moral weakness and transgression as grounded in a natural dialectic of reason. Far from being fatalist or trivializing in its presentation of the human propensity for evil, the above interpretation allows us to maintain that evil action is morally imputable without presenting the will as inscrutably voluntaristic in its choice to subordinate the moral law to selfish concerns. The evil will freely chooses to determine itself from immoral grounds, but this determination is itself based in our susceptibility to a natural illusion through which we take merely subjective principles of practical reason to have objective purport. We are obliged to overcome this illusion through the cultivation of virtue, and can make steady progress in this direction, but the susceptibility to make illusory judgments remains as a necessary element of our sensibly dependent rational nature.

With this account we find the human being presented as a complex but unified subject rather than a being divided by warring factions. Sensibility is a necessary condition on the possibility of evil, but cannot be its source. It is reason's activity that produces the subjective determining ground of the will, but again, not in isolation from sensible conditions and the dialectic they enable. If we ignore this unified conception of sensibly dependent reason, we fail to heed Kant's warning and end up with a skewed picture that either leans too heavily on sensibility,

making animals of us, or diminishes the practical interest of reason casting us as diabolical beings who can clear-eyedly subordinate morality to self-love (R 6:35). On the picture I have been articulating, evil is neither the result of natural necessity nor the product of a fundamental choice between two competing principles, each of which is attractive on its own grounds. So we are not necessitated to evil, but, importantly, nor does our practical freedom entail that we stand at a crossroads, faced with the choice between pursuing happiness or morality. Both of these pictures are too simplistic for Kant's rich vision of our moral experience.

In short, the concept of dialectic provides us with a framework to show how evil can arise through our failure to properly represent a natural principle of reason—the principle of happiness or self-love—as opposed to a failure to be motivated by the moral law. As I have argued, it is only because practical reason can become embroiled in misrepresentation and self-contradiction that evil is possible. Otherwise, reason could not furnish a subjective determining ground sufficient to bring about such action. In the *Groundwork*, Kant describes this propensity for dialectic as the capacity to call the law into question, to draw up principles that admit of exceptions or smuggle merely empirical incentives into the grounds for determination.¹ Building on this formulation in the previous chapter allowed me to develop a unique account of evil. In the present chapter, I will turn to Kant's description of practical reason's dialectic in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where he abstracts from the concepts of rationalization and doubt, claiming that practical reason's self-contradictions arise because of its attempt to find “the unconditioned for the practically conditioned” (KpV 5:108). Unpacking this thought will allow us to deepen our understanding of

¹ See G 4:405, where Kant describes the natural dialectic of practical reason as “a propensity to rationalize (*vernünfteln*) against those strict laws of duty and to cast doubt upon their validity, or at least upon their purity and strictness, and, where possible, to make them better suited to our wishes and inclinations.”

the concept of practical dialectical illusion, and in so doing, further specify the limits of our ongoing analogy with theoretical reason.

So far, each chapter has made a unique contribution to the determination of the concept of sensibly dependent practical reason and its analogy with theoretical reason. This development is useful for understanding the systematic nature of Kant's philosophy, but it also helps us to clarify certain misconceptions surrounding his view of practical reason. By arguing for a reading of Kant's moral philosophy that is deeply grounded in the necessary character of sensibly dependent reason, we can rule out interpretations that rely on purported facts about our empirical psychology and make our volitional attitudes out to be too disconnected from the cognitive content of our practical representations. A central tenet of the reading under development here is that Kant's equation of the will with practical reason entails that our ability to will an end cannot be sharply separated from our ability for conceptually articulated thinking about the grounds for willing that end. Hence acts of the will must be understood through reference to the cognitive standing of their representational content as much as through reference to the efficacy that marks them as acts of the faculty of desire.

The analogy I have developed between practical and theoretical reason provides support for this view by articulating the differences between each use of reason in a way that nevertheless identifies them both as determinations of the discursive cognitive capacity.² In the Chapter 2, I took up Kant's own articulation of the distinction between sensibly dependent reason's two uses, arguing that any analogy between them would be limited by the fact that theoretical cognition determines an already existing object given from elsewhere, while practical cognition brings the

² Recall that I am using 'discursive' and 'sensibly dependent' interchangeably here. See Chapter 2, §2.4, footnote 18.

object it determines into existence (KpV 5:46; Bix-x). This limit was further determined in §3.2 of chapter three, where I argued that practical and theoretical reason differ fundamentally insofar as practical cognition does not, like its theoretical counterpart, involve a synthesis of sensible matter yielding representations of already existing objects. Rather, practical cognition relates to representations of objects insofar as these representations are efficacious or motivating, i.e., capable of bringing about the cognitive activity that produces, reproduces, or maintains the object's existence. In the previous chapter, I focused on each use of reason in its capacity for dialectical activity, differentiating them insofar as theoretical reason is transcendent in its pure use, while practical reason is transcendent in its empirical use. In the present chapter, I will argue that this inverse relation is constitutive of one of the most striking and controversial differences between the two uses of reason: because sensibly dependent practical reason is immanent in its pure use, it is licensed to assume the objective reality of the ideas required for it to realize its necessary ends—even if the objects of these ideas are ideal and thus transcendent for the same faculty in its theoretical use.

Continuing to specify our analogy will thus lead us to the position that moral faith occupies in the Kantian system. Because the treatment of this issue will be framed through our discussion of the necessary structure of discursive practical reason itself, it will cut against empirically or historically based interpretations that understand the appeal to God to be based on merely psychological facts about us, or the result of Kant's attempt to find a place for his religious commitments within his system.³ Instead, I will argue that the human need for religious life will

³ For the former, see Paul Guyer, *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness*, (New York: CUP, 2000), pp. 333-371. For the latter, see Andrews Reath, "Two conceptions of the highest good in Kant," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 26, vol. 4 (1988): 593-619.

emerge directly from consideration of the a priori nature of sensibly dependent reason and its objectively necessary practical law. To make this argument, I start with the abstract characterization of practical reason's dialectic introduced above, and develop the idea that reason's self-contradictions emerge from its natural attempt to seek the unconditioned for the practically conditioned. This will require building upon the general concept of dialectical reasoning introduced in Chapter 4, developing the concept of the highest good, and showing how doubts about its possibility enable the dialectical illusion that was my focus in the previous chapter. In §5.3, I show how proving the possibility of the highest good, practical reason's unconditioned totality, leads to a series of practically grounded judgments about the objective reality of supersensible ideas. Here I argue that the intelligibility of practical reason's unconditioned totality requires us to postulate our freedom, immortality, and the existence of God. We thereby reach the desired conclusion: moral faith emerges as a necessary element in the life of a sensibly dependent practical being because without it, practical reason could not grasp the real possibility of a systematic totality of ends organized by the moral law.

5.2 Practical Reason's Search for the Unconditioned

Kant opens the Dialectic of the *Critique of Practical Reason* by describing practical reason's natural conflict in terms quite different from those he used in the *Groundwork*. He begins with the idea, by now familiar to us, that pure reason gives rise to a natural dialectic in both its uses. Then he specifies the practical variety as follows:

“As pure practical reason it likewise seeks the unconditioned for the practically conditioned (which rests on inclinations and natural needs), not indeed as the determining ground of the will, but even when this is given (in the moral law), it seeks the unconditioned totality of the object of pure practical reason, under the name of the *highest good*” (KpV 5:108).

This passage agrees with *Groundwork* 4:405 insofar as both cite our dependence on sensible needs and inclinations—what Kant here calls the practically conditioned—as that which enables the dialectic at issue. But while the *Groundwork* passage claims our sensible dependence leads reason to quibble with the law and recognize exceptions to it, the passage above from the second *Critique* insists that pure practical reason already recognizes its determining ground in the moral law, and yet still seeks an unconditioned totality in practical reason’s necessary object, the highest good.

We might take this to be grounds for thinking Kant changed some aspects of his view after he wrote the *Groundwork*, but it remains clear from other parts of the second *Critique* that Kant still thinks we need to resolve the dialectic. Otherwise, it can lead us to assume other, non-moral determining grounds of the will. In the Introduction, he declares that one of the second *Critique*’s tasks is to “prevent empirically conditioned reason from presuming that it, alone and exclusively, furnishes the determining ground of the will” (KpV 5:16). As the Dialectic progresses, we learn that the Antinomy to which reason is inevitably led, which manifests practical reason’s dialectic, concerns whether the desire for happiness is the motive for maxims of virtue, or the maxim of virtue is the cause of happiness (KpV 5:113). Thus despite the achievements of the *Analytic*, in the Dialectic we are inevitably back to entertaining the possibility that empirically conditioned practical reason could be the source of an objectively valid law instead.

This should come as no surprise considering Kant’s more general statements about what constitutes a dialectic of reason. In the previous chapter, I introduced the general structure of dialectical reason with the idea that it comes into being when immanent, subjectively dependent principles take on a transcendent use and appear to be objective.⁴ This can ground the illusory

⁴ See chapter 4, §4.3.1.

reasoning that is distinctive of dialectical thought in a number of ways. Most commonly, the appearance of objectivity leads a principle to form an antinomy, a seemingly irresolvable contradiction, with another purportedly objective principle.⁵ Now importantly, for this to be possible, the principles in question must claim to be universal in character. As Kant says in the third *Critique*, the dialectical faculty of mind in question must be “rationalistic (*vernünftelnd*), i.e., its judgments must lay claim to universality, and indeed do so *a priori*, for the dialectic consists in the opposition of such judgments” (KU 5:337). The possibility of a practical dialectic thus requires that the moral law be called into question by an opposing principle claiming universality.

So why does Kant open the Dialectic of the *Critique of Practical Reason* by insisting that pure practical reason does not seek a determining ground other than the one that is given to it, the moral law? Drawing on several passages that have already been discussed, we can see that Kant does not deny that happiness can appear to be a sufficient determining ground of the will. In the passage at issue, his aim is rather to trace the origin of the possibility of this appearance. In doing so, he is clear that the moral law has an original primacy insofar as it presses upon us and demands our interest. As he claims in the *Analytic*, the moral law is given to us as a fact of reason, something which cannot be argued from antecedent premises but simply announces itself in our consciousness (KpV 5:31). Kant reiterates this language of givenness in the passage under discussion, claiming that even after the moral law is given to us as the only determining ground of the will, reason still seeks the unconditioned for the will’s necessary object, the highest good (KpV 5:108). We thus find the source of dialectical activity in practical reason’s natural attempt to find an unconditioned

⁵ Depending on the nature of the antinomy in question, one or both of the propositions forming the contradiction at issue may be true. Or more accurately, conditionally true given the assumption of transcendental idealism. As we will see, this is the case with the antinomy of pure practical reason.

totality for its object, rather than in the attempt to find its own determining law. For as Kant insists, the latter is already given, present in our consciousness as soon as we attempt to draw up practical principles for ourselves (KpV 5:29). Were this not the case, the law could not figure as one of the two contradictory claims constitutive of practical reason's antinomy.

This line of reasoning echoes the discussion of respect as a necessary form of sensibility that was my focus throughout much of chapters 3 and 4. Regardless of what else we say about our propensity for dialectical reasoning in general, or for evil in particular, we cannot deny our unwavering ability to recognize the moral law's authority and feel respect for it. This would be to deny the above claim that the law is given as a fact of reason. It would also jeopardize my ongoing project to show how the sensibly dependent will can be understood in a robustly cognitivist manner, as identical to practical reason, yet without necessitating an impositionist picture on which sensibility is fundamentally resistant to reason and the practical subject is necessarily divided. A project which involves, among others, the argument that respect should be understood as the form of practical sensibility because recognition of the moral law fundamentally shapes our affective nature, making it possible for us to be moral agents capable of taking an interest in the moral law, and thus of having cognition of the good.

Having explained why Kant thinks practical reason's dialectic is logically posterior to and dependent upon our original consciousness of the moral law, the next task is to show how the practical antinomy arises from the search for the unconditioned totality of practical reason. The latter concept is more commonly known as the highest good, which Kant describes as "happiness distributed in exact proportion to morality" (KpV 5:110). Though the idea of the highest good has not received much discussion up to this point, many of the arguments necessary to understanding it have already been made. For to grasp this concept is essentially to grasp the concept of

hylomorphic unity which was my focus in Chapter 2. As we have seen, reason legislates the necessary form of our practical principles, while the deliverances of sensibility that are determined by this form individuate their matter.⁶ As happiness conditioned by morality, the highest good captures this aspect of Kant's position in the concept of a final, necessary end of pure practical reason.

Recall that happiness is understood as the sum of all materially determined ends, the realization of which would bring about "a rational being's consciousness of the agreeableness of life uninterruptedly accompanying his whole existence" (KpV 5:22). Kant is clear, from the *Groundwork* onwards, that this concept is a mere ideal of the imagination that is inherently indeterminate because its components are conditional ends and desires grounded in the feeling of the agreeable (G 4:418).⁷ Since our desires and the ends they fix are subject to constant change, we can never be certain what our happiness as a whole will consist in. Nevertheless, as we have seen, as sensibly dependent beings we depend on such desires, and it is a matter of subjective necessity that we desire happiness insofar as it contains them all under one concept. Happiness thus constitutes the material element of the object of practical reason. In contrast, reason supplies the formal determining ground of the will, setting limiting conditions on how we can pursue our material ends. Insofar as we are both sensibly dependent and capable of recognizing objectively

⁶ See Chapter 2, §2.4.2.

⁷ We must distinguish between ends and desires here because some objects that would contribute towards our happiness cannot be realized by our own actions. Kant defines ends as "the concept of an object insofar as it at the same time contains the ground of the reality of this object" (KU 5:180). Hence desired outcomes cannot be called ends unless the subject recognizes her ability to cause the outcome in representing it. This is why Kant also describes happiness as "the state of a rational being in the world in the whole of whose existence *everything goes according to his wish and will*" (KpV 5:124). Happiness includes not just the ends I will, but those I would will if I could, i.e., the objects of wishing. This point will become crucial in subsequent sections, when we turn to practical reason's antinomy, and the postulates we must assume to resolve it.

necessary laws of pure practical reason, i.e., insofar as we both aim at happiness and take an interest in morality, we recognize that the realization of our happiness under the formal conditions of the moral law constitutes the necessary object of the will.

So the highest good is not so much an additional aspect of Kant's moral picture, something which involves extra premises and grounds new duties,⁸ as it is an expression of the general conditions of sensibly dependent moral life that have been my focus all along. But instead of pulling these conditions apart through distinctions between formal and material practical principles, concepts of the good and the agreeable, and formal and material incentives, the highest good presents them as unified in a final end. This end is the complete good of practical reason, including as its elements both the formal law of pure practical reason as the unconditioned supreme good, and happiness as the materially determined conditioned good which completes it (KpV 5:110). The highest good is thus arguably the most prominent hylomorphic unity in the practical system, representing both pure practical reason's formal determining ground and the sensible matter which it determines as elements of a unified practical system.⁹

We are now in a position to see why Kant thinks of the highest good as the unconditioned totality of pure practical reason's object, that which finds the unconditioned for the practically conditioned. For it is through the concept of the highest good that contingent empirically conditioned ends are determined by the unconditional law of pure practical reason, and thus brought into agreement with one another as members of an objectively valid system of ends. This

⁸ Though largely dismissed at this point, some commentators have held the opposite view.

⁹ See KpV 5:109-110: "If the moral law is already included as supreme condition in the concept of the highest good, the highest good is then not merely *object*: the concept of it and the representation of its existence as possible by our practical reason are at the same time the *determining ground* of the pure will because in that case the moral law, already included and thought in this concept, and no other object, in fact determines the will in accordance with the principle of autonomy."

system forms an unconditioned totality insofar as the plurality of ends constitutive of the concept of happiness are unified under a single practical law which articulates the conditions under which such ends can be pursued.¹⁰

Despite the fact that the concept of the highest good requires no extra arguments and follows simply from fundamental features of practical reason that have already been discussed, Kant insists that showing its real possibility on practical grounds is no simple matter. This task is in fact the source of the practical antinomy that marks practical reason's dialectical use. Thus although the accomplishments of the preceding Analytic of the *Critique of Practical Reason* enable us to elucidate the concept in some important respects, a more determinate account is still called for. Moreover, the foregoing work of the Analytic has made the task at hand even more difficult by showing that morality and happiness are heterogeneous elements that cannot form an analytic unity. As a purely formal condition on action, morality does not directly concern itself with whether our materially determined ends are met. Hence showing the possibility of the highest good cannot be a matter of resolving concepts to show that one is virtuous simply in seeking happiness, or happy in demonstrating virtue (KpV 5:113). Instead, the two necessary components of the highest good must be combined synthetically, such that one component is taken to be the cause of the other.¹¹

In this way we reach the Antinomy of practical reason, which returns us to the question of the objective determining ground of the will. Since the possibility of the highest good requires that

¹⁰ See B 111 in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where Kant describes the concept of totality as "plurality considered as unity."

¹¹ We must posit a causal relation because our concern is to show how the highest good can be brought about through action, which is itself a kind of causality: "Since, as has already been shown, the given combination cannot be analytic, it must be thought synthetically and, indeed, as the connection of cause and effect, because it concerns a practical good, that is, one that is possible through action" (KpV 5:113).

virtue and happiness must be related causally, we have two options. Either the desire for happiness is the motive for adopting principles of virtue, or the autonomous adoption of virtuous principles brings about our happiness. Kant labels the first option “absolutely impossible” on the basis of the arguments of the Analytic (KpV 5:113). But the second proposition too appears impossible, for as the Analytic also established, the formal a priori law of morality does not directly concern itself with realizing the material ends constitutive of happiness. Kant’s claim that happiness and morality are two heterogeneous concepts commits him to viewing the systematic unity of ends determined by the latter as a formal characteristic, one that is quite separable from the empirical question of how to actually bring these ends into existence. Although virtue and happiness stand to one another as condition and conditioned in the highest good, it is far from clear how morality could actually bring about happiness. As Kant insists, “any practical connection of causes and effects in the world, as a result of the determination of the will, does not depend upon the moral dispositions of the will but upon knowledge of the laws of nature and the physical ability to use them for one’s purposes” (KpV 5:114).

Pure practical reason’s Antinomy thus emerges when reason both recognizes that one of the two propositions articulated above must be true if the highest good is to be an objectively real concept, and sees that it cannot grasp the possibility of either. In this way the very possibility of morality is called into question: since the highest good is the necessary object of pure practical reason, the impossibility of the former would lead us to question the possibility of the latter. In other words, if the critique of the faculty of practical reason reveals that its pure use has no possible object, the pure use of the faculty itself will be revealed as impossible insofar as its form is determined by a false principle that has no object and thus no objective validity.

I will unpack Kant's resolution of this antinomy in the following section. For now, my aim is to discuss how this conflict fits with the broader concept of dialectical illusion introduced in the previous chapter. Specifically, I need to show how Kant's description of practical reason's dialectic in the second *Critique* is consistent with the more informal characterization from the *Groundwork* that I drew upon. The above discussion of the highest good and the practical antinomy that it figures in gives us the resources to make this argument. For as I have shown, it is only upon asking how the unconditioned totality of pure practical reason can be realized that the determining ground of the will is called into question. The moral law itself cannot help but interest us, impressing itself upon practical consciousness as the formal condition of good conduct. But once the subject looks towards the sensibly conditioned final end of her action, and sees that a good moral disposition does not as such help to realize happiness in the world, the conditions that enable practical reason's natural dialectic fall into place. Insofar as practical reason is gripped by its antinomy, there is no clear way towards realizing the highest good, and the side of the Antinomy that privileges self-love can seem to present the best way forward.¹²

This is exactly how Kant describes practical reason's activity in the *Groundwork*. As we have seen, the natural dialectic that arises there is described as the propensity to quibble with the law—to recognize exceptions to it, and cast doubt upon its purity. In the surrounding passages, Kant also makes reference to our capacity to respect the moral law, and the fact that our focus on

¹² As we will see, the practical postulates provide relief by giving the subject objective practical grounds for taking the highest good to be possible. They thus help with motivation by enriching the determinacy of her practical representations of the good. So we are not saddled with the reading on which God and immortality serve as ideas that provide a psychological boost for the subject insofar as they dangle the prospect of eternal reward before her eyes. I will discuss the postulates in more detail in §3 and in chapter six.

materially determined ends and their relationship to the law continues to put pressure on its validity. He describes the nature of practical reason as follows;

“the human being feels within himself a powerful counterweight to all the commands of duty, which reason represents to him as so deserving of the highest respect—the counterweight of his needs and inclinations, the entire satisfaction of which he sums up under the name happiness. Now reason issues its precepts unremittingly, without thereby promising anything to the inclinations, and so, as it were, with disregard and contempt for those claims, which are so impetuous and besides so apparently equitable (and refuse to be neutralized by any command). But from this there arises a *natural dialectic*, that is, a propensity to rationalize against those strict laws of duty and to cast doubt upon their validity, or at least upon their purity and strictness, and where possible, to make them better suited to our wishes and inclinations” (G 4:405).

From this description of practical reason’s lot, Kant concludes that common human reason is compelled to philosophy despite its natural grasp of the conditions of morality and predisposition to respect for it. So rather than providing a new principle of morality, Kant’s moral philosophy is meant to safeguard the one we already grasp implicitly. Doing the metaphysical work of finding its source and precise determination is thus important insofar as it helps practical reason avoid the dialectical reasoning, what he here calls rationalization,¹³ that is enabled once practical reason grasps its antinomy. Kant thus ends the first section of the *Groundwork*, which is aptly entitled “Transition from common moral rational to philosophic cognition,” by calling for a critique of the faculty of practical reason that might allow it to “escape from its predicament about claims from both sides and not run the risk of being deprived of all genuine moral principles through the ambiguity into which it easily falls” (G 4:405).

¹³ Recall that in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant says that dialectical faculties must be inherently “rationalistic” (vernünftelnd), that is, such as to make purportedly universal judgments that oppose one another and ground a natural dialectic of reason (KU 5:337).

The account of practical reason's dialectical use found throughout Kant's mature works is thus consistent in character. We can account for the major differences between the two accounts under discussion through two different but related points. First, the *Groundwork* formulation is expressed in non-technical, subject-centered terms that capture the pre-philosophical structure of dialectic from the perspective of desire. Insofar as our inclinations are infringed upon by the law, the question of how to satisfy both arises and we respond by questioning the stringency of morality's commands in an attempt to reconcile the two components of the highest good. Though this may not be obvious to the subject, giving in to such quibbling inevitably involves making happiness the determining ground of the will. In contrast, the second *Critique* characterizes the dialectic in more abstract concepts that are fitting to the idea of a Dialectic in general. This should not be surprising, since here Kant is more concerned to trace the elements that a critical account of practical reason shares with the corresponding account of theoretical reason undertaken in the first *Critique*. His language thus captures practical reason's dialectic from the perspective of more neutral, technical concepts concerning cognition in general. Second, the *Groundwork* formulation picks out particular acts of reason that manifest dialectical structure, gesturing towards concrete moments of weakness and impurity like those described in the previous chapter. The second *Critique*, in contrast, remains at a more abstract level, discussing the general character of the antinomy, the principles involved, and the high stakes that loom insofar as it cannot be resolved. So while the former highlights the way dialectical reasoning arises in response to the pursuit of

particular ends, the latter takes the whole system of ends and their organization into account.¹⁴

Despite these differences, however, the core details of the view remain constant, and provide a rich account of how we can reconcile our ineradicable interest in morality with our propensity to dialectical illusion. For as we have seen, it is only when we look to the materially determined ends of happiness and their relation to morality that ambiguities arise. If we abstract from this relationship as we ought to do when we appraise the actions of others or find ourselves confronted with examples of virtuous conduct, Kant takes it to be uncontroversial that we can separate empirical motives from pure moral ones, and judge from our implicit recognition of and respect for the moral law. But when we are led to think about morality and happiness together, i.e., to think of our nature and the ends conditioned by it as forming an unconditioned totality that is at once rational *and* sensibly dependent, reason naturally falls into dialectical illusion.

It is in this context that practical reason can determine itself to evil in the manner discussed in the previous chapter. In the second *Critique*, Kant describes this activity with the declaration that practical reason is transcendent in its empirically conditioned use, and is naturally set up to make an illegitimate claim to absolute rule by furnishing merely contingent, material determining grounds that purport to be objective and universal (KpV 5:15). In the *Groundwork*, he does the same by foreshadowing the account of evil he will later give in the *Religion*, articulating three ways in which we cast doubt on the law by questioning its strictness, purity, or validity (G 4:405).

¹⁴ This difference can help us place the *Groundwork* discussion in relation to the second *Critique* and the resolution of practical reason's antinomy through the practical postulates. I do not mean to suggest that belief in the postulates will help fill out one's reasoning in concrete circumstances directed at a particular end. For example, heading into a tempting situation that will present ample opportunity for weakness, the subject will not necessarily be helped by avowing belief in her freedom or the existence of God. Kant's discussion of the issue suggests he situates the postulates at a more general level of analysis. They respond to a holistic, theoretically motivated scepticism that threatens the possibility of the highest good as such. It is this attitude that weakens the moral disposition, and makes the agent more vulnerable to the particular weak, impure, and depraved actions discussed in Chapter 4.

These correspond roughly to the three grades of evil—frailty, impurity, and depravity—developed in Chapter 4. Whether we look to the first-personal, desire-focused language of the latter, or the third-personal and highly general technical vocabulary of the former, we have in hand an account of practical reason’s natural dialectic that can be understood as both consistent across Kant’s mature practical writings, and analogous to the dialectic that emerges out of speculative reason’s search for the unconditioned in the first *Critique*.

5.3 Resolution Through the Practical Postulates

Now that we have a better grasp of practical reason’s dialectic, we can turn to its resolution. This will lead us to the practical postulates and a further limit to our analogy with theoretical reason. In the previous chapter, I gave an account of evil that located its possibility in the fact that practical reason is transcendent in its empirical use, unlike theoretical reason which is transcendent in its pure speculative use. In the present section I take up a corollary of this difference, namely, that practical reason is immanent in its pure use. I will show how pure practical reason is licensed to postulate the ideas of reason that are subjectively necessary for the resolution of the above antinomy, and thus also subjectively necessary for the faculty of sensibly dependent practical reason from which the antinomy naturally emerges. In this way, the central concepts of metaphysics—freedom, immortality, and God—find their place in the Kantian system as postulates of practical reason. As such, the objective reality of these concepts is shown, and we can affirm speculative propositions about the existence of freedom, God, and immortality on

practical grounds.¹⁵ Unlike its theoretical counterpart, pure practical reason is thus capable of grounding cognition of supersensible objects.

Grounding an account of the practical postulates in the structure of sensibly dependent reason itself will allow me to meet some commonly recognized interpretive challenges in a novel way. Attempting to grasp the proper role of the postulates in Kant's system is akin to walking a tightrope: the reader must accord them their rightful place as the objects of subjectively necessary belief. But in doing so, she must be careful not to inadvertently undermine the philosophical edifice she is trying to support. First, one wrong move can swiftly turn the good will's formal ground of determination into a merely material one. If, for example, belief in God is tied to the reward of everlasting happiness, and this latter hope is incorporated into the determining ground of the will, Kantian morality will no longer be autonomous in character. We must be wary of interpretations which understand this kind of belief to be what explains the motivational boost the postulates enable for the subject. Second, Kant's reader must avoid denying that those who reject the postulates would still possess the cognitive and motivational resources required to be subject to the moral law.¹⁶ In other words, she must do justice to Kant's claim that the postulates are only *subjectively* necessary objects of belief. So, we must also be careful not to build so much into the postulates that they become necessary conditions on the possibility of moral action as such.¹⁷ As

¹⁵ The closest Kant comes to a definition of the term 'practical postulate' is at KpV 5:122: "by which I understand a *theoretical* proposition, though one not demonstrable as such, insofar as it is attached inseparably to an a priori unconditionally valid *practical* law."

¹⁶ For an excellent breakdown of this issue and the various positions it determines, see Christopher Insole, "The Irreducible Importance of Religious Hope in Kant's Conception of the Highest Good," *Philosophy* 83 (2008): 333-351.

¹⁷ Some commentators simply bite the bullet and accept that moral faith is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law. Cf. Frederick C. Beiser, "Moral faith and the highest good," *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge, 2006), p. 607. As we will see, there are strong textual grounds for rejecting this reading.

Kant affirms with his vivid discussion of a godless Spinoza in the *Critique of Judgment*, the faithless are still morally interested persons.

My arguments in this section will meet these challenges by drawing on one of the major gains for the view of motivation currently under development. As I said in §5.1, and as follows from the central arguments of Chapters 3 and 4, the content of a practical representation and its capacity to motivate the subject should not be understood as separable from one another. Taking up this principle, I will show that the practical postulates provide motivation to be virtuous, not by shoring up one's moral resolve with extra-moral or psychological concerns, but through rendering the subject's practical representations themselves more cognitively determinate. As I will argue, the postulates respond to limits on our cognition that can be directly attributed to our sensible dependence and the specifically spatiotemporal form it takes. Belief in our immortality, freedom, and God's existence each allow us to transcend a particular limit by extending the content of our thought in a certain direction. Each of these extensions involves determining some aspect of the highest good through one of the three categories of relation: substance, causality, and community, and helps fill out the subject's conception of how the highest good is possible. Since the cognitive content of a representation is immediately related to its efficacy—its capacity to motivate—this added determinacy strengthens the moral disposition.

This understanding of the practical postulates meets the conditions of adequacy articulated above. Because I do not take a clean separation between objective content and subjective motivation to apply to Kant's account of the postulates, there is no worry that merely subjective material determining grounds, such as one's happiness, might be working independently to determine—or, more accurately, corrupt—one's moral disposition. In this case, the postulates motivate by extending, or adding determinacy to, our practically grounded representations. On this

reading, the postulates also do not figure as objective conditions on the possibility of morality. If the subject's practical representations lack the added determinacy brought by the postulates, they will be less practically efficacious. When her subjective need to be assured of the possibility of the highest good is unmet, her moral resolve may falter. *But* she will not fail to be obligated as a moral subject: her original ability to recognize and feel respect for the law will remain ineradicable. Hence we can understand the practical postulates as grounding the real possibility of the highest good, without worrying that they may be covertly serving as material determining grounds of the will, or objectively necessary grounds for morality that reach beyond the moral law itself.¹⁸

5.3.1 Theoretical Propositions Grounded in Pure Practical Reason

As we will see, each postulate requires its own unique argument to explain its place in Kant's system. But we can nevertheless turn to the concept of the practical postulate in general and enumerate a few necessary features common to each account. The first important point to grasp is that Kant thinks of the postulates as propositions of speculative reason asserted on practical grounds. Thus although the fact of their necessity is determined by moral laws, their assumption itself is an act of speculative reason in general:

“these postulates are not theoretical dogmas but *presuppositions* having a necessarily practical reference and thus, although they do not indeed extend speculative cognition, they give objective reality to the idea of speculative reason in *general* (by means of their reference to what is practical) and justify its holding concepts even the possibility of which it could not otherwise presume to affirm” (KpV 5:132).

¹⁸ Some commentators simply bite the bullet and accept that moral faith is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law. Cf. Frederick C. Beiser, “Moral Faith and the Highest Good,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Paul Guyer (New York: Cambridge, 2006), 607. As we will see, there are strong textual grounds for rejecting this reading.

Kant thus distinguishes between what justifies our belief in the postulates, or what the postulates reference as grounds, and the speculative activity of judging these ideas to have objective reality. While the former are purely practical cognitions of the moral law and its necessary object, the highest good, the latter are theoretical or speculative propositions in their own right.¹⁹

Second, though the postulates are practically grounded *theoretical* propositions, they are not the objects of theoretically determinate cognitions. Theoretical reason is forced to grant “*that there are such objects*” (KpV 5:135) because of a need of practical reason, but it cannot further determine them for its own purposes, restricted as it is to objects of possible experience. Kant thus does not violate the conditions of theoretical cognition set out in the first *Critique* in understanding the postulates as objects of speculative reason in general. He remains committed to the idea that freedom, immortality, and God are supersensible ideas of reason that could not be presented in sensible intuition as objects of theoretical cognition. We cannot know how any of these ideas are theoretically possible, but we can and must assume their objective reality on practical grounds. We must therefore be careful to distinguish, as Kant does, between propositions that do and do not extend the limits and content of theoretical cognition. Insofar as they are grounded by practical need, as opposed to sensible experience or a priori cognitions about the conditions of the possibility of sensible experience, the practical postulates do not extend theoretical cognition.

Third, practical justification for the postulates is obtained insofar as the objective reality of these ideas of reason must be assumed to answer the question that spurs practical reason’s antinomy, namely, how is the highest good possible? This is the practical need of which Kant speaks. As we saw in §5.2, being unable to judge the possibility of the highest good leads to

¹⁹ Recall also Kant’s loose definition of a practical postulate at KpV 5:122, where he affirms that they are theoretical propositions.

dialectical illusion and the possibility of evil action. But, importantly, the justification to assume the objects that fulfill this need does not come from the need itself. To take this reading would be to psychologize a key aspect of Kant's moral metaphysics. The justification for assuming the postulates is better understood as follows: because reason recognizes the highest good as its necessary end in connection with an apodictically certain moral law, it must assume the objective reality of the conditions required to realize this end.²⁰ In other words, because the moral law commands us to realize the highest good, and the moral law is unconditionally valid, the highest good cannot be an empty concept—it must be really possible. Hence, we can assume the objective reality of any ideas that are required for us to show this real possibility. In this way, ideas that would otherwise be transcendent for speculative reason “become immanent and constitutive inasmuch as they are grounds of the possibility of making real the necessary object of pure practical reason (the highest good)” (KpV 5:135).

The practical postulates are thus theoretical propositions that affirm the existence of supersensible objects on the basis of practical grounds that do not, as practical, extend the limits of theoretical cognition. Insofar as the ideas of freedom, immortality, and God are recognized as conditions on the possibility of a necessary, objectively valid end, pure practical reason is licensed to assume their objective reality. In this way, pure practical reason is assured of the possibility of

²⁰ Stephen Engstrom makes an excellent version of this point in “The Concept of the Highest Good in Kant's Moral Theory,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52 (1992): 747-780. He distinguishes between contingent ends of practical reason and necessary ends of pure practical reason, arguing that the former are reached by determining what is empirically possible for the agent. For example, in deciding which career to pursue, I have to take into account my various aptitudes, skills, likes, and resources to arrive at an actual end, something I can represent as possible through my own agency. In contrast, “pure practical reason, because its ends are necessary rather than contingent, reverses this order of determination: it postulates the powers of agency—e.g., freedom and the existence of God—needed to realize its necessary ends” (774).

the highest good, and the subject's representations of morally determined ends are more likely to be sufficiently efficacious.

5.3.2 The Postulate of Freedom

Turning now to the individual postulates, one typically finds that freedom is in some respects the easiest and in others the hardest of the three ideas to develop. Unlike the concepts of God and immortality, freedom does not obviously have the potential to undermine Kant's system by serving as a material determining ground of the will. In the Analytic of the second *Critique*, Kant even goes so far as to suggest that one could define (*definieren*) freedom through the concept of the will's independence from anything other than the moral law (KpV 5:94). Freedom is also unlike the other postulates, however, in that Kant never explicitly argues for it as a postulate of practical reason in the Dialectic. The concept only comes up in the closing sections, where Kant takes stock of what has already been accomplished, and reaffirms that practical reason can resolve questions about the objective reality of ideas that speculative reason could not. Here Kant describes but does not argue for freedom as a postulate, claiming that the objective reality of its concept is established through our aiming at the highest good, insofar as the latter contains the moral law as its determining ground "and with it the law of an intelligible world as well" (KpV 5:133).

So we must look back to the Analytic and Kant's discussion of the moral law itself to better understand freedom as a postulate. This is no easy task, since here too we find no explicit argument to this effect. Kant even makes declarations that appear to count against freedom being something we are merely entitled to postulate, asserting instead the apparently stronger claims that freedom reveals its reality through the moral law, and that the other postulates get their objective reality

through the concept of freedom (KpV 5:4).²¹ The interpreter's task is thus a difficult one. We can, however, arrive at a reading that fits with the text as a whole by drawing upon the general features of the postulates articulated in the previous section. Most importantly, we need to distinguish the foundational account of freedom that Kant gives in chapter one of the *Analytic* from the claim about its being a postulate that this account enables. The argument that we become conscious of our freedom through the moral law is thus not itself an argument for freedom as a postulate, but instead grounds for the subsequent claim that it is one. To argue for the latter goes beyond Kant's exposition of the moral law as a fact of reason and its status as the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom (KpV 5:5, footnote), to the warranted presupposition of freedom's objective reality as an intelligible causality.²²

The characterization of the practical postulates developed in the previous section suggests the distinction at the core of my argument here. As theoretical propositions about objects whose objective reality is grounded in practical cognition, the postulates, or more accurately, the act of postulating, must be distinguished from the grounds for the act itself. As we also saw, these grounds are secured insofar as the objective reality of each idea is a necessary condition on the possibility of the highest good. So we must pinpoint an argument which shows, on practical grounds alone, that freedom is necessary for the highest good to be realized as the final end of pure

²¹ Kant also confirms that freedom has a special status in the third *Critique*, where he claims that the reality of freedom as a kind of causality can be established *in experience* insofar as laws of pure practical reason give rise to actions observable in the world (KU 5:468). Hence freedom "is the only one among all the ideas of pure reason whose object is a fact and which must be counted among the *scibilia* [or facts]" (KU 5:468).

²² This view differs substantially from a common one which argues that freedom is used in two different senses in the *Analytic* and *Dialectic*. In the former, freedom as autonomy, as the bare possibility of acting independently of sensible causes, is asserted; while in the latter, freedom as autocracy or self-rule is postulated by the imperfect finite subject as an object of hope. Notable proponents include Lewis White Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 207-8; and Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (New York: Cambridge, 1990), 285.

practical reason. If we can do this, we will be licensed to make the speculative judgment that freedom is an objectively real concept on the basis of such grounds. I suggest that we find such an argument in the first chapter of the *Analytic*, specifically in §5-7, where Kant gives what has become known as the reciprocity thesis—the thesis that freedom and the moral law reciprocally imply each other.²³ This argument asserts that a will determinable by the form of law-giving must necessarily be independent of the material determining grounds given in nature, hence it must be free (KpV 5:28). Conversely, a free will must, as free, be capable of determining itself through something other than the material conditions constitutive of natural mechanical laws, hence it must be determinable through the concept of law-giving form (KpV 5:29). This foundational claim is nothing new: since the *Groundwork*, Kant has been clear that the moral law follows analytically from the positive concept of freedom (G 4:447). But it is only in the second *Critique* that he spells out how we come to cognize this relation between the two concepts. Drawing on arguments from the first *Critique*, Kant reminds us that we can have no theoretical cognition of transcendental freedom in experience, because all experience is determined by temporally structured laws of nature. Nor can we have a theoretically grounded speculative grasp of the positive concept of freedom a priori, we can only understand it negatively as independence from these natural laws. It is thus only through practical cognition that our freedom could be disclosed to us. Hence Kant's claim that the moral law is the ratio cognoscendi of freedom, the ground through which the concept becomes available to us:

“it is therefore the moral law of which we become immediately conscious (as soon as we draw up maxims of the will for ourselves), that *first* offers itself to us and, inasmuch as reason presents it as a determining ground not to be outweighed by any sensible conditions and indeed quite independent of them, leads directly to the concept of freedom” (KpV 5:29-30).

²³ See Henry E. Allison, “Morality and Freedom: Kant's Reciprocity Thesis,” *The Philosophical Review* 95 (1986): 393-425.

The crucial point here is that the concept of freedom asserts itself when we recognize a purely formal determining ground of the will, something which happens whenever we engage in practical reasoning about what to do. This activity must be understood as ‘practical’ in the full sense of the concept that was developed in Chapter 3. It is not merely awareness of the law that reveals our freedom, but awareness of the law as binding, as a practical principle that interests us and has efficacy. Insofar as the practical subject is conscious of this efficacy, she is conscious of her ability to act on principles whose determining ground is established, not by nature, but by reason itself.

It is thus through our cognition of the moral law as a fact of reason—as an a priori proposition that forces itself upon our consciousness, and cannot be based on any sensible intuition or antecedent data—that the positive concept of freedom appears in practical consciousness and we are put in a position to recognize it as a necessary condition of morality. Here it helps to invoke Kant’s reciprocity thesis again: once the subject recognizes her freedom in response to the moral law, she is put in a position to realize that it is only if she is free that she can be commanded by such a law. Freedom and the moral law thus imply one another, and do so necessarily (KpV 5:29, 5:46). Kant even goes so far as to suggest that they might be one and the same, such that “an unconditional law is merely the self-consciousness of a pure practical reason, this being identical with the positive concept of freedom” (KpV 5:29). The idea of freedom is thus unlike the other postulates insofar as it is immediately and necessarily connected with consciousness of the moral law. We find grounds for postulating freedom in our everyday moral consciousness, hence Kant’s claim that freedom reveals its objective reality through the moral law (KpV 5:4).

As I have been insisting, however, the reality we can attach to freedom does not extend theoretical cognition. It is not a reality graspable through sensible intuition. Take, for example, one of Kant's most radical statements about freedom at 5:468 in the third *Critique*:

“But what is quite remarkable, there is even one idea of reason (which is in itself incapable of any presentation in intuition, thus incapable of theoretical proof of its possibility) among the facts, and that is the idea of freedom, the reality of which, as a particular kind of causality (the concept of which would be excessive from a theoretical point of view) can be established through practical laws of pure reason, and, in accordance with these, in real actions, and thus in experience”

Here Kant both reaffirms that freedom could never be an object of intuition, and concludes that its reality can be established in experience through human actions. The only way to avoid flat-out contradiction is to understand the latter as practically grounded in a way that could never serve to extend the limits of theoretical cognition. It is in virtue of the moral law, or more precisely, its efficacy, that we become conscious of practical reason's pure use, of the ability to judge and produce actions based on their relations to formal principles. It is thus through the practical use of reason alone that we can recognize real actions as the effects of freedom. Without the characteristic practical principles, concepts, and incentives that were the focus of §3.2, we could not account for the subject's ability to grasp the necessary grounds for freedom, and thus its objective reality. To the extent that we can experience freedom, it is an object of practical thought, something determined in consciousness by the moral law, the categories of freedom, and the incentive of respect. As Kant repeatedly emphasizes, it cannot be an object of theoretical experience.²⁴ So when we postulate the existence of freedom, thus affirming a theoretical proposition, we do so on

²⁴ Though, importantly, practical freedom must not contradict theoretical experience. Kant rules out this possibility in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and reaffirms his conclusion throughout the practical works, as when he states that the categories of freedom must agree with the categories of nature (KpV 5:65). Cf. also KpV 5:93-4.

practical grounds alone and do not extend theoretical cognition by giving it a new object to determine.

The above account can lead us to question why freedom needs to be included among the postulates at all. If the reality of freedom is so inextricably bound up with our common moral consciousness, why do we need to make a separate judgment affirming its objective reality? My suggestion is that the further act of postulating our freedom adds cognitive content which is necessary to show the real possibility of the highest good. We are now in a position to see how the postulate of freedom can have this character. For even given the necessary connection between freedom and morality, the strict separation between the two uses of reason and their respective limits implies that we can never cognize how freedom is possible from a theoretical point of view. Such metaphysical uncertainty can threaten the whole moral edifice, leading the subject to endorse moral scepticism on theoretical grounds. Kant describes this possibility at the end of the *Analytic*:

“For, there are many who believe that they can nevertheless explain this freedom in accordance with empirical principles, like any other natural ability, and regard it as a *psychological* property...and they thus deprive us of the grand disclosure brought to us through practical reason by means of the moral law, the disclosure, namely of an intelligible world through realization of the otherwise transcendent concept of freedom, and with this deprive us of the moral law itself, which admits absolutely no empirical determining ground” (KpV 5:94).

The need to postulate the existence of freedom in the full, transcendental sense thus emerges from our inability to cognize it as an object of theoretical reason, and the possibility of doubt that this conditions. This need is subjective insofar as it is based on our cognitive makeup, i.e., limitations on the theoretical use of sensibly dependent reason. We cannot have theoretical insight into the possibility of our being determined by anything other than temporally conditioned empirical laws of nature, and this poses a threat to the reciprocal relationship between morality and freedom that is posed in everyday practical consciousness. We thus find a compelling reason to separate the act

of postulating freedom from the practical consciousness that grounds this act: were they identical, the postulate of freedom would be inseparable from our everyday consciousness of the moral law. If this were so, postulating freedom would be an objective condition on the possibility of moral obligation, effectively synonymous with recognizing the moral law itself. This view would not only fail to meet one of the conditions of adequacy specified above, it would leave no room for the kind of doubt Kant envisions.²⁵ This theoretically motivated scepticism responds to our common practical consciousness, and fuels the need for our avowed belief in the reality of transcendental freedom. The postulate of freedom asserts itself because reason must respond to this sceptical threat: if it does not, practical reason's dialectic emerges, as the possibility of determining one's will through the moral law, and thus the possibility of the highest good is called into question.

Importantly, however, it is not this need to avoid doubt and corruption that justifies the postulation of freedom. As I argued, this would result in a psychologized account of our moral motivation, one that takes contingent facts about various interests, propensities, and faculties to justify making assumptions about the reality of objects. Instead, the grounds for postulating the existence of freedom must be objective. They must therefore be tied to the objectively necessary law of pure practical reason and its final end, the highest good. Hence although the need for the postulates is a subjective one, the grounds for postulating are themselves objective. Kant himself affirms this in prefacing the above passage on scepticism. Given that no insight can be had into

²⁵ This is the heart of the difference between my view and that articulated by Marcus Willaschek. Insofar as he thinks the Fact of Reason argument *is* the argument for freedom as a postulate, the latter becomes an objective condition on the possibility of morality as such, and his view fails to meet one of the conditions of adequacy specified at the outset of this paper. Cf. Marcus Willaschek, "Freedom as a Postulate," forthcoming in *Kant on Persons and Agency*, ed. Eric Watkins (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

the possibility of freedom, he claims, “we are fortunate if only we are sufficiently assured that there is no proof of its impossibility, and are now compelled and precisely thereby also justified to assume freedom through the moral law, which postulates it” (KpV 5:94).²⁶ Confined to the theoretical use of reason, the best we can hope for is the absence of contradiction, the mere logical possibility of the idea of freedom. But through the practical use of reason, the idea of transcendental freedom—a particular species of causality—acquires new content that is justified through practical reason’s apodictic law, whose necessity licenses us to postulate the reality of the conditions that make realizing its command possible.

So we can see it is reason’s two different uses, with their corresponding limits, that condition the need for postulating freedom. The pure practical use of reason, which reveals itself through the moral law, requires, indeed is nothing other than, transcendental freedom. The limits and nature of theoretical reason, on the other hand, preclude theoretical cognition of this object insofar as it transcends the sensible realm, yet at the same time demand proof of its possibility. Hence the need to affirm the objective reality of freedom in a theoretical judgment. Kant is especially clear about this conflict in the third *Critique*: “the moral way of thinking has no way to persevere in its collision with theoretical reason’s demand for a proof (of the possibility of the object of morality), but vacillates between practical commands and theoretical doubts” (KU 5:472). The practically grounded theoretical judgment that we are free helps to alleviate this propensity to doubt. It does so as an act of reason which grasps the connection between a necessary

²⁶ I have significantly modified Gregor’s translation of the last clause for the sake of clarity. The German is: “glücklich! wenn wir nur, daß kein Beweis ihrer Unmöglichkeit stattfindet, hinreichend versichert werden können und nun, durchs moralische Gesetz, welches dieselbe postulirt, genöthigt, eben dadurch auch berechtigt werden, sie anzunehmen” (KpV 5:94). Gregor’s original translation is “we are fortunate if only we can be assured that there is no proof of its impossibility, and are now forced to assume it and are thereby justified in doing so by the moral law, which postulates it” p. 215.

object of pure practical reason and the conditions of its possibility, affirming that we are entitled to the latter on the basis of the former, and thereby ensuring a more determinate representation of freedom's objective reality. Though this judgment, we grasp not just that we are motivated by or interested in the law—this is all that is suggested by our grasp of the fact of reason—but, further, that we are licensed to assume the objective reality of freedom revealed by this interest. Through this act of postulating, we determine ourselves through the concept of causality (in thought, not in sensible intuition) and assert that the practical conception we have of ourselves as causally independent of temporally conditioned natural law has objective reality. It is this cognitive activity that adds determinacy to our representation of the highest good and strengthens the moral disposition. For it determines, in a speculative judgment, the kind of causality required if the subject is to limit her pursuit of happiness by bringing it under the condition of virtue, or steadfast adherence to morality's formal law. Kant describes this activity using much of the same language in the following passage from the second *Critique*:

“That unconditioned causality and the capacity for it, freedom, and with it a being (I myself) that belongs to the sensible world but at the same time to the intelligible world, is not merely *thought* independently and problematically (speculative reason could already find this feasible) but is even *determined with respect to the law* of its causality and *cognized* assertorically; and thus the reality of the intelligible world is given to us, and indeed as *determined* from a practical perspective, and this determination, which for theoretical purposes would be *transcendent* (extravagant), is for practical purposes *immanent*” (KpV 5:105).

So although this judgment does not amount to an extension of theoretical cognition, its content increases the efficacy of our practical representations by combating the theoretical scepticism that threatens to corrupt the sensibly dependent moral subject. Held up to the subject's belief in freedom and the other postulates, doubt cannot move her and the moral disposition prevails. We see this in

Kant's description of the upright person who insists upon her belief in freedom and the other postulates: she says,

“I stand by this, without paying attention to rationalizations, however little I may be able to answer them or to oppose them with others more plausible, and I will not let this belief be taken from me; for this is the only case in which my interest, because I *may* not give up anything of it, unavoidably determines my judgment” (KpV 5:143).

This statement succinctly captures the character, purpose, and grounds of the practical postulates. The affirmation of freedom is a theoretical judgment, yet one made on practical grounds that does not have the status of theoretical cognition. Nevertheless, it helps combat the scepticism, the rationalization and doubt, that threatens insofar as we do not have theoretical proof of the conditions that must obtain for the highest good to be possible. And perhaps most importantly, it is pure practical reason's efficacy, the interest it commands in virtue of its necessary law, which warrants practical reason's extension into the supersensible realm. The subject's interest in the law and its object, the highest good, justifies, compels her to assert the objective reality of these ideas of reason. But this compulsion is not psychological in character—it is rational, the dynamic force of a judgment that recognizes objective necessity.

Finally, we are also in a position to grasp why freedom is set apart from and made the condition of the other two postulates. As I have shown, the ground to assume our freedom is revealed directly by our consciousness of the moral law. In contrast, the grounds to assume the objective reality of God and immortality are only revealed through the necessity of the highest good as the synthetic combination of morality and happiness. As we saw in the previous section, the moral law is the unconditioned condition that serves as the determining ground of the highest good (KpV 5:109-110). Hence the warrant to assume freedom is grounded in the need to show the possibility of the *determining* element of the highest good, the moral law; and the warrant to

assume God and immortality is grounded in the need to show the possibility of the determined element of the highest good, namely, morality and happiness related proportionately to one another. So freedom is necessary for the moral law, and without the law the highest good would not be an objectively necessary concept capable of grounding the postulates of God and immortality. Hence, we can understand freedom as the condition of the latter.

5.3.3 The Postulates of Faith: Immortality and God

Compared to the postulate of freedom, those of immortality and God pose a radically different set of difficulties to the interpreter. While freedom is so integral to Kant's picture as to seem in need of no further account, the latter two postulates can appear completely foreign to the spirit of his Enlightenment project. Kant of course explicitly distances himself from those of his predecessors who would ground the authority of moral command in the will of a divine being (KpV 5:125-6). But when discussion turns to the postulates of immortality and God, it is common for his interpreters to wonder whether these antiquated ideas have taken up an unfortunate position in Kant's otherwise progressive system, representing a conscious or unconscious need to incorporate elements of the religious culture that dominated his time.²⁷ Even those who are sympathetic to the role that Kant assigns to religious belief struggle to square it with the rest of his system. Given the priority of the moral law, which must serve as the objective ground for willing, it is typical to relegate the role of faith to the level of empirically based human psychology. On this reading, belief in God and the afterlife is helpful insofar as it provides added motivation to do

²⁷ See, for example, Andrews Reath, "Two conceptions of the highest good in Kant," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 26, vol. 4 (1988): 593-619.

what we otherwise would, unflinchingly, were we less flawed creatures.²⁸ These interpretations risk undermining Kant's emphasis on formally determined willing, instead giving cognitive or at least motivational weight to the representation of God as an omnipotent being who can reward us with happiness, practical reason's materially determined end, the conditioned element of the highest good.

Against these readings, I suggest we account for immortality and God as I accounted for freedom in the previous section. Rather than tearing apart our objective and subjective determining grounds for action, I will argue that we should understand them as inseparably connected, so that the ideas of immortality and God help motivate the subject by contributing to the determinacy of her cognitive representations concerning the highest good. Importantly, they do not do so by providing separate motivation to pursue our final end—they do not offer motives that function independently of the aims set by our interest in the moral law. Rather, the postulates of immortality and God ground the possibility of the highest good as a necessary end of reason by providing a more determinate representation of how this end could be reached. This added determinacy is reached by thinking key conditions on the possibility of the highest good through the categories of substance and community. Through the former, we think the kind of being capable of realizing the completely moral disposition commanded by the highest good; and through the latter, we think the coordination of ends required for the attainment of both virtue and happiness. This cognitive work enables a more efficacious representation of one's moral vocation, one that is resistant to theoretically motivated doubt. The upshot of this argument then, is that the postulates do not

²⁸ See, for example, Paul Guyer, *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 333-371; and Lara Denis, "Autonomy and the Highest Good," *Kantian Review* 10 (2005): 33-59.

motivate by soothing an extra-moral or extra-rational psychological concern that could compete with practical reason's necessary goal. Instead, belief in the postulates contributes to the moral disposition from within the practical cognitive system itself. Belief motivates by adding to the determinacy, the representational content, of the subject's concept of the highest good and its real possibility, and it is this cognitive achievement, this sharpening of the concept, which accounts for pure practical reason's efficacy.

So we will see that, as with freedom, belief in immortality and God are grounded in a subjective need that springs from the structure of sensibly dependent reason itself. That is, something about the dependent nature of our cognitive faculty and the resultant division into its theoretical and practical uses creates a systematically grounded problem for the moral disposition. This subjective problem, however, can be overcome on objective practical grounds, through appeal to pure practical reason's necessary law and the final end that it determines. Kant's account of the postulates of faith is thus situated well within the limits of his metaphysics of mind: though based on a subjective need, we need not appeal to anything other than the fact of our sensible dependence to account for the role that God and immortality must necessarily play within the Kantian system. Interpreters therefore need not appeal to empirically based psychological factors to account for Kant's position. In light of this reading, it will also be much more difficult to argue that the postulates of faith represent an undesirable "tacked-on" element of Kant's moral picture that is spurred by extra-philosophical religious concerns.

If we look to the Dialectic of the second *Critique*, we find Kant introducing the postulates of faith by appealing to certain subjective limitations on our reason that can lead us to call the possibility of the highest good into question. Beginning with the postulate of immortality, he argues that the command to realize the highest good contains the command to realize a disposition

that is in complete conformity with the moral law. This containment relation holds because, as we have seen, the highest good is both the supreme and complete good of pure practical reason. That is, it does not merely represent our most noble or worthy end, the highest good also represents a complete totality of all ends insofar as they take the moral law as their determining ground. So the command to realize the highest good entails that all willing, insofar as it is directed at the highest good, takes the moral law as its determining ground. At this point, the limits of reason assert themselves and a subjective need emerges. For the complete conformity of one's disposition with the moral law is holiness, and Kant is adamant throughout the practical works that holiness is "a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment (*Zeitpunkte*) of his existence" (KpV 5:122).²⁹ Insofar as the subject is dependent on sensible desires that could potentially serve as material determining grounds of the will—a condition that is met simply insofar as practical reason is both self-determining and dependent on the deliverances of sensibility for its matter—holiness is ruled out. The possibility of the highest good is thus thrown into question on grounds that are inseparable from the nature of practical discursive reason itself. This is an important step in my argument for the postulates of faith. Kant and his readers often appeal to our inscrutably evil nature to explain certain elements of the practical picture, but we must take care to note that this reference to our fallenness is couched less in literary and psychological trope than it is grounded in a metaphysical account of our finitude. It is the subject matter of Chapter 2, the distinction between intuitive and discursive intellects, which ultimately explains the need for the postulate of immortality.

²⁹ This foundational claim was introduced way back in Chapter 2, §2.1., by appeal to G 4:412-3, where Kant introduces the distinction between holy and unholy wills.

As we saw in §2.3 of Chapter 2, the discursive intellect is marked by a dependence on sensibility, which stands as matter to the form of cognition. The proper part of the cognitive faculty, reason and understanding, account for the spontaneous, unifying activity that is constitutive of this form, while the deliverances of sensibility serve to individuate it, accounting for that which is determined, the material aspect of cognition. This activity of determining sensibly given content is definitive of the discursive, sensibly dependent intellect, which characteristically expresses itself in acts of judgment. As we saw, such judgment must relate to its object, that which is determined, in one of two ways: either it determines what already exists, and is theoretical, or it brings what it determines into existence, and is practical (KpV 5:46). In the latter case, the relevant cognitive activity occurs insofar as objects are incorporated into practical reason as ends to be realized in the world.

Now it is precisely because sensibly dependent practical reason functions through such acts of incorporation that the possibility of holiness is ruled out. Made up of individual acts of rational determination involving sensible matter, the activity of practical reason is by nature contingent and drawn out. Though such activity is subject to necessary laws that capture the form of practical cognition, it is quite contingent whether the moral law actually is the sole determining force. As I have been arguing since Chapter 2, the subject's dependence on sensible matter opens up the possibility that such matter might be wrongfully incorporated. Though reason strives for unity, the logically heterogeneous elements required for its activity entail that it is essentially a combinative, synthetic power, and this foundational aspect of its character accounts for the possibility that such

combination might be badly executed.³⁰ Practical reason's discursive character also entails that its activity is drawn out, unfolding through discrete acts of judgment that involve universal formal constraints—expressed through principles and concepts—but particular instances of temporally determined sensible matter. Understood as a sensibly conditioned judgment that takes place in a particular context, at a particular moment, such activity cannot be expressive of a complete disposition, which encompasses the subject's practical determining grounds considered as a totality. So when Kant rules out our holiness on subjectively contingent grounds having to do with our discursive, sensibly dependent nature, we should not only think of the account of evil that he develops in the *Religion*. Lest we mistake this metaphysically grounded picture for a scripturally based commitment to original sin, we must recognize the extent to which humanity's evil nature is, for Kant, bound up with the fundamental structure of our mindedness. We fail to be holy not just because we encounter wayward inclinations that can become the ground of evil action, but insofar as the character of holiness implies a completeness and necessity that can never be exhibited by beings who exercise their practical rationality in judgment. Hence Kant's description of holiness as “an idea that can be contained only in an endless progress and its totality, and hence is never fully attained by a creature” (KpV 5:123, footnote). In fact, as we are now in a position to see, the inclination-centered explanation of evil depends upon this more general metaphysics of mind for its foundation.³¹

So as Kant claims in the Dialectic, the complete conformity of moral disposition that is precluded through a critique of our practical reason must be accounted for in another way. Since

³⁰ This thought is further specified in Chapter 4 and §5.2 of the current chapter, through my discussion of practical reason's natural dialectic and the propensity to evil. It is crucial to remember that although error would not be possible without sensibility, it is reason's activity that actually gives rise to it.

³¹ This point has long been appreciated by Allen Wood, though even he frequently loses sight of its full application. Cf. Allen Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1970), 3-4.

we are not holy, he concludes, we can only attain the requisite disposition through a moral progress that seems to us endless, but which conceived as a totality can demonstrate the required commitment to morality. For this endless progress to be possible, we must assume immortality of the soul, what Kant describes as “the *existence* and personality of the same rational being continuing *endlessly*” (KpV 5:122). The concept of immortality is thus what enables us to represent the possibility of a complete disposition (*Gesinnung*) that transcends the cognitive capacity of our sensibly dependent discursive intellect, but is nevertheless a necessary requirement on the possibility of the highest good. As beings whose judgment is sensibly conditioned and thereby temporally extended, we need to represent our rational activity in a manner that is not so conditioned and extended. It is through the idea of immortality that we acquire the cognitive resources to understand ourselves as beings existing outside of sensible and temporal constraints, whose practical activity can be understood as a totality. So we are not so much helped by the idea of a time with no end, as we are by the concept of a being outside time, of itself having no temporal extension and thus no end. Kant himself suggests this in his description of what our disposition would look like to an atemporal being:

“the eternal being, to whom the temporal condition is nothing, sees in what is to us an endless series the whole of conformity with the moral law, and the holiness that his command inflexibly requires...is to be found whole in a single intellectual intuition of the existence of rational beings” (KpV 5:123).

Through the idea of immortality, we come as close as possible to representing ourselves as beings free from the subjective limitations conditioned by our sensibly dependent discursive intellect. In this way, the idea of endless progress can function analogously to the representation of a non-discursive, holy being with a complete moral disposition.³² It does so by abstracting from particular

³² For a more detailed discussion of this kind of intellect, see Chapter 2, §2.2.1.

sensible determinations, instead thinking the subject through the unschematized category of substance.³³ This is how we reach the concept of immortality: a being's atemporal or endless existence. In this way, we are able to think ourselves as possessing the kind of complete and necessary disposition required for the highest good to be possible.

As Kant's appeal to the intuitive intellect shows, however, the need to overcome the limitations of temporally determined existence and thus to appeal to the concept of immortality is subjectively based. Though, as I have argued, we are justified to postulate the objective reality of what is necessary for the possibility of the highest good, the subjective character of the need and the practical nature of the grounds that serve to meet it ensure that any cognitive gains do not amount to the theoretical determination of an existing object. That is, the necessity of the moral law gives us objective practical justification to postulate immortality, but does not thereby extend our theoretical cognition. As a practically grounded response to a subjective need, the postulates of faith cannot contribute to theological argument.

We find the same argumentative structure at the core of Kant's treatment of God. In the Dialectic of the second *Critique*, the appendix to the third *Critique*, and the *Religion*, we find him claiming that our sensible dependence conditions the need to believe in the existence of a moral author capable of ordering happiness in proportion to virtue. As we will see, the need met by postulating God's existence addresses the heart of the problem introduced in the discussion of the

³³ Kant hints towards this use of the categories at the end of the Transcendental Deduction: he writes, "so that one may not prematurely take issue with the worrisome and disadvantageous consequences of this proposition, I will only mention that the categories are not restricted in **thinking** by the conditions of our sensible intuition, but have an unbounded field, and only the **cognition** of objects that we think, the determination of the object, requires intuition; in the absence of the latter, the thought of the object can still have its true and useful consequences for the **use** of the subject's **reason**, which, however, cannot be expounded here, for it is not always directed to the determination of the object, thus to cognition, but rather also to that of the subject and its willing" (B166).

highest good from §5.2. To show that pure practical reason's final end is really possible, Kant must account for a causal connection between morality and happiness. That is, he must show how reason's necessary formal and material ends can be synthetically related as unconditioned and conditioned. Given the strict separation between morality, which concerns only the form of practical principles, and happiness, which concerns their matter, we have no objective grounds to cognize this synthetic relation. Here again, if we lose sight of its real possibility, the necessary end of morality and thus morality itself can be called into question.

In keeping with the argumentative structure that has been outlined, our inability to cognize an objectively determined causal relationship between morality and happiness is the result of reason's subjective limitations. In the *Dialectic*, Kant makes this argument by appealing to the different, heterogenous laws governing nature and morality, and the fact that we are incapable of controlling nature to meet the end of happiness through action guided by the moral disposition. Though he does not appeal explicitly to the nature of discursive reason, our sensible dependence does figure prominently:

“there is not the least ground in the moral law for a necessary connection between the morality and the proportionate happiness of a being belonging to the [sensible] world as part of it *and hence dependent upon it*, who for that reason cannot by his will be a cause of this nature and, as far as his happiness is concerned, cannot by his own powers make it harmonize thoroughly with his practical principles” (KpV 5:124, emphasis mine).

Here Kant suggests that our dependence on the sensible world is tantamount to a dependence on various temporally determined natural laws whose causal power is the source of our happiness. We are not the cause of such laws and have no control over them: the means required to realize our material ends; their feasibility; and the extent to which they depend on other people and events beyond the sphere of the actionable is not up to us. Insofar as this law-governed nature is beyond

our control and utterly heterogenous to our ability to act from practical laws, we cannot make it harmonize with the latter and the possibility of the highest good hangs in the balance. To ascertain this possibility, we need to presuppose the existence of a causal power that can harmonize these disparate ends. Thus, like immortality, we appeal to the concept of God because it contains certain representational resources we require because of certain limitations on our cognitive power. In this case, through the idea of God, the sphere of all possible ends is determined by the category of community, and represented as a coordinated whole.³⁴ By adding this conceptual determinacy to the idea of the highest good, the agent again grasps a crucial element that contributes to its real possibility.

At the end of the third *Critique*, Kant offers a consistent argument that makes even more explicit the extent to which the subjective need to postulate God's existence, and thereby show the possibility of the highest good, is grounded in the nature of sensibly dependent reason itself. To explain that the practically based postulate does not amount to theoretically determined cognition of God as an intelligent, moral being, Kant draws directly on the limited nature of our intellect. In short, the judgment postulating God's existence is not a theoretically grounded determining judgment with objective validity:

“For we cannot presume to understand that just because the principles of morally practical reason are essentially different from those of technically practical reason in us, they must also be so in the supreme cause of the world if it is assumed to be an intelligence, and that it needs a special and different kind of causality for the final end than for mere ends of nature” (KU 5:455).

³⁴ See B112 for Kant's description of the category of community in the first *Critique*. Community corresponds to the logical function of disjunctive judgment, exhibiting a similar form of unity or connection which “is thought of in an entirety of things, since one is not subordinated, as effect, under another, as the cause of its existence, but is rather coordinated with the other simultaneously and reciprocally as cause with regard to its determination (e.g., in a body, the parts of which reciprocally attract yet also repel each other)”.

The need to appeal to God is thus grounded in the fact that practical reason is sensibly dependent, and so reliant on both pure formal principles directed towards the final end, and technical or material principles directed towards natural ends. We can only harmonize these disparate principles insofar as we postulate the existence of a non-dependent being who is both intelligent and moral, i.e., who can cause this harmony through representations of reason guided by the moral law. Appealing to the category of community is especially helpful here. In thinking the possibility of the highest good through this category, we transcend the limitations on our intellect, which can only subordinate laws of happiness to laws of morality, but not think them together as synthetically coordinated. Through the idea of God, we determine the totality of ends in thought as coordinated, or reciprocally related through a single kind of causality. Through this reciprocal coordination, happiness in accordance with virtue is thought as really possible.

So once again, this judgment that God is necessary for the possibility of the highest good does not extend theoretical cognition. Though it is a theoretical judgment, it is one carried out on practical grounds, grounds that as practical cannot determine the relevant object for theoretical purposes. We are licensed to assume, and indeed must assume, any conditions on the possibility of the highest good because the highest good is itself necessary, determined as it is by an apodictically certain law of pure practical reason. However, as was the case with freedom and immortality, the subjective character of this need and the practical grounds that serve to meet it ensure that the resultant judgment concerning God's existence does not amount to theoretical cognition. By the time he writes the third *Critique*, Kant expresses the character of the postulates in terms of regulative as opposed to determining judgments. Because there is no theoretical object to determine, the judgment that God exists is instead regulative—something we must presuppose on subjective grounds. For as Kant has it, “given the constitution of our faculty of reason, we could

not even make comprehensible the kind of purposiveness related to the moral law and its object that exists in this final end without an author and ruler of the world who is at the same time a moral legislator” (KU 5:455). So once again we have a practically grounded response to a subjective need, a response that cannot as such contribute to theological argument about the existence of God as an independent object beyond the scope of our reason.

Turning now to the issue of motivation, we are in a position to see that the postulates of faith, like that of freedom, help protect sensibly dependent reason from the sceptical attitude that invites dialectical illusion and weakens the moral disposition. The ideas of immortality and God provide the representational resources needed to form a more determinate conception of how the highest good is possible, and in so doing, strengthen the moral disposition, or what amounts to the same, the efficacy of practical representations of the good. In §87 of the third *Critique*, Kant vividly communicates this through his discussion of Spinoza, a philosopher who he takes to be sound of morals but lacking faith in God and immortality because of his theoretical beliefs. The many ills and injustices that such a person would witness could not help but make manifest Kant’s earlier argument, namely, that the moral disposition cannot be brought into complete harmony with the sensible world. In short, Spinoza would nowhere find evidence that the highest good is possible. Kant thus concludes,

“if he would remain attached to the appeal of his moral inner vocation and not weaken the respect, by which the moral law immediately influences him to obedience, by the nullity of the only idealistic final end that is adequate to its high demand (which cannot occur without damage to the moral disposition), then he must assume the existence of a **moral** author of the world, i.e., of God, from a practical point of view, i.e, in order to form a concept of at least the possibility of the final end that is prescribed to him by morality” (KU 5:452-3).

By adding determinate representational content to the conception of the possibility of the highest good, the ideas of immortality and God prevent the cognitive and motivational damage that would

occur if pure practical reason's final end were taken to be empty. So just like the postulate of freedom, those of immortality and God help to combat the scepticism that would deprive the moral law and its object of influence. The concept of faith thus has a particular technical use within Kant's system, though one that is not totally divorced from its more common usage. Faith is "reason's moral way of thinking in the affirmation of that which is inaccessible for theoretical cognition" (KU 5:471-2). But importantly, and in keeping with Kant's critical system, this affirmation stems from a distinctly practical source: faith is not just the disposition to assume the existence of God and immortality of the soul; rather,

"it is the constant fundamental principle of the mind to assume as true that which it is necessary to presuppose as a condition for the possibility of the highest moral final end, on account of the obligation to that, although we can have no insight into its possibility or into its impossibility" (KU 5:471-2).

So although morality inevitably leads to religion, it does so on grounds that are internal to the nature of sensibly dependent reason and thus the practical system. For Kant, faith is a matter of pure rational belief that springs from pure reason itself (KpV 5:126).

5.4 The Immanent Use of Pure Practical Reason

We are finally in a position to see the full significance of my emphasis on how we think about practical representations and the way they motivate. If, as many commentators would have it, our explanation begins with sensible desire and the extent to which it can pose as an obstacle to the moral disposition, we end up with a heteronomous account of morality that understands the postulates as a response to empirically governed psychological issues. Accepting this picture entails that we think of the postulates as providing motivation that is external to the demands of pure reason: we only need to appeal to freedom, immortality, and God insofar as our moral

incentives are lacking, and morally permissible but sensibly based desires are needed to reinforce what pure practical reason cannot accomplish on its own. In this case, the postulates—especially the postulates of faith—are useful because they function as further springs of right action based in the desire for happiness. Regardless of how much these sympathetic commentators maintain that their reading is compatible with Kant’s commitment to autonomy, their projects are doomed to fail. Though, as I have shown, the postulates are intimately connected with our sensible dependence and thus our propensity to evil, we cannot understand them as providing supplemental motivation that works by appealing to the very kind of materially based reasoning that precludes good conduct in the first place. This is ultimately to embrace the battle of forces model that pits sensible desire against the moral disposition as an already existing obstacle, one that requires extra-moral, subjectively based motivation if morality is to win out.

In contrast, I have argued that we must articulate the need and warrant for the postulates in cognitive rather than desiderative or motivational terms. It is because of limitations on our representational powers that we need to appeal to these concepts, which provide the resources to improve our cognitive situation by sharpening our representation of the possibility of the highest good through determinations of the categories of substance, causality, and community. It is only thereby that the moral disposition, our interest in the good, is secured. The postulates of freedom, immortality, and God are thus crucial not for the happiness their joint actuality may promise us, but because they allow us to transcend cognitive limits that render opaque the real possibility of our own nature and the system of ends we aim at. The desiderative element germane to this picture is thus nothing over and above the efficacy that the subject’s practical representations possess in virtue of the increased determinacy of their content. In short, the materially determined wish to enjoy everlasting happiness forms no part of Kant’s picture. So the postulates do not help the moral

disposition from without, as a kind of sensibly based motivational spring that appeals to our extra-moral desires and reinforces the moral disposition's directedness towards the highest good. The postulates instead buttress from within, and in so doing prevent the dialectical illusion natural to practical reason's use. Rather than a battle of forces model that depicts sensibility as external to reason and in need of soothing on its own terms, we have the unified cognitive power I spoke of in the opening paragraphs of this chapter.

My account of the cognitive resources that the postulates provide also helps us see why Kant claims that practical reason is immanent in its pure use. As I highlighted at the outset, this represents a further limit to our ongoing analogy with theoretical reason, which in its pure use is wholly transcendent. Were the postulates merely psychologically based contingent beliefs that provide added motivation, the claim that they serve to further our cognition would look like a massive overstatement. Kant, however, insists that the postulates do just this. At the end of the *Analytic*, he is explicit that, through the concept of freedom,

“the reality of the intelligible world is given to us, and indeed as *determined* from a partial perspective, and this determination, which for theoretical purposes would be *transcendent* (extravagant), is for practical purposes *immanent*” (KpV 5:105).

Once practical reason's use is lawfully extended through the concept of freedom, the warrant for practical reason's further extension through the concepts of God and immortality is also secured.³⁵ Only the reading I have developed here can secure Kant's grand claim that freedom is the keystone of the entire system of pure reason, both practical and theoretical (KpV 5:3-4); an idea which extends practical reason's reach beyond the sensible realm, and secures everything else required

³⁵ See the text following the passage just quoted, where Kant says of the idea of God “we could not rise to it from the sensible world without the mediation of the first dynamical idea [freedom]” (KpV 5:105). Recall also my argument in §5.3.2 that freedom is the condition of the other postulates.

for the its unconditioned totality. Thus without the proper understanding of how practical representation and motivation relate to one another, Kant's interpreter not only risks coming away with an undesirable moral psychology that many unsympathetic philosophers would dismiss, she also risks losing sight of the central tenets of the Kantian vision. This is why it is crucial that we carefully develop the structure of sensibly dependent reason: if we fail to arrive at an adequate understanding of the relation between the rational and sensible elements of our cognitive faculty, we risk distorting every facet of Kant's system.

PART II: SECONDARY LITERATURE

CHAPTER SIX

Against Dualism:

Transcending the Intellectualist/Affectivist Framework

6.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters interpret Kant's theory of practical reason with particular focus on how the metaphysical interdependence of reason and sensibility shapes practical life. This view, which I take to be well captured by the term 'sense-dependent rationalism,' has three major commitments:

First, it accepts a broadly cognitivist account of practical reason, one which holds that practical reason shares a common form with its theoretical counterpart. Although there are obvious limits to the analogy I have built over the last four chapters, I take it that practical and theoretical reason manifest the same structure, a structure which permeates all the way down to sensibility and the way it relates to—and is transformed by—the higher cognitive capacities that determine it.

Second, sense-dependent rationalism holds that reason and sensibility are logically independent but metaphysically inter-dependent capacities which relate to one another as form to matter. It is only through understanding the hylomorphic unity they constitute that the nature of practical cognition and its role in human life is properly grasped. On this view, reason and sensibility together constitute a unity which possesses a common form and makes practical rational life possible.

Third, the cognitivist commitment and resolute hylomorphism detailed above imply that we misunderstand practical cognition and motivation if we pull them apart as separate

elements assigned to different capacities. Instead, I claim that the cognitive content of a practical representation and its ability to motivate the subject cannot be understood as separable from one another. The desiderative element germane to this picture of practical reason is thus nothing over and above the efficacy that the subject's practical representations possess in virtue of the determinacy of their content. Sensible desire certainly contributes to this content, but it is only one part of a unified whole that is ultimately shaped by reason's form.

As we have seen, the above view facilitates new ways of interpreting the feeling of respect, the possibility of evil, and the practical postulates. In the present chapter, my aim is to discuss these interpretive gains in relation to the secondary literature, and a particular framework for debate that has emerged over the last few decades. This is the intellectualist/affectivist framework, which is expansive enough to touch upon all of the issues I have discussed in the present study.

In Chapter 1, I stated that this framework inevitably divides the interpretive landscape according to two factions that both exhibit the dualism I claim we need to leave behind. Now, having developed the positive view that I suggest should take its place, I can turn to the framework itself to highlight its shortcomings. The remaining three sections will be divided according to the major interpretive issues discussed in Chapters 3-5: the feeling of respect, the possibility of evil, and the practical postulates. In each case, I will survey a number of dominant views from both sides of the debate, and argue that my view is preferable. Sense-dependent rationalism, I claim, is both more faithful to Kant's actual view, and better able to represent the complexities of practical life.

6.2 Respect and Moral Motivation

In Chapter 3, I presented an account of Kant's theory of moral motivation in line with the commitments of sense-dependent rationalism articulated above. Instead of viewing respect as a singular feeling, I sought to develop an analogy between the practical and theoretical uses of reason that would shed new light on this crucial concept. Informed by the inversely parallel structures of the *Analytics* from the first and second *Critiques*, I argued that we can understand respect as a practical analogue of space and time, the forms of theoretical sensibility. This analysis attempts to understand Kant's theory of moral motivation by looking to his broader metaphysical system and the deep philosophical questions that motivate it.

To situate my approach in relation to the wider sphere of Kant literature, it is helpful to first look to a radically different account of respect offered by Carla Bagnoli in her paper "Respect and Loving Attention". This work contains a number of claims about respect that are extremely complex. Consider the following examples:

1. "Caused by the representation of the moral law, respect is the feeling of being bound by the requirements of reason in deliberating about what to do" (487).
2. Respect is...the evaluative attitude that is appropriately elicited by the recognition of others as having dignity" (489).
3. "It *is* the subjective experience of rational agency" (491).
4. "Respect is a certainty, a given in the sense that it is the way we are aware that a pure idea of reason, the moral law, has a foothold in our character" (492).¹

I should be clear at the outset that it is not Bagnoli's aim to give the kind of account I am focused on in the present work. Her goal is to recover the philosophical value in Kant's idea of respect in direct response to critics like Iris Murdoch, who argue that it leads to an impoverished conception

¹ Carla Bagnoli, "Respect and Loving Attention," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 33 (2003): 483-515.

of agency, emotion, and inter-subjectivity. Though this task involves unpacking a good deal of Kant's view, Bagnoli is looking outward, to see how Kant can handle subtle literary examples and worthwhile objections. Nor would I disagree with any of the claims from the above list: they are all either directly grounded in the text, or skilled moments of interpretation. But I do think what they can teach us about Kant's view is severely limited. These rather diverse claims may constitute a more nuanced philosophical position than the one Murdoch constructs on Kant's behalf, but how they relate to one another, and how precisely they are grounded in a Kantian account of our mental faculties has yet to be determined. For example, we might ask, how can respect be at once a feeling and an evaluative attitude? While the former sort of representation is attributed to sensibility, the latter is a much more sophisticated representation that involves reason: it is a response to the recognition of moral worth. Picking up on the third quote, we might also ask how a sensible feeling could be identical with the self-conscious experience of a rational capacity—paraphrasing Kant, Bagnoli insists that respect just *is* the subjective experience of morality.² In short, there is much more to say about how complex, conceptual activity can at once cause and be identical with a special feeling. To really grasp Kant's position, we need what I have been calling a metaphysics of mind, which locates the nature and function of respect by unpacking Kant's account of reason, sensibility, and their complex interdependence.

6.2.1 The First Generation of Debate: Intellectualism vs. Affectivism

Towards the end of the 20th century, a number of Kant interpreters contributed to an emerging debate that addresses the type of question posed above. In a 1989 paper entitled "Kant's

² See KpV 5:76, where Kant claims that "respect for the law is... morality itself subjectively considered as an incentive".

Theory of Moral Sensibility”, Andrews Reath advanced what has come to be known as an intellectualist conception of respect. This characterization was suggested by Richard McCarty, who described the positions in the debate as follows in a 1993 paper on the subject:

“Intellectualists hold that respect for the moral law is, or arises from, a purely intellectual recognition of the supreme authority of the moral law, *and* that this intellectual recognition is sufficient to generate moral action independently of any special motivating feelings or affections. Opposed to the intellectualist interpretation is what I shall call the *affectivist* view. Affectivists need not deny that Kantian moral motivation initially arises from an intellectual recognition of the moral law. Contrary to intellectualists, however, they maintain that it also depends on a peculiar moral feeling of respect for law, one consequent to the initial recognition or moral judgment the intellectualists emphasize exclusively.”³

These positions mark out two possible views on the relationship between reason and sensibility, but, as I will go on to argue, they do not represent the full range of possible positions. The way McCarty and others understand the debate, respect is either primarily intellectual or sensible in nature. On the former view, moral motivation stems exclusively from acts of reason: the subject’s ability to recognize the universal validity of the moral law is the source of action. On the latter view, which McCarty himself adopts, this intellectual recognition is thought to be insufficient. What Kant intends to account for with the concept of respect is not the way that cognition itself can move us, but the way that it can give rise to a special sensible feeling that is the source of our motivation. Cast in these terms, the debate essentially boils down to whether it is reason or sensibility that does the driving work attributed to respect. McCarty thus claims that “the central question of the dispute is wholly psychological: whether the affective component of respect plays any role in the mechanism of moral motivation.”⁴

³ Richard McCarty, “Kantian Moral Motivation and the Feeling of Respect,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31 (1993): 423.

⁴ McCarty, “Kantian Moral Motivation,” 430.

As I emphasized in the opening pages of the introduction, how one understands the relationship between reason and sensibility has direct implications for interpreting Kant's relation to his early modern predecessors. These commentators all recognize that the central question motivating this debate is framed to capture whether one thinks Kant's theory of motivation has been deeply influenced by empiricism and its mechanistic, naturalized view of human psychology. As McCarty and others understand the landscape, affectivists take respect to be representative of Kant's attempt to bring pure practical reason into the economy of competing affective forces. Intellectualists, on the other hand, think respect takes on a different function with a more rationalist influence: insofar as the feeling represents our ability to be moved by reason alone, it must remain separate from the sensible realm and its deterministic battle-of-forces model of motivation.

Though he does not use the intellectualist/affectivist dichotomy introduced by McCarty, Andrews Reath was arguably the first to advance a reading of respect against the current wave of this interpretive backdrop. He advances a version of intellectualism that leads to the following conclusion:

“Kant does not think that the moral law determines the will through a quasi-mechanical or affective force. Such a view is implied by his remark that respect is not an ‘incentive to morality’, but the moral law itself regarded as an incentive. This qualification to the account of respect is added to make it clear that moral motivation does not require, or occur, through any feeling that exists independently of moral consciousness.”⁵

Reath justifies his reading by acknowledging that there is an affective aspect to the feeling of respect, but arguing that Kant means it to be stripped of all motivating power. Through this strategy, he accounts for the peculiar characteristics of respect articulated above in connection with

⁵ Andrews Reath, “Kant's Theory of Moral Sensibility: Respect for the Moral Law and the Influence of Inclination,” *Agency and Autonomy in Kant's Moral Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 12.

Bagnoli's reading. As we saw, the feeling is both caused by and somehow identical with consciousness of the moral law. Reath accounts for these features by suggesting that although it is one's rational consciousness alone that motivates, recognition of the moral law has an unavoidable effect on our sensible nature that is phenomenologically indistinguishable from the rational activity that has true explanatory power. As he claims, "one's inclinations are held in check simply by the recognition of the moral law (the practical aspect of respect), and this interaction between practical reason and sensibility gives rise to the feeling of respect (the affective aspect)."⁶ So respect has two logically separable aspects, with the rational one serving as both the cause of the affective aspect, and the resulting act of will. But these aspects are treated as inseparable from a phenomenological perspective, and together make up the felt character of moral life: "the resulting moral emotion ends up being something like the way in which we experience the activity of pure practical reason."⁷

Importantly, however, respect has these two aspects because we just happen to be creatures with contrary motives originating in sensibility. Given this fact, action produced by the moral law cannot help but interact with these motives and produce the affective dimension of respect. Good willing itself, though, is produced through reason alone, as it would be for any other being possessed of pure practical reason. Ultimately then, while respect's intellectual and sensible components are lumped together and treated as identical, this is merely because of certain psychological facts about our nature, facts which do not affect the purely intellectual source of moral motivation.⁸ On Reath's view, respect may be "morality itself subjectively considered"

⁶ Reath, "Kant's Theory of Moral Sensibility," 12.

⁷ Reath, "Kant's Theory of Moral Sensibility," 12.

⁸ Cf. Reath, "Kant's Theory of Moral Sensibility," 12: "It turns out that there is a tight connection between these two aspects of respect, due to certain facts about our nature, and this explains why Kant tends to treat them as identical."

(KpV 5:76), but the relevant practical element, what accounts for the efficacy of moral thinking, is rational and not sensible in character.

In *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, Henry Allison expresses the other prominent intellectualist reading of respect. Citing Reath's view, Allison agrees that Kant does not mean to embrace an empiricist battle of forces model with his account of moral motivation: "the conflict is not between psychic forces but between principles, each of which claims to be the supreme ground for the selection of maxims."⁹ Recognizing what is at stake in the debate, he moves away from the empiricist reading of respect and develops an account that remains consistent with his own Incorporation Thesis and the strong rationalism it implies. On Allison's view, our faculty of desire does not work through being determined by the strongest desire. Its activity is rational: inclinations operate only insofar as they are incorporated into practical principles and recognized as sufficient reasons for action. Respect must therefore motivate through the force of reason, and the affective aspect of the feeling can only be understood as the effect this rational activity has on sensibility. He thus concludes:

"Kant's phenomenology of respect can be regarded as his account of the psychological effects on the 'human faculty of desire' of this account of recognition. In both its negative and positive aspects, respect is produced by the consciousness of a rationally compelling value or norm (the moral law), not by the conquest of a weaker by a superior psychic force."¹⁰

As with Reath, it is key to Allison's account that any effect on sensibility is mediated through the activity of rational recognition. From this, he surmises that the affective dimension to the feeling of respect—in either its positive uplifting, or negative humiliating component—is essentially an indirect effect of rational activity. Once again, reason is cast as practical all on its own, and respect

⁹ Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 126.

¹⁰ Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, 127.

can be classified as a feeling only to the extent that this rational activity has particular sensible side-effects that can be predicted a priori, but are not essential to Kant's theory of moral motivation.

McCarty articulates his own affectivist position in response to both of these views. Preoccupied by Kant's distinction between the objective and subjective determination of the will, he accepts the prevailing interpretive stance that Kant typically looks at explanations from two different points of view and suggests that respect makes up one of these. He thus unequivocally accepts a bifurcated account of the motivational process, one that asserts both an intellectual and an affective aspect. McCarty seizes upon what he takes to be moments of obvious empiricist influence in Kant's texts, and objecting to those who would discount them as inconsistencies that should be overlooked, attempts to square them with Kant's more rationalist principles and his doctrine of radical freedom. McCarty's chief concern are passages like the following, where Kant talks of recognizing the constraints of morality, but failing to act on them: "when I judge by understanding that the action is morally good, I am still very far from doing this action of which I have so judged. But if this judgment moves me to do the action, that is the moral feeling" (LE, 27:1428). Since similar passages can be found throughout Kant's major practical works, he concludes that we must distinguish between the objective perspective of reason and judgment, and the subjective perspective of sensible, motivational strength. Although rational recognition remains a key component, McCarty argues that the latter is just as necessary if we are to give a full explanation of human action: "the moral action never occurs, however, unless there is

sufficiently strong motivation for the circumstances, relative to competing motivational resources: this is a function of the variable, affective aspect of respect.”¹¹

On this view, the intellectual and sensible aspects of moral consciousness are not only logically but also temporally separable. McCarty speaks of the “two stages”¹² of the motivational process, suggesting that “the moral law determines the will directly, and then follows the feeling of respect, which subsequently determines the choice to act accordingly.”¹³ If the resultant feeling is not strong enough in competition with other sensible motives, the agent does not act in accordance with her representation of the good, and she manifests one of the three grades of evil Kant discusses in the *Religion*. The complex details of McCarty’s view on immoral action will be discussed in §6.3; for now, my goal is to emphasize the paradigmatic affectivist reading of respect he has offered. To do this, we can consider how McCarty handles the thought that moral feeling is both caused by and somehow identical with consciousness of the moral law. Like the intellectualist, he holds that respect is the effect of one’s representation of the moral law as binding. So, the intellectual aspect of respect is the cause or ground of the affective one. But unlike the intellectualist who thinks the affective aspect of respect is a mere psychological side-effect, McCarty casts it as the cause of action from the subjective perspective, the perspective external to reason and characterized by mechanistic forces. Though he does not explicitly weigh in on how to square this reading with the thought that respect just *is* morality from the subjective perspective, we can piece it together from his comment that “respect for law is just the motivational attitude for action whose ground is the moral law.”¹⁴ For the affectivist, respect is identical with the

¹¹ McCarty, “Kantian Moral Motivation,” 427.

¹² McCarty, “Kantian Moral Motivation,” 427-8.

¹³ McCarty, “Kantian Moral Motivation,” 428.

¹⁴ McCarty, “Kantian Moral Motivation,” 430.

subjective aspect of morality insofar as it showcases the moral disposition from the mechanical-motivational point of view.¹⁵

6.2.2 The Second Generation of Debate: Non-mechanical Affectivism

Responding to this initial round of interpretive debate are a number of views that attempt to carve out a middle path. Such positions recognize that both sides of the debate present untenable accounts of Kant's view of moral motivation. The affectivist embraces the dominant dualistic reading commonly attributed to Kant, holding that the autonomy of pure practical reason is compatible with a need to account for sensible motivation in terms fixed by an independently intelligible view of empirical psychology. The intellectualist, wary of the seeming contradiction this implies, pulls back from the economy of sensibly determined motivation that the affectivist takes to be necessary to Kant's picture. But in so doing, he obscures the fact that sensibility has any real role to play, suggesting that any attendant affect is a mere by-product of the rational activities that have true efficacy. Not surprisingly, in response, other commentators have attempted to reconcile the perspectives of those who would like to uphold Kant's rationalist commitments, with those who would like to emphasize the important role that feeling does play in Kant's account of moral motivation.

In a 2001 paper, Jeanine Grenberg laments the plight of the Kantian who would like to fully vindicate the role of human emotion and desire in relation to action:

“despite a willingness to welcome the influence of feeling to many aspects of action and moral theory, most commentators, guided by a desire to maintain a clear

¹⁵ Paul Guyer's view represents another strand of traditional affectivism, though he does not explicitly weigh in on this debate. His view will be discussed in the final section of this chapter as it pertains to the practical postulates. For yet another version of affectivism, see Larry Herrera, “Kant on the Moral Triebfeder,” *Kant-Studien* 91 (2000): 395–410.

distinction between Kant's theory and a more 'empirical' approach to motivation, refuse feeling a direct motivational role both in moral action and in action more generally."¹⁶

Grenberg focuses in particular on Allison and those influenced by him, arguing that we can incorporate a more full-blooded account of feeling into Kant's a priori moral philosophy if we move away from the affectivist conception that understands feelings to interact as competing mechanical forces. She claims that on Kant's view, feeling has a 'nascent intentionality' which she describes as follows: "although it does not identify objective characteristics of its object and does partake of sensibility, [feeling] is, nonetheless, directed toward an object and, as such, is a function of the agent's capacity to represent that object in a particular way."¹⁷ Grenberg takes this focused directedness to set feeling apart from mere mechanical force, and suggests this difference can be the entry point to a rich account of feeling that is consistent with the requirements of Kant's a priori system. This move marks a distinctive functionalist turn for Kant commentators who want to give feeling its due without wandering into unapologetically empiricist territory. Rather than focus on its sensible character or strength, Grenberg's strategy is to be attentive to the role that feeling plays relative to other practical representations. She holds that "feeling is a sensible susceptibility to representations," and builds an account casting it as a vital sensible resource that rational reflection takes as its object. Through the latter, the agent learns about herself and finds access to the material needed to make choices and live a practical life.

In a 2011 paper that focuses more directly on the feeling of respect, Grenberg takes aim at the Allisonian account offered by Anne Margaret Baxley.¹⁸ Grenberg argues that despite efforts to

¹⁶ Jeanine Grenberg, "Feeling, Desire and Interest in Kant's Theory of Action," *Kant-Studien* 92 (2001): 154.

¹⁷ Grenberg, "Kant's Theory of Action," 160.

¹⁸ Cf. Anne Margaret Baxley, *Kant's Theory of Virtue: The Value of Autocracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

the contrary, Baxley succumbs to the rigid constraints of intellectualism and fails to offer a satisfactory interpretation. She describes Baxley's strategy as follows:

“by desensibilizing moral feeling, Baxley hopes she is making that feeling more appropriate for integration into an *a priori* morality; and that by denying that feeling a constitutive role in consciousness of moral law, she is respecting necessary, unavoidable constraints on the introduction of feeling to that *a priori* morality.”¹⁹

In opposition to this kind of view, Grenberg turns to passages where Kant speaks of common human judgment and its relation to respect. Because Kant claims that it is through this special feeling that moral and immoral determining grounds of the will are distinguished, Grenberg concludes that “we can rely upon the moral feeling of respect even for the very justification of moral principles.”²⁰ She thus advocates that we pull feeling all the way into Kant's epistemic or cognitive system, going so far as to suggest that human beings need the feeling of respect to identify and judge moral principles. Though Grenberg does not explicitly link this claim to her earlier work, one could flesh out her view by suggesting it is through the feeling of respect that we recognize our sensible relation to universal practical laws grounded in pure reason. Without consciousness of this relation, our latent capacity for moral judgment could not be actualized. Whether or not this is the right way to fill out her account, Grenberg's central thought is clear. As she says, “the future of Kantian ethics rests, I think, on the willingness of more commentators to welcome the fuller integration of feeling into the grounding of *a priori* morality which Kant's common grounding of morality encourages.”²¹ We can also flesh out her view by returning to the thought that moral feeling is both caused by and somehow identical with consciousness of the

¹⁹ Jeanine Grenberg, “Making Sense of the Relationship of Reason and Sensibility in Kant's Ethics,” *Kantian Review* 16 (2011): 469.

²⁰ Grenberg, “Reason and Sensibility in Kant's Ethics,” 470-1.

²¹ Grenberg, “Reason and Sensibility in Kant's Ethics,” 471.

moral law. At the outset of her paper, she asks: “is moral feeling a consequence of a previous, non-felt consciousness of the authority of the moral law; or is it an aspect of that consciousness itself, something upon which a finite being relies as an epistemic tool for appreciating the authority of the moral law?”²² Insofar as she builds an account in line with the latter option, her view is especially capable of answering the question of how respect can be both caused by and identical too the subjective aspect of morality. As a sensible susceptibility to or directedness towards representations of reason, respect must be caused by rational representation—it is our subjective reaction to such representations. But importantly for Grenberg, the grounding role it plays in moral life means that moral feeling is also a necessary aspect of moral consciousness. It is, as Kant says, morality itself subjectively considered. Given these commitments, we can recognize her position as the first prominent example of non-mechanical affectivism in the ongoing debate about respect.

Since Grenberg’s work, two more examples of non-mechanical affectivism have emerged. Not surprisingly, both also embrace implicitly or explicitly functionalist accounts of feeling. In a 2014 paper, Owen Ware brings out the extent to which Kant’s functionalist definition of feeling is “transcendental” in nature, i.e., such as to bring out feeling’s “kinship with the pure faculty of cognition a priori.”²³ He thus makes manifest what was latent in Grenberg’s work: to bring Kant’s account of feeling into the realm of a priori moral metaphysics, we must recast it to capture its transcendental character. Ware proceeds much as Grenberg does. He develops Kant’s non-mechanical account of feeling, using the same language of intentionality and reflexive relation: “every feeling has an intentional object (perceived by the senses, or imagined in thought) as well

²² Grenberg, “Reason and Sensibility in Kant’s Ethics,” 463.

²³ Owen Ware, “Kant on Moral Sensibility and Moral Motivation,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52 (2014): 733, footnote 17.

as an accompanying representation of the object's agreeableness or disagreeableness to the subject. This makes every feeling reflexive in character".²⁴ He also distances himself from McCarty's mechanistic affectivism without accepting the utter lack of efficacy accorded to feeling on the intellectualist view, stating that his aim is to rehabilitate Kant's account of feeling by articulating "a suitably idealized phenomenology, rather than a model of competing forces."²⁵ For Ware, the key step is to recognize that such an account requires a first-personal perspective on the structure of moral motivation. Rather than thinking of feelings as affective forces, we understand them as the result of rational reflection. To do this, he emphasizes the extent to which the negative and positive aspects of respect—the humiliation and self-esteem we feel when confronted with the law—are not identical with sensible pains and pleasures. The former is a "feeling of reproach,"²⁶ the latter "a feeling for the sublimity of our moral vocation."²⁷ Both involve rational recognition, and are uniquely suited to motivate the individual to morally good behaviour. Motivation is the key issue for Ware: he differs from Grenberg in that he does not go so far as to suggest respect provides epistemic justification for moral judgment. For his Kant, respect addresses

"the problem of how reason can access sensibility in a way suited to moral motivation, thereby serving as an incentive in the place of pathological feelings. The aim of Kant's theory of moral sensibility is to show how our recognition of the moral law must influence us, with the positive influence serving as our interest to make the law our own maxim of choice."²⁸

On Ware's view, respect amounts to the subjective aspect of morality insofar as it describes a feeling that explains not the ground of motivation, but the motivation itself. Because it accounts for our interest in the law, respect is identical to subjective moral consciousness.

²⁴ Ware, "Kant on Moral Sensibility," 733.

²⁵ Ware, "Kant on Moral Sensibility," 743.

²⁶ Ware, "Kant on Moral Sensibility," 738.

²⁷ Ware, "Kant on Moral Sensibility," 739.

²⁸ Ware, "Kant on Moral Sensibility," 743.

Before moving on to discuss my own view and its relation to this debate, it is worth developing one other version of non-mechanical affectivism. In a 2014 paper, Janelle DeWitt articulates a self-avowedly functionalist interpretation of respect that she claims can account for its dual nature, insisting that “Kant describes pleasure in terms of its function in the activity of the mind, rather than in terms of its affective character or visceral feel.”²⁹ She differs from both Grenberg and Ware, however, in that she goes as far as to say that feeling is itself a practical or motivating form of judgment. Note how in the following passage, she uses both the language of intentionality and reflexivity we saw with Grenberg and Ware, but concludes on the basis of such pronouncements that feeling amounts to judgment on Kant’s view:

“pleasure is a representation of an object, not as it is in itself, but as it *relates to the subject*. Or more specifically, it represents how the object relates to the subject’s faculty of desire—the source of his activity. Without this connection to the subject’s source of activity, an object cannot move us to act. It is in this regard, where pleasure is a type of judgment representing this relationship, that Kant says the faculty of desire is determined by a pleasure in an object.”³⁰

DeWitt thus attributes more of a role to feeling than any commentator in this debate. Since she builds so much into the concept, she need only look to the passages where Kant argues that we need feeling to establish the driving power of action to complete her account. Her functionalism is so rich that we need only look to feeling to see how representations relate to our faculty of desire. Because it is raised to the full status of judgment, feeling alone can account for how we relate to possible courses of action, even those determined by the moral law. In this sense, it has the epistemic status Grenberg wants to give to feeling, though Grenberg herself does not go so far as to equate it with judgment. And since DeWitt, along with most commentators, takes feeling to be

²⁹ Janelle DeWitt, “Respect for the Moral Law: The Emotional Side of Reason,” *Philosophy* 89 (2014): 36.

³⁰ DeWitt, “Respect for the Moral Law,” 38.

what motivates, or accounts for the driving spring of action, her account of respect is secured. She concludes, “as an action-initiating evaluative judgment, respect qualifies as both a feeling and a moral motive without violating the metaphysical constraints of Kant’s theory.”³¹ Interestingly, DeWitt does not even allow this evaluative judgment to have its usual humiliating effect on the inclinations. She assumes that respect’s special character as a judgment made in relation to representations of the understanding and not sensibility means it cannot take mere inclination as its object. Her conclusion, then, is that respect’s influence on our sensible nature must be wrought indirectly through other rational representations, interacting with our maxims of self-love. Though this view can start to look quite intellectualist, it’s important to remember that DeWitt has built all of this rational structure into the higher faculty of feeling. The extreme nature of her view is laid bare when she calls the faculty of feeling—and not reason—“the faculty responsible for practical cognition.”³² On her view then, it is easy to account for the thought that respect is morality itself subjectively considered. It is, strangely, more difficult to explain Kant’s claim that respect is produced by reason. To accomplish the latter, DeWitt must appeal to her claim that respect and the other higher feelings are evaluative judgments which take representations of reason as their object.

There are two related points worth noting in response to these three versions of non-mechanical affectivism. First, it would not be unfair to suggest that on some level, having slogged through two generations of debate, we are right back where we started in trying to make sense of respect. Recall Bagnoli’s complex claims about respect as both a feeling and an evaluative attitude. While the first round of debate proceeded by sharply separating and simplifying these two aspects,

³¹ DeWitt, “Respect for the Moral Law,” 55.

³² DeWitt, “Respect for the Moral Law,” 42.

we now have a series of different claims that attempt to make sense of respect by collapsing them together. On Grenberg's view, feeling has a nascent intentionality that allows it to play an epistemic role; on Ware's view, the feeling of respect is a complex first-personal awareness "of the sublimity of our moral vocation" that has the power to motivate; on DeWitt's, respect, as a feeling, just is a form of judgment. In each case, so much is built into feeling that these motivational attitudes are unrecognizable as affective states. Such characterizations reignite the questions and concerns posed at the beginning of this section. To stay on solid interpretive ground, these authors appeal to Kant's functionalist account of feeling; but as we have seen, each draw radically different conclusions from Kant's thought that feeling is intentional (or quasi-intentional) and reflexive rather than a *mere* affective force.

This brings me to the second point: functionalism can only take us so far. As we have seen, it admits of many different versions and we need to look beyond a broadly functionalist account of feeling to see which, if any, of the particular versions we've seen correctly represents Kant's view. As I will argue in the next section, we should not conclude, with DeWitt, that to feel is to judge; or side with Grenberg and hold the more moderate view that feeling is wholly sensible, but nevertheless capable of playing an epistemic role in virtue of its complex structure. To his credit, Ware attempts to keep feeling from looking too much like a propositional attitude or something that can play a justificatory role, but he still allows its complex representational content to take centre stage. If we side with him, we accept that respect is the feeling *of* the sublimity of our moral vocation. Surely it must be something like this if it is to motivate, but how reason and sensibility could interact to produce a representation this complex is far from clear. Like other commentators, Ware is cautious of trampling over Kant's claim that the ground of this interaction is the philosopher's stone: as Kant says, we cannot comprehend "how a mere thought which itself

contains nothing sensible produces a feeling of pleasure or displeasure” (G 4:460). But I contend that there is still more to say on the subject, and we can avoid throwing our hands up and resting with hybrid descriptions of respect that invite more questions than they answer.

6.2.3 Respect as the Formal Element of Sensibility

At first glance, it may seem no more helpful to claim, as I did in Chapter 3, that respect is the formal element of practical sensibility. A central difference in my strategy, however, lies in the fact that this claim brings the level of discussion up from talk of particular feelings, acts of mind, and thought processes to the more general talk of capacities and their interdependence. This is key to making sense of respect. As I clarify in Chapter 4, respect can of course be felt as a particular feeling, but to fully understand its complex representational structure we need to grasp not just its unique character, but how reason and sensibility interact to produce practical cognition. So, our questions should not concern whether respect is primarily intellectual or affective, or some special combination of the two. We must ask what role sensibility plays in practical cognition and how its relationship to reason allows it to fulfill this role. This is the best way to establish how respect, and sensibility more generally, can be brought more fully into Kant’s a priori metaphysics—the self-professed goal of the non-mechanical affectivists surveyed above.

I have argued that the best way to approach the question of sensibility’s role in practical cognition is to be attentive to the structure of discursive cognition in general, and the ways in which its theoretical and practical forms are analogous to one another. While, on the one hand, theoretical sensibility provides a manifold of object-directed sensation, practical sensibility provides a manifold of feeling. As we saw, Kant is clear that the latter is not object-directed in the same way. Though feeling results from the subject’s relation to a representation of an object, it communicates

something about the subject, namely, whether or not she desires the thing she represents.³³ So feeling essentially relates the object to her faculty of desire, communicating the extent to which the object is efficacious for the subject, i.e., such as to move her to fixate upon, deliberate about, and/or act with respect to it. Seizing on this difference between the two uses of reason, I depart from Grenberg and DeWitt, concluding that sensibility, as the capacity for feeling, concerns representations only insofar as they are efficacious or motivating. Thus, although feeling figures prominently in practical cognition of the good, it does not do so by providing some necessary epistemic warrant or, even more strongly, functioning as judgment. To isolate the role that sensibility plays in practical cognition, we must ask whether there are a priori sensible conditions on the possibility of acting from practical laws that concern the efficacy of those laws.

As I go on to argue, such conditions do not concern the empirical domain, or even some non-mechanical conception of drive or impulsion that understands sensibility, independently of reason, to provide the driving force of action. I do not, of course, deny that respect is a *Triebfeder* or incentive. I deny that what makes this feeling an incentive is best understood by casting sensibility as the capacity which spurs movement. Even when we cast aside the mechanical view of feeling as Grenberg and others do, this latter assumption betrays an empiricist commitment that Kant does not share. As I argue, respect instead fulfills a metaphysical requirement concerning what the nature of sensibly dependent reason must be like if the deliverances of sensibility are to figure in acts of practical reason as Kant understands it. For sensibility itself, considered wholly independently of reason, is merely a receptive capacity to be affected by objects. Were we simply

³³ Recall the helpful distinction Kant makes at KU 5:206: “the green color of the meadows belongs to objective sensation, as perception of an object of sense; but its agreeableness belongs to subjective sensation, through which no object is represented, i.e., to feeling, through which the object is considered as an object of satisfaction (which is not a cognition of it).”

to rest with this conception, we would have to conclude that sensibility operates according to its own laws, and is not responsive to the demands of reason. In this case, practical cognition would not be possible, because the subject's sensible desire would not be responsive to her recognition of what morality requires, and her representation of the good could not move her. As I claim in Chapter 3, if we are to be understood as subjects capable of producing objects through the recognition that they agree with practical principles of reason, Kant must have an account as to how the efficacy of sensible desire can be conditioned based on its relation to such principles. My claim is that Kant's discussion of respect fulfills this metaphysical requirement, accounting for the fact that sensibility must be rationally determined and so responsive to the demands of reason in order to serve in acts of practical cognition, acts whose efficacy springs from the recognition of principles rather than the pull of sensible affect. Respect functions as the form of practical sensibility insofar as it represents this rationally determined transformation, and the fundamental character that sensibility takes on through its relationship to reason. This is why I claim we must explain respect at the level of whole capacities, not individual feelings: it accounts for the general structure our practical sensibility must have, given its role as the matter of practical cognition. As I go on to suggest in chapter three, we *can* point to respect as an individual determining ground of the will, or a feeling identifiable in a particular moment of consciousness. But we do not fully understand its role in Kant's metaphysics of mind until we move up a level, and study the general relationship that holds between reason and sensibility.³⁴

³⁴ We should thus take Kant at his word when he talks at the general level of reason determining sensibility. Cf. KpV 5:76: "respect is an effect on feeling (*Gefühl*) and hence on the sensibility of a rational being", and G 4:460 "in order for a sensibly affected being to will that for which reason alone prescribes the 'ought,' ... there is required a causality of reason to determine sensibility in conformity with its principles."

This point about transformation is key to distinguishing my view: through practical reason's determination of sensibility and the feeling of respect, Kant accounts for the human capacity to be motivated by the practical principle itself. With this capacity, what changes is not just the set of ends that we can be motivated to act upon, but the very nature of our practical activity, the way we desire and set ends. Unlike those who would claim that respect makes practical cognition possible by bringing the push of sensible affect into the picture, I claim that respect makes practical cognition possible by completely transforming sensibility as a capacity, so that it is reason, and not sensibility, which motivates.³⁵ As the matter of practical cognition, sensible desire still has some efficacy, but ultimately it provides neither the objective ground nor the subjective motivation to act. Instead, by organizing the manifold of sensible desire in a new way, respect changes how representations motivate us—turning us into beings motivated by the recognition of practical principles, rather than the strength of affect. I thus claim, like the intellectualist, that we are motivated through rational recognition and not affect, but I do so without casting the sensible aspect of respect as a mere by-product. Instead, I claim it does the integral work of shaping sensibility so that pure reason can itself be practical, without completely erasing the important contributions that merely sensible feeling makes to practical cognition.

We can now return to the thought that respect is both caused by reason and identical with the subjective aspect of morality. As I explain it, respect is not 'subjective' because it accounts for

³⁵ Grenberg provides a helpful example of this kind of thinking on p. 158 of "Kant's Theory of Action": "Whether one struggles to maintain a commitment to the moral law, or to self-love, an agent needs 'impulsions' to act so as to overcome that part of herself with which she will always be in conflict. Without such impulsions, an agent would not have the *strength* to choose as she sees fit." Though her account of desire aims to bring feeling out of the empirical-mechanical realm, she still understands human action to be driven by affect. On her view, incorporating sensible desire into one's maxim "involves the acquisition of the force of one's sensible drives in the service of the agent's rational choice" so that, ultimately, "the incorporated drive is the source of the motive force toward the action represented by the maxim" ("Kant's Theory of Action," 178).

the affective, as opposed to intellectual, aspect of action—whether this affect be construed as mechanical or non-mechanical. In this regard, I disagree with the affectivist. But I also depart from the intellectualist’s account: on my view, respect represents the subjective aspect of morality because it goes beyond the objectively necessary, universal aspects of morality to give a fuller picture, accounting for additional conditions on practical cognition that hold for sensibly dependent moral subjects. Though it is reason that motivates action, we cannot account for this possibility in sensibly dependent beings without saying something about how our logically independent capacity for feeling can be responsive to reason’s activity. As I say, otherwise, our sensible desires could not be organized based on their relation to the practical principles that motivate us. They could not, in short, take up their role as the matter of practical cognition. So, we must say something about feeling: the intellectualist does not give a complete account of human action—we do not explain how reason is practical without looking to sensibility. But we do not complete the account by casting sensibility as the source of motivation; rather, we must show how reason itself can motivate by altering sensibility’s very form, and reframing the role it plays in our practical activity.

6.3 The Possibility of Evil

The above reading of respect suggests a new and fruitful way to explain the possibility of evil within Kant’s metaphysics of mind. Understanding respect as the form sensibility must take insofar as it is responsive to reason, a general relationship between the two capacities is established, and a form of willing secured. As I stress in Chapter 4, this does not mean that all of our particular acts of willing must be determined exclusively by the moral law. It does mean, however, that as morally interested persons we necessarily frame our action in relation to the good,

and are motivated on the basis of this rational activity. This leads to a unified conception of motivation, one which avoids the complex schisms between knowledge and motivational strength often found in the secondary literature. In Chapters 4 and 5, I express the interpretive commitment stemming from my view as follows: the objective content of a practical judgment and its ability to motivate the subject cannot be separated from one another. Though we can certainly fail to act on our representation of the good, and subordinate morality to self-love in various ways, this does not mean that our model for action must include the possibility of impotent knowledge or the clear-eyed pursuit of evil ends. Kant's view lends itself to a much more sophisticated account of human evil. To accommodate this picture, we must go beyond the intellectualist/affectivist framework and the various accounts of evil it facilitates. In what follows, I survey this framework before suggesting how we might transcend it.

6.3.1 Intellectualist and Affectivist Interpretations of Frailty

Not surprisingly, Allison, Reath, and McCarty develop accounts of evil consistent with their views on respect. For my purposes here, it is most useful to consider frailty—or, adopting the term more familiar to contemporary English commentators, weakness—the first of the three grades of evil that Kant discusses in the *Religion*. Focusing on frailty will prove to be especially instructive because in the classic example, the agent is moved to act against her representation of the good, suggesting that the objective content of her practical representation and its ability to move her can be wholly unrelated. Whether or not an interpreter accepts this schism as a possibility, and how she explains it in the event that she does, tells us much about how she understands Kant's theory of motivation.

Henry Allison's view represents the extreme end of the intellectualist or rationalist side of the spectrum. Because he attempts to square his reading with the Incorporation Thesis and its rationalist commitments, Allison cannot accept the traditional model of weakness, on which the agent is fully committed to and aware of the good, but lacks the motivational strength to carry out the required action. If this were the case, the agent would act on an incentive she had not incorporated into her will, instead of her fully incorporated commitment to morality. Instead, Allison concludes the weak agent must be self-deceived about her true principles:

“the so-called lack of sufficient strength to follow moral principles when they conflict with the claims of inclination reflects the lack of a full commitment to these principles in the first place. Thus, self-deception enters the picture at the very beginning, depicting what is in reality a free evaluation on one's part as a ‘weakness’ for which one is not responsible.”³⁶

On this strongly rationalist interpretation, Kant's insistence that human action is necessarily free and imputable leads to the view that all action reflects one's considered judgment. Though the subject might consciously disavow or unconsciously distort her reasons for acting, we must conclude that her actions are indicative of her true practical commitments. Allison thus completely rejects the possibility that one can have full knowledge of and commitment to the good, but fail to act because of insufficient motivational strength.

Reath adopts a more nuanced but equally intellectualist position. He describes the weak person as someone who “does not recognize the authority of the moral law in the requisite sense of adopting a maxim that gives deliberative priority to moral considerations,”³⁷ suggesting that the principal failure is one of recognition or commitment. He even walks the Allisonian line and accepts that, in the core passages about frailty from the *Religion*, Kant conceives of the weak

³⁶ Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, 159.

³⁷ Reath, “Kant's Theory of Moral Sensibility,” 28, endnote 14.

person as one who “acts on a different maxim, one that subordinates morality to self-love.”³⁸ His account is, however, more sensitive to a wider variety of cases: though he too is open to the possibility of self-deception, he both accepts that the agent can act against her well-established practical principles, and recognizes forms of weakness that do not rely on self-deception. In the first sort of case, “one acts against one’s considered judgment, but constructs a rationalization that allows one to view the action as consistent with one’s principles and ongoing ends, and thus as permissible under the circumstances.”³⁹ This type of weakness reflects Reath’s view that action carries an implicit claim to some form of justification, though this particular justification would not stand up to further scrutiny. It is also well-grounded in the text, fitting with the passages where Kant highlights our proneness to quibble with the moral law and make occasional exceptions that do not, or do not yet, amount to the full acceptance of self-interested reasoning.⁴⁰ The second kind of weakness is much more extreme. Reath describes an agent who, even in the moment, does something

“he judges he has no reason to do and does not in any sense endorse. . . . Here it is not clear that the agent acts on a maxim, since there is no rationale under which the agent views the action as choiceworthy at the time. In such cases, what the agent does is less than an action, because there is a failure to exercise the capacities for rational control and self-governance that are standardly employed in rational action.”⁴¹

This example fits more easily with the traditional view of weakness insofar as the agent does not endorse his action, even before reflecting upon it. It also fits with Reath’s wider commitments: because the agent feels rationally disconnected from what he does, it cannot count as an action in

³⁸ Reath, “Kant’s Theory of Moral Sensibility,” 28, endnote 14.

³⁹ Reath, “Kant’s Theory of Moral Sensibility,” 30, endnote 29.

⁴⁰ See, for example, G 4:405 and G 4:424.

⁴¹ Reath, “Kant’s Theory of Moral Sensibility,” 30, endnote 29.

the full sense Reath attributes to the term. Since, on his reading of Kant, action is intrinsically justified for the agent, her alienated stance bars weak 'action' from being action proper. Unfortunately, Reath does not give us a more detailed explanation of how such behaviour might be possible from a Kantian viewpoint. He simply concludes that it results from some failure of rational self-control. Although we lack a complete explanation of how this break between judgment and motivational strength is possible on Reath's interpretation, we can conclude that the behaviour which results is not a straightforward example of choice. This kind of weakness amounts not just to a moral failure, but a complete breakdown of rational activity.

In contrast, McCarty's affectivism enables him to comfortably handle the schism between reason and sensibility that cases of weakness seem to present. Because he already endorses a mechanical understanding of sensibility and its role in motivating action, weak action is for him just a prime illustration of the fact that the possibility of action depends on a sufficiently powerful affective force. While the intellectualist understands weakness as an anomaly that fails to exhibit the true character of human action, the affectivist sees an instructive case that renders the true structure of motivation transparent. McCarty thus fully embraces the model of the agent who acts against her knowledge: for him, "the pure in heart but frail...are those who intellectually acknowledge the supreme authority of the moral law but may nevertheless choose, through weakness, to act on opposing inclinations."⁴² In a series of papers dealing with the phenomenon of weakness, he takes Kant's commitment to a 'competing forces' view of motivation to be obvious, and the main interpretive hurdle to be preserving the imputability of evil action given this

⁴² McCarty, "Kantian Moral Motivation," 431. See also, McCarty, "Motivation and Moral Choice in Kant's Theory," *Kant-Studien* 85 (1994): 15-31; and McCarty, "Moral Weakness as Self-Deception," *Proceeding of the Eighth International Kant Congress: Memphis 1995, Vol. II*, 587-593 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995).

view. As he argues, because the weak agent believes she should and could have acted otherwise, the action is free. McCarty thus concludes, “it is entirely appropriate to impute to moral agents any transgression due to moral weakness, even though there remains a sense in which we may say their transgressions depend on a factor beyond their immediate control: namely, the contingent strength of their capacity for moral feeling.”⁴³ Here we see McCarty’s affectivist leanings at work: although weak action is freely adopted, explaining its occurrence requires appealing not to the agent’s beliefs and commitments, but to her motivational strength, an empirical matter of fact which lies beyond the sphere of rational influence. Because intellectual recognition and motivational strength have been so completely separated, the occurrence of weakness is effectively chalked up to dispositional luck: “no matter how strong the moral incentive is in us, dispositionally, circumstances can arise where competing incentives of inclination just turn out to be stronger than our feeling of respect for the moral law.”⁴⁴

Before moving on to discuss my own view, we should more explicitly consider the dualism inherent to those just presented.⁴⁵ On the one hand, McCarty’s commitment to reading Kant’s theory of motivation through the two worlds distinction leads him to completely isolate our

⁴³ McCarty, “Motivation and Moral Choice,” 28.

⁴⁴ McCarty, “Motivation and Moral Choice,” 26.

⁴⁵ Though I have not discussed them here, other well-cited accounts of weakness also fit into this intellectualist vs. affectivist framework. Consider those offered by Iain Morriison and Robert N. Johnson. Both attempt to square the possibility of weakness with Allison’s Incorporation Thesis, though with differing results. Morriison takes a more resolutely intellectualist route and argues that the weak-willed subject acts “somewhat rationally,” choosing to pursue principled ends that have been deemed simply or immediately good, but do not figure in the totality of ends that constitute her vision of happiness. Weak action thus constitutes a failing to the extent that it is short-sighted, but is nevertheless guided by principles. Cf. Iain Morriison, “On Kantian Maxims: A reconciliation of the Incorporation Thesis and Weakness of the Will,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 22 (2005): 73-89. In contrast, Johnson offers an affectivist friendly interpretation that holds an atypically expansive understanding of maxims: on Johnson’s view, some maxims motivate without justifying, making room for the possibility of irrational action that intentionally and voluntarily pursues the bad. Cf. Robert N. Johnson, “Weakness Incorporated,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 15 (1998): 349-367.

intelligible character from our empirical one, and conclude that the feeling of respect and all other incentives operate in a closed economy of psychological forces whose general thrust is indicative of our empirical character. This makes for a shockingly precarious view of virtue, even by Kant's lights. As McCarty declares, "we have better moral characters, empirically, to the extent that we are susceptible to feeling greater moral pleasure and displeasure: to the extent, that is, that our recognition of how our contemplated action conforms to the moral law generates, through feeling, a stronger motive force."⁴⁶ Since McCarty is insistent that rational recognition is only contingently related to motive force, moral education and the cultivation of motivational virtue cannot be a predominantly cognitive process. It must, instead, involve training psychological responses so as to strengthen one's ability to withstand temptation from inclination. Leaving aside the question of whether one wants to make room for the latter phenomenon within the Kantian picture, I would argue that it cannot stand as his model for virtue. Such a view cannot fit with Kant's cognitivist commitments.⁴⁷ Placing such a large gap between reason and sensibility, the affectivist is unable to articulate a properly Kantian account of moral life.

The intellectualist allows for a similarly fatal gap, but, unlike his counterpart, develops the account too much on the side of reason. Allison's view is the paradigmatic example: he rejects the battle of forces model, and talks up the Incorporation Thesis so much that there appears no viable alternative but to deny the traditional conception of weakness. There is no room for immoral action to take place unless it has been at least partially incorporated into one's maxim—as it is with the

⁴⁶ Richard R. McCarty, *Kant's Theory of Action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 182-3.

⁴⁷ Consider the following passage from MS 6:383-4: "But virtue is not to be defined and valued merely as an *aptitude* and... a long-standing habit of morally good actions acquired by practice. For unless this aptitude results from considered, firm, and continually purified principles, then, like any other mechanism of technically practical reason, it is neither armed for all situations nor adequately secured against the changes that new temptations could bring about." As I argued in Chapter 4, I take passages like this one to require a much tighter relationship between reason and sensibility than McCarty makes room for.

latter grades of evil, impurity and depravity. So with Allison, too, we see reason and sensibility held at arm's length from one another, this time with the consequence that reason completely overshadows sensibility and the contributions it makes to practical life.⁴⁸ Andrews Reath, on the other hand, seems to recognize the impossibility of such an extreme intellectualist account of evil, and this creates some tension within his account. He accepts some version of the Incorporation Thesis, but insists that an intellectualist reading can accommodate more complex examples. He thinks weakness can be understood as either the result of a rationalizing process through which the agent departs from her characteristic commitments, or as a non-action that, as such, cannot be justified in any way. But both cases are difficult to square with the party line voiced by Allison and Reath. In the first, the rationalization is meant to serve as an alternative maxim, one that opposes the moral law. This seems too strong, however, since Reath is clear that the rationalization does not replace the agent's more deeply rooted commitment to moral goodness. Moreover, since Reath, like Allison, rejects the battle of forces model, it is difficult to see how the second case is possible. Though he should ostensibly deny that it is sensibility, and not reason, which determines such weak behaviour, it is not clear what other recourse for explanation is available to him, especially given that reason and sensibility have been so cleanly separated in his account of motivation. If, as he would have it, our capacity for rational reflection and control is not being exercised—either well or badly—it would seem that the only other way to explain the subject's behaviour is to appeal to the strength of her desire.

⁴⁸Consider, for example, Kant's reflections on affect and passion from the *Anthropology*: "To be subject to affects and passions is probably always an *illness of the mind*, because both affect and passion shut out the sovereignty of reason" (ApH 7:251); and "affect is surprise through sensation, by means of which the mind's composure is suspended. Affect is therefore rash, that is, it quickly grows to a degree of feeling that makes reflection impossible (it is thoughtless)" (ApH 7:252). It is difficult to see how Allison could incorporate such phenomena into his view without somehow invoking self-deception and the incorporation thesis, suggesting that the affected subject does in fact act on a maxim.

6.3.2 Finding the Middle Path: Frailty and Affect

Given the failures of intellectualism, a question that emerges from this debate could be put as follows: can we account for the fragmented character of weakness without reverting to McCarty's empiricist-inspired dualism? I argue that we can, but only if we adopt a more unified understanding of the relationship between reason and sensibility. Building on my conception of respect, I suggest we can formulate an account of evil that precludes the affectivist-style schism between recognition and motivational strength, while also making room for explanations that appeal to strong sensible desires—as opposed to maxims about sensible desire that diminish one's moral commitment. My account of respect argues that we must reconsider the role that sensible desire plays in practical reasoning: insofar as we are moral agents, sensible desire possesses only a limited kind of efficacy. It is ultimately practical reason that moves us. So I hold, with the intellectualist, that to explain our action we must look to the activity of practical reason. But unlike the intellectualist, I do not claim that all action is the expression of a chosen maxim, while anything else is something less than an action. Because our practical activity is inherently directed towards the good, we can miss the mark, make exceptions, and be tripped up by momentary desires without having to concede that we are not really committed to the moral law, or downgrading what we do to mere behaviour.

Focusing on the nature of sensibly dependent reason, I argue that reason's general function of cognizing the particular through the general suggests the fragmented nature of weakness is not caused by a schism between knowledge and motivation, but an incomplete sense of the determining relationship between universal laws and particular ends or circumstances. This, and not a dualistically framed sensible nature that stands in opposition to reason, is the sticking point in our practical lives. It is of course true that we represent the particular ends and circumstances

we are confronted with as having a kind of efficacy that pulls us in a certain direction. If this were not the case, we would not be talking about practical thinking. My point of departure from other interpreters, especially the affectivist, is the claim that it is not the efficacy, the pull, of such representations which presents difficulty so much as the task of properly organizing them in accordance with the conditions of practical cognition. That our sensible needs and desires often direct us away from what morality requires is an important part of the equation, but ultimately it is the difficulty of sensibly dependent synthetic reasoning that makes us fallible beings. As I claim in Chapter 4, we fail, not because countervailing desires are too strong, but because we lack the judgment required to determinate what we ought to do in the face of a constantly changing, incredibly varied world which makes demands on us. At this moment, it is helpful to recall Kant's thought about virtue from the *Metaphysics of Morals*: if virtue does not result "from considered, firm, and continually purified principles, then, like any other mechanism of technically practical reason, it is neither armed for all situations nor adequately secured against the changes that new temptations could bring about" (MS 6:383-4). Given the variability of sense-dependent life, the only way to consistently act well is to cultivate the judgment required to effectively organize the desires that make up the material aspect of our practical reasoning.

There are a number of ways to flesh out cases of weakness or frailty using this general explanation for the possibility of evil. I thus agree with Reath that we should be open to many different sub-types of explanation for weak action. One of only examples of weakness we find in Kant's texts suggests this as well: as I described it in Chapter 4, in the *Lectures on Ethics*, he takes up a case where someone insults another person at a gathering, and comes to regret it after reflecting on the incident at home later on (LE 27:295). This suggests a much more expansive interpretation of St. Paul's quote, which Kant uses in the *Religion*: "What I would, that I do not!"

(R 6:29). Frail action does not just refer to the traditional case of knowing one is doing wrong, and doing it anyway despite the considerable pain of this recognition. Frailty includes any case where the subject acts against her established principles, in a way that she will regret once able to properly reflect on the matter. Under this description, I suggest there are three general types of cases, two of which Reath recognizes, and one which he does not—perhaps because of his intellectualist commitments. Reath describes both i), rationalized weakness, where one consciously deliberates and makes an exception that permits self-interested action; and ii), alienating weakness, the traditional conception of weakness on which one realizes that one is acting badly while acting, and cannot endorse the action. I would also add, iii), impulsive weakness, where one acts without reflection and neither explicitly endorses nor disavows what is done.

To flesh these cases out, it is helpful to return to Kant's remarks on affect from the *Anthropology*, which I discussed in Chapter 4. Recall his characterization of affect as “surprise through sensation, by means of which the mind's composure is suspended. Affect is therefore rash, that is, it quickly grows to a degree of feeling that makes reflection impossible (it is thoughtless)” (APH 7:252). As I argued, affect does not describe the class of feelings capable of overpowering us through sheer force, it picks out those feelings that, owing in part to our natural disposition and in part to our rational ability, we have difficulty reflecting upon. Given this difficulty, our judgment is limited, and we are likely to act from weakness. Now this could happen in various ways. Consider the affect of anxiety, which Kant describes as “fear concerning an object that threatens an undetermined ill,” noting that it can even “fasten onto someone without his knowing a particular object for it: an uneasiness arising from merely subjective causes” (ApH 7:255). Understanding anxiety as an affect is helpful because Kant is clear that it does not simply arise through a direct causal reaction to an object one is in sensible contact with. It is the result of complex subjective

processes involving both reason and sensibility. This helps to forestall the thought that affects are particularly intense sensations that passively overtake the subject, perhaps expressing some unreflective aspect of her baser instincts or animal nature. Focusing on anxiety is also helpful because it is a complex feeling that informs our action in many different ways, which reflect the different types of weakness I want to identify.

For example, someone could abruptly leave a friend's party due to social anxiety, failing to uphold a promise she had made to be there to support the host.⁴⁹ Upon proper reflection, she will regret her action, and be pained by her failure to live up to her commitment. This appears to be a clear case of weak action. Now looking more closely at the situation, we can imagine a number of different ways she might leave. In a case of impulsive weakness, the socially anxious person simply goes without consciously reflecting on her reasons. Perhaps someone else is leaving and she jumps at her chance for a ride home, or she feels uncomfortable enough to just walk out and leave the party. In such moments, her conscious thought process is better captured with the thought "I have to get out of here," than with any reasoning about whether she should go or stay.

In a case of rationalized weakness, the agent reasons that she really *should* leave: perhaps she has been neglecting her partner at home, and would like to get a good night's sleep because she has work-related obligations to attend to the next day. She has been at the party long enough to fulfill her obligation to her friend, and it now makes sense to go home to spend time with her loved-one and then get an early night. She thus leaves in good conscience, though later reflection will show that she really let her friend down in response to a strong sense of anxiety, and not

⁴⁹ One can of course imagine a bout of extreme anxiety that would serve as a perfectly acceptable reason for leaving, something that would qualify as extenuating circumstances. This is not the kind of case I am imagining here.

because of any of the other commitments that were weighing on her. This sort of case is arguably the most dangerous, as it exhibits the rationalization characteristic of more advanced forms of evil and is harder to expose for what it is—though, as a case of weakness, we should conclude such rationalization is carried out in good faith.

Finally, in a case of alienating weakness, the agent is fully aware that she is defaulting on a promise: she feels pained at letting her friend down, but cannot see a better way to deal with her anxiety. She must leave, and though she recognizes that she has failed in some way, she cannot work out how to remain at the party and be there for her friend given her anxious state. So although she disavows her leaving even as she does it, she can recognize no better course of action.

These examples help to fill out the general account developed in Chapter 4, suggesting that weakness in response to affect is determined in different ways, at different levels. Recall Kant's non-mechanical characterization of affect: "generally speaking, it is not the intensity of a certain feeling that constitutes the affected state, but the lack of reflection in comparing this feeling with the sum of all feelings" (ApH 7:254). I take this description to fit all of the explanations given above. One could not reflect at all, reflect poorly in rationalizing, or have some but not enough reflective clarity. In any of these cases, one fails to arrive at a properly organized representation of one's end that is determinate enough to motivate, and weak action is the result.

I take this interpretation of weakness to walk a middle path between the raw empiricism of an unqualified affectivist like McCarty, and the rationalistic caricature offered especially by Allison and to some extent by Reath. On my reading, we can account for the sometimes-disruptive presence of sudden and unexpected sensible desire without falling back on a mechanistic, battle of forces model of motivation. We can also show that reason is always the ultimate motivating factor in human action without having to accept an implausibly strong reading of the Incorporation

Thesis. The weak subject does not disclose her true, self-interested maxims in acting as she does. As I argued in Chapter 4, her activity is better described as an exception that downgrades the strict universality of the law instead of usurping it and installing a maxim of self-love in its place. This fits with Kant's general view: as I pointed out earlier, inclinations are not incorporated into one's practical principles as conditions for acting until the later stages of evil.⁵⁰ Weakness is, instead, better described as the subject trying to do what she ought to in good faith, though she fails because of her unsharpened judgment. Though it's true she exhibits a lack of self-control and winds up acting from self-love, such action does not constitute an unwavering expression of her character.⁵¹ But it is also not on that account, as Reath would say, 'less than an action.' Even when she disavows her action as in what I have called 'alienating weakness,' she acts as she does because she cannot see a better way forward. Returning to our example, the agent knows, in a general sense, that she should remain at the party for her friend's sake, but cannot see how to reach this end. Someone more prepared for the bout of social anxiety might think "I'll go talk to so-and-so, they have a calming presence," or "I should busy myself with making drinks so I don't have to carry on a conversation." Absent such thoughts, however, leaving presents itself as the thing to do—painful though it may be. Though the agent cannot fully defend her action, it is freely chosen, the product of her current reflective circumstances, limited though they may be.

I take this understanding of evil, and weakness in particular, to go some way towards overturning the staunchly intellectualist representation of our actions as the product of

⁵⁰ Cf., for example, his discussion of impurity and depravity at R 6:30. Recall also his discussion of passions from the *Anthropology*, where he declares that only passions, and not affects, presuppose maxims for acting, because the former contains "a *constant* principle with respect to its object" (APH 7:266).

⁵¹ As Kant says in his discussion of affect, "since he quickly regrets the episode afterward, it is only a paroxysm that we call *thoughtlessness*" (APH 7:253).

corresponding principles that have been consciously or unconsciously chosen. On such a view, immoral action results from immoral maxims that must reflect who we are at our core. Failing this, our actions would not be attributable as freely chosen. I do not think Kant's view requires this model of willing to respect the idea—championed by the Incorporation Thesis—that free action is ultimately motivated by reason and not sensibility. The general form of practical reasoning secured through my account of respect, which holds that we must look to the activity of reason to explain the efficacy of our representations, is enough to meet this condition. Such a view facilitates a more nuanced understanding of evil because it affords us the opportunity to develop the sophisticated interdependence between reason and sensibility, making room for sensible disruption without conceding that such disruption implies one's pursuit of the good has been voluntarily abandoned, or disarmed in the face of a stronger incentive.

6.4 The Practical Postulates

Finally, we can examine more closely how my reading of respect and Kant's theory of motivation facilitates a new interpretation of the practical postulates. As I stated in Chapter 5, I take there to be two major conditions of adequacy for understanding how the ideas of freedom, immortality, and God function in Kant's practical philosophy. First, Kant's reader must be wary of accidentally turning the will's formal determining ground into a merely material one. If belief in being rewarded by God in the afterlife becomes part of the subject's grounds for acting, Kantian morality will no longer be autonomous in character. We must therefore avoid interpretations which understand this belief to be what explains the motivational boost that is enabled through the postulates. Second, Kant's reader must avoid denying that non-believers would still possess the cognitive and motivational capacities required to be subject to the law. The failure to believe in

these subjectively necessary objects of practical reason does not thereby preclude the possibility of moral interest. Hence, we must be careful not to build so much into the postulates of moral faith that they become objectively necessary conditions on the possibility of moral action as such. In what follows, I suggest that a number of prominent views fail to meet these conditions. Once again, we can carve up the field according to the intellectualist/affectivist framework. As we will see, the affectivist fails to meet the first condition of adequacy, while the intellectualist is likely to run afoul of the second. Finally, I show how we can transcend these limitations by embracing the unified view of moral consciousness I developed in Chapters 3-5.

6.4.1 Intellectualist and Affectivist Interpretations of the Practical Postulates

McCarty does not offer a developed view of the postulates, but the position Paul Guyer articulates in his book *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness*, serves as a helpful stand-in that walks the affectivist party line. Like McCarty, Guyer separates Kant's account of motivation from his rationalist metaphysics, taking him to hold "a profoundly dualistic conception of human nature."⁵² On Kant's behalf, Guyer identifies our sensible dependence as grounds for concluding that a good account of motivation must cater to the independent nature of sensibility as determined by empirical psychology. Though we are subject to universal laws that hold for all rational beings, Guyer insists that Kant "never conceives of us as creatures who can act in accordance with these laws by means of our reason alone, without also recognizing our sensibility and inducing this sensibility to act in accordance with the demands of reason by means appropriate to sensibility."⁵³

⁵² Paul Guyer, *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 365.

⁵³ Guyer, *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness*, 366.

On the basis of this general view of human nature, Guyer argues that “the entire doctrine of the postulates of practical reason is stated within the limits of human psychology.”⁵⁴ So, on Guyer’s view, it is a conception of human nature that isolates sensibility from reason which explains Kant’s claim that belief in the theoretically transcendent ideas of freedom, immortality, and God are subjectively necessary. Because sensibility remains at least partially outside reason’s influence, we must appeal to beliefs that cater to merely subjective conditions on our sensibly determined motivation. We can thus believe that for which we have no evidence if it soothes our psychology on non-rational grounds and motivates us to act well. So on Guyer’s view, the practical postulates have no rational standing beyond the bare condition of being logically non-contradictory. Disconnected from our rational capacities, belief in these ideas “have no recommendation except that they are effective in motivating creatures like us to act in the way and toward the end that reason demands.”⁵⁵ As I argued in Chapter 5, this general strategy flouts the first condition of adequacy insofar as it appeals to merely material incentives and thereby infringes upon the autonomy of pure practical reason.

Opposing this view are those who shy away from an empirical-psychological reading and think Kant’s doctrine of the highest good and the practical postulates must be grounded in his conception of practical reason. Largely of the same mindset as those who would argue for the intellectualist conception of motivation, these commentators are concerned to distance themselves from any reading which understands the postulates as additional incentives which are designed to placate our sensibility and increase the chances of moral compliance. These interpretations thus

⁵⁴ Guyer, *Freedom, Law, and Happiness*, 367.

⁵⁵ Guyer, *Freedom Law and Happiness*, 367. For another account along these lines, see Lara Denis, “Autonomy and the Highest Good,” *Kantian Review* 10 (2005): 33-59. Denis argues that we can conceive of belief in the postulates as akin to feelings of sympathy and benevolence that help us act morally when we might otherwise be reluctant to do so.

often take pains to show how belief in a deity could be rational independently of any hope for God-given happiness. With this end, Andrews Reath makes a widely-cited argument for a non-theological conception of the highest good, insisting that in ideal conditions humans could achieve the final end prescribed by the moral law without God's intervention. Against those who would interpret the concept in terms of a morally proportioned happiness that appeals to our merely sensible nature, Reath places it squarely in the domain of reason, describing the highest good "as a construct of reason in its characteristic activity of introducing systematic unity into a body of given material—the material here being the ends that can be contained in or could result from moral conduct."⁵⁶ But though he argues for a secularized conception of the highest good, Reath still recognizes the extent to which the postulates are required to make sense of the concept for sensibly dependent reason. He concludes that its real possibility depends upon belief in God as the "moral author of the world, who ordered the laws of history so as to support progress towards this end in time."⁵⁷ So far, this interpretation does not differ much from my own, but Reath goes on to take a hard intellectualist turn, invoking an argument from pragmatism which suggests we need belief in God so that moral action does not appear irrational to us. The worry expressed here is not a general scepticism about the possibility of meeting both the objectively necessary end of morality, and the subjectively necessary end of happiness. Instead, Reath suggests that moral behaviour can itself start to look pointless insofar as others might take advantage of our good intentions, effectively reversing the intended end of moral action: "the problem which this poses for Kant is that, in many situations, it may become (or appear to become) irrational for individuals

⁵⁶ Andrews Reath, "Two Conceptions of the Highest Good in Kant," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26 (1988): 597.

⁵⁷ Reath, "Two Conceptions," 602.

to act from what they recognize as their duty.”⁵⁸ On the secular interpretation of the highest good that Reath endorses, this worry is abated—not through belief in God—but through collective human action and the establishment of social institutions whose aim is to cultivate circumstances that are conducive to moral conduct.⁵⁹

There are two points worth making in response to this view. First, as Kant describes it, the unflinching moral interest we take in the law does not seem compatible with this pragmatist form of doubt Reath articulates. Kant takes the best examples of moral conduct to highlight a display of virtue undertaken in spite of considerable disadvantage to oneself. As he says in the *Groundwork*, even the “most hardened scoundrel” responds to this good conduct—“even combined with great sacrifices of advantage and comfort”—by wishing he might also be so disposed to it (G 4:454). As I argued in Chapter 4, the scoundrel fails to exhibit this virtue, not because such action appears pointless or irrational to him, but because his judgment either fails to live up to his principles, or has been utterly corrupted through misuse. Perhaps he is unable to properly reflect in moments that call for self-sacrifice; or he is unpracticed in vigilantly distinguishing incentives of self-love from those of happiness. Regardless, it is key to the preservation of moral agency that his interest in the law remains, and good action never appears pointless. Insofar as it is formally determined, good willing cannot be invalidated by its material consequences, and the freedom it discloses to the practical subject is always an object of respect.

Second, even if we accept this picture of apparently ‘irrational’ moral action, Reath’s account cannot succeed. While his suggestion that we work towards the harmony of our formal

⁵⁸ Reath, “Two Conceptions,” 618.

⁵⁹ Reath, “Two Conceptions,” 619. Given this conclusion, it appears as though Reath’s earlier claim that we still need belief in God merely pays lip service to Kant’s insistence that it be included as one of the practical postulates.

and material ends through social institutions is no doubt an important aspect of realizing the highest good, such action does not seem well-poised to address practical reason's Antinomy as it is presented in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the *Critique of Judgment*, and as I developed it in Chapter 5. Reath takes his secular conception of the highest good to be preferable to the theological conception, on which the harmony of our two necessary ends is resolved by God, but it's not clear how the activity of sense-dependent human reason can work towards the resolution of a problem that is supposed to be irresolvable for it given its very nature. As I argued in Chapter 5, belief in the postulates is required because we rely on two heterogeneous sets of laws—those of morality and those of happiness—that cannot be synthetically connected, regardless of how well we act or how lucky we are. Even the most virtuous human society could not succeed in establishing a necessary causal connection between laws of reason and laws of nature, and this is the sticking point that ushers in theoretically motivated doubt that must be countered by moral faith. However desirable some commentators might find the possibility, a secular resolution to the Antinomy of practical reason is not possible. Human action cannot be the answer, for the sought-after resolution cannot be stated within the very limits that need to be transcended.

Allen Wood presents a different, potentially more successful intellectualist argument for the postulates in *Kant's Moral Religion*. Wood seizes on one of Kant's remarks from his *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion*, where he claims that the argument for moral faith is an "*absurdum practicum*," such that "if I deny this or that I would have to be a scoundrel" (LR 28:1083). Picking up on the close analogy to a theoretical *absurdum logicum* Kant draws in the lecture, Wood suggests we read Kant as suggesting that we implicitly commit ourselves to certain practical beliefs in aiming at the highest good:

“assume that I deny either the existence of God or of a future life. Now if I deny either of these, then I cannot conceive the highest good to be possible of attainment. If I deny that I can conceive the highest good to be possible of attainment, then I presuppose or imply that I will not pursue the highest good, or commit myself not to pursue it.”⁶⁰

Wood’s intellectualist reading of the postulates thus proceeds on the basis of a tight analogy with theoretical reason. He assumes that the postulates are necessary objects of belief because of their logical connection to the highest good and the structure of sense-dependent rational action.

Though I am of course sympathetic to the idea of an informative analogy between the two uses of reason, I would argue that Wood’s interpretation fails to heed this analogy’s limits. Given that the essential difference between theoretical and practical reason is that the former determines an already existing object, while the latter brings the object it determines into existence, I contend that a practical absurdity differs from a logical one because it concerns the efficacy of representations—their ability to move the subject to act, to produce its object—rather than their logical standing. So, we do not distinguish between theoretical and practical absurdities because the former concerns logical relations pertaining to the domain of facts, while the latter concerns logical relations pertaining to the domain of actions. Practical absurdity is instead bound up with the objectively necessary interests of practical thinking, and the extent to which they can be contradicted. The faithless person who denies the existence of God is possessed of an unflinching interest in the moral law through her consciousness of the fact of reason. This interest makes manifest her personality, her predisposition to the good. But, because of her faithlessness, her conviction in this same law falters and she would also “have to be a scoundrel” (LR 28:1083), manifesting her propensity to evil. This contradiction does not occur at the level of propositions,

⁶⁰ Allen Wood, *Kant’s Moral Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 29.

as in the logical contradiction between “the highest good is possible,” and “the highest good is not possible.” This is Wood’s suggestion, which makes it hard to see why this is a specifically practical contradiction and not just a logical contradiction about practical matters. Instead, the practical absurdity occurs insofar as one is both motivated and not motivated to act in accordance with the moral law. Though Kant is more likely to describe this absurdity in terms of the moral disposition suffering, even this thought echoes the structure of practical contradiction just articulated.

Consider the following passage from the third *Critique*, which says of the faithless Spinoza,

“if he would remain attached to the appeal of his moral inner vocation and not weaken the respect, by which the moral law immediately influences him to obedience, by the nullity of the only idealistic final end that is adequate to its high demand (which cannot occur without damage to the moral disposition), then he must assume the existence of a moral author of the world” (KU 5:452-3).

This passage articulates the dilemma in practical terms that concern the subject’s ability to be motivated by the law. Wood, on the other hand, expresses it in logical terms. Consider his thoughts on the faithless subject who pursues moral ends without believing in the possibility of the highest good: “in this case I will have to admit that I am acting ‘irrationally’ and that according to my own beliefs I *should* (in a logical, but not a moral sense of ‘should’) give up my pursuit of the highest good and my obedience to the moral law, and *become a Bösewicht* [scoundrel].”⁶¹ As I argued above, the subject cannot come to see moral action as pointless or irrational. But, perhaps more worryingly, this interpretation also runs afoul of the first condition of adequacy on interpreting the postulates that I laid out above. By articulating a tight logical connection between the moral law, the highest good, and the practical postulates, Wood suggests there is an objectively necessary connection between recognizing the force of the moral law and believing in the postulates. As I

⁶¹ Wood, *Kant’s Moral Religion*, 30.

argued above, this claim is much too strong. The ideas of freedom, immortality, and God constitute only subjectively necessary objects of belief. One can recognize the force of the moral law and worry about the real possibility of the highest good without logical contradiction. Insofar as we do not have theoretically based proof of the latter's objective reality, nothing irrational is taking place. This possibility is, in fact, the source of the distinctively practical absurdity that I propose is at the heart of Kant's account of practical reason's Antinomy. Because of this natural conflict of reason, its practical use must venture into the intelligible realm on the strength of its objectively necessary law.

6.4.2 The Unified Account of Motivation

The shortcomings associated with the accounts surveyed above lead nicely to the reading of the practical postulates I developed in Chapter 5. As we saw, those with affectivist leanings treat the postulates as representations whose only purpose is to soothe human psychology. They thus interpret Kant's claim that the postulates are *subjectively* necessary beliefs as an argument that their purpose is sub-rational: the postulates motivate by speaking to our sensible desires, not our rationally determined ends. In contrast, intellectualists like Reath and Wood connect the postulates *too* closely with reason's activity. On Wood's view, our moral ends rationally commit us to an additional set of beliefs that we give up on pain of theoretical irrationality; on Reath's, we need these beliefs to keep moral action itself from looking irrational and pointless. As I argued in connection with Wood's view, both the distinctly practical absurdity Kant connects with practical reason's Antinomy, and its resolution, must be expressed in motivational terms. But, lest we swing back towards the affectivist view, the source of this motivation cannot be our desire for happiness.

What is required, then, is an account of the postulates that conceives of their purpose in practical/motivational terms without appealing to merely material incentives.

The view I present in Chapter 5 does exactly this, by drawing on the third major commitment of sense-dependent rationalism articulated at the outset of the present chapter: namely, that the cognitive content of a representation and its ability to motivate us cannot be understood as separable from one another. To the extent that we can show the postulates to add cognitive determinacy to our representation of the highest good, they also serve to motivate us. More specifically, the postulates show how the highest good can be possible by showing how the limits of sense-dependent theoretical reason can be transcended. Through the ideas of freedom, immortality, and God, we determine key conditions on the highest good's real possibility through the unschematized categories of causality, substance, and community. Through freedom, we think the kind of causality capable of acting from the moral law; through immortality, we think the kind of being capable of realizing the completely moral disposition commanded by the highest good; and through community, we think the coordination of ends required for the attainment of both virtue and happiness. By sharpening our representation of the real possibility of the highest good, these concepts serve to protect the moral disposition that would otherwise falter, clashing with a theoretically motivated scepticism based in speculative reason's limitations. The practical postulates therefore motivate without appealing to material incentives of happiness.

My account of the postulates thus secures the unified view of practical reason I have been working towards. I began this project by arguing that the feeling of respect is key to securing the formal unity of sense-dependent reason. Through respect, the form of sensibility, the characteristic efficacy that practical representations have for rational beings—whose actions must always be explained through an appeal to reason and not merely affect—was accounted for. This interpretive

gain enabled a reading of practical reason's natural dialectic which suggests that it is neither the overwhelming power of sensible desire, nor a diabolical reason interested in pursuing non-moral action for its own sake, which grounds our moral failures. It is, instead, the cognitive determinacy of our practical representations that explains how we are motivated to act. We find especially good confirmation of this reading in trying to make sense of the ideas of freedom, immortality, and God in relation to the practical system. For given the fundamental interpretive constraints guiding Kant's reader, she can only do justice to the practical postulates through a unified account of motivation, one which understands the cognitive content of a practical representation to be inseparable from its ability to motivate.

Developing Kant's account of practical reason's antinomy also helps to drive home just how radical Kant's conception of practical reason really is. The practical realm does not merely pick out those principles and cognitions that pertain to action, it marks the kind of rational representation that is productive of itself. Thus, although a suitably specified analogy between reason's two uses is appropriate, its limits dictate that we cannot conceive of practical reason's antinomy in theoretical or logical terms. We must instead honor the idea that sense-dependent practical reason's unique dialectic emerges through its inability to grasp and thereby be motivated by a conception of the complete systematic unity of its ends. I take the sense-dependent rationalism I have articulated here to be capable of doing this, and so too of securing Kant's unifying vision and the radical conception of practical cognition it leads to.

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