



**MANIPAL**  
ACADEMY *of* HIGHER EDUCATION  
*(Institution of Eminence Deemed to be University)*

---

# KANT'S THEORY OF MORAL MOTIVATION

---

A THESIS TO BE SUBMITTED TO  
MANIPAL ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

FOR FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE  
AWARD OF THE DEGREE  
OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
BY  
VIVEK KUMAR RADHAKRISHNAN  
Reg. No.163600101

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF  
**DR. APAAR KUMAR**  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
AHMEDABAD UNIVERSITY

AND

UNDER THE CO-GUIDANCE OF  
**DR. MRINAL KAUL**  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY - BOMBAY

MANIPAL CENTRE FOR HUMANITIES

JULY 2022



## **DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE**

I declare that this thesis, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to Manipal Academy of Higher Education, is my original work, conducted under the supervision of my guide Dr. Apaar Kumar and co-guide Dr. Mrinal Kaul. I also wish to inform that no part of the research has been submitted for a degree or examination at any university. References, help and material obtained from other sources have been duly acknowledged

### **Candidate**

*R. Vivek*

**Vivek Kumar Radhakrishnan**

**Reg. No. 163600101**

**Manipal Centre for Humanities**

**Manipal Academy of Higher Education**

July 2022



## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this thesis “**Kant’s Theory of Moral Motivation**” submitted by Vivek Kumar Radhakrishnan was carried out under my supervision. No part of this thesis has been submitted for a degree or examination at any university. References, help and material obtained from other sources have been duly acknowledged.

### Research Guide

**Dr. Apaar Kumar**  
**Associate Professor,**  
**School of Arts and Sciences,**  
**Ahmedabad University**

July 2022



## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this thesis “**Kant’s Theory of Moral Motivation**” submitted by Vivek Kumar Radhakrishnan was carried out under my supervision. No part of this thesis has been submitted for a degree or examination at any university. References, help and material obtained from other sources have been duly acknowledged.

**Research Co-guide**

**Dr. Mrinal Kaul**

**Assistant Professor,**

**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,**

**Indian Institute of Technology – Bombay**

July 2022



## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY OF RESEARCH WORK AND THESIS BY THE STUDENT AND SUPERVISOR**

I have not committed plagiarism in any of the forms described in the ‘Manipal Academy of Higher Education Plagiarism Policy’. I have documented all methods, data and processes truthfully and I have not manipulated any data. I have mentioned all persons who were significant facilitators of the work. The work has been screened electronically for plagiarism.

*R. Vivek*

**Vivek Kumar Radhakrishnan**

**Reg. No. 163600101**

Manipal

25/07/2022

I, Dr. Apaar Kumar, certify and attest that the work done by my Ph.D. student Mr. Vivek Kumar Radhakrishnan is original and vouch that there is no plagiarism. The work has not been submitted for the award of any other degree/diploma of the same University/Institution where the work was carried out, or to any other University/Institution.

*Apaar Kumar*

**Dr. Apaar Kumar**

**Associate Professor,**

**School of Arts and Sciences,**

**Ahmedabad University**

Ahmedabad

25/07/2022

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, I thank my supervisor, Dr. Apaara Kumar for his constant support throughout the course of this project. Among other things, he taught me how to read a philosophical text in the context of relevant secondary literature. His critical feedback helped me hone my research skills and improve the quality of my thesis. Second, I thank my co-supervisor, Dr. Mrinal Kaul, without whose encouragement and support, the road towards the completion of this project would have been rough. Regular discussions with him challenged me philosophically and motivated me to approach this project with earnestness. I also thank the other two members of my Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC): Dr. Meera Baindur for her intellectual inputs and moral support throughout the course of this research, and Dr. Nikhil Govind for his support in his capacity as the director of Manipal Centre for Humanities (MCH).

I thank all the faculty members and staff of MCH for creating an ambiance conducive for undertaking this research. My heartfelt thanks to all my PhD colleagues for their love, warmth and trust during my time at MCH: Dr. Sonia Ghalian, Ms. Anagha Anil, Ms. Abeer Khatoon, Ms. Urmila G, Mr. Yadu Krishnan, Ms. Revathy Vyas and Mr. Srijan Deshpande. Special mentions to Dr. Tapaswi HM, Dr. Srajana Kaikini, Mr. Raghu Menon and Mr. Sandeep Dubey for additionally allowing me some space to discuss my thesis with them.

I thank Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) for supporting me with TMA Pai Scholarship for the first three years of my PhD. I also thank Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) for awarding me Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) to support my thesis project.

Last but certainly not the least, I am grateful to my friends and family for their unconditional care and support throughout my PhD. My friends, Sanjivy, Anirudh, Sandeep Sen, Aakash, Varun, Raghu, Bharath and Samvartha stuck around, wishing only the best for me during this phase of my life. My parents, Radhakrishnan and Meena, and my brother, Vinod, guarded me from mundane distractions and gave me the space to immerse in this project. My partner, Srajana stood by me through my lows and highs during the last five years. From patiently listening to my ideas to actively reading my chapter drafts, her contribution to the successful completion of this project is immense and invaluable. Finally, my cats, Myshkin and Nastasya, and my dog, Mogri, never forgot to remind me that food and sleep are very important too – I dedicate this project to them.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
List of Abbreviations	v
<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Chapter 1: Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in Kant’s Moral Theory</b>	11
1. Korsgaard’s Dismissal of Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in Kant’s Moral Theory	13
1.1. Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason Lacks Independent Philosophical Validity	14
1.2. Application of Korsgaard’s Arguments to Kant’s Moral Theory	18
1.3. A Scholarly Trend in Dismissing the Problem of Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in Kant’s Moral Theory: Views of Ameriks and Ware	22
1.4. Exceptions to the Trend: Views of Sargentis and Sytsma	26
2. Kant’s Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in the Pre-Critical Period	28
2.1. Practical Nature of the Supreme Principle of Morality and the Question of Moral Motivation	29
2.2. Encountering Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in Kant’s Rationalist Response to the Question about Supreme Principle of Morality	30
2.2.1. Moral Principles of Reason Lack Independent Motivational Force	32
2.2.2. Motivational Inefficacy of Practical Reason in Cases of Moral Failures in Human Agents	35
3. Kant’s Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in the Critical Period	39
3.1. Kant’s Critical Investigation into the Supreme Principle of Morality and Its Source	40
3.2. <i>A Priori</i> Practical Nature of the Supreme Principle of Morality	42
3.3. Kant’s Critical Evaluation of the Responses to the Question about the Supreme Principle of Morality Given by His Predecessors and Contemporaries	46
3.4. Encountering Motivational Skepticism about Pure Practical Reason in Kant’s Critical-Rationalist Response	50

3.4.1. Motivational Skepticism about Pure Practical Reason due to Formality of the Moral Law	52
3.4.2. Moral Law of Pure Reason Cannot Move Human Agents with Sensible Nature	55
3.4.3. We Can Never Know How the Moral Law Moves Us	60
4. Comparing Kant's Version of Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason with Korsgaard's Two Versions of Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason	66
4.1. Kant's Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason is not Korsgaard's Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason – Version I	66
4.2. Kant's Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason is not Korsgaard's Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason – Version II	69
5. Conclusion	76
<b>Chapter 2: A Review of the Secondary Literature on Kant's Account of Moral Motivation</b>	80
1. Interpretative Divides on the Nature of Kant's Account of Moral Motivation	81
1.1. Phenomenological Interpretations of Kant's Account of Moral Motivation	82
1.1.1. Grenberg's Phenomenological Interpretation	82
1.1.2. Ware's Phenomenological Interpretation	85
1.2. Empirical Interpretations of Kant's Account of Moral Motivation	88
1.2.1. Frierson's Empirical Interpretation	88
1.2.2. Singleton's Empirical Interpretation	91
1.3. Transcendental Interpretations of Kant's Account of Moral Motivation	93
1.3.1. Allison's Transcendental Interpretation	94
1.3.2. Reath's Transcendental Interpretation	97
2. A Critical Overview of Debates between the Interpretative Positions	100
2.1. Emergence of Alternatives as Reactions to Allison-Reath's Transcendental Interpretation	101
2.2. Disagreements amongst Scholars with Alternative Interpretative Positions	104



2.2.1. Debate between Frierson and Grenberg	105
2.2.2. Ware's Disagreements with Grenberg's Views	108
2.3. Two Problems with Alternative Interpretations of Kant's Account of Moral Motivation	111
2.3.1. <i>A Priori</i> Status of Moral Feeling: A Problem for Frierson and Grenberg	111
2.3.2. Ware's Misunderstanding of the Problem of Moral Motivation	115
3. Conclusion	119
<b>Chapter 3: Moral Feeling as Kant's Solution to Motivational Skepticism about Pure Practical Reason – A Revised Transcendental Interpretation</b>	121
1. Moral Feeling as Kant's Critical Solution to the Motivational Problem from within Metaphysics of Morals	123
2. Kant's Argument for Establishing Feeling as the <i>A Priori</i> Moral Incentive: A Reconstruction	132
2.1. Unity of Pure Reason Underlying Its Divergent Applications in the Theoretical and Practical Realm	134
2.2. Analogy between Analytic of Pure Speculative Reason and Analytic of Pure Practical Reason	137
2.3. Feeling as the Appropriate Practical Analogue to Space and Time	143
3. Kant's Peculiar Conception of Moral Feeling to Resolve Specific Motivational Skeptical Challenges	151
3.1. Moral Feeling does not Violate the Formal Nature of the Moral Law	153
3.2. Moral Feeling is Capable of Overruling the Tendencies of Our Sensible Nature	159
3.3. Moral Feeling Does Not Enable Epistemic Access into the Process of Moral Motivation	169
4. Proposing a Revision to Allison-Reath's Standard Transcendental Interpretation of Kant's Account of Moral Motivation	180
5. Conclusion	192
<b>Conclusion</b>	194
<b>Bibliography</b>	201

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Throughout the thesis, I have cited Kant’s works using volume number and page number of his *Gesammelte Schriften*, Akademie Ausgabe, edited by Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences (29 vols. Berlin: Georg Reimer (later de Gruyter), 1900-). An exception to this general pattern is his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which I have cited using its A and/or B editions and their respective page numbers. I have used translations from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, edited by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992-2020). Following the standard practice in Kant scholarship, I have used the abbreviations prepared by Kant-Forschungsstelle of the Johannes-Gutenberg Universität, Mainz.

<b>Abbreviation (Volume No.)</b>	<b>Original Title in German</b>	<b>Translated Title in English</b>
AA	<i>Gesammelte Schriften, Akademie-Ausgabe</i>	-
Anth (AA 07)	<i>Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht</i>	<i>Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View</i>
Br (AA 10-13)	<i>Briefe</i>	<i>Correspondence</i>
EEKU (AA 20)	<i>Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilkraft</i>	<i>First Introduction to the Critique of the Power of Judgment</i>
GMS (AA 04)	<i>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten</i>	<i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>
GSE (AA 02)	<i>Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen</i>	<i>Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime</i>
KpV (AA 05)	<i>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft</i>	<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>
KrV (A/B)	<i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</i>	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>
KU (AA 05)	<i>Kritik der Urteilkraft</i>	<i>Critique of the Power of Judgement</i>
Log (AA 09)	<i>Logik</i>	<i>Lectures on Logic</i>
MS (AA 06)	<i>Die Metaphysik der Sitten</i>	<i>The Metaphysics of Morals</i>

NG (AA 02)	<i>Versuch, den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen</i>	<i>Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy</i>
Prol (AA 04)	<i>Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik</i>	<i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i>
Refl (AA 14-19)	<i>Reflexion</i>	<i>Notes and Fragments</i>
RGV (AA 06)	<i>Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft</i>	<i>Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason</i>
TP (AA 08)	<i>Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis</i>	<i>On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, But It Is of No Use in Practice</i>
UD (AA 02)	<i>Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral</i>	<i>Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality</i>
V-Anth/Collins (AA 25)	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1772/1773 Collins</i>	<i>Lectures on Anthropology – “Collins (1772–1773)”</i>
V-Anth/Fried (AA 25)	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1775/1776 Friedländer</i>	<i>Lectures on Anthropology – “Friedländer (1775–1776)”</i>
V-Anth/Mron (AA 25)	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1784/1785 Mrongovius</i>	<i>Lectures on Anthropology – “Mrongovius (1784–1785)”</i>
V-Anth/Parow (AA 25)	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1772/1773 Parow</i>	<i>Lectures on Anthropology – “Parow (1772–1773)”</i>
V-Lo/Blomberg (AA 24)	<i>Logik Blomberg</i>	<i>Lectures on Logic – “The Blomberg Logic”</i>
V-Met/Mron (AA 29)	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1782/1783 Metaphysik Mrongovius</i>	<i>Lectures on Metaphysics</i>
V-Met-K3/Arnoldt (AA 29)	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1794/1795 Metaphysik K3 (Arnoldt, Schlapp)</i>	<i>Lectures on Metaphysics</i>
V-Met-L1/Pölitz (AA 28)	<i>Kant Metaphysik L1 (Pölitz) (Mitte 1770er)</i>	<i>Lectures on Metaphysics</i>

V-Met-L2/Pölitz (AA 28)	<i>Kant Metaphysik L2 (Pölitz, Original) (1790/91?)</i>	<i>Lectures on Metaphysics</i>
V-Mo/Collins (AA 27)	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1784/1785 Moralphilosophie Collins</i>	<i>Lectures on Ethics – “Moral Philosophy: Collins’s lecture notes”</i>
V-Mo/Mron (AA 27)	<i>Moral Mrongovius (Grundl.: 1774/75 bzw. 76/77)</i>	<i>Lectures on Ethics</i>
V-Mo/Mron II (AA 29)	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1784/1785 Moral Mrongovius II</i>	<i>Lectures on Ethics – “Morality according to Prof. Kant: Mrongovius’s second set of lecture notes”</i>
V-MS/Vigil (AA 27)	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1793/1794 Die Metaphysik der Sitten Vigilantius</i>	<i>Lectures on Ethics – “Kant on the metaphysics of morals: Vigilantius’s lecture notes”</i>
V-Phil-Th/Pölitz (AA 28)	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1783/1784 Philosophische Religionslehre nach Pölitz</i>	<i>Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion</i>
V-PP/Herder (AA 27)	<i>Praktische Philosophie Herder (1763/64 bzw. 64/65)</i>	<i>Lectures on Ethics – “Kant’s practical philosophy: Herder's lecture notes”</i>

## INTRODUCTION

In 1798, Christian Garve, a contemporary and a good friend of Immanuel Kant, published a history of ethics volume titled *Overview of the Chief Principles of Morality, from the Age of Aristotle to our own Times*.<sup>1</sup> Dedicating the book to Kant, he spends a section titled “Assessment of the Kantian moral system”<sup>2</sup> to discuss and appraise Kant’s moral philosophy. In it, “after commending Kant’s illumination of the field, the edification of his teachings, and the “sensitivity of his heart””, he raises some specific objections (Kant *Br*, AA, 12: 258n). Two of these objections are: (i) “his [notion of] rational law lacks motivations” and (ii) “the moral law lacks content”. Taken together, Garve’s general criticism is that, from a Kantian standpoint, it is difficult to see how the moral law of pure reason, without any material content, can motivate human agents towards moral actions.<sup>3</sup> This criticism primarily arises as a result of Garve’s view that we naturally prefer an action over others *only* if performing it is expected to give us happiness. Our natural preference for it, he believed, makes happiness the driving force underlying the performance of any action, including moral actions. He puts this view in his earlier *Essays on Various Topics from Morals and Literature* published in 1792: “From happiness in the most general sense of the word arises the motives for every effort and so too for observance of the moral law”.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to this view, Kant makes a clear-cut separation between the rational moral end and the natural end of happiness in his moral theory.<sup>5</sup> Keeping the two ends separate, he strictly dismisses the moral worth of actions that are motivated by incentives based on happiness, even if these actions conformed to rules of the moral law. As he puts it in his second *Critique*, “What is essential to any moral worth of actions

---

<sup>1</sup> This is Bernd Ludwig’s English translation of the book’s original title, *Uebersicht der vornehmsten Principien der Sittenlehre, von dem Zeitalter des Aristoteles an bis auf unsre Zeiten* (Ludwig 2007, 188). The full text has not been translated into English yet.

<sup>2</sup> This is again Ludwig’s translation of the section title that goes: “Übersicht und Darstellung des Ganzen Kantischen Moralsystems” (Ludwig 2007, 188).

<sup>3</sup> As Mary Gregor (1996, 257) puts it in her introduction to Kant’s *Theory and Practice*, “Garve’s criticism was... that Kant’s formal principle [i.e., the moral law of pure reason] could not provide a motive for action”.

<sup>4</sup> This is Garve’s sentence from a passage quoted by Kant (*TP*, AA, 08: 281-282) in his essay, *On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice*. Commonly referred to as *Theory and Practice* among scholars, this essay was published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in 1793. In the first part of this essay, Kant responds to Garve’s general criticisms to his moral theory.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, after introducing the moral law as the practical principle of pure reason, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 25) remarks “The direct opposite of the principle of morality is the principle of *one’s own* happiness made the determining ground of the will”. Again, a few pages later, he notes, “[T]he moral law... must... be something other than the principle of one’s happiness” (05: 37). Corresponding to these two distinct principles, the two types of objects of our actions are moral good and happiness (or well-being) (05: 60).

is that the moral law determine the will immediately. If the determination of the will takes place conformably with the moral law but only by means of a feeling [that is based on the principle of happiness] ...then the action will contain legality indeed but not morality” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 71).<sup>6</sup> From Garve’s viewpoint, such a position of Kant leads to the following question: if our natural preference for happiness is removed from the moral motivational structure, then how will human agents get motivated by the moral law of pure reason to perform moral actions? For him, a coherent account of moral motivation (based on incentives like happiness) is “absolutely necessary to give the moral system support and stability” (Kant *TP*, AA, 08: 281). In his *Overview of the Chief Principles of Morality*, Garve (1798, 377-378) sums his objection in the following sentence: “Kantian morality destroys all incentives that can move human beings to act at all, and therefore also those that move them to act virtuously”.<sup>7</sup>

This general objection of Garve is one of the first in a long list of standard criticisms laid against Kant’s moral theory. In fact, its failure to account for motives and motivational structures present in our complex moral lives is one criticism commonly levelled against Kant’s moral theory. It gains weight in the light of the view that Kant overconcentrated on reasons, duty and value in developing his moral theory. For instance, one can see this criticism in the texts of Arthur Schopenhauer that came out a few decades after Garve put forward his general objection for the first time. In a section titled, “Critique of the Kantian Philosophy” of the first volume of his *The World as Will and Representation* published in 1818, Schopenhauer (1969, 527) lays this critical remark as follows:

This demand by Kant that every virtuous action shall be done from pure, deliberate regard for and according to the abstract maxims of the law, coldly and without inclination, in fact contrary to all inclination, is precisely the same thing as if he were to assert that every

---

<sup>6</sup> Kant also very specifically criticizes the view (of Garve) that morality and its motives can be reduced happiness. In a lecture he says, “It is therefore a false opinion of certain philosophers, to have thought the happiness of a man necessary to his end and motive in the performance of moral actions” (Kant *V-MS/Vigil*, AA, 27: 487). In another lecture, he says, “It seems that morality tells us to do nothing save what brings us happiness. But this principle [of happiness] is utterly false, totally adverse to morality, and cannot be applied at all” (Kant *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 623).

<sup>7</sup> This is Ludwig’s (2007, 188) translation of the German sentence that runs: “die Kantische Moral in dieser Gestalt, sage ich, vernichtete alle Triebfedern, welche den Menschen bewegen Ednnen, überhaupt zu handeln, und also auch die, welsche ihn bewegen, tugendhaft zu handeln”.

genuine work of art must result from a well-thought-out application of aesthetic rules. The one is just as absurd as the other.

Again, in his *The Basis of Morality* published in 1840, Schopenhauer mocks Kant's overemphasis on "cold" and "indifferent" duties as promoting a "slavish morality" and finds his exclusion of feeling-based incentives as "revolting to true moral sentiment" (see Schopenhauer 1903, 49-50). Further, to put it across as a matter of ridicule, he calls Kantian morality as "stupid moral pedantry" and makes a reference to the two oft-cited epigrams of Friedrich Schiller from a poem titled "The Philosophers" (see Schopenhauer 1903, 49):

*Scruples of Conscience*

Gladly I serve my friends, but alas I do it with pleasure.

Hence I am plagued with doubt that I am not a virtuous person.

*Decision*

Sure, your only resource is to try to despise them entirely,

And then with aversion to do what your duty enjoins you.<sup>8</sup>

After more than 200 years since Garve laid his criticism, Kant's theory of moral motivation continues to be a subject matter of discussions and debates in the scholarly literature. Among the concerns raised by scholars are issues surrounding the nature and significance of the problem of moral motivation within Kant's moral theory. Christine Korsgaard (1996, 330-331) reads Kant's problem of moral motivation not as a philosophical problem, but as a problem concerning human psychology. She takes Kant's account of the categorical imperative as sufficiently explaining the possibility of morality in all rational agents without exceptions. By taking Kant's moral philosophy as a fully complete enterprise, she thinks that a problem of moral motivation cannot occur within the philosophical domain of his moral theory. To be more specific, she thinks that the problem of moral motivation is not about how the moral law of pure reason can motivate finite rational agents (such as human agents) towards the performance of moral actions. Instead, she thinks that this problem is about how human agents can fit the tag of rational agents, and thereby, get motivated to act according to the commands of the categorical imperative. Like Korsgaard, Karl Ameriks (2006, 100) and Owen Ware (2014, 732) also consider the problem of moral motivation as having

---

<sup>8</sup> See Paton 1946, 48; Beck 1960, 231n, to know how scholars of Kant have responded to these epigrams.

only psychological relevance in Kant's moral theory. In contrast to this view, scholars like Sharon Sytsma (1993, 118) and Konstantinos Sargentis (2012, 100, 107) look at the problem of moral motivation as emerging from within the philosophical domain of Kant's moral theory. In other words, they take it as occurring as a part of Kant's enterprise of proving the practicality of pure reason. For them, Kant's problem of moral motivation is very much about the motivational capacities of the moral law of pure reason. To be more specific, they claim that the problem is essentially about whether or not the moral law is capable of motivating all rational agents, including human agents, towards moral actions. Kant's solution to the problem, they argue, is a part of his main argument to justify the validity of the moral law. This means that they do not relegate the problem of moral motivation to the psychological domain of Kant's moral theory.

Another subject matter of debate among scholars has been about the nature of Kant's discussion of moral motivation in his texts. Scholars like Andrews Reath (1989, 295-297) and Henry Allison (1990, 97-98, 125) regard Kant's account of moral motivation as a discussion about the necessary determination of the will of all the rational agents by the moral law of pure reason (i.e., autonomous will). They claim that the objective of Kant's discussion of moral motivation is to argue for the validity of the moral law as the supreme principle of morality (Reath 1989, 285; Allison 1990, 104, 237). In contrast to this standard reading, some scholars like Jane Singleton (2007, 48) and Patrick Frierson (2014, 116; 2016a, 357) interpret Kant's account of moral motivation as a scientific explanation of how human agents are motivated by the moral law towards the performance of moral actions. For them, Kant's discussion of moral motivation aims to showcase the causal process of how the moral law effects a moral feeling in our minds to motivate us to act morally, from a third-personal standpoint. Against this trend, some other scholars like Jeanine Grenberg (2013, 64-66) and Owen Ware (2014, 733-734) read the discussion of moral motivation in Kant's texts as expressing what human agents feel in our minds during the process of motivation from the moral law. They argue that the purpose of Kant's account of moral motivation is to describe the way we subjectively experience moral feeling when we are moved towards the performance of moral actions, from a first-personal viewpoint. Thus, there are three types of interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation in the secondary literature. These three interpretative strands are dubbed as transcendental, empirical and phenomenological interpretations respectively (Frierson 2014, 117-118; 2016a, 354).



In the light of the scholarly literature produced on this topic, this thesis aims to study Kant's theory of moral motivation. The main objectives of this project are: (i) to examine how the problem of moral motivation occurs in Kant's texts and (ii) to examine how Kant's account of moral motivation serves as the solution to it. With these two objectives in mind, I argue that Kant's problem of moral motivation is a skeptical problem concerning the motivational efficacy of practical reason occurring as an integral part of his moral philosophy. I also argue that Kant develops his account of moral feeling in a way that it resolves the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. My take on Kant's problem of moral motivation goes against Korsgaard's dismissal of the philosophical significance of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant's moral theory. Further, my interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation becomes a revised version of Allison-Reath's transcendental interpretation as it regards moral feeling as an essential part of both Kant's moral motivational structure and his justification of the validity of the moral law.

I argue for these claims over the course of three chapters. The main focus of the first chapter of this thesis is to understand how the problem of moral motivation occurs in Kant's moral theory. In this chapter, I argue that Kant encounters the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason during his investigation into the supreme principle of morality, both in the pre-Critical and Critical periods of his philosophical development. To situate my reading in the scholarly literature, I first discuss Korsgaard's dismissal of the philosophical validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant's moral theory in section 1 of this chapter. In section 1.1., I show that Korsgaard (1996, 313-314, 318-321) dismisses the philosophical validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason because: (i) in some moral theories, its occurrence depends on another skepticism regarding the practical content of reason and (ii) in some other moral theories, it arises due to a misunderstanding of the requirements of rational considerations. I also show that, by dismissing the validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason, she claims that discussions on moral motivation generally belong to the psychological domain of a moral theory (329). In section 1.2., I discuss the application of Korsgaard's thesis to Kant's moral theory: since the categorical imperative *must* motivate all the rational agents towards moral actions, skeptical concerns about the motivational efficacy of practical reason are invalid. I also show that, for her, Kant's discussion of moral motivation is rather a psychological account of how human agents can maintain their rationality to act according to commands of the categorical imperative (330-331).

In section 1.3., I show that, like Korsgaard (1996), Ameriks (2006, 100) and Ware (2014, 732) hold dismissive views about motivational skepticism about practical reason and relegate moral motivational concerns to the psychological domain of Kant's moral theory. In section 1.4., I show that, as exceptions to this trend, Sytsma (1993, 118) and Sargentis (2012, 100, 107) read Kant's problem of moral motivation as a part of his philosophical project of proving the practicality of pure reason. In section 2, I discuss how Kant encounters the problem of motivational skepticism in his works produced in the pre-Critical period. In section 2.1., I show that, during the pre-Critical period, Kant thought that moral philosophy must give priority to the search for the supreme principle of morality (Kant *UD*, AA, 02: 300; *V-PP/Herder*, AA, 27: 06). Further, as I also show, for him, the supreme principle of morality must be practical in a way that it motivates agents towards the performance of moral actions (Kant *Refl*, AA, 19: 117, 220). In section 2.2., I show that, in considering reason as the correct source of the supreme principle of morality, he encountered motivational skepticism about practical reason. As I show in section 2.2.1, one way in which Kant expresses such skeptical worries in his texts is by doubting if the rational principles can possibly move us towards moral actions if they are formal in nature (Kant *UD*, AA, 02: 299; *Refl*, AA, 18: 185; *Refl*, AA, 19: 120, 185, 230; *V-Anth/Fried*, AA, 25: 486-487; *V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz*, AA, 28: 258-259). In section 2.2.2, I show that Kant also draws attention to our moral failures to argue that moral rules of reason do not have sufficient motivating capacities to move us towards moral actions (Kant *GSE*, AA, 02: 28; *NG*, AA, 02: 183; *Refl*, AA, 19: 77, 108, 133; *V-PP/Herder*, AA, 27: 61-62). Following this, in section 3, I show how Kant encounters the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason in his works in the Critical period. In section 3.1., I show that, during the Critical period too, Kant thought that the correct supreme principle of morality and its source must first be sought in any philosophical investigation into morality (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 392, 405; *MS*, AA, 06: 376). In section 3.2., I show that, for Kant, the supreme principle of morality must be practical in a way that it serves both as an *a priori* principle underlying moral appraisal and as an *a priori* principle underlying moral motivation (Kant *KrV*, AA, A841/B869; *MS*, AA, 06: 215, 375; *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 274-275, 299; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 626). In section 3.3., I show that, Kant was aware that none of his predecessors and contemporaries came up with a supreme principle that is practical *a priori* in their attempts to discover the supreme principle of morality (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 432; *KpV*, AA, 05: 64; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 622). In section 3.4., I show that, in his attempt to prove pure reason as the correct

source of the supreme principle of morality, Kant encountered the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. As I show in section 3.4.1., one way in which Kant expresses such skeptical worries in his texts is by doubting if the formal moral law can possibly motivate all the rational agents towards moral actions (Kant *KrV*, AA, A812-813/B840-841; *V-Mo/Mron*, AA, 27: 1428). In section 3.4.2., I show that Kant also expresses this problem by doubting how the moral law can possibly move our imperfect will that is naturally influenced by tendencies and needs of our sensible nature (Kant *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 293, 361; *V-Mo/Mron*, AA, 27: 1429). As I show in section 3.4.3., Kant also adds that our lack of epistemic access into how the moral law causes moral motivation makes it difficult for us know how pure reason has the capacity to serve as the source of moral motivation in all rational beings (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 459-461; *KpV*, AA, 05: 72; *V-Mo/Mron*, AA, 27: 1428). After showing how the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason occurs in Kant, I return to Korsgaard's (1996) dismissal of its independent validity in section 4. In this final section of the chapter, I argue that, since Korsgaard's arguments do not apply to the way this problem occurs in Kant's texts, motivational skepticism about practical reason is a philosophically significant problem in Kant's moral theory. Summing up, in the first chapter of this thesis, against Korsgaard's dismissal of its independent philosophical validity, I argue that motivational skepticism about practical reason occurs as a significant problem in Kant's moral philosophy.

In order to situate my interpretation of Kant's solution to this problem (which I discuss in the third chapter), I provide a critical overview of the scholarly interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation in the second chapter of this thesis. In section 1 of this chapter, I discuss Frierson's (2014, 2016a) division of interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation in the secondary literature. Accordingly, there are three strands of interpretations: phenomenological, empirical and transcendental (Frierson 2014, 117-118; 2016a, 354). In section 1.1., I discuss the phenomenological interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation proposed by Grenberg (2013) and Ware (2014). As I show in this sub-section, this interpretation considers Kant's account of moral motivation as a first-personal, descriptive account of how human agents subjectively experience moral feeling when we get motivated by the moral law (Grenberg 2013, 64-66; Ware 2014, 733-734). In section 1.2., I discuss the empirical interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation proposed by Singleton (2007) and Frierson (2014, 2016a). As I show in this sub-section, this interpretation considers Kant's account of moral motivation as a third-personal,

explanatory account of how the moral law causally leads us to perform moral actions via an intermediate motive of moral feeling effected in our minds (Singleton 2007, 48; Frierson 2014, 116; 2016a, 357). In section 1.3., I discuss the transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation proposed by Allison (1990) and Reath (1989). As I show in this sub-section, this interpretation considers Kant's account of moral motivation as a discussion of how the moral law motivates the will of all the rational agents towards moral actions (Allison 1990, 97-98, 125; Reath 1989, 295-297). Additionally, I also show that this interpretation considers Kant's discussion of moral motivation as a proof of his claim that the moral law of pure reason conditions the possibility of morality in all rational agents without exceptions (Allison 1990, 104, 237; Reath 1989, 285). In section 2, I explore the debates and disagreements amongst scholars who propose these interpretations. In section 2.1., I show that empirical and phenomenological interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation were proposed as alternatives to the standard transcendental interpretation of Allison-Reath. As I show, this is because the standard transcendental interpretation fails to incorporate moral feeling into both Kant's moral motivational structure and Kant's argument to justify the validity of the moral law (Singleton 2007, 50; Frierson 2014, 120, 124n, 148; Grenberg 2013, 71, 142-144, 148; Ware 2014, 741-742; 2015, 308). In section 2.2., I discuss the ongoing debates and disagreements among scholars who propose the two alternative interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation. In section 2.2.1., I discuss the debate between Frierson (2016a, 2016b) and Grenberg (2016) on the right way to incorporate moral feeling into both Kant's moral motivational structure and Kant's argument to justify the validity of the moral law. In section 2.2.2., I discuss Ware's (2015) disagreements with Grenberg's inclusion of moral feeling into her phenomenological interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation. In section 2.3., I show specific issues that are common to both empirical and phenomenological interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation. In section 2.3.1., I show that the nature of empirical and phenomenological interpretations is such that the *a priori* status that Kant attributes to moral feeling cannot be accommodated into them. In section 2.3.2. I show that a mistaken understanding of Kant's problem of moral motivation is another common problem for scholars who propose alternate interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation. In sum, the main aim of the second chapter is to provide a critical overview of the scholarly interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation in the secondary literature.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I examine how Kant resolves the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason occurring in his moral theory. I argue that Kant's account of moral motivation, that essentially revolves around the notion of moral feeling, serves as an appropriate solution to the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. In section 1 of this chapter, I first situate this problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason within Kant's metaphysics of morals. I also show that, Kant arrives at the incentive of moral feeling as a response to this problem in his critical investigation into the practical employment of pure reason (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 440; *KpV*, AA, 05: 72-81; *MS*, AA, 06: 400; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 625). In section 2, I examine how Kant arrives at a *feeling* as the *a priori* principle underlying the possibility of moral motivation in finite rational agents. First, as I show in section 2.1., for Kant, pure reason is one united faculty with two different applications in theoretical and practical realms (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 391; *KpV*, AA, 05: 03, 15-16, 120-121). Second, in section 2.2., I show that by virtue of the unity of pure reason, the analytic of pure practical reason must share an analogical connection with the analytic of pure speculative reason (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 16, 89-90). Third, in section 2.3., I argue that, by virtue of the analogy amongst *a priori* principles that belong to the analytic of pure reason, the *a priori* principle underlying moral motivation in the aesthetic section of the analytic of pure practical reason must share an analogy with the *a priori* principle underlying sensible intuition in the aesthetic section of the analytic of pure theoretical reason. Further, I show that, feeling is an appropriate practical analogue to *a priori* forms of sensible intuition, space and time, and hence, one of its kinds serves as the *a priori* principle underlying moral motivation in finite rational agents (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 90). In section 3., I discuss how Kant develops his account of feeling-based incentive in a way that it appropriately resolves the individual challenges that make up the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. First, in section 3.1., I show that Kant conceives of this *a priori* feeling as a moral feeling effected by the moral law itself (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 460; *KpV*, AA, 05: 78, 80, 117). As I show, such a conception ensures that the moral law itself serves as the moral incentive, and also restores the formal nature of the moral law. Second, in section 3.2., I show that Kant conceives of this moral feeling as constituted of feelings of humiliation towards our sensible nature and a feeling of respect for the moral law (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 75). As I show, such a conception ensures that moral feeling can successfully resist the naturally forceful needs of our sensibility and thereby can move us towards moral actions. Third, in section 3.3., I show that, Kant thinks about motivation from

moral feeling along similar lines as his notion of causality of freedom (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 72, 75, 78, 80-81). As I show, this enables moral feeling to successfully condition the possibility of moral motivation without providing us epistemic access into causality of the moral law. In section 4, I argue that Allison-Reath's standard transcendental interpretation excludes moral feeling from Kant's moral motivational structure as a result of an inconsistent application of Kant's 'incorporation thesis' to the process of moral motivation. I also show that, by contrast, my revised transcendental interpretation, that includes moral feeling as an essential part of Kant's moral motivational structure, is compatible with a consistent application of 'incorporation thesis' to the process of moral motivation. Summing up, in the third chapter of this thesis, I illustrate that Kant's account of moral motivation that essentially revolves around the incentive of moral feeling, suffices to fully resolve the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. Further, the interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation I put forward is a revised transcendental interpretation because it considers moral feeling as an essential part of both Kant's moral motivational structure and his justification of the validity of the moral law.

I conclude my thesis with a short summary of the main arguments of this project. Before closing, I also briefly discuss a few possible avenues of research that this project leads me to take up in the future.

## CHAPTER 1: MOTIVATIONAL SKEPTICISM ABOUT PRACTICAL REASON IN KANT'S MORAL THEORY

In her essay titled “Skepticism about Practical Reason”<sup>9</sup> Korsgaard (1996) dismisses the philosophical relevance of skeptical concerns about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason in Kant’s moral theory. She argues that Kant’s discussion of how “pure reason can be a motive...– [i.e.,] about how it functions as an incentive in combating other incentives” belongs to the “psychological” domain of his moral theory (Korsgaard 1996, 330). In this chapter, against this view, I argue that the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason is integral to Kant’s moral philosophy. This is evident from doubts about the motivational efficacy of practical reason that Kant expressed throughout his writings on moral philosophy in the pre-Critical and the Critical periods. During the pre-Critical period, such doubts were expressed in the context of Kant’s search for the supreme principle of morality. Although he was confused about whether the moral law of reason or moral feeling is the founding principle of morality until mid-1770s, Kant had concerns about the motivational capacity of practical reason in the light of his consideration of reason as the possible source of the supreme principle of morality. These concerns were supported by (i) the lack of motivational force in the moral principles of reason and (ii) the high likelihood of moral failures in human agents. During the Critical period, Kant’s motivational skepticism about pure practical reason was a part of his project of establishing pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality. Specifically, in the process of proving that the moral law of pure reason is practical *a priori*, Kant had doubts about how it could possibly serve as a foundational principle that moves *all* the rational agents towards moral actions *without exceptions*. These doubts were backed by (i) the formal nature of the moral law, (ii) the natural constitution of human agents, and (iii) the epistemic inaccessibility into the way the moral law of pure reason supplies a moral incentive to us. Since it occurs in his works in both the pre-Critical and the Critical periods as a part of his philosophical inquiry into the supreme principle of morality, the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason has independent philosophical validity, and therefore, cannot be reduced to psychology.

---

<sup>9</sup> This essay (pp. 311-334) from the book titled *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (1996) first appeared as an article with the same title in *The Journal of Philosophy* vol. 83, no. 1, pp. 5-25 in 1986.

In section 1 that follows, I discuss Korsgaard's thesis that motivational skepticism about practical reason does not hold any independent philosophical value in Kant's moral theory. First, I discuss Korsgaard's general arguments to dismiss the independent validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason in moral theories that do not attribute any practical role to reason, and in moral theories that admit reason to have at least minimal practical influence (section 1.1.). Then, I discuss the application of Korsgaard's general take on motivational skepticism about practical reason to Kant's moral theory (section 1.2.). Then, I show that a few other prominent scholars like Ameriks (2006) and Ware (2014) share similar dismissive views about the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant's moral theory (section 1.3.). Finally, towards the end of section 1, I show that there are a few scholars who go against this trend of dismissing the philosophical validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant's moral theory (section 1.4.). In section 2, I discuss how Kant's doubts about the motivational efficacy of practical reason come about in his writings in the pre-Critical period. First, I show that, in his early works, Kant expressed his concerns about the supreme principle of morality and believed that its practical nature entailed the capacity for moral motivation (section 2.1.). Then, I show that, in considering reason as the possible source of the supreme principle of morality, Kant encountered motivational skepticism about practical reason (section 2.2.). His skeptical worries occur in the form of concerns about how moral principles of reason generally lack a motivational force (section 2.2.1.) and concerns about failures of human agents to act morally (section 2.2.2.). In section 3, I show how the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason occurs in his works in the Critical period. First, I show that, in his Critical period too, Kant was concerned about the supreme principle of morality and the source of it (section 3.1.). Then, I show that, for Kant, the supreme principle of morality must be practical in way that it conditions the possibility of both moral appraisal and moral motivation *a priori* (section 3.2.). Then, I show how Kant's claim that pure reason is indeed the source of the supreme principle of morality emerged in the light of his critical assessment of his predecessors and contemporaries (section 3.3.). Then, I show that, in his attempt to prove pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality in his works during the Critical period, Kant encountered motivational skepticism about pure practical reason (section 3.4.). His skeptical worries were expressed in the form of concerns about the formal nature of the moral law (section 3.4.1.), concerns about our imperfect will (section 3.4.2.) and concerns about our impossibility to acquire knowledge about the process of moral motivation (section 3.4.3.).



Finally, in section 4, in order to reinstate the philosophical validity of the problem, I show that Kant's version of motivational skepticism about practical reason is different from Korsgaard's (1996) two versions of the problem as discussed in section 1. By showing this, I restore the philosophical significance of Kant's response to the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason.

### **1. Korsgaard's Dismissal of Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in Kant's Moral Theory**

At the end of her essay titled "Skepticism about Practical Reason", Korsgaard (1996, 332) concludes that "[t]he extent to which people are actually moved by rational considerations, either in their conduct or in their credence, is beyond the purview of philosophy". She argues that, in any moral theory, the onus of providing analyses "about human motivational capacities" belongs to the domain of "psychology" (330). She backs this conclusion by arguing that the question of how practical reason moves agents to perform moral actions mostly arises as a mistake and, therefore, does not hold an independent philosophical validity. By dismissing motivational skepticism about practical reason as philosophically invalid, she opens up a space for questions and discussions about the process of moral motivation psychologically. In section VII of the essay, Korsgaard applies her thesis to Kant's moral theory to defend it against criticisms emerging due to skeptical concerns about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason (330-331). Accordingly, in Kant's moral theory, the question of *how* pure reason motivates human agents to perform moral actions is erroneous and is philosophically irrelevant. Instead, in her view, the question of whether and how human agents get motivated by feeling of respect for the moral law belongs to the domain of psychology.

In this section, I show how Korsgaard (1996) dismisses the philosophical validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant's moral theory. In section 1.1. that follows, I explore Korsgaard's general arguments for discarding independent skeptical questions about the motivational efficacy of practical reason in a moral theory. As I show in this section, she argues that motivational skepticism about practical reason either depends on a more fundamental form of content skepticism or emerges due to a misunderstanding about what is required of rational considerations in a moral theory. In section 1.2., I show how, from Korsgaard's viewpoint, motivational skepticism about practical reason occurs in Kant's moral theory as a result of a

misunderstanding about the motivational requirement of pure practical reason in making moral actions possible. In section 1.3., I show that a few other prominent scholars like Ameriks (2006) and Ware (2014) hold similar views (as Korsgaard does) in dismissing the philosophical validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant's moral theory. In section 1.4., I show that, against this trend, scholars like Sargentis (2012) and Sytsma (1993) think that Kant's main problem of moral motivation is his philosophical concern regarding how pure reason can serve as the source of moral motivation in all rational agents.

### **1.1. Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason Lacks Independent Philosophical Validity**

Korsgaard (1996, 311) defines motivational skepticism about practical reason as “skepticism about the scope of reason as a motive”. It refers to doubting how reason could possibly move agents to perform moral actions. In her essay, Korsgaard aims to understand if motivational skepticism about practical reason could pose an independent threat to a moral theory (311-312). To do this, she explores how this problem generally arises (i) in moral theories that do not allow attribute any positive role to practical reason and (ii) in moral theories that allow at least a minimal instrumental practical role to reason. Throughout this chapter, I refer to the former as the first version of motivational skepticism (or motivational skepticism about practical reason– version I) and the latter as the second version of motivational skepticism about practical reason (or motivational skepticism about practical reason – version II). For Korsgaard, the essential characteristic of the first version of motivational skepticism is that it is usually presented as a point of defense for a general skepticism about practical reason (312-313). That is, some moral theories deny the possibility of the practical employment of reason by resorting to the view that reason does not have the capacity to motivate agents to perform actions. These theories presuppose that reason always functions to establish abstract relations between ideas of logic and mathematics and casual relations between objects of experience.<sup>10</sup> Since such knowledge cannot move us to do anything, doubts about how reason could possibly move agents to perform moral actions emerge. This is how motivational skepticism about practical reason – version I occurs in a moral theory. The second version of motivational skepticism occurs in a moral theory due to the possibility of cases of “true irrationality” (318-319). Korsgaard defines true irrationality as “a failure to respond

---

<sup>10</sup> Korsgaard (1996, 312-313) cites Hume's moral theory to show how the first version of motivational skepticism occurs in it.

appropriately to an available [rule/principle of practical] reason” (318). In a genuine case of irrationality, the faculty of reason prescribes an action (via practical rules/principles) to attain a desirable end and, yet, the agent fails to perform it. As Korsgaard puts it, in the case of true irrationality, despite “knowing the truth about the relevant causal relations..., we might nevertheless choose means insufficient to our end or fail to choose obviously sufficient and readily available means to the end” (318). She claims that in a moral theory that allows for a minimal, means/ends type of practical reasoning, “[i]t is perfectly possible to imagine a sort of being who could...engage in reasoning that would point out the means to her ends, but who was not motivated by it” (319). Moral theories with “more ambitious forms of practical reasoning” too will admit the possibility of this kind of irrationality (321). Such failures to appropriately respond to the prescribed rule/principle of practical reason (i.e., cases of true irrationality) raises doubts about the motivational efficacy of practical reason. This is how motivational skepticism about practical reason – version II occurs in a moral theory.

Korsgaard (1996) elucidates the two versions of motivational skepticism about practical reason to argue that they lack validity as independent forms of skepticism concerning practical reason. First, she argues that the first version of motivational skepticism about practical reason is derivable from and dependent on a fundamental form of skepticism concerning the content of practical reason (Korsgaard 1996, 313-314). Korsgaard defines content skepticism about practical reason as “skepticism about what reason has to *say* about choice and action” (314). It refers to expressing “doubt(s) about the bearing of rational considerations on the activities of deliberation and choice” (311). If reason is a faculty capable of generating ideas, both abstract and empirical ones, then content skepticism questions if these rational ideas could contain in them subject matter pertaining to practical affairs. Korsgaard argues that, in a moral theory, doubts about the provision of any practical content by reason are always presupposed in order to put forth skepticism about the role of reason as a motive (313-314). She writes, “the question what sorts of operation, procedure, or judgement of reason exist is [always] presupposed in” the question of how reason could possibly serve as the motive of actions (313).<sup>11</sup> That is, since it is *impossible to find practical content* among the possible operations of reason, doubts about the role of reason as a motive of actions emerges.

---

<sup>11</sup> Once again, Korsgaard (1996, 313) refers to Hume’s moral theory to present her argument for the dismissal of the first version of motivational skepticism.

This means that these doubts about the motivational efficacy of reason depend on doubts about whether reason could possibly give content having practical relevance. Thus, the first version of motivational skepticism is always dependent on content skepticism and, therefore, it does not have an independent force.

Second, Korsgaard (1996, 317) argues that the second version of motivational skepticism about practical reason arises as a result of a misunderstanding about what she calls as the “internalism requirement”.<sup>12</sup> She first defines internalism requirement as a “requirement on practical reasons, that they be capable of motivating us” (317). If there is a reason for why an action occurs, then that reason must be the motive behind that action for it to occur. Unless a rational consideration “is able to motivate a rational person [towards actions], there is doubt about whether that consideration has the force of a practical reason” (317). Putting it alternatively, if a moral theory allows for the practical employment of reason, even if only minimally, then it must also serve as the source of motivation towards performing moral actions.<sup>13</sup> Korsgaard claims that this internalism requirement is always presupposed in the occurrences of the second version of motivational skepticism about practical reason within a moral theory (317-318). In other words, only if there is a requirement for practical reason to serve as a motive, doubts about the motivational efficacy of practical reason arises when the agent fails to act according to it. Korsgaard’s purpose in pointing this out is to show how internalism requirement is misunderstood when it is presupposed in skeptical arguments concerning the motivational efficacy of practical reason based on cases of true irrationality. She writes, “internalism requirement... precisely malfunctions in skeptical arguments” that are based on the cases of true irrationality (318). She

---

<sup>12</sup> Korsgaard draws this term from the essential point that distinguishes motivational internalism from motivational externalism. Unlike the motivational externalists (Brink 1989; Foot 1972; Frankena 1976) who explain motivation using forces external to moral judgements, motivational internalists (Nagel 1978; Smith 1994) claim that motivation to perform moral actions are internally built into moral judgements (see Brink 1989, 38-39; Nagel 1978, 07; Sargentis 2012, 94-95).

<sup>13</sup> For a better understanding, Korsgaard (1996, 317) explains the internalism requirement from two perspectives:

i. Explainer’s perspective: She draws this perspective from Williams (1981). The idea is: If an agent performs an action for a reason R1, then R1 should also be the motive attributed to her in explaining her action. That is, there cannot be an external reason R2 that can rightly explain the motive behind the action, if that action was performed by the agent for the reason R1.

ii. Agent’s perspective: She draws this perspective from Nagel (1978). The idea is: If an agent has a reason R1 to perform an action, then R1 should also be the motive behind performing that action. That is, there cannot be an external reason R2 to move the agent to perform the action, if the agent performs the action for reason R1.

clarifies that internalism requirement actually requires that the “rational considerations succeed in motivating us [only] *insofar as we are rational* [emphasis added]” (321). That is, “reason motivates someone who is capable of being motivated by the perception of a rational connection” and “[r]ationality...is not a [subjective] condition we are always in” (324). Hence, there is no reason to take true cases of irrationality to mean the failure of practical reason to move agents to actions. Instead, as Korsgaard puts it, “there seem to be plenty of things that could interfere with the motivational influence of a given rational consideration” (320). Subjective conditions such as “[r]age, passion, depression, distraction, grief, physical or mental illness” could cause agents to deviate from acting in accordance with principles or rules of reason (320). In other words, the failure to be motivated by rational considerations should be taken as a failure of agent’s subjective conditions to corroborate with her practical reasoning. Hence, when an agent fails to be moved by a principle or a rule of practical reason, it would be wrong to say that it was a failure of practical reason in motivating her to act accordingly. Thus, the second version of motivational skepticism about practical reason arises only because there is a misunderstanding about what is required of practical reason for moral motivation to occur.

Having dismissed the independent philosophical validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason, Korsgaard (1996) claims that the question of how we get motivated to perform moral actions belongs to the psychological domain of a moral theory. As mentioned above, for Korsgaard, reason will serve as the motive “insofar as we are rational”, and moral failures are actually our failures to align our subjective dimension with the moral content of reason. The clause “insofar as we are rational” of Korsgaard’s (1996, 321) internalism requirement refers to the appropriate subjective condition that the agents are required to be in (or to have) for their faculty of practical reason to actually move them to actions. Although all rational considerations are required to serve as the source of motivation, “it is a subjective matter which [rational] considerations can [actually] motivate a given individual” (325). Concerns about how to align the “subjective matter” appropriately with practical reason so that individual agents are motivated by practical reason belong to the domain of psychology. Korsgaard writes, “[t]he force of internalism requirement is psychological: what it does is...to make a psychological demand on [moral theories]” (329). That is, in a moral theory which allows for a practical role of reason, rational considerations must be taken to serve as the motive of moral actions. However, since the subjective

dimension of human agents is not always in alignment with rationality, the demand to explain how these rational considerations move us to perform moral actions is a “psychological” one.

## **1.2. Application of Korsgaard’s Arguments to Kant’s Moral Theory**

In the introduction to her paper, Korsgaard (1996) states that her purpose behind dismissing motivational skepticism about practical reason as a standalone philosophical problem is to argue against thinkers who criticize moral theories founded on practical reason using this very problem. She writes: “[s]ome people think that motivational considerations alone provide grounds for skepticism about the project of founding ethics on practical reason. I will argue, against this view...” (Korsgaard 1996, 311-312). Her reference here is to Kant’s moral theory as the latter is founded solely on practical reason. She begins her paper with a note that, although Kant’s moral theory easily avoids forms of skepticism that other moral theories are generally susceptible to, it is often challenged by motivational skepticism about practical reason (311). Clearly, Korsgaard’s intention in laying her detailed views on motivational skepticism about practical reason is to defend Kant’s moral theory against them. Further, in section VII of the paper, she discusses her arguments for dismissing the validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason in the light of Kant’s moral theory in some detail.

As discussed in section 1.1. above, Korsgaard’s (1996) first version of motivational skepticism about practical reason occurs to justify the rejection of the practical employment of reason (see p.14). Since Kant’s moral theory is founded on practical reason, this version cannot possibly occur in it. So, from Korsgaard’s view, the only possible way for skeptical concerns about the motivational efficacy of practical reason to occur in Kant’s moral theory is via the possibility of true cases of irrationality (i.e., as motivational skepticism – version II). In Kant’s moral theory, one of the ways in which Korsgaard’s conception of true irrationality manifests is through the notion of frailty (or weakness of the will).<sup>14</sup> In his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant (*RGV*, AA, 06: 29-30) defines frailty as “the general weakness of the human heart” in complying with the moral law that reason presents to agents in the practical realm. He writes, “frailty (*fragilitas*) of human nature is expressed even in the complaint of an Apostle: “What I

---

<sup>14</sup> Other notions that capture the essence of Korsgaard’s idea of true irrationality include impurity, depravity (two other cases of evil discussed at Kant *RGV*, AA, 06: 29-30), affects, passions (Kant *Anth*, AA, 07: 251; *V-Anth/Fried*, AA, 25: 589) and even self-deception (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 407).

would, that I do not!””. To explain it better with an example, one of the moral commands that pure practical reason gives all the rational agents is the command to not lie even in desperate circumstances (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 389). Despite recognizing its moral worth and, sometimes, even adopting the moral maxim of not lying, human agents are not likely to consistently comply with this command. Frailty depicts true irrationality because: (i) on the one hand, reason commands agents to perform actions that, not only conforms with the moral law it provides, but are also done for the sake of it (04: 390) and (ii) on the other hand, human agents are likely fail to act in accordance with the moral law of reason. Our failure to consistently act in accordance with the moral law of reason, as depicted by cases of frailty, raises the question about whether reason has the ability to move agents to perform moral actions. Thus, Korsgaard’s (1996) second version of motivational skepticism emerges due to space for cases of true irrationality in Kant’s moral theory (as the case of frailty illustrates).

As discussed earlier, for Korsgaard (1996), the second version of motivational skepticism arises erroneously (see pp. 16-17). The mistake often occurs due to misattributing the cause of cases of true irrationality to practical reason. On the one hand, practical reason *must* serve as the source of the motive of moral action (i.e., internalism requirement) and, on the other hand, cases of true irrationality occur due to failures of the subjective dimension of the agents to align with practical reason. These arguments apply to the second version of motivational skepticism emerging from within Kant’s moral theory as well. Firstly, in Kant’s moral theory that is solely founded on pure practical reason, there is a requirement for the moral law of reason (that categorically commands rational agents to will and act on universalisable moral maxims) to serve as the source of motive for moral actions. For instance, unless the maxim, “one ought not to lie even in desperate circumstances” is taken as the motive behind the agent’s action of not telling lies, it cannot be used (i) by the agent as the reason behind his action of not lying and (ii) by others as the reason to explain his action of not lying. Korsgaard (1996, 330) notes that Kant expresses this internalism requirement when he identifies the categorical imperative as that which *necessitates* the will unconditionally to accomplish its morally worthy commands, in the second section of his *Groundwork*.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, she argues, Kant’s deduction of the categorical imperative from the

---

<sup>15</sup> Korsgaard cites the following quote of Kant to justify her point: “Now the question arises: how are all these imperatives possible? This question does not call for knowledge of how to conceive the execution of the action that

idea of freedom by “appealing to the pure spontaneity of reason” in the third section of *Groundwork* strengthens the internalism requirement and establishes that the moral law of reason indeed motivates the free will of rational agents to perform moral actions (330).<sup>16</sup> Thus, maxims of morality *must* move rational agents to perform moral actions because (i) they are derived from the categorical imperative that binds the will unconditionally and (ii) the categorical imperative is our “own necessary willing” as rational agents in the intelligible world (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 455). This internalism requirement of Kant makes these moral maxims as the rationale behind and the explanation for moral actions. Yet, the fact that the moral law of reason must inevitably serve as the motive does not guarantee the absence of subjective hindrances to this rational motivation. As Korsgaard (1996, 331) writes, “[I]f we are rational, we will act as the categorical imperative directs. But we are not necessarily rational”. In fact, cases of true irrationality occur when the motivation to act in accordance with the moral law is interfered by agent’s subjective factors and tendencies. Failures to act in accordance with the moral law despite recognizing its value and, sometimes, even adopting moral maxims derived from it (i.e., cases of frailty) are due to the subjective condition called the weakness of will that all human agents share. Furthermore, for Kant (*RGV*, AA, 06: 24), our frail will is in turn due to our natural propensity to evil. That is, one of the ways in which our natural propensity to moral evil manifests on an individual level is via our failures to act according to the moral law despite knowing its unconditional worth and authority. If so, it would be a mistake to question the motivational capacity of the moral law of reason when individual agents fail to act according to it. Hence, cases of true irrationality (as in the expressions of frail will) do not raise doubts about the motivational efficacy of the moral law of reason. In short, motivational skepticism about practical reason – version II is not valid as a form of skepticism about practical reason in Kant’s moral theory.

---

the imperative commands, but merely of *the necessitation of the will that the imperative expresses in its task* [emphasis added].” (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 417)

<sup>16</sup> The reference is to Kant’s quote that goes: “As a rational being, hence as one that belongs to the intelligible world, a human being can never think of the causality of his will otherwise than under the idea of freedom... Now with the idea of freedom the concept of *autonomy* is inseparably bound up, and with it the universal principle of morality, which in the idea lies at the foundation of all actions of *rational* beings...” (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 452-453)

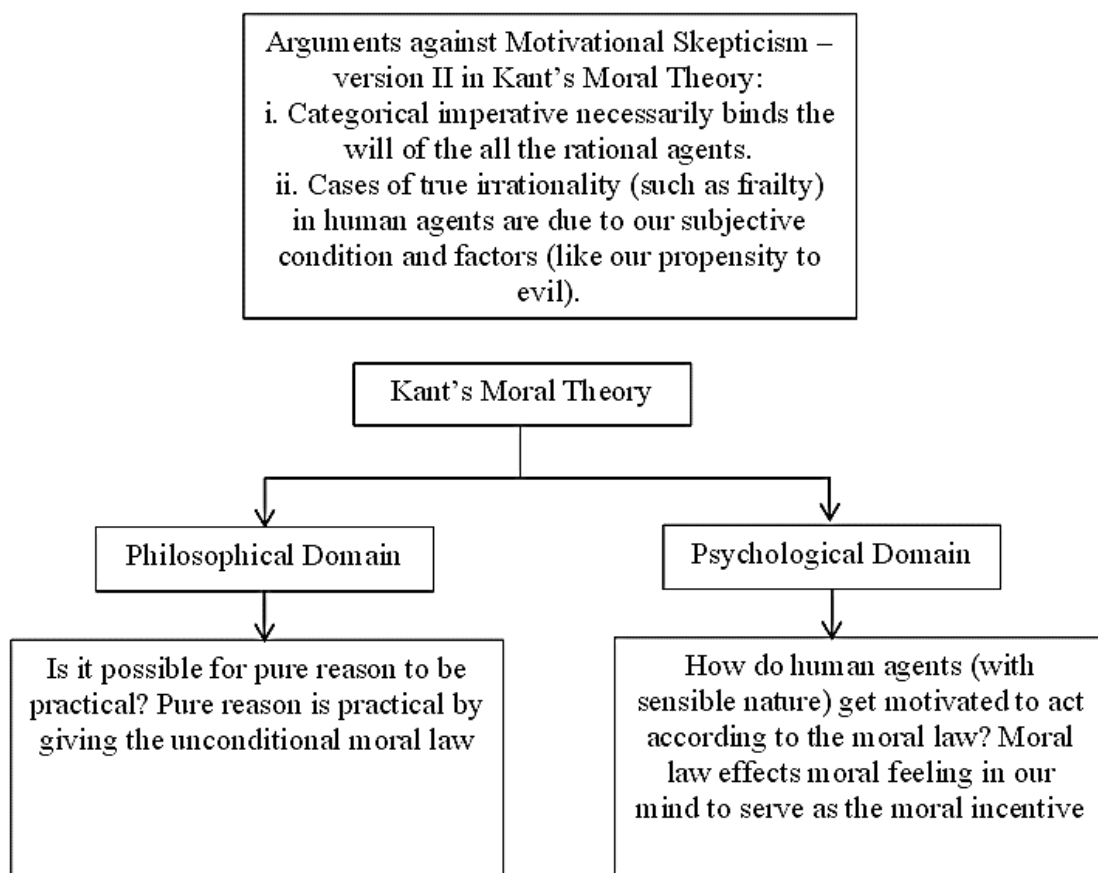


Having dismissed the philosophical validity of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason, Korsgaard (1996) claims that concerns regarding how human agents are motivated by the moral law of pure reason belong to the psychological domain of Kant's moral theory. She writes,

[Kant] argues that we know that we are capable of being motivated by the categorical imperative and therefore that we know (in a practical sense) that we have an autonomous will...It is important, however, that although in the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant does not try to argue *that* pure reason can be a motive, he has detailed things to say about *how* it can be a motive – about how it functions as an incentive in combating other incentives. Something is still owed to the internalism requirement: namely, to show what psychological conclusions the moral theory implies. (Korsgaard 1996, 330)

That is, Kant's establishment of the practical employment of pure reason (via his notion of categorical imperative) in his *Groundwork* and his *Critique of Practical Reason* is sufficient to show that pure reason can serve as the motive underlying the performance of moral actions. This is the internalism requirement: categorical imperative must serve as the source of motivation to perform actions in so far as we are rational. Since we are not always rational (as we also possess a sensible nature), Kant also engages in a psychological discussion of how the moral law of pure reason causes a subjective effect in our minds to cause moral motivation. Hence, on the one hand, Kant's philosophical account about the practicality of pure reason is sufficient to dismiss the validity of doubts about whether pure reason can serve as the motive of moral actions; On the other hand, the question of how human agents, with our sensible dimension, can align our actions with commands of the categorical imperative is dealt within Kant's psychological account on the incentives of pure practical reason (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Korsgaard’s Demarcation of Philosophical and Psychological Domains in Kant’s Moral Theory**



### 1.3. A Scholarly Trend in Dismissing the Problem of Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in Kant’s Moral Theory: Views of Ameriks and Ware

Like Korsgaard (1996), prominent scholars like Ameriks (2006) and Ware (2014) dismiss the philosophical validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant’s moral theory. In his essay titled “Kant, Hume and the Problem of Moral Motivation”,<sup>17</sup> Ameriks (2006, 89-107) attempts to understand Kant’s theory of moral motivation in the light of the contemporary debate between motivational internalists and motivational externalists.<sup>18</sup> To be specific, his aim is to show

<sup>17</sup> This essay, that appears in Ameriks’ book titled *Kant and the Historical Turn: Philosophy as Critical Interpretation* (2006), is a reprint of the essay titled “Kant und das Problem der moralischen Motivation” from the book, *Kants Ethik* (2004) and the essay titled “Kant and Motivational Externalism” from the book, *Moralische Motivation: Kant und die Alternativen* (2005).

<sup>18</sup> Scholars of Kant have attempted to locate Kant’s theory of moral motivation in the midst of this contemporary meta-ethical debate between motivational internalism and motivational externalism. Some consider Kant to be a motivational internalist because they argue that the maxims of morality determine the will of human agents immediately and do not need an incentive other than the moral law itself (Allison 1990, 238; Guyer 2000, 136). Some

that the problem of moral motivation behind the internalism/externalism debate is too simplistic to grasp Kant's complex and sophisticated theory of moral action (92). He writes, "The problem of moral motivation is...oversimplified in Anglophone philosophy, and it is approached in isolation from the full structure of Kant's system... [T]he Kantian response to this challenge is to point out that the philosophy of action in general requires a much more complex approach" (89, 92). Ameriks begins the essay by arguing that two of the primary objectives of a moral theory must be to provide answers to the questions regarding the content of morality and the process of moral motivation. That is, any moral theory must explain what ought to be done and how agents in the practical realm are motivated to do what ought to be done (89). He then claims that Kant's moral theory answers these two questions: first, the moral law of reason commands agents to do what ought to be done and second, the fact that it is rooted in our autonomous will explains how rational agents are motivated to do it. He writes, "Kant's theory of morality as autonomy promises an answer to all these questions at once: (1) the lawful content of autonomy tells us what, most basically, is to be done, and (2) its being rooted in our own rational 'self', in autonomy, is supposed to make it readily understandable how we can be willing to do this" (90). By establishing this at the beginning of his essay, he takes for granted that pure practical reason has the capacity to motivate all the rational agents by virtue of the unconditional moral law it provides them. Since the practical content of pure reason is a categorical imperative that unconditionally binds the will of all rational agents towards moral actions, skeptical worries about the motivational efficacy of pure reason are automatically resolved. He writes, "An appropriate Kantian response to this problem [of moral motivation] is to point out that the process that ends with deciding that one should act for duty is something that could *of itself—and 'right then'*—generate a motive [emphasis added]" for agents to act morally (100). He adds, "[B]y the time that the policy of duty is followed, there would be something within one's motivation set after all that this policy is 'in line with'". That is, as soon as the moral maxims are adopted, our will is automatically in correspondence with what morality requires. This view of Ameriks (2006) is no different from Korsgaard's (1996) internalism requirement applied to Kant's moral theory.<sup>19</sup> That is, as we saw

---

others interpret Kant's theory of moral motivation as an externalist account by arguing for a motivational gap between moral maxims and actions that can only be resolved by an additional incentive (Ameriks 2006, 89-107; Frankena 1976; Sargentis 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Despite taking a stance similar to that of Korsgaard's (1996), Ameriks (2006) avoids the "internalist" tag to his view because he reserves the internalism/externalism problem, and in particular, his "non-internalist" stance solely to the psychology of moral motivation in human agents (Ameriks 2006, 96, 101). That is, unlike Korsgaard, Ameriks does

above, Korsgaard too argues that the unconditionally binding nature of the moral law is sufficient to explain whether pure reason motivates finite rational agents towards moral actions in the practical realm. For her, this is evidence of the requirement of the practical reasons in a moral theory to necessarily serve as the motive. Thus, in the same way Korsgaard does, Ameriks (2006) dismisses the possibility of motivational skepticism about practical reason occurring in Kant's moral theory on the grounds that, for Kant, pure reason is practical via the unconditionally binding moral content it gives. Doing so, he shifts the focus to the psychological question about how our will can possibly align with categorical commands of morality that reason prescribes. For him, the problem of moral motivation in Kant's moral theory is about how "sensible agents like us can and should be expected to move to act...on the basis of 'pure practical reason'" (Ameriks 2006, 91). In other words, for him, the question is how human agents can align their subjective dimension to get motivated by the moral law. Ameriks writes, "a special motivation problem for Kantians [that] might seem to arise after all [is]: how can agents be expected to act in a non-prudential and moral way that might not even correspond with anything in their 'prior [subjective] motivation set'?" (100). One may recall that this is the very question that, Korsgaard (1996) thinks, must arise when true cases of irrationality are presented. For her, genuine cases of irrationality are due to subjective factors and, hence, the psychological domain of a moral theory must discuss how human agents, with their subjective dimension, get motivated by rational considerations about morality. Similarly, Ameriks (2006) thinks that Kant's problem of moral motivation is about how the moral law generates a motivational resource in our minds to make our subjectivity be in line with its rational commands.

In his article titled "Kant on Moral Sensibility and Moral Motivation", Ware (2014) too takes a similar position regarding the nature of the problem of moral motivation in Kant's moral theory. In this article, he sets out to study Kant's theory of moral motivation in human agents in the light of the contemporary debate between the intellectualists and affectivists on the issue.<sup>20</sup> Before

---

not see the internalism/externalism dilemma as applying to the question of how practical reason motivates agents to perform moral actions. Instead, he sees it as applying to the question of how human agents are motivated by practical reason to perform moral actions. The former is a philosophical question about the practical content of reason and its unconditionally binding nature, while the latter is a psychological question about how our will can possibly align with categorical commands of morality that reason prescribes.

<sup>20</sup> One of the well-known debates among scholars who work on Kant's theory of moral motivation is concerning the role of moral feeling of respect in the process of moral motivation in human agents. This debate arises in the light of two contradictory positions that Kant appears to hold. On the one hand, he claims that actions have moral worth only

eventually siding with affectivism, he tries to understand the problem of moral motivation as it occurs in Kant's writings in the first two sections of the article. He argues that the skeptical concern regarding moral motivation occurs due to two discordant positions that Kant simultaneously holds: on the one hand, moral actions do not arise out of pathological feelings (like pleasure or pain) and, on the other hand, the moral law effects a feeling of respect akin to the pathological feelings of pain or pleasure. He writes: "[t]he general concern here is...whether [pure reason] can have an effect appropriate to motivate action from duty. And this is where we face a skeptical threat, since it looks as though the feelings our recognition of the moral law elicits from us (whether painful or pleasurable) are all of a pathological nature" (Ware 2014, 732). He calls this problem, "motivational effect skepticism" (728, 732). This problem, as Ware formulates it, rightly fits within the psychological domain of Kant's moral theory as the central focus of it concerns the sort of effect that pure practical reason produces in the minds of human agents. He identifies the motivational gap between moral judgement and action (as it occurs in Kant's moral theory as the problem of philosopher's stone) as the source of motivational effect skepticism (730). In addition to formulating the problem of moral motivation psychologically as Korsgaard (1996) does, Ware (2014) also dismisses the philosophical problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason. To do this, he first distinguishes between motivational effect skepticism and motivational skepticism about practical reason to make it clear that the problem about how human agents get motivated by the effect of the moral law is not the same as the problem about how pure reason produces a motivational effect in our minds (Ware 2014, 731). He then goes a step further to claim that the latter "poses no genuine threat" in Kant's moral theory. He backs this claim by arguing that, for Kant, the skeptical concern about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason can never be answered because "this is beyond the reach of our understanding" (732). That is, from

---

if they are exclusively done from duty (according to the moral law) without involvement of any feelings in the process (see Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 71, for instance). On the other hand, he simultaneously maintains that a moral duty is an action that arises out a feeling of respect for the moral law (see Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 400, for instance). In order to reconcile these two positions, some scholars reduce Kant's notion of respect to merely aid in the intellectual recognition of the moral law and, thereby discount its affective aspect as playing no role in the process of moral motivation (Allison 1990; MacBeath 1973; Reath 1989; Sytsma 1993; Timmons 1985; Wolff 1974). Another set of scholars attribute a positive role to the *feeling* of respect by making it compatible with Kant's rationalist account of moral motivation (Broadie and Pybus 1975; Herrera 2000; McCarty 1993; Nauckhoff 2003; Ware 2014). McCarty (1993, 423) identifies these two camps of interpreters for the first time and names them as intellectualists and affectivists respectively. Since then, scholars take McCarty's division of intellectualist and affectivist interpretations seriously and place their positions amidst these two strands (see Herrera 2000, 396; Sargentis 2012; 113-114; Frierson 2014, 117; Ware 2014, 741).

the viewpoint of Kant's critical epistemology, the process of how pure practical reason causes an effect to move human agents to perform moral actions is beyond the realm of possible experience and, hence, it is impossible to know anything about it. Since it is impossible to acquire any knowledge about how pure practical reason moves agents to perform moral actions, Ware argues, raising doubts about it is a mistake. Thus, Ware (2014) uses Kant's position on the limits of knowledge to arrive at the same conclusion that Korsgaard (1996) does.

Thus, Ameriks (2006) and Ware (2014) share a view that is similar to Korsgaard's (1996) in their attempts to understand the problem of moral motivation in Kant's moral theory. Like Korsgaard, both dismiss the philosophical validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant's moral theory.

#### **1.4. Exceptions to the Trend: Views of Sargentis and Sytsma**

Unlike Korsgaard (1996), Ameriks (2006) and Ware (2014), scholars like Sargentis (2012) and Sytsma (1993) read Kant's discussion of moral motivation in human agents as connected with his philosophical concern of how pure reason motivates agents to perform moral actions. In his article "Moral Motivation in Kant", Sargentis (2012) aims to resolve the debate between the intellectualists and affectivists and, also, situate Kant's theory of moral motivation amidst the debate between internalism and externalism (Sargentis 2012, 94). With this aim in mind, he proceeds to articulate Kant's problem of moral motivation as "the question concerning how the consciousness of the moral law is connected with a moving force for the performance of the morally good action" (100). By pointing to this problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason in Kant's texts, Sargentis recognizes the occurrence of this problem from within Kant's moral theory. It is this skeptical question about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason that Korsgaard (1996) deems irrelevant in Kant's moral theory. Sargentis (2012, 105) then acknowledges the impossibility of knowing the causal process underlying how the moral law motivates agents to perform moral actions. Unlike Ware (2014) who discards the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason on the basis of this epistemic inaccessibility, Sargentis (2012) continues to keep this problem relevant and open-ended. He does so by connecting this problem to the larger problem of showing that pure reason is practical. He writes, "Kant discusses the problem of motivation only in the context of his main aim, which is to show "that there is pure practical reason"" (Sargentis 2012, 107). By connecting motivational skepticism

about practical reason with Kant's larger ethical project, Sargentis retains the philosophical significance of it. In other words, the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason is philosophically relevant because it is connected to Kant's problem of proving pure reason as practical. After stating the problem of moral motivation in Kant's moral theory in this way, Sargentis proceeds to discuss how, for Kant, moral feeling of respect serves as the moral motivational resource of pure practical reason. He writes, "[T]he problem of moral motivation in Kant is exclusively about the nature and the function of respect as a product of pure reason and as an incentive for moral actions" (108). His reading of Kant's discussion of moral incentive as a response to the philosophically valid problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason restores the philosophical significance of the former. This point is another crucial point of divergence from Korsgaard's (1996) conclusion that Kant's discussion of the incentives of pure practical reason belongs to the psychological domain of his moral theory.

Another scholar who notably does not hold the same views that Korsgaard (1996) holds regarding Kant's problem of moral motivation is Sytsma (1993). In her article "The Role of *Achtung* in Kant's Moral Theory", Sytsma (1993) aims to argue against the internalist account of Kant's theory of moral motivation. To do so, she puts the problem of moral motivation in Kant through the following questions:

Does Kant hold that the recognition of a moral obligation itself provides the motivation to act morally, or does he believe that in addition to this recognition, moral feeling is required as a motivational impetus for moral action? Is it possible that reason could give a moral command and yet fail to motivate, because of the lack of the experience of moral feeling? More to the point: Is reason independently motivating or is it not? (Sytsma 1993, 118)

Sytsma's last question that sums up the problem is the question regarding the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason. Thus, unlike Korsgaard (1996), she thinks that all the problems surrounding moral motivation in Kant boils down to the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason. Furthermore, the second question among the three questions quoted above is that which arises due to cases of true irrationality. Again, unlike Korsgaard (1996), Sytsma (1993) identifies the faculty of reason, and not the subjective dimension of human agents, as the cause of the failures to act according to moral considerations. Although she does not go further in establishing the connection that this problem has with Kant's larger ethical project, the fact that

she recognized the possibility of the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason in Kant's moral theory goes against Korsgaard central thesis.

In the sections that follow, I take the lead of Sargentis (2012) and Sytsma (1993) to go against the trend of dismissing the philosophical validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant's moral theory. To be specific, against Korsgaard's (1996) view, I will argue that the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason has independent philosophical validity in Kant's moral theory because it occurs as a crucial problem within his philosophical project of proving the practicality of pure reason.

## **2. Kant's Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in the Pre-Critical Period**

In this section, we will see that Kant's doubts about the motivational efficacy of reason in its practical employment occur in his early attempts to find the correct supreme principle of morality in the pre-Critical period. During this period, he believed that the supreme principle of morality will be an answer to the question regarding the actual grounds of moral motivation. Influenced by both moral sentimentalists and moral rationalists of his times, he was unsure about whether it is moral feeling or reason that serves as the source of the supreme principle of morality during this period. In the light of considering reason as the possible source of the supreme principle of morality, he expressed skeptical concerns about how principles of reason could possibly move human agents towards moral actions. Two main arguments that back Kant's motivational skepticism about practical reason are:

- i. Principles of reason are formal and, hence, are in need of external incentives to move human agents to perform moral actions
- ii. Human agents are likely to perform actions against morality despite the presentation of the law of morality by our reason.

In section 2.1. that follows, I show that Kant was concerned about the source of the supreme principle of morality and maintained that this supreme principle makes the performance of moral actions possible. In section 2.2., I show how Kant encountered the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason in considering reason as the correct source of the supreme principle of morality.



## 2.1. Practical Nature of the Supreme Principle of Morality and the Question of Moral Motivation

Kant gave priority to the investigation into the supreme principle of morality in his works from as early as 1760s. In one of his earliest works titled *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality* published in 1764,<sup>21</sup> he writes that the fundamental principle of morality must “first of all...be determined more reliably” with “highest degree of philosophical certainty” (Kant *UD*, AA, 02: 300). Again, in a lecture note recorded by Herder around the same time, he says, “[i]n order not to err in moral matters,” we “must seek out the 1st *propositio* of the good” (Kant *V-PP/Herder*, AA, 27: 06).<sup>22</sup> Laying emphasis on this question, Kant assumed that the fundamental principle of morality must have the quality of practicality. For him, since ethics is “the science of actions” and morality involves the performance of actions (27: 13), the fundamental principle underlying morality must be practical in a way that it makes moral actions possible. In some of his notes written during this period, we see him briefly hinting at questions that the practical nature of the supreme principle of morality will serve as an answer for, once it is rightly identified. In a note written in 1760s, Kant (*Refl*, AA, 19: 117) jots three fundamental questions about morality that needs attention:

The first investigation is: Which are the *principia prima dijudicationis moralis*...i.e., which are the highest maxims of morality and which is its highest law.

2. Which is the rule of application... to an object of adjudication...3. Through what do the moral conditions become *motiva*, i.e., on what rests their *vis movens* [i.e., moving force] and thus their application to the subject?

These three questions are about principles underlying moral appraisal, moral execution and moral motivation respectively. That is, the first question is regarding the fundamental principle that makes moral judgements possible; the second question is regarding the fundamental principle that makes moral deeds possible; and the third question is regarding the motivational resource that

---

<sup>21</sup> This essay is also commonly called as the *Prize Essay* because Kant won second prize for submitting it as “an answer to the question proposed for consideration by the Berlin Royal Academy of Sciences for the year 1763” (Kant *UD*, AA, 02: 273).

<sup>22</sup> Lecture notes recorded by Herder was a part of Kant’s course on ethics to students at Albertina University in Königsberg, from 1762-1764.

moves agents to perform moral actions according to moral judgments. Kant repeats the importance of these three questions in another note written in mid-1770s. The note goes as follows:

From moral philosophers one demands:

1. Doctrines of moral judgment, in order to know what is good and what is evil, what deserves aversion, and thus grounds for approbation and disapprobation.
2. Grounds of execution, *caussas subjective moventes* [i.e., subjectively motivating causes], in order that one can really love that which one approves and really avert that which one finds worthy of aversion.
3. Precepts for how inclination can be made concordant with principles or be subjected to them. (19: 220)

Once again, here, the first two questions are about the fundamental principles of moral judgement and performance of moral actions respectively. The third question is regarding how these two principles are connected so that moral motivation occurs. Although Kant does not make it explicit, it is evident from the primacy attributed to search for the supreme principle of morality that these three fundamental questions can be answered only by rightly identifying the supreme principle of morality. That is, during the pre-Critical era, Kant assumed that finding out the supreme principle of morality will answer the questions regarding the fundamental principle underlying moral appraisal, moral execution and moral motivation. Particularly important for our purpose is the connection between the supreme principle of morality and the third question of how motivation towards performing moral actions occurs. That is, during this period, for Kant, one of the requirements for a principle to be identified as the supreme principle of morality is that it must be capable of moving agents towards moral actions.

## **2.2. Encountering Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in Kant's Rationalist Response to the Question about Supreme Principle of Morality**

Kant's response to the question concerning the supreme principle of morality was still in its formative stages during the pre-Critical period. Throughout this time period, he was oscillating between moral feeling and the moral law of reason to give one of them the status of the supreme principle of morality. In his *Prize Essay*, he is quite straightforward about this confusion when he writes that in "practical philosophy...it has yet to be determined whether it is merely the faculty

of cognition, or whether it is feeling...which decides its first principles” (Kant *UD*, AA, 02: 300). Kant’s uncertainty in deciding between these two principles partly arises from the fact that he was influenced by modern thinkers who “divide[d] themselves into the moral theorists of pure reason [e.g. Wolff and Baumgarten] and those of moral sentiment [e.g. Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Hume]” (Kant *Refl*, AA, 19: 116). He knew that he was in the midst of these moral philosophers who belonged to two different camps in their responses to the question concerning the first principle of morality. He notes, “The systems of the moderns try to find the *principium* of moral judgment...All [these] systems derive morality either from reason or from feeling” (19: 116).<sup>23</sup> Thus, in his writings during the pre-Critical stage, we find some passages and notes that suggest reason (or understanding or more generally, cognitive faculty) to be the source of the supreme principle of morality and some others that indicate moral feeling (or moral sentiment) to be the source of the supreme principle of morality. For instance, in a note jotted during this period, Kant mentions that “The rules of morality proceed from a special, eponymous feeling, upon which the understanding is guided” (19: 93). By contrast, in another note written during the same period, he writes, “Morality is an objective...subordination of the will under the motivating grounds of reason” (19: 107-108).<sup>24</sup> Kant’s confused standpoint shows that his mature account of pure reason as solely grounding morality was still in its infancy during this period. That is, during 1760s and 1770s, he was uncertain about the extent to which practical reason plays a positive role in making

---

<sup>23</sup> Given that his basic philosophical training took place within the dominant rationalist tradition spearheaded by thinkers like Leibniz and Wolff, Kant was well-versed with and was heavily influenced by the ethical writings of Wolff very early in his philosophical development (For Kant’s direct references to Wolff’s ethics, see Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 391; *KpV*, AA, 05: 40; *Refl*, AA, 19: 116, 120; *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 276-277; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 598, 622, 626). Similarly, Baumgarten, who belonged to the broader Wolffian rationalist tradition, influenced Kant’s early ethical thought. This is evident from Kant’s use of Baumgarten’s *Initia Philosophiae Practicae Primae* (*Introduction to Practical First Philosophy*) (1760) and *Ethica Philosophica* (*Philosophical Ethics*) (1740) as primary texts for his lectures on moral philosophy during his formative years (Schneewind 1997, xix). Simultaneously, since early 1760s, Kant had access to German translations of works written by the moral sentimentalists (or moral sense theorists) like Hume, Smith, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson (Frazer 2010, 201). He found their moral theories appealing, and particularly considered their take on moral feeling as providing him “a starting point” for his own investigation into the founding principle of morality (Kant *UD*, AA, 02: 300). Thus, during the early stages of his philosophical development, Kant was drawing ideas from both the rationalist and the sentimentalist traditions to address the central question concerning the supreme principle of morality.

<sup>24</sup> This is a bird’s eye view of Kant’s take on the supreme principle of morality during the two decades that make his pre-Critical phase. A closer look at Kant’s views during this period is more likely to give us a picture of a linear progress from confusion to clarity (from 1760s to 1770s) in his concerns regarding the foundational principle of morality. Walschots (2015, 44, 47), for instance, argues that the nature of influence of the moral sentimentalists on Kant’s views changed after 1769 in a way that he stopped considering moral feeling to be the ultimate source of the fundamental principle of morality in 1770s. Accordingly, during the ‘silent decade’ of his pre-Critical period, his focus shifted to dealing with how reason could possibly serve as the source of the supreme principle of morality.

morality possible. Yet, throughout this time period, he considered the faculty of reason as one of the two chief contenders (the other being, the faculty of moral feeling) for serving as the source of the founding principle of morality. In the light of this consideration, within his project of identifying the supreme principle of morality, Kant had doubts regarding how reason could possibly motivate agents in its practical employment.<sup>25</sup> In his works that came out in the pre-Critical period, he occasionally expresses worries about the motivational capacities of practical reason as direct remarks about the lack of motivational force in the formal rules of morality provided by reason. In addition, he also often observes the likelihood of failures in human agents to act according to the law of morality provided by reason. Given that he makes such observations within the context of his initial inquiry into whether or not reason is the source of the supreme principle of morality, they must be read as expressions of motivational skepticism about practical reason.

Let us take a look at these points in detail. In section 2.2.1. that follows, I show that Kant consistently expresses his doubts about the motivational efficacy of practical reason in his works in the pre-Critical period by referring to the lack of a motivational force in the formal moral principles of reason. In section 2.2.2., I show that Kant also expresses motivational skepticism about practical reason in these works by pointing at our vulnerability to fail to act morally.

### **2.2.1. Moral Principles of Reason Lack Independent Motivational Force**

Kant's early concerns about the dependence of formal laws of reason on external resources for moral motivation can be seen in his *Prize Essay* published in 1764. In this essay, in a section on the fundamental principles of morality, Kant observes that the formal principles of morality emerging from the faculty of cognition cannot by themselves result in moral actions. In addition to these formal rules, Kant writes, material principles from the faculty of feeling are needed for moral actions to occur. Given that his sophisticated account of categorical imperative as the moral

---

<sup>25</sup> Since Kant alternatively considered the faculty of moral feeling as the source of the fundamental principle of morality during this period, he had doubts about the motivational capacity of moral feeling as well. For instance, in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* published in 1764, we see Kant hinting at his worry about how the universally valid moral feeling could possibly move human agents towards moral actions. He writes, "as soon as this [moral] feeling is raised to its proper universality, it is sublime, but also colder" He further adds that, "the virtuous person... [moved by this moral feeling,] constantly melting into sympathetic tears, with all this good-heartedness would nevertheless become nothing more than a tenderhearted idler" (Kant *GSE*, AA, 02: 216) (see Frierson 2015, 36-37).

law of reason was not developed yet, Kant takes the rational principle of perfection as the fundamental principle of morality.<sup>26</sup> He then claims that this formal principle cannot lead agents in the practical realm to moral actions unless combined with the material principles of good. He writes:

The rule: perform the most perfect action in your power, is the *first formal ground* of all obligation *to act*. Likewise, the proposition: abstain from doing that which will hinder the realisation of the greatest possible perfection, is the first *formal ground* of the duty to *abstain from acting*...[N]o specifically determinate obligation flows from these two rules of the good, unless they are combined with indemonstrable material principles of practical cognition. (Kant *UD*, AA, 02: 299)

Kant adds that this need for the additional material principles becomes clearer as soon as we realise the distinction between the faculty of cognition as the faculty for representing truth and the faculty of feeling as the faculty of experiencing the good. He argues that although it is the faculty of cognition that makes judgements concerning the good, these judgements are ultimately based on simple, indemonstrable feelings of good. He writes, “This judgement will be an immediate effect of the consciousness of the feeling of pleasure combined with the representation of the object” (02: 299). Further, he argues that it is these simple feelings of good that serve as the material principles of obligation to bring about moral actions. He writes, “[I]f an action is immediately represented as good, and if it does not contain concealed within itself a certain other good, which could be discovered by analysis and on account of which it is called perfect, then *the necessity of this action is an indemonstrable material principle of obligation*. [emphasis added]” (02: 299). Kant’s purpose in this essay is to show that the first principles of morality are harder to understand due to their indemonstrability and simple nature.<sup>27</sup> Although all his arguments are directed towards establishing this claim, his emphasis on the need for additional material principles from simple

---

<sup>26</sup> Wolff’s rationalist moral theory is based on the principle of perfection and, as mentioned earlier (footnote 23 at p. 31), it had an enormous influence on Kant’s views on ethics in his formative years.

<sup>27</sup> He writes, “For there is still a great deal of obscurity surrounding the [moral] concepts [of goodness and justice] ...even when they occur in ourselves. In order to make this claim clear I shall merely show how little even the fundamental concept of *obligation* is yet known, and how far practical philosophy must still be from furnishing the distinctness and the certainty of the fundamental concepts and the fundamental principles which are necessary for certainty in these matters” (Kant *UD*, AA, 02: 297-298, 300).

feelings of good for the fruition of moral obligation shows us Kant's doubt about the independent motivational capacity of cognitive faculty in his early writings.

Kant's doubts about how the formal laws of reason could independently motivate agents to perform moral actions can also be seen in some of his notes written in 1760s and 1770s. In a note written in the late 1760s, Kant expresses the need for material principles to supplement the first formal principles of morality stemming from reason for moral actions to take place. He writes: "The supreme principles *diudicationis moralis* are to be sure rational, but only *principia formalia*. They do not determine any end, but only the moral form of every end; hence *in concreto* the *principia prima materialia* are presented in accordance with this form" (Kant *Refl*, AA, 19: 120). That is, the fundamental principles of morality stemming from reason are formal principles, and therefore, do not determine the will of the agents to actions that lead to moral good. Hence, there is a need for material principles that conform to the form of the supreme principles of morality. Similarly, in a note written in mid-1770s, Kant (*Refl*, AA, 18: 185) writes, "Moral motives should not have merely *vim objective necessitantem* for the...conviction of the understanding, but *vim subjective necessitantem*, i.e., they should be *elateres*". That is, the formal moral law of reason has a necessitating force that is objective in its scope. Yet, it is not enough for the moral principles derived from the moral law to move agents to perform moral actions. In order for these formal rules of morality to serve as driving springs of moral actions, they should also have a motivational force that necessitates individual agents subjectively. Thus, principles of morality derived from reason are not sufficient for moral actions to occur (see also Kant *V-Met-L1/Pölitz*, AA, 28: 258-259).

In addition to these notes, Kant expresses the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason more straightforwardly in one of his lectures on anthropology transcribed by Friedländer in 1775-1776. With the aim of discussing the significance of the distinctive roles that sensibility and understanding plays, he claims that, in practical contexts, the free power of choice is a condition under which both these faculties carry out their respective functions with equal importance. He argues that the faculty of understanding has the "power of ruling (*potestas rectoria*)", but not the "power of execution (*executoria*)" in its use in the practical realm. He says, "The power of ruling is blind without the power of execution. Sensibility is a main element of the human being insofar as sensibility has executive force, through which the understanding has an effect" (Kant *V-*

*Anth/Fried*, AA, 25: 486). To put it alternatively, understanding has the power of judging right actions from wrong actions, but does not have the power to enable agents to perform the right actions and avoid wrong actions. Given this limitation, it is sensibility that should provide the motivational resources for the judgements of understanding to convert into moral actions. Kant notes, “The understanding cannot carry anything out, rather sensibility must give it the material” (25: 486). He again says, “With regard to the will, the senses are an incentive, but the understanding has no incentive. One does not at all see how the understanding can convey its insight to the senses, and how it can have an effect on the senses, since it has no motive force” (25: 487). Considered as the source of the supreme principle of morality, the faculty of reason prescribes moral rules and insights concerning right and wrong. If there are no incentives coming from the same source, then it is difficult to see how moral actions are possible. In another note written around the same time, Kant (*Refl*, AA, 19: 230) writes, “Reason alone can provide no end, also no incentives; it is reason, however, which limits all ends without distinction, so that they stand under a single common rule. Reason alone determines the conditions under which the free power of choice stands under a self-sufficient rule”. That is, the faculty of reason provides the rules of morality to determine the free power of choice. Yet, it does not have the motivational resources (i.e., incentives) to motivate agents to perform moral actions. Given this lack of independent motivational force in the moral principles of reason, the question of how these formal rules of reason move agents to perform moral actions acquires a skeptical tone and poses a skeptical threat. Kant asks: “How can reason provide an incentive [for moral actions], since it is otherwise always only a guideline and it is inclination that drives, the understanding prescribing only the means?” (19: 185).

### **2.2.2. Motivational Inefficacy of Practical Reason in Cases of Moral Failures in Human agents**

Kant repeatedly observes failures of human agents to act according to the moral principles of reason in his early writings on moral philosophy. In his essay titled *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy* published in 1763, Kant presents the case of motivational gap between inner moral law and moral actions in human agents to show how the concept of real opposition works within moral philosophy.<sup>28</sup> He writes:

---

<sup>28</sup> As the title of the essay suggests, Kant’s aim in this essay is to introduce the concept of negative magnitude and discuss its applications to various fields of study. For him, the “concept of negative magnitudes involves...[the relation

[I]magine a human being who fails to help someone whom he sees in distress and whom he could easily help. There is a positive law to be found in the heart of every human being, and it is a law which is present in this man's heart as well; it commands that we love our neighbour. In the present example, the law must be outweighed. (Kant *NG*, AA, 02: 183)

This example shows that human agents have an inner law of morality within them and yet, sometimes fail to act accordingly. He further contrasts moral failures in human agents with moral failures in animals. He claims that, since animals lack reason, they do not have laws of morality, and they are “not driven by inner moral feeling to a good action”. Unlike moral failures in human agents, moral failures in animals are neither a “product of...resisting that inner moral feeling” nor “the result of the operation of a counteracting force” against the principles of morality (02: 183). His purpose in making this distinction is to argue that the case of human failures to act according to the inner law of morality shows, not a lack of virtue, but a deprivation of it.<sup>29</sup> This argument supports his central claim that there must be a real opposition to the motivation stemming from the inner law of morality for us to act against its commands to do right actions. Now, although Kant does not discuss this in the text, the question that is of interest to us is regarding the cause of these moral failures in human agents. On the one hand, Kant’s presentation of it can be read as illustrating how the notion of ‘real opposition’ works in moral philosophy. Reading it this way, the causes of moral failures in human agents can be attributed to the motivating forces that oppose motivation from the inner law of morality. On the other hand, Kant’s presentation of the cases of moral failures can be taken as highlighting the presence of the inner law of morality in human agents (unlike animals who do not have it). Taken this way, the causes of moral failures in human agents can be attributed to the inability of this law to move human agents to perform moral actions. It is possible for both these causes to simultaneously explain multiple cases of moral failures in human agents. That is, some failures of human agents to act according to the inner law of morality are due to certain unrelated subjective factors and the others are due to the lack of sufficient

---

of] ‘real opposition’” between two entities (Kant *NG*, AA, 02: 174-175). Real opposition refers to the opposition between two positive forces which results in something instead of nothing. As Kant puts it, in real opposition “one thing cancels that which is posited by the other” and “the consequence is something (*cogitabile*)” (02: 171).

<sup>29</sup> Kant (*NG*, AA, 02: 177-178) distinguishes between ‘deprivation’ and ‘lack’ as follows: “A negation, in so far as it is the consequence of a real opposition, will be designated a *deprivation* (*privatio*). But any negation, in so far as it does not arise from this type of repugnancy, will be called a *lack* (*defectus, absentia*). The latter does not require a positive ground, but merely the lack of such a ground. But the former involves a true ground of the positing and another ground which is opposed to it and which is of the same magnitude.”



motivational force in the moral principles of reason. This point gets confirmed in a note from his unpublished *Remarks to Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* written around the same time period. Kant (*GSE*, AA, 02: 28) writes:

It must be asked how far inner moral grounds can bring a human being. They will perhaps bring him so far, that, in a state of freedom without great temptations, he is good, but if the injustice of others or the force of delusion does violence to him, then this inner morality does not have enough power...human nature is not capable of an immediate moral purity.

The note above begins with a question regarding the motivational capacity of the inner moral law and ends with a remark on moral imperfection of human agents. On the one hand, human beings have “great temptations” and are morally imperfect. On the other hand, inner moral law “does not have enough power” and sufficient resources to move human agents to act morally. Similarly, in a lecture note recorded by Herder around this time period, Kant (*V-PP/Herder*, AA, 27: 61-62) says:

[T]he *highest morality* is not on a par with the *moral level* of man...[W]e should investigate the degree of morality that is suited to men... An ethic for the human being, *determined* in his nature, by his knowledge, powers and capacities, has yet to be written. For by reason we can also discern rational perfections that are suitable, indeed, for a higher being, but not for him.

The moral status of human agents depends on our nature, knowledge, powers and capacities. In other words, our subjective limitations decide our “*moral level*” and our “degree of morality”. At the same time, the highest principles of morality derived from reason are unsuitable and are not on par with our condition. That is, what naturally moves us to actions is not what reason gives us via its law of morality.<sup>30</sup> In another note written around the same time period, Kant (*Refl*, AA, 19: 77) once again observes that “[t]he weakness of human nature” lies in the fact that we need motives akin to those underlying sensible inclinations for us to be driven towards moral actions. But, the law of morality is also pure and “excludes all these *motiva auxiliaria*”. That is, on the one hand, morality “in the human being is always imperfect” and on the other, “[a]ll morality rests on ideas” (19: 108). Thus, while it is true that moral failures are partly due to the moral imperfection of

---

<sup>30</sup> Frierson (2015, 37) too notes that this passage in Kant’s early lecture expresses the problem of moral motivation.

human agents, they are also because of the “purity” of the law and principles of morality. In other words, for Kant, the motivational gap in moral failures occurs due to our limitations on the one hand, and the motivational inefficacy of the rules of reason on the other.

The view that the motivational inefficacy of practical reason is the cause of some cases of moral failures in human agents goes hand in hand with Kant’s worry that the law of morality springing from reason lacks independent motivational force – a point that I discussed in section 2.2.1. (see pp. 32-35). That is, the view that the inner law of morality cannot move morally imperfect human agents supplements the view that the formal rules that it provides need additional material resources (or sensible incentives) for them to motivate agents to perform moral actions. Furthermore, inferring Kant’s worries about the motivational inefficacy of reason from cases of moral failures in human agents gains validity in the light of Kant’s consideration of reason as the possible source of the supreme principle of morality. As discussed in section 2.1., Kant’s main project of identifying the supreme principle of morality (and the source of it) has its roots in his writings in the pre-Critical period (see pp. 29-30). Given that the faculty of reason was considered by him as one of the prime candidates for the source of the foundational principle of morality, the onus of moral motivation is on reason to have the capacity to move human agents towards moral actions. If human agents fail to act morally, then, from within the context of Kant’s initial inquiry into whether and how reason serves as the fundamental principle of moral motivation, the cause of it (at least partially) must be attributed to the inability of reason to motivate human agents towards moral actions. In a note written in mid-1770s, Kant (*Refl*, AA, 19: 133) writes:

If the primary grounds of morality rest on reason, then it is a question whether departure from the teachings of ethics are to be attributed to error or to evilness of the will...False moral judgment is to be attributed to the weakness of reason (against prejudices of self-love); action contrary to these judgments is to be attributed to the powerlessness of reason over the inclinations.

Here, he makes it clear that “[i]f the primary grounds of morality rest on reason”, then making wrong judgements about what actions are right and not acting according to what is right are to be attributed to “weakness” and “powerlessness” of reason. He also adds that the ineffectiveness of reason in moral motivation lies in the fact that it “moves only pure spirits” and does not have appropriate resources to motivate imperfect human agents towards performing moral actions (19:

133). Thus, taken in the light of his initial attempts to know if the faculty of reason is the source of the supreme principle of morality, Kant's discussions on the moral failures in human agents should be seen as expressions of motivational skepticism about practical reason.

### **3. Kant's Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in the Critical Period**

In the previous section, I explored the two arguments using which Kant expressed the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason in the pre-Critical period. In this section, I show how this problem emerges in his efforts to establish his mature position on the question about the supreme principle of morality in the Critical period. During this period, Kant developed a view that for the supreme principle of morality to make morality possible, it should be practical in a way that it should serve as the fundamental *a priori* principle underlying moral appraisal and moral execution. Unsatisfied with the attempts of his predecessors and contemporaries in finding the correct supreme principle of morality, Kant held a view that the only source capable of producing a foundational principle that is practical *a priori* is pure reason. In his undertaking of establishing the moral law of pure reason as the correct supreme principle of morality, Kant encountered skeptical worries about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason. These concerns were backed by the following arguments:

- i. The moral law of pure reason does not have material incentives and ends to move us towards the performance of moral actions.
- ii. Human agents have an additional sensible nature with needs more compelling than the necessitation of the moral law of pure reason.
- iii. Given our limited knowing capacities, it is impossible for us to know how the moral law of pure reason supplies us with an incentive to move us towards the performance of moral actions.

I discuss these points in detail below. In section 3.1. that follows, I show that, during the Critical phase of his philosophical development, Kant was concerned with the search for the supreme principle of morality and engaged in a critical investigation into the source of it. In section 3.2., I show that, for Kant, the supreme principle of morality must serve as the highest principle of moral appraisal and moral motivation in all rational agents without exceptions. In section 3.3., I show how Kant encounters the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason in the

process of establishing pure reason as the source of the supreme principle underlying moral motivation universally and necessarily.

### 3.1. Kant's Critical Investigation into the Supreme Principle of Morality and Its Source

The primary focus of Kant's moral philosophy continued to be the identification of the supreme principle of morality in the Critical phase of his philosophical development. In his *Groundwork* published in 1785, around two decades after the publication of his *Prize Essay*, Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 392) still considers "the search for and establishment of the *supreme principle of morality*" to be an "important" and a "central question" that must be "kept apart from every other moral investigation". Again, in his *The Metaphysics of Morals* published in 1797, he writes that "it is not useless" and "much less ridiculous" to investigate the first principle grounding ethics (or doctrine of virtue) because without it "neither certitude nor purity" is possible in our understanding of morality (Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 376). During this period, Kant was also aware of the relevance of uncovering this foundational principle from within the purview of his critical epistemology. His starting point in undertaking this investigation was the fact of quotidian morality. By default, we live in a moral world and engage with moral questions, dilemmas and circumstances in our everyday lives. In our attempts to study and systematize it, our faculty of reason unites all knowledge of our day-to-day morality under one fundamental principle that makes it possible.<sup>31</sup> Hence, there is only *one valid* philosophy of morality and only *one correct* founding principle underlying it. In his *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant (*MS*, AA, 06: 207) writes:

[C]onsidered objectively, there can be only one human reason, there cannot be many philosophies; in other words, there can be only one true system of philosophy from principles, in however many different and even conflicting ways one has philosophized about one and the same proposition. So the *moralist* rightly says that there is only one virtue and one doctrine of virtue, that is, a single system that connects all duties of virtue by one principle.

---

<sup>31</sup> Kant (*KrV*, AA, A298-A302/B355-B359) considers reason to be the "supreme faculty of cognition" that provides completion to the process of acquiring knowledge by unifying the manifold knowledge that passively comes through our senses and actively processed by our understanding by subsuming it under one or a few principles. He writes, "If we survey the cognitions of our understanding in their entire range, then we find that what reason quite uniquely prescribes and seeks to bring about concerning it is the **systematic** in cognition, i.e., its interconnection based on one principle." (A645/B673)

In one of his lectures on ethics recorded by Collins in mid-1780s, Kant (*V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 252) again says:

[S]ince we must all have a principle of moral judgement, whereby we can unambiguously decide about what is morally good or bad, we perceive that there must be a single principle emanating from the ground of our will. It is now a matter of ascertaining this principle in which we situate morality, and whereby we can distinguish the moral from the immoral.

Thus, if there is the fact of the ordinary conception of morality, there must be one supreme principle grounding it. It is a matter of importance to uncover this principle by philosophizing about it.

During this period, Kant also realized that a critical inquiry into the source of this supreme principle of morality is integral to his project of searching for this foundational principle of morality. He believed that, in our search for the ultimate principle of morality, it is likely that we would end up attributing highest moral worth to principles underlying our needs, desires and wishes. This tendency in human agents will lead us to rationalize the principles underlying our needs and inclinations, and cast doubts about the validity of a genuine supreme principle of morality. About this Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 405) writes, “[T]here arises [in us] 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”. In order to “not run the risk of being deprived of all genuine moral principles” and for “the correct determination of this principle [of morality]”, it is important to obtain “information and distinct instruction regarding the source” of it (04: 405). Thus, to arrive at a correct supreme principle of morality (in spite of certain needs and desires that are dear to us), we must not rest except with a “complete critique” of the source that it would be derived from. Further, Kant also thought that only a critical study of the source that this principle would be derived from will provide reliability to it and, thereby validate it as providing a secure foundation to morality. That is, for morality to be taken seriously and “not as a chimerical idea without any truth”, not only should the supreme principle of morality be brought forward, but a critique of its source should also be undertaken (04: 445).

### 3.2. *A Priori* Practical Nature of the Supreme Principle of Morality

Kant assumed that the supreme principle of morality must have the quality of practicality. The quality of practicality follows from the fact that moral philosophy is a “doctrine of doing” and the object of its study is “*praxis*” (Kant *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 245). In a lecture transcribed by Vigilantius, Kant (*V-MS/Vigil*, AA, 27: 485) says, “The subject-matter of morals...are never theoretical, containing only those conditions under which a thing is; they are at all times purely practical, stating only those conditions under which a thing ought to come about...” Kant developed clear-cut views about the practical nature of the supreme principle of morality during this period. Unless the question of how it should be practical to make morality possible is addressed, it will be difficult to embark on the search for the supreme principle of morality. As I show in the next section (section 3.2.), it was the understanding of the practical nature the supreme principle of morality that helped Kant in filtering away the erroneous candidates for this principle and, in the end, aided in identifying the right one. First and foremost, during the Critical period, Kant thought that the supreme principle of morality must be practical *a priori*. *A priori* status is attributed to the supreme principle of morality by virtue of the fact that it must be derived from an *a priori* basis. In a lecture, Kant (*V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 626) mentions that that “[m]orality must be based on *a priori* grounds”. Again, in his first *Critique*, he notes that “morality is the...lawfulness of actions which can be derived entirely *a priori* from principles” (Kant *KrV*, AA, A841/B869). As mentioned before, for Kant, we engage in moral deliberations and perform moral actions in our daily lives (see p. 40). For the body of knowledge concerning moral right and wrong (i.e., the doctrine of virtue that we use in our day-to-day moral affairs) to have certainty and reliability (just as scientific principles do), it must be based on a fundamental principle derived from an *a priori* ground. Putting it in Kant’s words, the “*doctrine of virtue* (ethics)...needs *metaphysical first principles*” (i.e., principles that must be derived from *a priori* grounds) for it to “be set forth as a genuine science (systematically) and not merely as an aggregate of precepts sought out one by one (fragmentarily)” (Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 375).<sup>32</sup> Instead, if the supreme principle of morality does not have an *a priori* basis, then our doctrine of virtue will not have any certainty.

---

<sup>32</sup> Kant’s division of the philosophy of all the disciplines into pure and empirical parts is to be noted here. The empirical philosophy of any discipline investigates its subject matter *a posteriori* and the pure philosophy of any discipline investigates the supreme principle that conditions the possibility of its subject matter *a priori*. Kant calls the latter as metaphysics. Accordingly, metaphysics of morals is a pure philosophical discipline that determines the supreme principle of morality governing our moral judgements and moral actions *a priori* (Kant *KrV*, AA, A841-842/B869-870; *GMS*, AA 04: 388-389; *MS*, AA, 06: 375; *V-MS/Vigil*, AA, 27: 480; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 597).

In other words, the basis for making moral judgements and performing moral actions will lack certainty if the first principle underlying them is derived *a posteriori* (i.e., from experience). In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant expresses the importance of deriving the principle of morality strictly from *a priori* grounds by comparing it with the principles of natural science. He writes, “[F]or natural science, which has to do with objects of outer sense, one must have a priori principles...[P]rinciples [of natural science] must be derived from a priori grounds if they are to hold as universal in the strict sense” (06: 215). Despite this, scientists sometimes base their universal principles “on the evidence of experience”. For instance, “[c]hemists...base their most universal laws of the combination and separation of substances by their own forces entirely on experience”. In contrast, Kant stresses, “it is different with moral laws”. He continues,

[M]oral laws...hold as laws only insofar as they can be *seen* to have an a priori basis and to be necessary. Indeed, concepts and judgments about ourselves and our deeds and omissions signify nothing moral if what they contain can be learned merely from experience. And should anyone let himself be led astray into making something from that source into a moral principle, he would run the risk of the grossest and most pernicious errors. (06: 215)

That is, unlike the principles of natural science which may sometimes rely on *a posteriori* evidence for their proofs, the supreme principle of morality (or “moral laws” as Kant refers to it in the passage above) must strictly have *a priori* basis only. Any attempt to derive the foundational principle from experience would result in gross errors. Since the supreme principle of morality must be derived from an *a priori* basis, it must be practical *a priori*, and thereby capable of conditioning the possibility of our everyday morality.

Secondly, Kant held a view that the supreme principle of morality must be practical in two ways: (i) it should serve as the first principle of moral appraisal and (ii) it should serve as the first principle of moral execution. That is, firstly, as the supreme principle of moral appraisal, it must enable agents to discriminate between right and wrong actions and, thereby aid them in making moral judgements; secondly, as the supreme principle of moral execution, it must move agents to perform morally right actions. In a lecture note recorded by Collins, we see Kant (*V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 274) saying the following during his discussion on the supreme principle of morality:

We first have to take up two points here: (1) The principle of appraisal of obligation, and (2) the principle of its performance or execution. Guideline and motive have here to be distinguished. The guideline is the principle of appraisal, and the motive that of carrying-out the obligation; in that they have been confused, everything in morality has been erroneous. If the question is: What is morally good or not?, that is the principle of appraisal, whereby I judge the goodness or depravity of actions. But if the question is: What moves me to live according to this law?, that is the principle of motive.

That is, the correct supreme principle of morality must be a capable of enabling moral agents to judge some actions as morally right and others as morally wrong. In addition, it should also be capable of motivating moral agents to actually *do* the right actions according to the prior judgements made about them.<sup>33</sup> In the passage above, we also see Kant insisting that the distinction between these two ways in which the supreme principle of morality becomes practical be made clear and explicit. Especially, it is possible to erroneously subsume its function as the first principle of moral execution under its function as the first principle of moral appraisal. That is why, Kant particularly asserts that the “principle of motive cannot be confused with the principle of judgement (27: 275). The latter is the norm, and the principle of impulsion is the motive”. In another lecture he says, “All actions are indeed *adjudged* to be [morally] necessary, but a *motivating ground* is also needed in order to perform these actions [emphasis added]” (27: 299).

---

<sup>33</sup> We saw in section 2.1. that although Kant did not clearly articulate his views on how the supreme principle of morality should be practical in the pre-Critical era, he hints at it when he briefly remarks that the correct supreme principle of morality must answer questions concerning moral judgement, moral execution and moral motivation (see pp. 29-30). His move of reducing the practical roles of the supreme principle of morality to two core functions of appraisal and execution in mid-1770s, and later maintaining it throughout in the Critical period, can be read as direct influence of Hutcheson’s views on Kant. Walschots (2015, 69-70) argues that Kant’s distinction between principle of moral appraisal and moral execution “likely goes back to Hutcheson’s distinction between justifying and exciting reasons”. In his *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, Hutcheson (1756, 208-209) argues that there are two qualities of any action in the moral realm: approbation and election. Approbation refers to that quality of an action that was contemplated and reflected upon before its performance. Election refers to that quality of an action that makes an agent do that particular action, instead of doing another action or instead of remaining passive. He further argues that, when we ask for the reason behind any action performed, we either ask for the truth about the quality of the action that involves approbation or we ask for the truth about the quality of the action that excited the agent to do it. The former is what he calls as the justifying reason of an action and the latter is what he calls as the exciting reason of an action (217-218). As Walschots (2015, 69) puts it, “there are [certainly] many similarities between Hutcheson’s and Kant’s versions of this distinction” between the two different dimensions of moral actions.



He believed that confusing these two practical functions of the supreme principle of morality results in a significant categorical error that should be avoided in moral philosophy.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, during the Critical period, Kant thought that the supreme principle of morality (i) must be practical *a priori* and (ii) must be practical as the first principles of moral appraisal and moral execution. Combining these two characteristics, there is a requirement for the supreme principle of morality (i) to serve as the first principle governing moral appraisal *a priori* and (ii) to serve as the first principle governing moral execution *a priori*. Since any principle derived from an *a priori* basis must hold universally and necessarily,<sup>35</sup> two implications follow:

i. The supreme principle of morality must serve as the fundamental principle of moral appraisal and the fundamental principle of moral execution universally. This means, for a principle to be identified as the supreme principle of morality, it should be capable of providing *all* the moral agents with norms (or standards) to judge right actions and with resources that move them to perform right actions.

ii. The supreme principle of morality must serve as the fundamental principle of moral appraisal and the fundamental principle of moral execution necessarily. This means, for a principle to be identified as the supreme principle of morality, it should be capable of *always* supplying moral agents with norms (or standards) to judge the right actions and with resources that move them to perform right actions *without exceptions*.

To sum up (see Figure 2), the supreme principle of morality must be practical in a way that it should *always* be both the first principle governing moral appraisal and the first principle governing moral execution for *all* the moral agents *without exceptions*. It should be capable of

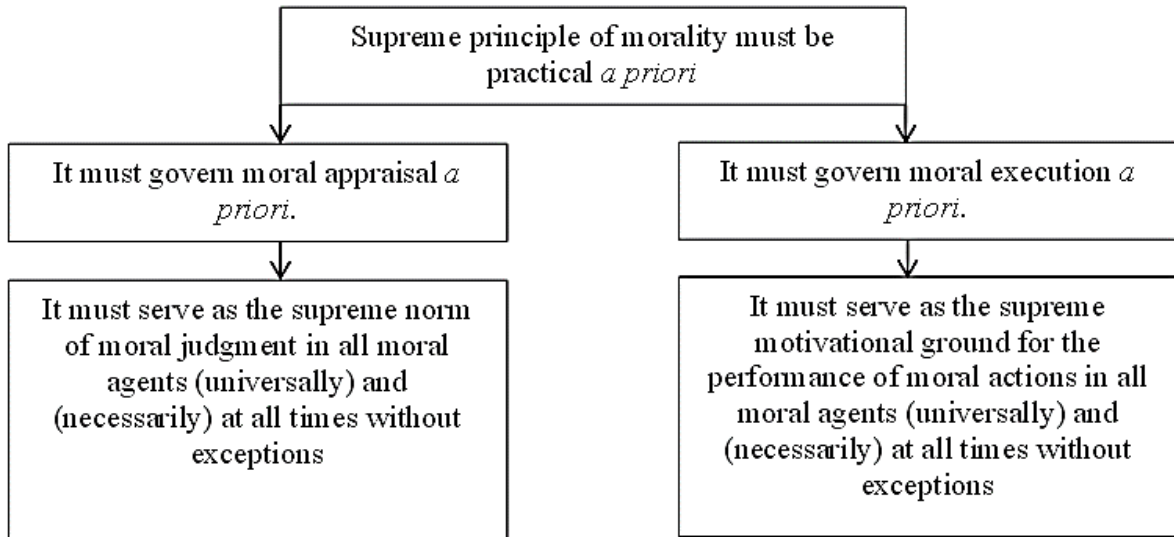
---

<sup>34</sup> As I quoted in section 2.2.1., we see this line of thought even in one of his lectures in mid-1770s when Kant (*V-Anth/Fried*, AA, 25: 486) says, “The power of ruling is blind without the power of execution” (see p. 34).

<sup>35</sup> In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant (*KrV*, AA, B3-B4) argues for universality and necessity of principles derived from *a priori* grounds by juxtaposing them against principles derived from experience (i.e., *a posteriori* knowledge): (i) Knowledge from experience informs us “that something is constituted thus” and not “that it could not be otherwise” (B3). If it could be otherwise, then it is not *necessarily* constituted thus. (ii) Knowledge from experience informs us that “as far as we have yet perceived, there is no exception” to how something is, but not “in such a way that *no exception at all* [for how something is] is allowed to be possible [emphasis added]” (B4). Hence, it does not give knowledge of how something *universally* is. (iii) If knowledge from experience does not give us knowledge of how something exists universally and necessarily, then knowledge gained independent of experience (i.e., *a priori* knowledge) should be about how something is universally and necessarily.

providing norms and resources according to which *every* agent in the moral realm *ought* to *judge* and *perform* moral actions.

**Figure 2: Kant’s Account of the Practicality of Supreme Principle of Morality during the Critical Period**



### 3.3. Kant’s Critical Evaluation of the Responses to the Question about the Supreme Principle of Morality Given by His Predecessors and Contemporaries

During the Critical period, Kant’s response to the question regarding the supreme principle of morality was: only pure reason is capable of producing the supreme principle of morality that is practical *a priori*.<sup>36</sup> For him, the supreme principle of morality is the moral law of pure reason that categorically commands and binds the will of all the rational agents to judge and act morally without exceptions. Kant was better aware of who he was responding to when he laid out his critical-rationalist response to the fundamental question about morality during this period. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that he developed his position in the light of his critical assessment of moral theories of other modern thinkers.<sup>37</sup> That is, he worked out his answer to the problem about the source of the supreme principle of morality against the background of his critical

<sup>36</sup> For Kant, pure reason is the source of all *a priori* principles. In his first *Critique*, he notes, “pure reason is that which contains the principles for cognizing something absolutely *a priori*” (Kant *KrV*, AA, A11/B24).

<sup>37</sup> In his essay titled “Kant’s History of Ethics”, Wood rightly claims that Kant’s purpose of providing a historical introduction to modern moral philosophy via his lectures (Kant *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 252-255; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 621-628) is to “motivate his own original approach to the topic of searching for a supreme principle of morality.” In other words, “Kant’s own enterprise in ethics” is “a projection of certain vital historical developments in ethics, as Kant sees them.” (Wood 2015, 123).

response to the views of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 441-444; *KpV*, AA, 05: 39-41; *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 252-255; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 621-628). In a new understanding of their approaches that he developed during this period, Kant classified modern moral philosophers (i) on the basis of whether they discovered the supreme principle of morality from external or internal sources, and, (ii) on the basis of whether they derived the supreme principle of morality from empirical or rational sources. Thus, in his works, he presents a taxonomy of four types of moral theories that the modern thinkers developed on the basis of the source from which they discovered their supreme principle of morality (Kant *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 252; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 621-622; *GMS*, AA, 04: 442; *KpV*, AA, 05: 39-40). They are: (i) moral theories that derived the supreme principle of morality from external empirical sources,<sup>38</sup> (ii) moral theories that derived the supreme principle of morality from internal empirical sources,<sup>39</sup> (iii) moral theories that derived the supreme principle of morality from external rational sources,<sup>40</sup> and (iv) moral theories that derived the supreme principle of morality from internal rational sources<sup>41</sup>.

Kant did not find any of these moral theories convincing. He thought that the question about the fundamental principle of morality has not been answered satisfactorily by any of his predecessors

---

<sup>38</sup> This is a reference to moral theories of thinkers like Montaigne and Hobbes. These philosophers locate the source of the supreme principle of morality in the empirical world outside us. Montaigne identified moral customs and education to be the primary sources of the supreme principle of morality. Hobbes located the supreme principle of morality in laws that particular governments enforce on their citizens (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 40; *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 253; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 621-622).

<sup>39</sup> This is a reference to moral theories of thinkers who located the supreme principle of morality internally in the faculty of feeling. Some of them argued that physical feelings of pleasure (or happiness) and displeasure (or unhappiness) enable agents to judge what is morally right and move them to perform moral actions. Kant attributes these moral theories founded on faculty of physical feeling to followers of Epicurus. Some others thought that the moral feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction provides the norms for moral judgements and resources for performing moral actions (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 442; *KpV*, AA, 05: 40; *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 253-254; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 621, 623). As mentioned before, this set of thinkers were the moral sentimentalists (or moral sense theorists) whose theories Kant was engaging with since the pre-Critical period (see footnote 23 at p. 31).

<sup>40</sup> This is a reference to moral theories of thinkers like Crusius and Leibniz. These thinkers locate the source of the supreme principle of morality in God. That is, for them, the divine will is the supreme judge of what is morally right and wrong and the ultimate source of motivation to perform moral actions. Since God can be thought of only by means of rational concepts, Kant categorized their theories as those which derived the supreme principle of morality from external rational sources (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 441-442; *KpV*, AA, 05: 40-41; *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 277-278; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 622).

<sup>41</sup> This is a reference to moral theories of Kant's rationalist predecessors like Wolff and Baumgarten. These thinkers thought that the rational principle of moral perfection serves as the supreme principle underlying our moral judgements and moral actions (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 443; *KpV*, AA, 05: 40-41; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 626).

and contemporaries. For instance, in one of his lectures, after briefly reviewing the ethical systems of the modern thinkers, he says, “The principle of morality has not yet been rightly discovered, because on it the worth, or otherwise, of moral conduct depends” (Kant *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 622; see also Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 432; *KpV*, AA, 05: 64). He was unsatisfied with these sets of moral theories because none of them put forward a principle of morality that is practical *a priori*. Firstly, the lack of *a priori* status of the supreme principle(s) of morality derived from empirical sources is obvious. For instance, the principle of morality located in external empirical sources such as moral customs, education and laws differs from culture to culture and from nation to nation. This means, such a principle of morality cannot be that which makes some actions as morally right and that which motivates agents to perform moral actions in *all places and at all times without exceptions* (Kant *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 254; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 622). Similarly, the supreme principle of morality derived from the physical feelings of pleasure (or happiness) and displeasure (or unhappiness) varies from one individual to another due to differences in the objects that cause pleasure (or happiness) and displeasure (or unhappiness) (Kant *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 276).<sup>42</sup> This shows that the faculty of physical feeling is capable of providing a principle of morality that is applicable only contingently and subjectively, and not necessarily and universally (Kant *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 253, 275). Likewise, it is not possible for the supreme principle of morality derived from faculty of moral feeling to be strictly universal and absolutely necessary as the actions that cause the moral feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction varies from one individual to another (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 442; *MS*, AA, 06: 400; *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 253-254; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 625).<sup>43</sup>

Secondly, Kant was also critical of thinkers who discovered the supreme principle of morality from external and internal rational sources because these principles that they identified too lacked *a priori* practicality. For instance, a principle of morality derived from an external rational source

---

<sup>42</sup> Physical feelings of pleasure (or happiness) and displeasure (or unhappiness) refers to subjective states of agents and not to representations of objects (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 204; *MS*, AA, 06: 211). These subjective mental states are in turn *caused* by representations of empirical objects that affect the agents from outside (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 09n, 204; *V-Met-LI/Pöhlitz*, AA, 28: 247).

<sup>43</sup> Although some moral sentimentalists like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson posit the existence of a moral sense (in addition to five physical senses) for making certain judgements about right and wrong actions, it ultimately relies on the moral feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction emerging from actions for its judgements. Hence, postulating an additional power of moral sense into the picture will not change the *a posteriori* status of the supreme principle of morality based on the faculty of moral feeling.

like all-perfect God cannot have the *a priori* status. This is because the norms of moral judgements and resources for moral motivation rely solely on the arbitrary and subjective divine will (Kant *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 263-264). This means, it is not impossible for the all-powerful God to re-judge a set of actions, which was once judged as morally wrong, as morally right later in time (Kant *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 627). Further, a principle underlying the moral commands of an external rational source like God cannot be ‘practical’ in a moral sense of the term. This is because: instead of serving as the principle on the basis of which agents judge and act morally, this principle demands agents to dogmatically accept the divine moral commands and compels them to obediently perform them in order to please the divine will (Kant *V-Mo/Mron*, AA, 27: 1426; *V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 627-628). Furthermore, deriving the supreme principle of morality from internal rational sources does not make it practical *a priori* (in a moral sense) by default. For instance, the feature of *a priori* practicality cannot be attributed to the rational principle of perfection because one could attain perfection in their actions even when the ultimate motivating ground underlying these actions are derived from experience. This is why, in a lecture, Kant (*V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 626-627) says, “To be sure, there are also perfections that are regarded as means; but to seek these would be pragmatic and not moral. All this [i.e., perfections] is good, but not without restriction”. In his *Groundwork*, Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 391) writes about rationalist moral thinkers who identified the principle of perfection as the supreme principle of morality as follows:

[T]hey do not distinguish motives that, as such, are represented completely a priori by reason alone and are properly moral from empirical motives, which the understanding raises to universal concepts merely by comparing experiences; instead they consider motives only in terms of the greater or smaller amount of them, without paying attention to the difference of their sources (since all of them are regarded as of the same kind)

That is, although the principle of perfection derived from faculty of reason is used as a norm to distinguish between right and wrong actions, the principle underlying the performance of actions (i.e., highest motivational ground) to attain perfection could stem from empirical sources such as needs and inclinations. If so, this principle of perfection cannot be qualified as the supreme principle of morality as it is not practical *a priori*.

Thus, for Kant, moral theories that derived the supreme principle of morality from (external and internal) empirical sources and from (external and internal) rational sources failed to come up with the correct supreme principle of morality because these principles they came up with are not practical *a priori*. In other words, Kant was unsatisfied with the efforts of his predecessors and contemporaries in their responses to the question about the supreme principle of morality because none of them proposed a fundamental principle that makes moral appraisal and moral execution possible universally and necessarily.

### **3.4. Encountering Motivational Skepticism about Pure Practical Reason in Kant's Critical-Rationalist Response**

Against the context of his critical take on moral theories that attempted to derive the supreme principle of morality from different sources, Kant believed that the correct supreme principle of morality can only be located in and derived from pure reason. In the *Preface* of his *Groundwork*, he writes,

[T]he ground of [moral] obligation...must not be sought in the nature of the human being or in the circumstances of the world in which he is placed, but a priori simply in concepts of pure reason; and that any other precept, which is based on principles of mere experience – even if it is universal in a certain respect - insofar as it rests in the least part on empirical grounds, perhaps only in terms of a motive, can indeed be called a practical rule but never a moral law. (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 389)

That is, the supreme principle of morality must not be derived from internal or external empirical sources (i.e., “sought in the nature of the human being or in the circumstances of the world”). At the same time, it should not be uncritically derived from external or internal rational sources, “even if it is universal in a certain respect” because it is possible that a part of it (such as the motive) would still rest on empirical grounds. Rather, the correct supreme principle of morality (i.e., the moral law), which must be practical *a priori*, must be sought only in pure reason.

During the Critical period, Kant's aim was to discover the supreme principle of morality from pure reason and prove that pure reason is solely capable of giving us the fundamental moral law in its practical employment. He states this objective in the *Preface* of his *Groundwork* and in the *Introduction* section of his second *Critique*. In the *Preface* of his *Groundwork*, Kant (*GMS*, AA,

04: 392) writes, “The present groundwork is, however, nothing more than the search for and establishment of the *supreme principle of morality*, which constitutes by itself a business that in its purpose is complete and to be kept apart from every other moral investigation”. Taking this as his objective, he establishes the moral law of pure reason as the supreme principle of morality and expresses it using different formulations of the categorical imperative. In the *Introduction* section of his second *Critique*, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 15) writes, “The first question [to be addressed]... is whether pure reason of itself alone suffices to determine the will or whether it can be a determining ground of the will only as empirically conditioned”. Taking this project up, he proves that pure reason is unconditionally practical via its supreme principle, the moral law. Now, in the process of identifying the moral law of pure reason as the supreme principle of morality and arguing that pure reason is practical all by itself in these texts, Kant encounters the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason. This is quite obvious given that his aim was to arrive at a supreme principle of morality that is practical *a priori*. That is, as discussed before in the section 3.2., for Kant, the correct supreme principle of morality must make morality possible (i) by serving as the ultimate standard for making judgements concerning what is right and wrong universally and necessarily (i.e., *a priori* principle of moral appraisal), and (ii) by serving as the highest ground for motivating all the agents in the moral realm to perform right actions universally and necessarily (i.e., *a priori* principle of moral execution) (see pp. 45-46). If so, for the moral law of pure reason to be the supreme principle of morality, it must be capable of serving as the *a priori* principle of moral appraisal and as the *a priori* principle of moral execution. Since the notion of moral execution is of interest for us here, in his project of establishing the moral law of pure reason as the right supreme principle of morality, Kant had the burden of proving that it can move all the rational agents to perform moral actions without exceptions. In a lecture on ethics recorded by Mrongovius in 1785, in the context of his critical take on the views of his predecessors and contemporaries (which I discussed in section 3.3. above at pp. 46-50), Kant (*V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 626) says, “If [pure] reason determines the will through the moral law, [then, it means that] it has the force of an incentive, and in that case has, not autonomy merely, but also autocracy. [That is,] [i]t then has *both* legislative and *executive power* [emphasis added]”. This means, for Kant to prove that pure reason is practical all by itself (and, therefore, it is the source of the supreme principle of morality), it is required of him to show how pure reason is solely capable of serving as the source of motivation for all the rational agents to perform moral actions without exceptions.

Thus, in showing that pure reason is the source of the moral law in its practical employment and that this moral law is the fundamental principle of morality, Kant had to engage with the question of how it is possible for pure reason to move rational agents to perform moral actions universally and necessarily. This is the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. In many of his works during this period, Kant expresses doubts about how pure reason could possibly move all the rational agents to perform moral actions without exceptions. Like what he does in his works in the pre-Critical period, we see him, at times, concerned about how the *formal* moral law could possibly move agents towards moral actions, given that it is a product of pure reason *without any empirical components* in it. More importantly, Kant's worry was: since the moral law of pure reason must be capable of motivating *all* the rational agents *without exceptions*, it should be capable of motivating *all* the human beings, with our unique and idiosyncratic sensible natures, *without exceptions*. To this worry, Kant's critical epistemology adds a caveat of epistemic inaccessibility into how pure reason could possibly cause human agents to move and perform moral actions. That is, in addition to the question of how all the human agents, with our diverse sensible needs and inclinations, could be moved by the moral law of pure reason necessarily, Kant also held a view that it is beyond the limits of our epistemic reach to know how the moral law of pure reason causes moral actions in human agents.

Let us look at these points, one by one, in some detail. In section 3.4.1. that follows, I show that the moral law of pure reason is formal by virtue of its *a priori* status, and therefore lacks incentives to move human agents towards moral actions. In section 3.4.2., I show that the moral law of pure reason does not have an incentive sufficient to counteract the forceful needs of our sensible nature. In section 3.4.3., I show that our limitations in knowing anything about the motivation caused by the moral law adds to motivational skepticism about pure practical reason occurring due to formality of the moral law and our imperfect will.

### **3.4.1. Motivational Skepticism about Pure Practical Reason due to Formality of the Moral Law**

Like the stance he took during the pre-Critical period, Kant thought that the formal nature of the moral law of pure reason does not allow it to be sufficient for moving agents to perform moral actions. In his discussion on the ideal of the highest good of pure practical reason in his first *Critique*, Kant claims that the moral maxims derived from the moral law of pure reason do not



automatically move all the rational agents (with differences in their natural constitutions and ends) to perform moral actions in spite of their necessarily binding nature. This is because, the moral law of pure reason is “a mere idea” that needs external postulates such as God and immortality for its maxims to motivate agents to perform moral actions. He writes,

It is necessary that our entire course of life be subordinated to moral maxims; but it would at the same time be impossible for this to happen if reason did not connect with the moral law, which is a mere idea, an efficient cause which determines for the conduct in accord with this law an outcome precisely corresponding to our highest ends, whether in this or in another life. Thus without a God and a world that is now not visible to us but is hoped for, the majestic ideas of morality are, to be sure, objects of approbation and admiration but not incentives for resolve and realization, because they would not fulfill the whole end that is natural for every rational being and determined a priori and necessarily through the very same pure reason (Kant *KrV*, AA, A812-813/B840-841).

That is, moral maxims are mere ideas and do not possess incentives to drive agents to perform moral actions because they are derived from the formal law of pure reason. Hence, external postulates of reason such as God and immortality (that give us the hope of highest good) are needed to give that missing motivating power to the moral law.<sup>44</sup>

It should be recalled that Kant mostly took the formal nature of the moral principles of reason for granted when expressing his doubts regarding the motivational efficacy of practical reason during the pre-Critical period (as we saw in section 2.2.1. at pp. 32-35). Alternatively, during the Critical period, Kant knew that it is the essential *a priori* status of the moral law that gives it a formal character and makes it “a mere idea”. That is, the formality of the moral law of pure reason is by virtue of the fact that it does not have material ends (like pleasure) and incentives (like sensible needs) derived from empirical sources (like the faculty of feeling). Principles that have these ends and incentives derived from *a posteriori* bases are material and can never become universal and necessary laws of morality. By contrast, the moral law has the form of universality and necessity

---

<sup>44</sup> Sargentis (2012, 104) rightly points out that, although in his first *Critique* Kant (*KrV*, AA, A815/B843) considers ideas of God and immortality to serve as the “obligating force” for the moral law of reason to come to effect via our actions, it “is not the final form of Kant’s theory of moral motivation”. As we will see in the third chapter, he consistently argues that the moral feeling of respect positively serves as the moral motive for human agents in his mature works on ethics in the Critical period.

alone (without any material content) by virtue of its *a priori* status. This is why Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 41) writes that the condition of “the *formal practical principle* of pure reason” for binding the will of the rational agents is “the mere form of a possible giving of universal law through our maxims”. In other words, “the [moral] law contains no condition to which it would be limited” except that the maxims of actions *ought* to conform to its *universal* form (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 421). Only such a formal law “can *possibly* be fit for categorical imperatives, that is, practical laws (which make actions duties), and in general for the principle of morality, whether in appraisals or in application to the human will in determining it” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 41). How this formal law of morality serves as the fundamental principle of moral appraisal is quite obvious. The very form of the universal law becomes the criterion for rational agents to evaluate and decide the maxims to adopt and act on.<sup>45</sup> However, the way in which this formal law of morality also becomes the fundamental principle of moral execution is not very evident. That is, it is difficult to see how moral maxims, which have only the form of universal law, have motivational resources capable of driving agents to perform moral actions. This is why, in the passage above, Kant (*KrV*, AA, A812-813/B840-841) writes that the “majestic ideas of morality are, to be sure, objects of approbation...but not incentives for resolve and realization”. Thus, the formal nature of the moral law leads to doubts about its capacity to move agents for performing moral actions.

Let us take another passage from one of Kant’s lectures on ethics to confirm this skeptical position:

[S]ince the understanding is the faculty of rules and judgement, morality consists in the subordination of the action as such to the principle of the understanding. But how the understanding might contain a principle of actions is somewhat difficult to see. In no sense does it contain the end of the action; the morality of the action consists, rather, in the universal form of the understanding (which is purely intellectual), assuming, that is, that the action is taken universally, so that it can exist as a rule. It is here that we have to bring in the already-mentioned distinction between the objective principle of the appraisal of the action, and the subjective principle of its performance. (Kant *V-Mo/Mron*, AA, 27: 1428)

---

<sup>45</sup> This is a reference to the universalizability test for evaluating the moral worth of the maxims. Maxims of actions that can be willed as the universal law without logical contradiction or contradiction in willing qualify as moral maxims (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 424). Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05:27) writes that even “[t]he most common understanding can distinguish without instruction what form in a maxim makes it fit for a giving of universal law and what does not”.

In this passage, the last two lines about the “already-mentioned distinction” is a reference to the distinction between the fundamental principle of moral appraisal and the fundamental principle of moral execution that the supreme principle of morality must serve as, for making moral actions possible. Kant’s claim above is: given that the moral law must be the fundamental principle underlying the performance of moral actions, it must have ends and supply incentives for motivating rational agents subjectively. However, given its origination from the faculty of understanding (i.e., pure reason, to be precise), it is formal (i.e., “purely intellectual”) in the sense that it contains only the form of the universal law as its condition to necessarily bind the will of all the rational agents. If so, it is “difficult to see” how the moral law of pure reason contains moral motives to drive all the rational agents to perform moral actions. Hence, motivational skepticism about pure practical reason arises due to the formality of the moral law.

### **3.4.2. Moral Law of Pure Reason Cannot Move Human Agents with Sensible Nature**

As I showed in section 2.2.2. above, in the pre-Critical period, Kant arrived at motivational skepticism about practical reason by drawing inferences from failures of human agents to act according to the moral rules of reason (see pp. 35-39). In the Critical period, he took the natural constitution of human agents to show that the moral law of pure reason is incapable of moving us towards moral actions. His line of argument is: although our intelligible nature presents us with the moral law, we also possess a sensible nature that diverts us away from acting in accordance with it.<sup>46</sup> By virtue of our intelligible nature, we possess a faculty of reason that is characterised by independent self-activity and pure spontaneity. Due to these characteristics, our reason is capable of producing representations independently of empirical objects. That is, it can solely generate pure ideas and principles far removed from objects of the empirical world (Kant *GMS*,

---

<sup>46</sup> This distinction has roots in the transcendental idealist distinction between appearances (phenomena) and things-in-themselves (noumena) that Kant developed during the Critical period. Accordingly, we possess knowledge of the world only in so far as it affects our sensibility and as we actively cognize it using our understanding. We must also assume (although we can never know) that there is a world behind these appearances that is out of reach for our faculties of knowledge. Applying this distinction to ourselves as things in the world, we appear to ourselves (via our inner sense) as belonging to the world of sense. As a member of this world, we know ourselves (by actively organizing intuitions of ourselves under categories of understanding) as having a sensible nature that is subject to the laws of nature. We also have an unknowable noumenal dimension to us that belongs to the world of understanding. As a member of this world of understanding, we have an intelligible nature that cannot be known as subject to laws of nature (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 451-452).

AA, 04: 452).<sup>47</sup> The moral law is such a principle that is capable of binding the will of all the rational agents (including all the human agents) necessarily. However, unlike the rational agents who possess only intelligible nature,<sup>48</sup> we also have a sensible nature by virtue of which we possess faculties that are characterised by passivity and receptivity.<sup>49</sup> Our faculty of sensibility (five external senses and one internal sense) produces intuitions in so far as objects in the empirical world affect it. These varied sensible intuitions in turn affect our faculty of physical feeling to cause pleasure or displeasure. Taken together, these sensible representations (of intuitions and feelings) cause desires in the form of instincts<sup>50</sup> and inclinations<sup>51</sup> (i.e., needs of the sensible nature) which require constant satisfaction.<sup>52</sup> These sensible needs too are capable of determining the will of all the human agents. Hence, on the one hand, the moral law of pure reason from our intelligible nature demands that our will be in conformity with its commands unconditionally and, on the other, needs from our sensible nature require our will to satisfy their demands consistently.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> In fact, Kant's critical metaphysics provides us the distinction between the world of sense and the world of understanding (and, also the limits of our understanding) as a product of pure activity of reason "that goes far beyond anything that sensibility can ever afford" it (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 452).

<sup>48</sup> This is a reference to purely rational agents who have holy or perfect will. Since they do not possess sensible nature (with its own set of needs), their will is always determined by the moral law alone. As Kant puts it, the "perfectly good will [of the purely rational agents]...can be determined only through the representation of the good". In other words, "for a *holy* will... [the] volition is of itself necessarily in accord with the [moral law]" (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 414).

<sup>49</sup> Faculties belonging to sensible nature are lower faculties of cognition, feeling and desire (Kant *V-Met-L2/Pöhlitz*, AA, 28: 584). In a lecture, Kant (*V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz*, AA, 28: 228-229) defines these faculties: "The *lower* faculty of cognition [i.e., sensibility] is a power to have representations so far as we are affected by objects"; "The *lower* faculty of pleasure and displeasure is a power to find satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the objects which affect us"; "The *lower* faculty of desire is a power to desire something so far as we are affected by objects".

<sup>50</sup> Kant (*V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25: 1339) defines instinct as "an actual desire, but without clear cognition of the object" (see also Kant *Anth*, AA, 07: 265; *V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25: 1334). The lack of *clear* cognition here does not refer to a lack of sensation, but to a lack of understanding or reason. Examples of instincts include sexual instinct, hunger, etc.

<sup>51</sup> Kant defines inclination as "an habitual desire" (Kant *RGV*, AA, 06: 29; *MS*, AA, 06: 212; *Anth*, AA, 07: 251; *V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25:1334, 1339) that "always indicates a *need*" (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 413n). Compared to instincts, inclinations are complex desires with a wider scope. They can arise out of simpler basic instincts and are many in number (Kant *V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25: 1334). Examples include inclinations for smoking, drinking (Kant *V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25: 1339), honour, money, authority (Kant *Anth*, AA, 07: 271) etc.

<sup>52</sup> The nature of physical feelings is such that a feeling of pleasure requires an agent to maintain it by reproducing or continuing the intuitions that caused it and a feeling of displeasure requires an agent to get rid of it by dismissing or eliminating the intuitions that caused it (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 220). The only way for feelings of pleasure to ensure the continuance of intuitions that cause them (or for feelings of displeasure to get rid of intuitions that caused them) is by determining the faculty of desire of agents (i.e., will, in the case of rational agents) to cause actions for satisfying these requirements (see Kant *V-Met/Mron*, AA, 29: 877-878; *V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25: 1334, for Kant's understanding of the connection between faculties of feeling and desire; see also Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 09n; *V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz*, AA, 28: 247, for Kant's use of the term "life" to refer the inextricable connection between feeling and desire.)

<sup>53</sup> For Kant, it is due to the conflicting influence of needs of our sensible nature upon our will that the commands of the moral law take the form of imperatives. In other words, since our will is not naturally in conformity with it, the

Furthermore, in addition to having these two natures with two sets of conflicting demands, the needs of our sensible nature are such that they *forcefully* require their conditions to be satisfied. In other words, by default, instincts and inclinations belonging to our sensible nature “always have the first word” in seeking satisfaction of their demands (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 147). About this, in his second *Critique*, Kant notes, “[W]e find our nature as sensible beings so constituted that the matter of the faculty of desire (objects of [instincts and] inclination...) first forces itself upon us, and we find our pathologically determinable self...striving antecedently to make its claims primary and originally valid, just as if it constituted our entire self” (05: 74). He also makes this point evident in all the four examples that he provides to demonstrate the first formula of categorical imperative in the second section of his *Groundwork*<sup>54</sup>: his first example is about someone who is “so far in possession of his reason” that he is sick of his life and feels suicidal; the second is about someone who is “*urged* by [a] need to borrow money [emphasis added]” and is inclined to make a false promise (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 421-422); the third example is about someone who gives in “to pleasure than to trouble himself with enlarging and improving his fortunate natural predisposition”; and the fourth is about someone does not feel like getting out of the cycle of satisfying his own needs to help others in need (04: 423). In these four cases Kant clearly presumes that the needs of our sensible nature are so compelling that they take priority in requiring us to satisfy their demands.<sup>55</sup> Now, if we naturally have sensible needs which not only conflict with demands of the moral law, but also have the power to overrule its necessitating capacity, then we are left with the question: how is it possible for the moral law of pure reason to move us towards moral actions? In a lecture transcribed by Collins, Kant says (*V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 293):

The weakness of human nature consists in its want of sufficient moral goodness to make the action adequate to the moral law. But its frailty consists, not only in its want of moral goodness, but also in the prevalence therein of even the strongest principles and

---

moral law of pure reason represents the element of necessity inherent in its commands in the form of necessitation (i.e., as “ought”) (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 412-413; *KpV*, AA, 05: 20).

<sup>54</sup> Timmermann (2007, xx) draws attention to this point in his commentary on Kant’s *Groundwork*.

<sup>55</sup> Since the satisfaction of individual inclinations results in a state of happiness, Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04, 399) alternatively calls our pressing sensible needs as “the strongest and deepest inclination to happiness”. Again, about our inclination for happiness, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05, 25) writes, “To be happy is necessarily the demand of every rational but finite being and therefore an unavoidable determining ground of its faculty of desire... [It is] a problem imposed upon him by his finite nature itself, because he is needy and this need is...related to a subjective feeling of pleasure or displeasure underlying it”.

motivations to ill-doing. Morality consists in this, that an action should arise from the motivating grounds of its own inner goodness, and this pertains to moral purity, known as *rectitudo moralis*. The latter, therefore, is the highest motivating ground to an action. But although the understanding is well aware of this, such a motivating ground still has no driving force. Moral perfection meets with approval, to be sure, in our judgement, but since this motivating ground of moral perfection is produced from the understanding, it does not have a driving force so strong as the sensory one, and that is the weakness of human nature, when it lacks moral goodness and *rectitudo*.

Here, Kant says that human agents seek moral goodness and want our actions to be in conformity with the moral law. The moral law of pure reason aids us in knowing that moral goodness consists in actions stemming from pure inner motivational grounds. Although this awareness aids us in making judgements regarding right and wrong actions, the moral law does not have a driving force that is capable of overriding motivational forces stemming from our sensible needs. Hence, he pins the problem down to our want of moral perfection and the prevalence of stronger motivational forces for satisfying our sensible needs. Let us take another passage from another lecture of Kant to confirm this position:

When a man has learnt to appraise all actions, he still lacks the motive to perform them. The immorality of the action consists, therefore, not in the want of understanding, but in the depravity of the will or the heart. The will is depraved when the motive power of the understanding is outweighed by sensibility. The understanding has no *elateres animi*, albeit it has the power to move, or *motiva*; but the latter are not able to outweigh the *elateres* of sensibility. (Kant *V-Mo/Mron*, AA, 27: 1429)

Again, in this passage, Kant says that although we have the moral law that aids us in judging the right actions, our imperfect will does not automatically get motivated by it. This is because, as discussed above, the motivational force associated with the needs belonging to the sensible nature outweighs the necessitation (or obligating force) stemming from the commands of the categorical imperative. Hence, the moral law does not have the sufficient motivational capacity to move our depraved will towards moral actions.

What is important for us to recall here is that this skeptical argument stemming from the natural constitution of human agents belongs to Kant's larger project of proving that the moral law of pure reason is the supreme principle of morality. While showing that the moral law of pure reason not only serves as the *a priori* principle of moral appraisal but also as the *a priori* principle of moral execution, Kant encounters the skeptical problem of how human agents, with our unique constitution, can be moved by the commands of the moral law. Taking this argument independently of Kant's larger philosophical purpose would make it a problem not about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason, but a problem about *our inability* to act according to the moral law. That is, one could read Kant's concerns about our imperfect will without connecting them to his project of proving pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality. That would mean that these concerns are primarily about *our inefficiency* to follow the commands of the moral law. However, this would be an incomplete reading because Kant expressed these concerns about our imperfect will in the context of his attempt to prove pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality. Since they occur in the light of his main project, skeptical concerns due to our imperfect will become concerns about the motivational inefficacy of pure reason. Keeping this in mind, Kant's doubts about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason due to our sensible nature cannot be dissociated from such doubts emerging due to the formality of the moral law (a point that was discussed in section 3.4.1. above at pp. 52-55). It is not the case that the compelling needs of our sensible nature alone give rise to doubts about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason. Rather, they arise because the moral law originating from pure practical reason is formal and does not have a motivational resource that is capable of overruling the determining force of our sensible needs.<sup>56</sup> In Kant's words, "[on the one hand, the] moral law has precepts, indeed, but no motives [as] it lacks executive authority... [on the other hand,] [m]en may indeed have good powers of judgement in moral matters, but no feeling [capable of moving us towards moral actions]." (Kant *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 361) Thus, the two sets of

---

<sup>56</sup> One may raise an objection that I am reducing all the motivational concerns stemming from our imperfect will to the lack of motivational capacities of the formal moral law in Kant's moral theory. However, this is not the case. My purpose in this discussion is to show evidence for Kant's doubts about how the formal moral law could possibly move our will if we naturally possess a sensible nature with compelling needs and tendencies. Such doubts cause a problem for Kant as his main project is to establish the moral law of pure reason as the highest motivating ground in all human agents without exceptions. This does not mean I am foreclosing the possibility of motivational issues stemming from our psychological inability to adhere to motivation emerging from the moral law. But, to address these psychological issues, it needs to be proven that the moral law is capable of serving as the supreme principle of moral motivation in all human agents.

concerns (one, the moral law is formal, and two, our will is imperfect) that make up Kant's motivational skepticism about pure practical reason are connected.

### 3.4.3. We Can Never Know How the Moral Law Moves Us

To the two connected arguments discussed above, Kant adds another crucial point that strengthens his skeptical stance regarding the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason during the Critical period. This point, which comes about as a direct result of his critical epistemology, is: With the cognitive faculties we possess, it is impossible to know how the moral law of pure reason moves us towards performing moral actions. In a lecture note recorded by Collins during this period, Kant admits that judging morally right actions does not automatically entail our performance of them. Calling the problem of converting moral judgements into actions as the problem of philosopher's stone, he says that it is impossible to know how the ultimate source of the moral law has the power to motivate us to perform morally right actions. In Kant's words:

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...Nobody can or ever will comprehend how the understanding should have a motivating power; it can admittedly judge, but to give this judgement power so that it becomes a motive able to impel the will to performance of an action – to understand this is the philosophers stone (Kant *V-Mo/Mron*, AA, 27: 1428).

For him, this epistemic inaccessibility into the process of moral motivation stemming from pure practical reason has its roots in the analytic relationship between the moral law of pure reason and the idea of freedom. Let us see how this problem exactly occurs in his texts during the Critical period. In the beginning of the third section of his *Groundwork*, Kant asks how human agents could take interest in acting in accordance with the categorical imperative.<sup>57</sup> On the one hand, commands of the categorical imperative do not have material ends (like ends of the sensible needs) and on the other hand, we are beings “who are also affected by sensibility” and “in whose case that which reason by itself would do is not always done” (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 449). However,

---

<sup>57</sup> For Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 413n), the notion of interest (or taking interest in actions) is specific to beings whose will “is not of itself always in conformity with reason”. Since we possess a sensible nature in addition to our reason, the will of human agents is divided between taking interest in acting according to the principles of reason solely (i.e., in accordance with the commands of the categorical imperative) and taking interest in acting according to the needs of our sensible nature by using principles of reason. Kant calls the former as practical interest and the latter as pathological interest.



unless it is shown how all the human agents get motivated to necessarily take interest in acting according to the commands of the categorical imperative, the latter cannot be established as the supreme principle of morality.<sup>58</sup> This is because, as discussed in section 3.2., the supreme principle of morality must necessarily move all the rational agents towards moral actions in addition to necessarily serving as the ultimate principle of moral appraisal for them (see pp. 45-46). In response, Kant claims that this knowledge of how it is possible for the categorical imperative to trigger interest in human agents is beyond the scope of human reason. He writes that our efforts to attain knowledge about how we take interest in the moral law and get motivated to act accordingly “is just the same as if I tried to fathom how freedom itself as the causality of a will is possible” (04: 461) That is, our epistemic inaccessibility into the process of how we take interest in acting according to the categorical imperative of pure reason is identical with our epistemic inaccessibility into causality of free will. He again notes “The subjective impossibility of *explaining* the freedom of the will is the same as the impossibility of discovering and making comprehensible an *interest* which the human being can take in moral laws” (04: 459-460). Kant treats the two concepts on an equal footing when it comes to acquiring knowledge of them because of the analytic connection between the causality of the free will and our motivation to act from the moral law. Kant’s reason for establishing an analytic connection between the two concepts is a result of the ‘deduction’ of the categorical imperative, which he engages with in the third section, in order to establish its unconditional authority. In short, his arguments for making this connection are as follows: Firstly, the categorical imperative and, in particular, the principle of autonomy that explains it can be real only if freedom is attributed as the property of the will of all the rational agents.<sup>59</sup> Secondly, the view that freedom is a property of our will rests on the recognition of ourselves as members of the intelligible world.<sup>60</sup> Thus, as members of the intelligible world, we

---

<sup>58</sup> In the first two sections of the *Groundwork*, Kant analytically draws the categorical imperative from foundational moral concepts such as good will and duty. At the end of the second section, he admits that unless the categorical imperative is shown to be “absolutely necessary as an a priori [practical] principle”, it will remain as “a chimerical idea without truth” (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 445). Since, as discussed in section 3.2. above, the absolute necessity element of its practicality entails moral motivation (see pp. 45-46), the categorical imperative will remain a “chimerical idea” if it is not absolutely necessary as a practical principle.

<sup>59</sup> This is the positive notion of freedom that refers to a sort of causality that is different from causality found in nature. This positive notion of freedom follows from the negative notion of freedom, which refers to independence from alien influences upon the self-legislating will (i.e., autonomous will) (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 446-447).

<sup>60</sup> See footnote 46 at p. 55 for Kant’s transcendental distinction between the two worlds and our two natures from the standpoint of each of these worlds. Kant’s move of grounding the idea of freedom as a property of the will of the members of the intelligible world is to avoid the circular argument of assuming “the idea of freedom [in the form of

possess a will that is free and that is determined by the moral law of pure reason (in the form of categorical imperative). Given that “a free will and a will under moral laws are one and the same” (04: 447), the question of how we take interest in acting in accordance with categorical imperative is not any different from the question of how actions stem from our free will. Now, for Kant, the knowledge of how actions follow from free will (as effects from causes do) is beyond the scope of our cognitive faculty. This epistemic inaccessibility into how free actions are possible is a direct result of his critical epistemology. Accordingly, our faculty of reason, in one of its ways to engage in its speculative search for the unconditioned condition of the series of given conditions, posits the idea of freedom as the ultimate condition for the series of causes and effects in our world of appearances.<sup>61</sup> This also means that this idea does not contain the manifold elements drawn from the phenomenal world through our sensibility. If so, there is nothing from our experience to be synthesised and unified under the category of causality, and thereby, gain knowledge of how freedom *causes* actions. About this Kant writes,

For we can explain nothing but what we can reduce to laws the object of which can be given in some possible experience. Freedom, however, is a mere idea, the objective reality of which can in no way be presented in accordance with laws of nature and so too cannot be presented in any possible experience; and because no example of anything analogous can ever be put under it, it can never be comprehended or even only seen (04: 459).

If it is impossible for us to explain how free will causes actions, then we can never know how we take interest in the moral law and get motivated to perform actions in accordance with the commands of the categorical imperative. In Kant’s words, “reason would overstep all its bounds if it took it upon itself to *explain how* pure reason can be practical, which would be exactly the

---

the principle of autonomy] only for the sake of the moral law, so that we could afterwards infer the latter in turn from freedom [as the property of our will]” (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 453).

<sup>61</sup> In the chapter on “The antinomy of pure reason” in his first *Critique*, Kant (*KrV*, AA, A409/B436) writes, “Reason demands... [that] [i]f the conditioned is given, then the whole sum of conditions, and hence the absolutely unconditioned, is also given, through which alone the conditioned was possible”. In the process of satisfying this demand, our reason takes a step beyond the boundaries of experience and arrives at two conflicting assertions both of which are arguably true. The third of the four antinomies of pure reason that Kant discusses is about reason’s search for unconditioned for the series of causes and effects as conditions given in the world of appearances. One of the two conflicting assertions that reason arrives at in this search is the thesis that the causality of freedom is the ultimate condition for the series of causes and effects in appearances (A444/B472). Ultimately, Kant resolves the conflict between two contradictory assertions in these antinomies by pointing out the mistake of our reason in its transgressive employment beyond the limits of experience to arrive at knowledge of the unconditioned belonging to the noumenal realm (A491-A498/B519-B526).

same task as to explain *how freedom is possible*” (04: 458-459). Kant particularly writes about the problem of epistemic inaccessibility into how the moral law gives us a motivating incentive (or how pure reason becomes practical for us) as follows:

[I]t is quite beyond the capacity of any human reason to explain *how* pure reason, without other incentives that might be taken from elsewhere, can be of itself practical, that is, how the mere *principle of the universal validity of all its maxims as laws* (which would admittedly be the form of a pure practical reason), without any matter (object) of the will in which one could take some interest in advance, can of itself furnish an incentive and produce an interest that would be called purely *moral*; it is impossible for us to explain, in other words, *how pure reason can be practical*, and all the pains and labor of seeking an explanation of it are lost (04: 461).

The problem of having no epistemic access into the possible solution for the philosopher’s stone in ethics occurs in a similar way in the second *Critique* too. In this text, Kant begins the chapter, “On the incentives of pure practical reason” with his insistence on the need for an incentive from the moral law to move us towards the performance of moral actions. This need arises due to the fact that the will of human agents is not in conformity with the moral law by default (because of our sensible nature). In the light of stressing on this need, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 72) defines 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”. As discussed in section 3.2., for Kant, the supreme principle of morality must not only be a norm for all the agents to judge right actions, but must also motivate them to perform these actions without exceptions (see pp. 45-46). If so, the moral law of pure reason, and not any other principle, must serve as the incentive of morality for all the human agents without exceptions. In other words, the ultimate ground of moral motivation for all the individual human agents must necessarily be the moral law of pure reason itself. Kant writes, “[T]he objective determining ground must always and quite alone be also the subjectively sufficient determining ground of action if this is not merely to fulfill the *letter* of the law without containing its *spirit*” (05: 72). In other words, the actions of all the rational agents must not only conform to the norm set by the moral law, but must also spring from incentive of the moral law. Now, what remains is an illustration of how this moral law serves as the moral incentive for all of us without exceptions. In response, Kant claims that we can never know how the moral law could

necessarily serve as the subjective determining ground of the will of all the human agents. He writes,

[N]othing further remains than to determine carefully in what way the moral law becomes the incentive and, inasmuch as it is, what happens to the human faculty of desire as an effect of that determining ground upon it. For, how a law can be of itself and immediately a determining ground of the will (though this is what is essential in all morality) is for human reason an insoluble problem and identical with that of how a free will is possible. (05: 72)

In the passage above, Kant again considers the question of how the moral law becomes an incentive and the question of how free will is possible as “identical” questions. In the “Preface” of the text, Kant writes that “freedom is indeed the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom” (05: 04n). That is, freedom is the condition under which the fact of moral law is rendered to us and, the moral law is the condition under which we become aware of our freedom. His arguments for establishing this connection (in the second *Critique*) are as follows<sup>62</sup>: First, the moral law presents itself as the fact of pure reason in its practical employment (05: 31, 46-47). Since the moral law has only the form of universal lawgiving without any incentives or ends from *a posteriori* grounds, we become aware of our freedom from the world of appearances during the presentation of the moral law (05: 29-30). Thus, our consciousness of the fact of the moral law is the condition under which we first recognize our freedom. Second, since our reason already has an idea of freedom (as a possibility) in its search for the unconditioned condition for the series of causes and effects in the empirical world in its speculative employment, the fact of moral law confirms its reality (05: 48). Thus, it is under the condition of the reality of freedom that pure reason belonging to our intelligible nature generates the moral law. Hence, the notion of the moral law entails the notion of freedom and vice versa. As Kant puts it: “freedom and unconditional practical law [of morality] reciprocally imply each other” (05: 29). This reciprocal relationship freedom and the moral law implies that a will that is free is determined by the form of

---

<sup>62</sup> This argument is quite evidently different from the one that Kant presents in his *Groundwork*. As I briefly discussed above, in the *Groundwork*, Kant engages in the “deduction” of the moral law and finds it in the idea of freedom. In the second *Critique*, however, he argues that such a deduction is unnecessary (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 47) because the moral law is a fact of reason which, in turn, makes us aware of our freedom. This shift in his argument is controversial and is referred to as the “great reversal” in the secondary literature (see Ameriks 2003, 161-192).

the universal law and the will determined by this moral law is a will that is free. Hence, the question of how our will exercises its freedom via actions is not different from the question of how the moral law moves human agents to perform moral actions. As discussed above, from the viewpoint of Kant's critical epistemology, it is beyond the scope of our cognitive faculty to know how free actions are possible. About the epistemic inaccessibility into the causality of freedom, Kant writes, "It is...absolutely impossible to give anywhere in experience an example of it [i.e., freedom], since among the causes of things as appearances no determination of causality that would be absolutely unconditioned can be found... [Thus, by freedom,] I do not cognize at all the object to which such causality is attributed – what the object may be..." (05: 48). Now, since the causality of free will is in essence identical with the question of how the moral law becomes an incentive for us, it is impossible to have epistemic access into the latter. Thus, it is impossible to know "the ground from which the moral law in itself supplies an incentive" to us (05: 72).

Thus, during the Critical period, Kant held a view that it is impossible for us to know how pure reason supplies us with the motivational resource necessary for us to perform moral actions. It should be recalled here that Ware makes use of this point about the epistemic inaccessibility into how the moral law moves us to dismiss the very problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason in Kant's moral theory. As discussed in section 1.3. above, Ware (2014, 731) argues that if we can never know how we get motivated to perform moral actions, then the problem of how the moral law motivates us to perform moral actions "poses no genuine threat" (see pp. 24-26). However, the way we arrived at it by situating it in Kant's broader project shows that this epistemic inaccessibility leaves Kant's main project of proving pure reason as practical and establishing the moral law of pure reason as the supreme principle of morality incomplete. That is, it is in his undertaking to establish pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality that Kant encountered this issue of our lack of epistemic access into the process of moral motivation. Hence, this problem of not having any knowledge about how the pure reason could possibly cause moral motivation hinders Kant's attempt to establish pure reason as the supreme principle of morality. I already showed in sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2. above that, in this very same undertaking, Kant also faced two skeptical challenges to the motivational efficacy of practical reason due to formal nature of the moral law and our imperfect will (see pp. 52-55, 55-60). Taken together with the formal nature of the moral law and our imperfect will (that does not conform with the commands of the moral law naturally), the lack of epistemic access into how the moral

law moves us towards moral actions shows Kant's strong skeptical position regarding the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason during the Critical era. In other words, contrary to how Ware thought about it, the impossibility to know how the moral law serves as the supreme principle of moral execution strengthens Kant's motivational skepticism about pure practical reason during the Critical period.

#### **4. Comparing Kant's Version of Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason with Korsgaard's Two Versions of Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason**

In sections 2 and 3 above, we saw how Kant encountered the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason in his project of identifying the correct supreme principle of morality (in the pre-Critical period) and of proving that the moral law of pure reason is the supreme principle of morality (in the Critical period). In this section, we will see how the version of motivational skepticism about practical reason that occurs in Kant's writings is different from the two versions of the same problem that Korsgaard (1996) dismisses in her essay, "Skepticism about Practical Reason". Only if Kant's version of motivational skepticism about practical reason is different from Korsgaard's versions of it, the former would avoid the latter's arguments for dismissing the problem as invalid. In other words, if Kant's version of the problem is identical with one of the two possible versions of the problem as Korsgaard sees it, then the former succumbs to the latter's objections and cannot be taken as philosophically valid.

In the two sections that follow, I show how Kant's problem motivational skepticism about practical reason is not susceptible to Korsgaard's (1996) arguments for dismissing the philosophical validity of this problem. In section 4.1., I show that, unlike how Korsgaard conceives of the first version of this problem, Kant's motivational skepticism about practical reason does not depend on content skepticism. In section 4.2., I show that, unlike how Korsgaard conceives of the second version of this problem, Kant's account of motivational skepticism does not arise due to a misunderstanding about the extent of the motivational requirement of the practical reason.

##### **4.1. Kant's Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason is not Korsgaard's Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason – Version I**

As discussed in section 1.1. above, for Korsgaard (1996), the first version of motivational skepticism refers to raising doubts about how reason could possibly move agents towards any actions if it is just a faculty of theoretical cognition with no practical relevance (see p. 14). This

version comes about as a point of justification for holding a general skeptical position about practical reason in some moral theories. Korsgaard dismisses this version of motivational skepticism as an independent problem on the grounds that it always presupposes another fundamental skepticism about the practical content of reason. Korsgaard argues that the question of how reason, as a cognitive faculty, could possibly move agents towards actions depends on another question of whether reason could possibly provide any content regarding practical affairs. Now, as mentioned in section 1.2. above, from Korsgaard's viewpoint, this first version of motivational skepticism cannot obviously occur in Kant's moral theory because, while this version serves to justify doubts about whether reason has *any* positive role to play in the practical realm, practical employment of pure reason is undeniably an essential component of Kant's ethics (see p. 18). However, the way I read how the issue of motivational skepticism about practical reason occurs in Kant's writings above does not presuppose Kant's moral theory as a fully formed, complete system founded solely on pure practical reason. That is, in showing the occurrences of this problem, I did not presume the success of Kant's enterprise in establishing pure reason as the founding principle of morality. Rather, as we saw in the sections above, Kant's doubts about the motivational efficacy of practical reason comes about *in the process* of investigating the correct supreme principle of morality.<sup>63</sup> They occur within Kant's attempt to establish the moral law of pure reason as the founding principle of morality. It is possible that this reading of Kant's motivational skepticism about practical reason may resemble Korsgaard's first version of it and, therefore, may become vulnerable to her arguments against its independent validity. That is, from Korsgaard's standpoint, one may argue that if Kant took a skeptical position concerning the motivational efficacy of practical reason *as a part of* his project of identifying and establishing the correct supreme principle of morality,<sup>64</sup> then it is possible that this position followed from content

---

<sup>63</sup> One may question why motivational skepticism about practical reason should *necessarily* be a part of Kant's working out of the supreme principle of morality. As I showed in section 3.2. of this chapter (pp. 42-46), for Kant, by virtue of its *a priori* status, the supreme principle of morality must *necessarily* serve as the ultimate principle of moral motivation in all rational agents without exceptions. Hence, Kant's discussion of how the moral law of pure reason can possibly move all the human agents *necessarily* belongs to his project of establishing the moral law of pure reason as the supreme principle of morality. Furthermore, as I showed throughout this chapter, he expresses his doubts about the motivational efficacy of the moral law of pure reason in his texts during his discussion of the moral law, nature of human beings and our epistemic limitations into the causality of the moral law.

<sup>64</sup> The term "part of" here is used in the sense of a step belonging to Kant's argument for establishing the moral law as the supreme principle of morality. Articulating and addressing motivational skepticism about pure practical reason is an argumentative step in Kant's proof of pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality. As discussed in section 3.4. (p. 51), another step that is a part of this proof is Kant's discussion of how the moral law of pure reason

skepticism about practical reason that he was primarily addressing through his project. In other words, if Kant encountered motivational skepticism about practical reason in the process of showing that pure reason is practical, then it is possible that it had its roots in a more fundamental form of skepticism about whether or not pure reason provides any moral content in its practical employment. If this is so, then, from Korsgaard's viewpoint, it would mean that motivational skepticism about practical reason occurring in Kant's texts does not have any independent philosophical validity.

However, it is not true that Kant's motivational skepticism about practical reason (as it occurs in his texts) depends on a fundamental content-related skepticism that he was trying to respond to. To show this, it is firstly important to recall that, for Korsgaard (1996, 311), content skepticism refers to expressing "doubts...about whether "formal" principles [of reason] have any content and can give substantive guidance to choice and action". By contrast, despite emphasizing on the formal nature of the principles and rules of reason in the light of expressing doubts about their motivational efficacy, Kant never had doubts about whether these formal principles and commands of reason have moral content in them. As mentioned in section 2.2., during most part of the pre-Critical period, Kant encountered motivational skepticism about practical reason in the light of considering faculty of reason as the ultimate source of the supreme principle of morality (see p. 32). Now, what should be noted in these discussions is that, in spite of his uncertainty about whether the role of reason extends to moral motivation, Kant always presumed that reason has the capacity to make judgements concerning what is morally good. In other words, in considering reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality, Kant never had doubts about whether reason could possibly judge actions as morally right and wrong. For instance, in the passage from his *Prize Essay*, that we saw in section 2.2.1., Kant posits the need for material principles from the faculty of feeling *after* taking the judgements of reason concerning moral good for granted (Kant *UD*, AA, 02: 299) (see p. 33). Similarly, in the Critical period, Kant did not have problems in showing how the categorical imperative serves as the *a priori* norm for judging and deciding morally right actions. Although the moral law is devoid of material content, the form of universal law it has is sufficient for it to serve as the ultimate norm of moral appraisal. An action acquires

---

serves as the supreme principle of moral appraisal in all rational agents without exceptions (see Figure 3 in p. 75 below).



moral worth only if the maxim underlying it is willed as the universal law (i.e., takes the form of the moral law) (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 424). Further, as mentioned above in footnote 45 (p. 54), anyone with good reasoning capacity can easily judge an action as morally good by evaluating if the form of the maxim underlying it takes the form of the universal law (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 27). Hence, in his project of identifying and establishing the correct supreme principle of morality, Kant never had difficulties in thinking about reason as the faculty that aid us in making correct moral judgements. This means, in taking reason as the possible source of the supreme principle of morality in the pre-Critical period and, in showing pure reason as the faculty that solely founds morality in the Critical period, Kant did not have any doubts about whether or not faculty of reason could possibly give us *any* moral content to rational agents. Rather, after admitting the practical employment of reason (for the formation of moral judgements), his question was: can reason *also* possibly give us content that moves us towards moral actions. Thus, Kant's skeptical position concerning the motivational efficacy of practical reason is not based on his doubts about whether or not reason could possibly give any moral content to rational agents in the practical realm. This shows that Kant's version of motivational skepticism about practical reason is different from Korsgaard's (1996) first version of it and, hence, it avoids her arguments against its independent validity.

#### **4.2. Kant's Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason is not Korsgaard's Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason – Version II**

As discussed in section 1.1. above, Korsgaard's (1996) motivational skepticism about practical reason version – II arises due to the possibility of true cases of irrationality in moral theories that attribute at least a minimal role to faculty of reason in the practical realm (see pp. 14-15). As discussed in section 1.2. above, Kant's version of motivational skepticism about practical reason fits into Korsgaard's second version of motivational skepticism about practical reason quite evidently (see pp. 18-19). As we saw, space for notions such as frailty in Kant's moral theory illustrates Korsgaard's case of true irrationality pretty straightforwardly. If so, skepticism about the motivational efficacy of practical reason arising due to these notions is identical with Korsgaard's second version of motivational skepticism about practical reason. This means, Korsgaard's arguments for dismissing the second version of motivational skepticism about practical reason applies to Kant's version too. Let us quickly recall how her arguments for dismissing motivational skepticism about practical reason apply to Kant's moral theory: Firstly,

since Kant's moral theory attributes a significant role to pure reason in the practical realm, internalism requirement requires that pure practical reason must certainly serve as the source of the motive for moral actions. The categorical imperative of pure reason satisfies this requirement because it is unconditionally authoritative and, therefore, binds the will of all the rational agents without exceptions. Secondly, our failures to act morally despite the unconditional demands of the moral law are a result of certain factors and influences stemming from our subjective dimensions. For instance, the weakness of our will is a result of our natural propensity to evil. Similarly, we saw in section 3.4.2. above that, human agents are naturally constituted in a way that the needs of our sensible nature take precedence in seeking satisfaction (see pp. 55-60). These points mean that our lack of motivation to perform moral actions is because our subjective dimension is not in alignment with the moral law of reason. Taken together, these two arguments lead to the view that doubts about the motivational capacity of pure practical reason in Kant's moral theory arise only erroneously.

However, such a reading of Kant's motivational skepticism about practical reason is mistaken. To see how, let us first take the argument from internalism requirement. Generally, internalism requirement requires that if a moral theory allows for a practical employment of reason, then the principles and rules of practical reason must serve as the underlying motive for moral actions. While Korsgaard (1996) is right in claiming that the categorical imperative is supposed to satisfy the internalism requirement in Kant's moral theory, the extent to which it does so is a question that needs examination. Although the unconditionally authoritative nature of the categorical imperative seems to satisfy this requirement, it does so only partially. In other words, the categorically necessitating nature of the moral law is not sufficient for it to serve as the motive for moral actions. To understand this point, it should be recalled (as mentioned in footnote 53 at pp. 56-57) that the supreme principle of morality from pure reason is presented to us in the form of an imperative because human agents also possess a sensible nature, with its own set of needs, in addition to reason. To put it in other words, due to our natural constitution, the element of necessity inherent in the supreme principle of morality takes the form of necessitation (in the form of "ought") for our imperfect will. Now, this necessitation of the moral law too is not sufficient to motivate us towards performing moral actions because of the limitation to what the form of imperative can possibly do in the process of determining the will towards actions. In a discussion on the possibility of imperatives in his *Groundwork*, Kant clearly restricts the role of imperatives to necessitating

the will and denies their positive connection with the execution of actions. He writes: “Now the question arises: how are all these imperatives possible? This question does not inquire how the performance of the action that the imperative commands can be thought, but only how the necessitation of the will, which the imperative expresses in the problem, can be thought.” (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 417). This shows that, by definition, imperatives aid in the necessitation of the will and do not lead to actions automatically all by themselves. If imperatives do not guarantee the performance of actions, then the categorical imperative do not lead to the performance of moral actions despite its unconditionally necessitating nature. Thus, the nature of imperatives is such that the categorical imperative necessitates the will of all the human agents without exceptions, but does not necessarily move the will of all the human agents without exceptions. An alternate way of putting this point is: the form of categorical imperative that the supreme principle of morality takes for us serves only to counterbalance our additional sensible nature. But, there is an additional need for an incentive *from* pure reason as a supplement to this moral law for motivating us to act against the *compelling* incentives (stimuli) of our sensible nature. Kant expresses this point as a short remark in one of his lectures on the philosophical doctrine of religion delivered in the year 1785-86. In a discussion about the distinction between objective and subjective grounds of actions, he says:

Just this [i.e., the distinction between objective and subjective grounds] often holds even of moral motives which, if they are objective, obligate me to do something, but still do not bestow on me the powers and incentives to do it. For in order to perform the actions recognized to be good and right, certain subjective motives in me are also required to put them into practice. For this it is necessary not only that I find the deed to be noble and fine, but that my choice be determined accordingly. (Kant *V-Phil-Th/Pölitz*, AA, 28: 1100-1101)

In short, although the categorical imperative, as an objective determining ground of motivation, necessitates us towards satisfying the moral obligation, we additionally need subjective motivating grounds (or incentives) from pure reason to perform actions accordingly. Hence, the internalism requirement is not fully satisfied with the categorical imperative alone. How pure reason supplies an additional incentive as a supplement to the categorical imperative for it to serve as a moral motive, and thereby, satisfy the internalism requirement is the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason.

Secondly, Korsgaard's (1996) argument from imperfect subjectivity to support her dismissal of motivational skepticism about practical reason misses the broader picture of Kant's main project. This is a point that I have already discussed in sections 2.2.2. and 3.4.2 briefly (see pp. 38-39, 59-60). If we consider instances of moral failures in human agents and our idiosyncratic sensible natures independently of Kant's central question on how pure reason can be practical, then they can be taken as referring to our weaknesses in aligning with morality of pure reason. The presupposition that pure reason is the source of the supreme principle of morality is required for comparing our natural constitution and moral failures with the unconditional moral law of pure reason and qualifying the former as subjective imperfections. However, as I showed above, Kant's objective in his writings on moral philosophy is to show that pure reason is the source of the supreme principle of morality (pp. 50-51). For pure reason to be the source of the supreme principle of morality, it must be practical *a priori*. In other words, the moral law of pure reason should serve as the source of moral judgements and as the source of motivation towards the performance of moral actions in all the rational agents without exceptions. Since human beings are rational by virtue of our intelligible nature, the moral law of pure reason must be capable of serving as the source of moral appraisal and moral execution in all of us without exceptions. But, naturally, we also happen to have a sensible nature that has its own set of needs that requires constant satisfaction. Since we are susceptible to giving priority to performing actions that satisfy the sensible needs and desires, the question that needs answering is: how is it possible for the moral law of pure reason, which is valid and real for all the rational agents without exceptions, to motivate all the human agents to perform moral actions without exceptions? This is how the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason emerges in Kant's moral theory. Thus, if we keep Kant's main project in mind, then we realize that the onus of moving our imperfect will towards moral actions lies with pure reason. In other words, for pure reason to serve as the supreme principle of morality, it must possess a rational incentive capable of overruling our natural tendencies to satisfy the sensible needs, and thereby, drive our will towards moral actions.

Since the two arguments that Korsgaard (1996) uses to dismiss her second version of motivational skepticism about practical reason do not apply to Kant's version of the problem (as illustrated in the two paragraphs above), the latter is certainly different from Korsgaard's motivational skepticism about practical reason – version II. What should additionally be noted here is: the view that Kant's motivational skepticism about practical reason is different from Korsgaard's second

version of it does not deny the erroneous occurrences of the latter via cases of true irrationality in Kant's moral theory. It is possible that one may mistakenly question the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason in Kant's moral theory due to cases of true irrationality after taking Kant's account of moral incentive into the picture. That is, as we will see in the third chapter, Kant responds to the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason using his account of moral feeling, an incentive of the moral law. Taking Kant's resolution to the problem as granted, one could still question the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason in the light of our subjective failures to act from motivation caused by the incentive of moral feeling.<sup>65</sup> The problem presupposes the internalism requirement that pure reason must be capable of motivating rational agents *using its moral incentive*. This presupposition leads to Korsgaard's criticism that this problem arises mistakenly due to an error in the understanding of what the internalism requirement requires holds good. Her arguments for dismissing the occurrence of the problem in this way would be the following: Firstly, the internalism requirement requires that the categorical imperative *and* the moral incentive of pure reason must serve as the motive for the performance of moral actions. Secondly, cases of true irrationality are due to certain elements and factors from our subjective dimension which drive us to act against morality despite necessitation from the categorical imperative *and* the positive influence of the moral incentive of pure reason.<sup>66</sup> Frailty as a case of evil still fits this category because Kant's discussion of it (along with two other cases of evil – depravity and impurity) presupposes his proof of pure reason's practicality and his account of how of pure reason serves as the moral incentive for human agents. Our will is frail (or depraved or impure) only in comparison with the already-established moral law of pure reason and only when we subordinate the moral incentive to the incentives from our sensible nature.<sup>67</sup> Further, performing actions contrary to morality due to our frail will must be attributed to our natural propensity towards evil and not to the moral law of pure reason. Hence, Korsgaard's second

---

<sup>65</sup> This is a point I briefly discussed in the form of an objection and a response at footnote 56 in page 59.

<sup>66</sup> The way Korsgaard (1996) generally argues against the second version of motivational skepticism about practical reason has been discussed in section 1.1. of this chapter (see pp. 16-17). The way Korsgaard conceives of and dismisses this version of the problem as occurring in Kant's moral theory has been discussed in section 1.2. of this chapter (see pp. 19-20). Here, I am showing how she would dismiss motivational skepticism about practical reason if it arises despite the inclusion of an incentive of pure reason in Kant's moral motivational structure.

<sup>67</sup> The priority in getting motivated by the moral incentive over sensible incentives is the moral order of incentives. Evil (in the form of frailty, depravity and impurity) occurs when this moral order of incentives is reversed. Kant (RGV, AA, 06: 36) writes, "the human being (even the best) is evil only because he reverses the moral order of his incentives in incorporating them into his maxims".

version of motivational skepticism about practical reason can arise in Kant's moral theory due to misunderstanding about the internalism requirement and misattribution of true irrationality to pure reason (as illustrated using the case of frailty).<sup>68</sup> The purpose of putting this point forward is to emphasize the following: although Korsgaard's second version of motivational skepticism about practical reason can come about in Kant's moral theory (with few modifications from how Korsgaard thinks of it) and, thereby, yield to her arguments against its independent validity, Kant's own doubts about the motivational efficacy of practical reason occur in his texts in a very different manner that they avoid Korsgaard's arguments against their independent validity.

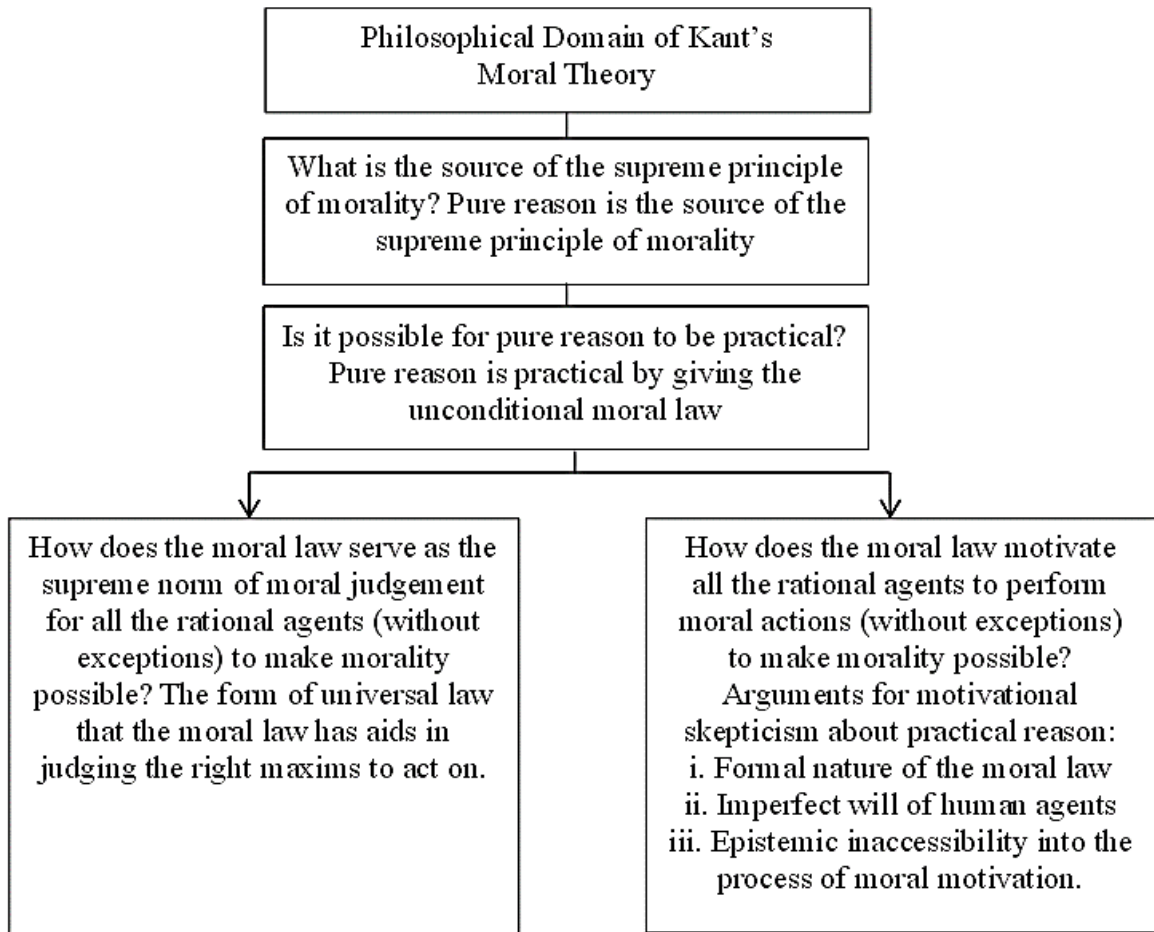
Thus, the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason as it occurs in Kant's texts is different from Korsgaard's (1996) two versions of the same problem. If so, as we saw in section 4.1. above, Kant's motivational skepticism about practical reason does not depend on another fundamental form of skepticism about the moral content of practical reason (see pp. 66-69). Further, as we saw in section 4.2., this problem does not arise in Kant's moral theory due to a misunderstanding about the internalism requirement or due to misattribution of our subjective imperfections to the faculty of reason (see pp. 69-74). In sum, Kant's motivational skepticism about practical reason is not subject to Korsgaard's arguments for dismissing it as philosophically invalid. By contrast, as I discussed in sections 2 and 3 in detail, this problem is closely tied to Kant's main philosophical project of finding and establishing the correct supreme principle of morality (see pp. 28-39, 39-66). In the pre-Critical period, although Kant did not have a well-defined account of how the supreme principle of morality becomes practical to make morality possible, he was certain that it must play a positive role in motivating agents towards moral actions. In the light of his consideration of faculty of reason as the possible source of the supreme principle of morality, questions about how principles and rules of practical reason could motivate agents in the moral realm emerged. In the Critical period, Kant developed a mature account of how the supreme principle of morality must be practical for it found morality. The only way for any fundamental principle to make morality possible is by serving as the first principle governing moral appraisal and moral execution *a priori*. In his project of proving that pure reason is practical in this way through its moral law, he encountered doubts about the motivational efficacy of the

---

<sup>68</sup> As mentioned in footnote 14 at p. 18, this view applies to other notions like, impurity, depravity, affects, passions, self-deception etc. in Kant's moral theory that demonstrate Korsgaard's (1996) notion of true irrationality.

latter. Thus, Kant's motivational skepticism about practical reason is intertwined with his philosophical project of considering reason as the possible source of the supreme principle of morality and of establishing the moral law of pure reason as the supreme principle of morality (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Situating the Problem of Motivational Skepticism about Practical Reason in Kant's Moral Philosophy**



Now, unless we see a convincing solution to the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason from within Kant's texts, his philosophical project of grounding morality with *a priori* principle of pure reason cannot be taken as complete. The only way he could have resolved the problem is by showing that there is a moral incentive emerging from pure reason that is capable of moving all the human agents to perform moral actions. More importantly, his solution must be capable of overcoming the two main difficulties that backed the problem of motivational

skepticism about practical reason in his moral theory. That is, the moral incentive of pure reason should go hand in hand with the formal moral law and should possess the strength to drive our will against the compelling desires of our sensible nature. If an incentive is capable of not giving material ends to the moral law and of motivating human agents against the forceful tendencies of our sensible nature, then we can take it to fully resolve motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. Given this, Kant should however ensure that this moral incentive of pure reason does not violate his epistemological thesis regarding our inaccessibility into the process of moral motivation. That is, the nature and function of the correct moral incentive must be such that it retains our limits of acquiring knowledge. As mentioned at different places in this chapter, for Kant, it is moral feeling, and in particular, feeling of respect for the moral law that serves as the moral incentive of pure reason, and thereby, serves as the solution to his problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason. Since motivational skepticism about pure practical reason is tied to the question about the supreme principle underlying moral motivation, moral feeling not only motivates human agents to perform moral actions, but it also conditions the possibility of moral motivation in all finite rational agents without exceptions. Since the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason has philosophical validity by virtue of its place within Kant's overall philosophical project, the solution he offers too acquires philosophical significance. As I will show in the third chapter, Kant's notion of moral feeling not only belongs to his moral motivational structure, but is also an important part of his proof of the practicality of pure reason. Thus, Kant's account of moral motivation, particularly his discussion of moral feeling, belongs only to philosophical domain of Kant's moral theory and, therefore, it cannot be sidelined to the domain of psychology.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this chapter, against Korsgaard's (1996) dismissive stance, I showed that motivational skepticism about practical reason occurs in Kant's moral theory as a significant problem that is closely tied with the main project of his moral philosophy. First, I discussed how Korsgaard dismisses motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant's moral theory. For Korsgaard, motivational skepticism about practical reason generally arises in any moral theory either because the faculty of reason cannot produce practical content or because of the misunderstanding of what practical reasons require to motivate agents. By locating the cause of failures in getting motivated by rational considerations in our subjective dimension, Korsgaard opens up space for the



psychological discussion of moral motivation in human agents. Applying these views Kant's moral theory, Korsgaard argues that motivational skepticism about practical reason occurs only because of the misunderstanding about what categorical imperative requires for it to serve as the source of moral motivation. Since the categorical imperative unconditionally moves our will to moral actions in so far as we are rational, she argues that moral failures must be attributed to our failures to align our subjective natures with the commands of morality. By doing so, Korsgaard relegates Kant's discussion of how the moral law effects incentives in our minds for moral motivation to the domain of psychology. I briefly showed that while there are a few scholars like Ameriks (2006) and Ware (2014) who share Korsgaard's (1996) conclusions, there are a few others like Sargentis (2012) and Sytsma (1993) who do not follow her line of thought.

After discussing Korsgaard's (1996) dismissive stance in detail, I shifted my focus to how the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason occurs in Kant's moral theory. For Kant, the central project of any philosophical investigation on morality must begin with the search for the supreme principle of morality. The supreme principle of morality, a foundational principle that conditions the possibility of moral judgement and performance of moral actions, must certainly be capable of motivating all the agents in the practical realm to act morally. If the moral law, that is derived from pure reason, is the supreme principle of morality, then the question that arises is: how could human agents in the practical realm be motivated by the commands of this moral law to perform moral actions? This question acquires a skeptical flavor due to challenges in answering it. These issues are about the formal nature of the moral law, the likelihood of the imperfect will of human agents to act against morality and the impossibility to know how the moral law motivates us. Taken together, they support Kant's skeptical position concerning the motivational efficacy of practical reason. I showed that this problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason and the arguments for it occur in Kant's texts in both pre-Critical and Critical period of his philosophical development. During most part of the pre-Critical era, Kant was uncertain about whether moral feeling or the moral law of reason serves as the supreme principle of morality. Despite this, in his efforts to position reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality, he encountered doubts about the motivational efficacy of practical reason. These doubts were backed by the formal nature of the moral rules of reason and the occurrences of moral failures in human agents on a regular basis. In the Critical period, Kant developed a mature view on the feature of practicality of the supreme principle of morality. The supreme principle of morality must be the

fundamental principle underlying moral appraisal and moral performance for all the agents in the practical realm without exceptions. After critically assessing the other possible sources of the supreme principle of morality that his predecessors and contemporaries proposed, he identified pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality. Although the moral law of pure reason evidently serves as the highest governing moral norm for all the rational agents without exceptions, it is not clear how it could possibly move all the human agents to perform moral actions without exceptions. This doubt arises because (i) the moral law of pure reason is formal and does not contain any material ends or incentives, (ii) human agents have needs and desires from sensible nature that constantly divert our will against morality and (iii) to know how the moral law supplies us with an incentive to move us towards moral actions is beyond the scope of our knowing faculties. Thus, as I showed above, motivational skepticism about practical reason occurs throughout Kant's writings in both pre-Critical and Critical periods.

Then, I argued that Kant's version of motivational skepticism about practical reason is different from Korsgaard's (1996) two versions of the same problem. I showed that the problem as it occurs in Kant's moral theory avoids Korsgaard's objections for it to be dismissed as lacking independent philosophical validity. To be specific, I showed that Kant's version of this problem does not depend on a fundamental moral content-related skepticism, does not arise due to a misunderstanding of what the internalism requirement requires and does not arise as a result of a misattribution of our subjective imperfections upon our faculty of reason. Finally, I showed that Kant's version of motivational skepticism about practical reason holds independent philosophical validity, not only because it is different from Korsgaard's versions of the problem and avoids her criticisms, but also because it is intricately intertwined with Kant's main philosophical project of identifying the correct supreme principle of morality and proving its practicality in our everyday moral lives. If the question concerning the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason has philosophical validity in Kant's moral theory, then his response to it have philosophical significance.

The aim of this chapter was to study the problem of moral motivation in Kant's moral theory. In the next chapter, I will critically discuss the three exclusive types of scholarly interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation – phenomenological, empirical and transcendental interpretations. A critical overview of these debates and disagreements in the secondary literature

will lead me to explore how Kant's consideration of moral feeling as the moral incentive of pure reason serves as an appropriate solution to the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason in the third chapter.

## **CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE SECONDARY LITERATURE ON KANT'S ACCOUNT OF MORAL MOTIVATION**

The main focus of the first chapter was to understand the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason as it occurs in Kant's moral philosophy. In discussing the problem in detail, I hinted at a few places that Kant resolved his doubts about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason using the notion of moral feeling of respect. Although Kant identifies feeling of respect for the moral law as the correct moral incentive at different places in his works in the Critical period, it is in the third chapter of his second *Critique* titled, "On the incentives of pure practical reason", where Kant exclusively works out the details of how this moral feeling conditions the possibility of moral motivation in finite rational agents. Taking this chapter as central to their reading, scholars and commentators have provided three kinds of interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation: phenomenological, empirical and transcendental. In this chapter, I study these three types of interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation with specific references to two scholars from each of these strands. In addition to understanding them, I show how scholars from across two types of interpretative strands and from within the same type of interpretation have critically responded to and engaged in debates with each other. In the process of doing this, I also highlight the specific problems that all the three types of interpretations face.

With these objectives in mind, I begin this chapter by introducing the interpretative divides in scholarly approaches to Kant's account of moral motivation. In section 1, I discuss the three kinds of interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation in detail with specific references to two scholars from each of these interpretative strands: First, I discuss phenomenological interpretations of Grenberg (2013) and Ware (2014) (section 1.1.); Second, I discuss empirical interpretations of Frierson (2014, 2016a) and Singleton (2007) (section 1.2.); Third, I discuss transcendental interpretations of Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) (section 1.3.). Then, in section 2, I show that empirical and phenomenological interpretations were proposed as alternatives to transcendental interpretations of Allison (1990) and Reath (1989). More specifically, in section 2.1., I argue that the two alternative interpretations emerged primarily because of the problem concerning the role of moral feeling within Kant's moral motivational structure in the standard transcendental interpretations. I also show that scholars who propose these two alternatives find Allison-Reath's denial of any role to moral feeling within Kant's justification of the moral law as problematic.

Then, in section 2.2., I show the debates and disagreements between scholars both from across two types of interpretations and from within the same kind of interpretation. I take up the on-going debate between Frierson (2016a, 2016b) and Grenberg (2016) to demonstrate the former (section 2.2.1.) and discuss Ware's (2015) disagreements with Grenberg's (2013) reading to illustrate the latter (section 2.2.2.). In section 2.3., I highlight the specific challenges (such as, the problem concerning the *a priori* nature of moral feeling (section 2.3.1.) and a misunderstanding of Kant's problem of moral motivation (section 2.3.2.)) that are common to all these alternative interpretations.

### **1. Interpretative Divides on the Nature of Kant's Account of Moral Motivation**

In his book *Kant's Empirical Psychology*, Frierson (2014, 117) identifies two strands of approaches to understanding Kant's account of moral motivation in the secondary literature. He sees some scholars as taking an empiricist approach in their interpretations of Kant's discussion on how moral motivation occurs in human agents. This empiricist interpretation takes Kant's account of moral motivation as explaining moral actions as "events in the empirical world" that occur due to "the interaction between causal powers of the soul" (118). Frierson also writes about scholars who provide an anti-empiricist interpretation of Kant's discussion on how human agents get motivated to act according to the moral law. This view considers Kant's account of moral motivation as describing moral actions "from the practical (rather than empirical) point of view" in order to lay out "the conditions of possibility" of such actions (118). In his article, "Kantian Feeling: Empirical Psychology, Transcendental Critique, and Phenomenology", Frierson (2016a, 354) revises this twofold division of interpretative strands and broadens it into three ways in which scholars have read Kant's account of moral motivation. They are: phenomenological, empirical and transcendental approaches. While empirical and transcendental interpretations correspond to empiricist and anti-empiricist interpretations of his earlier division of interpretations, a phenomenological interpretation of Kant's views on how human agents get motivated to perform moral actions is a new addition.<sup>69</sup> This phenomenological interpretation regards Kant's account of moral motivation as attending "to the way" in which individual human agents "feel" from within

---

<sup>69</sup> This addition of a phenomenological interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation to Frierson's earlier twofold interpretative division is a result of his reading of Grenberg's book, *Kant's Defense of Common Moral Experience: A Phenomenological Account* (Frierson 2016a, 354).

themselves when “the moral law shows up as a reason” for performing actions (Frierson 2016a, 362).

In this section, I explore these three strands of interpretations of Kant’s position on moral motivation by referring to the arguments of two scholars belonging to each of these interpretations. In section 1.1., I discuss the phenomenological interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation with references to Grenberg (2013) and Ware (2014). In section 1.2., I discuss the empirical interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation with references to Frierson (2014, 2016a) and Singleton (2007). In section 1.3., I discuss the transcendental interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation with references to Allison (1990) and Reath (1989).

### **1.1. Phenomenological Interpretations of Kant’s Account of Moral Motivation**

As pointed out above, the phenomenological interpretation regards Kant’s discussion on the process of moral motivation as a first-personal, descriptive account of how we feel from within, when we get motivated by the awareness of the moral law. It particularly revolves around Kant’s passages on what happens when individual human agents experience moral feeling – an effect of the moral law in our minds, in the light of his thesis that we can never know anything about how the moral law causes this feeling in us. In sections 1.1.1. and 1.1.2. that follow, I discuss Grenberg’s (2013) and Ware’s (2014) phenomenological interpretations of Kant’s account of moral motivation in some detail.

#### **1.1.1. Grenberg’s Phenomenological Interpretation**

In her book *Kant’s Defense of Common Moral Experience: A Phenomenological Account*, Grenberg (2013) claims that Kant had a well-thought-out phenomenological approach to morality throughout his writings on moral philosophy. For her, Kant appealed to “a method of attentive reflection upon a common, felt, first-personal” experience of morality “as a part and parcel of his method of grounding practical philosophy” (Grenberg 2013, 15, 17). She holds that he made an extensive use of common, felt, first-personal moral experiences in order to establish the basic tenets of his moral theory. She argues that he relied on the phenomenological method mainly because, for him, foundational principles that make morality possible are beyond the limits of our knowledge. More specifically, she writes, “Kant...utilize[d] this first-personal phenomenological experience to present noumenally weighty things such as awareness of [moral] obligation and

freedom” (41). That is, in order to validate the supreme authority of the moral law of pure reason, Kant depended on common, first-personal, felt experiences of categorical necessity and freedom. To justify her main claim, Grenberg shows that although Kant consistently refers to common, felt experiences of categorical obligation in his *Groundwork*, he refuses to grant it a foundational, grounding status yet (108). She particularly shows that despite his references to first-personal felt experiences of negative freedom in the third section of his *Groundwork*, Kant looked for another reliable source beyond these phenomenological experiences of morality to affirm the objective reality of freedom and categorical imperative (118-133). Criticizing his reluctance to use phenomenological method to ground his moral theory in the *Groundwork* (she calls it as the “phenomenological failure of *Groundwork*” (106, 134), Grenberg takes up Kant’s second *Critique* to provide a successful phenomenological reading of his discussion on the moral law as a ‘fact of reason’. She argues that, for Kant, the “*Fact of Reason is a felt, phenomenological fact*” (193). That is, the “[a]wareness of being obligated to the moral law” is a “given, unavoidable, nondeducible [felt] fact” (191). She argues that, by consistently appealing to this common, first-personal experience of the felt fact of reason, Kant articulates and justifies the authority of the moral law of pure reason in his second *Critique*. She particularly examines how Kant presents the ‘gallows man’ example to ground the rational cause of the common, phenomenological feeling of categorical obligation as the moral law and philosophically articulates it using formulations of categorical imperative. She writes:

[I]n the Gallows Man example of the second *Critique*, Kant presents a man who discovers, through first-personal reflection, that “he can do something because he is aware that he ought to do it” (5:30/27–28). He has, in other words, an *experience* of the moral law weighing upon him. The Gallows Man is simply experiencing himself as being obligated categorically; this is, apparently, something Kant considers capable of being presented in experience. If we remind ourselves, further, that a claim such as “the will is obligated categorically” is a synthetic a priori claim, then we see that Kant has just appealed to first-personal experience to present a practical synthetic a priori claim of necessity (41).

Thus, for Grenberg, Kant uses “the phenomenological method of philosophical attentiveness to felt experience” to vindicate his “most basic claims of practical philosophy – the claims of objective, synthetic a priori, practical cognitions” (187-188).

Given her overall project of developing and defending a phenomenological approach to Kant's moral philosophy, Grenberg's (2013) phenomenological interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation is evidently a part of it. To argue for such an interpretation, she considers Kant's definition of feeling from his *Metaphysics of Morals* (at Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 211-212, 212n) to draw our attention to two different, yet related points about the nature of feelings in general. First, for Kant, feelings have more to do with our subjective experiences than with our knowledge of external objects. She writes, "Feeling...is a thoroughly subjective experience in that, while it too is subjectively experienced, it does not get involved in the construction of empirical objects of experience" (Grenberg 2013, 43). Second, for Kant, feelings belong to sensibility irrespective of whether the representations that cause them have sensible or intelligible origins. In particular, she points out that, for Kant, "even a feeling that is the effect of intelligible representations does, whatever its causes, "belong...to sensibility" (6:212n/12n)" (61). Keeping these two points in mind, she claims that, for Kant, moral feeling caused by the moral law of pure reason is a subjectively felt experience that belongs to sensibility of the agents. Since it is a subjectively felt experience, she reads Kant's discussion on how moral feeling serves as the moral incentive for human agents as a phenomenological account of how we subjectively feel (from within) when we are moved to perform moral actions. More importantly, since it is a feeling that belongs to sensibility, she looks at Kant as appealing to moral feeling to enable us with an epistemic access into the process of moral motivation. This epistemically enabling role of moral feeling is especially significant in the light of Kant's view that, with the cognitive capacities we possess, it is impossible for us to have a direct epistemic access into how the moral law moves us to perform moral actions. About this, she writes that Kant "relies upon [moral] feeling as an enabling epistemic tool to access those aspects of reason which do ground morality, but which are also beyond the usual, theoretical epistemic grasp of finite rational beings" (68). Taking these points together, Grenberg argues that Kant depends on moral feeling to gain epistemic access into the process of moral motivation and gives us a phenomenological account of common, first-personal experience of how we get motivated to perform moral actions.

According to Grenberg's (2013) phenomenological reading, Kant's account of moral motivation essentially deals with how moral feeling "operates within the first-personal deliberative point of view of the common person" in practical circumstances involving the conflict between moral obligation and one's need for happiness (Grenberg 2013, 64). Phenomenologically speaking,



within the framework of moral motivation “the conflict between happiness and morality is a central moral experience, and the moral feeling of respect is, therefore, a central, frequently felt, common feeling” (65). This process begins with individual human agents paying careful attention to first-personal experience of internal conflict between happiness and moral obligation in a moral circumstance. Attentive reflection upon this experience causes a “common, knowable and even painfully familiar” moral feeling within us (52). Grenberg notes, “[W]henver we find ourselves experiencing a conflict between the competing demands of happiness and morality, our affective state is best described by what Kant calls [as] the moral feeling” (66). On the one hand, this feeling imposes a powerful constraint on our need for happiness, and on the other, it evokes a positive feeling of respect and wonder towards the mysterious and intelligible cause of it. By enabling us to contemplate on its mysterious cause, moral feeling of respect “connects us to a rational, intelligible representation of the moral law and of ourselves as legislators of it” (61). Although common, non-philosophical agents may not articulate it as the moral law (via formulations of categorical imperative), we become internally aware of the categorical necessity to perform right actions by virtue of paying close attention to the experience of moral feeling. Grenberg explains this first-personal deliberative process using Kant’s ‘gallows man’ example as follows:

[T]he first moral task...is an effort...of moral perception. We need to get better at *seeing* clearly how the moral law forces itself upon us, by becoming more subtle appreciators of the feeling-informed twists and turns of our first-personal phenomenological experiences. [Moral] [f]eeling is...the means by which we will have become aware of the moral law forcing itself upon us. When my prince is telling me that I need to tell a lie, and that I will be killed if I don’t tell this lie, the moral demand to tell the truth reveals itself to me in the horrible, demanding, painful constraint I nonetheless *feel* to tell the truth (24).

Thus, Grenberg writes, for Kant, “the very process of becoming a moral person, proceed according to a method of attentive reflection upon a common, felt, first-personal phenomenological experience” of moral conflict and moral feeling (15).

### **1.1.2. Ware’s Phenomenological Interpretation**

Unlike Grenberg (2013), Ware (2014) does not have an elaborate phenomenological reading of Kant’s moral philosophy. His focus is narrower and is directed towards resolving a particular problem within Kant’s theory of moral motivation. As discussed briefly in section 1.3. of the first

chapter, in his paper “Kant on Moral Sensibility and Moral Motivation”, Ware (2014) lays out Kant’s problem of moral motivation as a psychological problem about the *nature* of effect that the moral law of pure reason produces on the minds of human agents (see pp. 24-26). Specifically, since the moral feeling that pure reason effects in our minds is akin to sensible feeling of pleasure, he is concerned with whether or not this effect is “appropriate” and “suited to motivate action[s] from duty” (Ware 2014, 732-733). As a response to this problem of motivational effect skepticism (as he calls it), Ware “advance[s] a novel reading of Kant’s account [of moral motivation], one that considers the concept of moral feeling from the *agent’s own point of view* [emphasis added]” (728). He considers this “*phenomenology* of moral feeling” that Kant provides as giving us an insight into how the moral feeling of respect produced by the moral law differs from feelings of pleasure caused by other empirical objects (734). The difference between how the awareness of the moral law feels from within and other feelings of pleasure caused by external objects is crucial to resolve the threat regarding whether or not the moral law of pure reason produces an appropriate effect to move us towards the performance of moral actions (739).

To argue for a phenomenological interpretation of Kant’s discussion on moral motivation, Ware (2014) first takes up Kant’s definition of feeling from the “Preface” section of the second *Critique* (at Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 09n) and points at the reflexive character of all our feelings. That is, for Kant, although feelings are always about perceived objects or abstract ideas, they are essentially representations of subjective mental states of individual agents. Ware (2014, 733) writes “every feeling has an intentional *object* (perceived by the senses, or imagined in thought) as well as an accompanying representation of the object’s agreeableness or disagreeableness *to the subject*. This makes every feeling reflexive in character: “pleasure” is the representation of agreeableness-to-oneself; “pain,” the representation of disagreeableness-to-oneself”. This means, irrespective of the objects that cause them, feelings represent the way individual agents are from within. As Ware puts it, “[a] feeling of agreeableness, whether before a glass of wine or before the moral law, concerns *me—how I relate to an object or action—*not anything outside of me [emphasis added]” (734). Hence, Ware argues, Kant’s account of moral motivation, which mostly revolves around how moral feeling (that the moral law effects in our minds) functions as the moral incentive for human agents, is about how an individual human agent feels from within oneself as a result of the awareness of the moral law. This reading is supported by Kant’s extended discussion on the process of moral motivation in individual human agents in the third chapter of the second *Critique*,

despite his view that it is impossible to know how the moral law produces moral feeling in our minds to move us towards moral actions. That is, given Kant's stance on epistemic inaccessibility into how the moral law causes moral actions from a scientific-objective perspective, Ware sees Kant's detailed discussion on how moral feeling (that the moral law effects in our minds) moves us towards moral actions from a phenomenological-subjective perspective. To put it in his words, although "we can see that Kant is bracketing the question of reason's causal efficacy, from a third-person perspective", there is a focused discussion "on the question of what the moral law must feel like, from a *first-person* perspective" (734).

Ware's (2014) phenomenological interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation can be put in short as follows: All human agents have a propensity to prioritize our sensible needs and rank them first before our will to form and adopt principles of actions. When we recognize our own rational nature, we are "*painfully enlightened*" about the "misperceived value of our needs and inclinations" in comparison to the unconditionally authoritative moral law (Ware 2014, 737-738). The feeling of humiliation that individual human agents experience due to our natural tendency to value satisfaction of sensible needs is followed by a "*feeling of the sublimity*" for the majestic nature of the moral law. Thus, moral feeling emerging from awareness of the moral law is an inner experience that is "initially *painful* [and] yet subsequently *exalting*" (740). Ware then identifies the elevating feeling as a peculiar sort of pleasure that "constitutes our interest to adopt the moral law as our own maxim of choice" to perform moral actions (739). He calls this pleasure as the "pleasure of self-respect" and writes, "In criticizing our tendency to overvalue the pursuit of happiness, we must also be aware of our capacity to act independently of pathological incentives, and this discovery must elicit a kind of pleasure in us." (738). Since this pleasure of self-respect arises within us due to an awareness of our own rational nature, rather than representation of empirical objects, the threat of whether it is possible for the moral law to effect a non-pathological incentive is averted. Ware writes:

[T]here is no room for motivational effect skepticism, because the pleasure<sub>sr</sub> we feel in respecting ourselves arises from the same awareness that underlies the pain<sub>sc</sub> brought about by our self-criticism. It is the awareness of ourselves as rational beings. With pleasure<sub>sr</sub>,

then, we at last have an effect on sensibility that is suited to play the role of moral motivation, for this feeling arises from an awareness of our autonomy (739).<sup>70</sup>

## **1.2. Empirical Interpretations of Kant's Account of Moral Motivation**

As mentioned above, the empirical interpretation considers Kant's discussion of moral motivation as a causal explanation of how moral feeling motivates human agents to perform moral actions from a third-personal, scientific point of view (see p. 81). It presupposes Kant's transcendental idealist distinction between phenomenal and noumenal standpoints and considers his account of moral motivation from the viewpoint of the former, without compromising on the epistemic inaccessibility into it from the viewpoint of the latter. In sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2. that follow, I discuss Frierson's (2014, 2016a) and Singleton's (2007) empirical interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation in some detail.

### **1.2.1. Frierson's Empirical Interpretation**

In his book, *Kant's Empirical Psychology*, Frierson (2014) claims that Kant developed empirical psychology as a systematic study with its distinct nature, method and purpose in order to understand human beings as they appear from an empirical point of view. He writes that Kant's "empirical psychology describes the operation of human minds "from without," with empirical accounts of causal interactions between the world and various powers of the human mind treated as properties of an object of investigation" (Frierson 2014, 02). In other words, it studies our inner faculties that are governed by distinct causal laws and occasioning principles in order to explain specific mental states and actions occurring in the empirical world. In laying out the nature of Kant's empirical psychology, Frierson stresses that the study of the human soul from an empirical point of view goes hand in hand with Kant's transcendental philosophy. In particular, Frierson assures that "Kant's empirical psychology is not a threat to his theory of freedom, nor vice versa" (18). He argues that empirical determination of our mental states and actions is not incompatible with transcendental freedom because while transcendental freedom conditions the possibility of morality noumenally, human actions are still subject to causal laws and are, thereby, vulnerable to prediction and explanation from a phenomenal standpoint. Laying emphasis on the demarcation between methods of Kant's empirical psychology and transcendental philosophy, Frierson

---

<sup>70</sup> Ware (2014, 739) uses "pleasure<sub>sr</sub>" to refer to the pleasure of self-respect and "pain<sub>sc</sub>" to refer to the pain or humiliation in comparing our self-conceit against the moral law.

observes that, for Kant, one of the purposes of empirical study of human agents is to aid transcendental philosophy by drawing out empirical influences on human faculties. He writes, “[E]mpirical psychology...serves transcendental philosophy by laying out the empirical influences on the development and exercise of proper reasoning, moral virtue, and the pursuit of happiness”. In addition, he sees Kant’s empirical psychology as having the ability to “alleviate deep misunderstandings about supposed empirical implications of his transcendental philosophy” (51). After briefly discussing the nature, method and purpose of empirical psychology, Frierson spends the rest of his book laying out the functional-structure of Kant’s “rich and coherent empirical-causal account of human action[s]” (51). To do this, he takes up Kant’s classification of our psychological faculties, explores their working definitions, and discusses the causal laws that govern their operations including tracing their origins to natural predispositions that occasion them. Showing proofs from Kant’s texts, he argues that, for Kant, human actions (as they appear in the empirical world) are conditioned by faculties of cognition, feeling and desire which operate according to causal laws. More specifically, for him, human actions follow from desires which arise as a result of feeling of pleasure which in turn follows from a particular cognition. That is, the empirical-causal account of human action takes the form: “Cognition → Feeling → Desire → Action” (56). Since each of these faculties are divided into higher faculties, characterized by spontaneity and activity, and lower faculties, characterized by receptivity and passivity, Kant’s empirical account of human action becomes complex and covers a wide range of actions.

In laying out a broad, coherent picture of Kant’s empirical psychology, Frierson (2014, 116) “argue[s] that Kant does have an empirical account of moral motivation, one that fits neatly into the general account of human [action and] motivation”. To argue for his empirical interpretation, he first takes Kant’s transcendental idealist position and shows the possibility of viewing moral actions from two different standpoints: from a practical or “from within” standpoint, “our [moral] actions are the consequence of free choices based on reasons” derived from the moral law; from an empirical or “from without” standpoint, “our [moral] actions are consequences of natural (psychological) causes” occasioned by the operations of our faculties (121). He then argues that Kant’s discussion on how moral motivation occurs is psychological, and hence, naturally falls within the empirical perspective on moral actions. He writes that Kant’s “description of [moral] actions motivated by [feeling of] “respect for the moral law”...is not only one of his most detailed psychological descriptions of action, but it also plays an important role in laying out the empirical

expression of morally praiseworthy action” (84-85). More specifically, he treats Kant’s “account in [the chapter on] “Incentives” [in the second *Critique*] as an account of moral motivation *empirically considered*” (Frierson 2016a, 357).<sup>71</sup> He argues that this chapter provides a detailed “picture of what respect for the moral law would look like empirically” because, for Kant, the aim of this chapter is “to give [a] detailed account of “respect for the law”” for discussing ““morality itself subjectively considered as an incentive” (5:76)” (357). He takes Kant’s brief descriptions about feeling of respect from this chapter to show how it follows from cognition of the moral law to serve as an incentive and motivate agents to perform moral actions. He writes,

On this empirical-psychological reading, when Kant defines “respect” as “a feeling that is produced by an intellectual ground” (5:73)..., when he insists that “respect for the moral law must be regarded also as a positive though indirect effect of the moral law on feeling” (5:79), and when he discusses respect as an “influence of a mere intellectual idea on feeling” (5:80); he is merely reiterating the general claim...that even the purest intellectual cognitions (such as the cognition of the moral law) motivate only by means of feeling (357).

Further, he argues that, since “Kant specifically claims that the feeling of respect “must ... be regarded as a subjective ground of activity” (5:79)”, this feeling must precede the determination of the faculty of desire for the moral actions to take place (Frierson 2014, 120). He additionally takes lines and passages from other texts of Kant to show that the feeling of respect serves as the “motivational transition” from cognition of the moral law to the performance of moral actions via determination of the faculty of desire (124). Thus, by virtue of how he treats feeling of respect as the moral incentive in his texts, Frierson argues, Kant’s account of moral motivation fits into his general empirical account of human action and motivation.

Frierson (2016a, 357) writes that Kant’s empirical account of moral motivation takes the form: “Cognition of Moral Law → Feeling of Respect for ML → Volition to Act according to ML → Action” (see also Frierson 2014, 123). That is, moral actions follow from desires to act in accordance with the moral law, which arise as a result of feeling of respect (for the moral law),

---

<sup>71</sup> Frierson (2016a, 355) “provides a glimpse of” his empirical interpretation from his book in his article “Kantian Feeling: Empirical Psychology, Transcendental Critique, and Phenomenology”. Hence, I refer to both his book and his article to show his empirical interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation.

which in turn follows from cognition of the moral law. First, moral principles of action (higher cognitive states) are generated and derived from the moral law of pure reason. The intellectual representations of these moral principles cause negative and painful effect on feeling at first because they exclude sensible needs that we are naturally inclined to satisfy on priority. However, this negative feeling of humiliation immediately leads to a positive feeling of respect for the moral law. This feeling of respect (which is an intellectual pleasure) generates the motivation (higher desire) for performing actions in accordance with moral principles (derived from the moral law). As Frierson (2014, 127) puts it, “Reason provides consciousness of the moral law, which produces the feeling of respect, which provides a basis for making the moral law practically effective as the maxim of one’s action in a particular case”. Thus, from within Kant’s empirical psychology, Frierson provides an empirical interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation that fits his general empirical account of human action.

### **1.2.2. Singleton’s Empirical Interpretation**

Unlike Frierson (2014, 2016a), Singleton (2007) does not have an extended discussion on Kant’s empirical psychology to back her empirical interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation. Rather, in her paper, “Kant’s Account of Respect: A Bridge between Rationality and Anthropology”, she focuses on exploring different functions of the notion of respect for the moral law within Kant’s writings. As the title suggests, her central claim is that Kant’s account of respect plays a crucial role in enabling “the interaction of pure moral philosophy with general features of human beings” (Singleton 2007, 43). She argues that “there is not a single account of respect (*Achtung*) in Kant’s writings” and discusses it as having a broader meaning in its relation to duties in general, and a narrower meaning in its relation to a particular set of duties (41). By analysing its broad and narrow functions in different contexts, she proves that Kant’s notion of respect “provides a bridge between moral philosophy, understood as referring to the rational part of ethics, and anthropology” (58). One of the contexts in which the notion of respect plays a broad role, covering all the duties (“respect (B)” as she calls it), is when it serves as the moral incentive for performing moral actions. Singleton considers Kant’s account of this motivating function of respect as providing an empirical explanation for what happens when human agents are moved by the moral law. She writes, “[W]hilst Kant does not deviate from the position that it is the moral law alone that motivates, without his account of respect we would not have an explanation at the phenomenal level of how it could motivate in the human case” (41). In other words, she argues

that Kant's purpose of discussing the notion of respect as the moral incentive is to "[describe] the phenomenal mechanism that accompanies the motive of [moral] duty" (42). By arguing so, she makes a claim that the notion of respect informs us about "the sort of creatures that we are" when "a priori features of morality...[are] applied to humans" (43).

To show that the incentive of respect for the moral law serves to empirically explain moral motivation, Singleton (2007), like Frierson (2014, 2016a), presupposes Kant's transcendental idealist distinction between "intelligible and phenomenal" standpoints (Singleton 2007, 44).<sup>72</sup> Keeping the two-standpoint distinction in mind, she first takes up Kant's definition of incentive (or "drive", as she translates Kant's term '*Triebfeder*') from the chapter "On the incentives of pure practical reason" (at Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 72) in the second *Critique*. She points out that, for Kant, the term incentive is attributed only to human agents and not to beings whose will is automatically aligned with the moral law (i.e., divine will). This means, "[d]rives are possessed by beings who have...selves that can be viewed both phenomenally and intelligibly" (Singleton 2007, 44). She then argues that incentives are indeed objects of empirical world and apply only to the empirical character of human agents (and not our intelligible character) because, by definition, their function is to determine the will of individual human agents with different subjective dimensions. In other words, since Kant uses the term 'subjective' in his definition of incentives, they "are objects of experience and belong therefore to the phenomenal world" (44). Singleton then argues that Kant discusses feeling of respect as the moral incentive to explain empirically what happens when the moral law motivates us towards moral actions. She writes, "What then is the 'drive' of the moral law or, the question that Kant takes as synonymous, 'what happens to the human faculty of desire as a consequence of this motive [(Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 72)]'? Kant's reply is that respect for the moral law is the moral drive and his account of respect is thus designed to explain how this can be so" (44). She adds that the empirical explanation of moral motivation using the account of respect as the moral incentive gains significance in the light of Kant's view that the moral law as "motive of duty is [in itself] not an object of experience" (48). In other words, since the moral law motivates us noumenally, Kant gives us an empirical explanation of how we get motivated by the moral law using his account of respect in his second *Critique*. She writes, "The account of respect is the

---

<sup>72</sup> She admits that she subscribes to Allison's "one world [(or two-standpoint)] interpretation where the phenomenal world is composed of objects as we represent them as opposed to a consideration of these objects with this condition abstracted or removed" (Singleton 2007, 44).



explanation of the motive of duty from the subjective or phenomenal point of view. Kant is not arguing that duty needs to be supplemented by a feeling - a feeling of respect - in order to motivate, but that this feeling is the expression of duty from the phenomenal point of view” (48). Thus, using Kant’s definition of incentives and our epistemic inaccessibility into how the moral law actually motivates us, Singleton provides an empirical reading of Kant’s account of respect for the moral law as the moral incentive.

As she reads it, Kant’s empirical account of moral motivation goes as follows: Having its origination in the intellectual cause, feeling of respect is a *necessary* effect on our minds. This feeling consists of both “a feeling of pain which arises when our inclinations are thwarted” and “a positive feeling is generated by the removal of the resistance of our inclinations” (Singleton 2007, 45-46). As an incentive, this feeling of respect produces a practical interest towards performing moral actions. This practical interest towards moral duties serves as the basis for deriving and adopting moral maxims. Since, for Kant, the power of choice follows from maxims that are based on interest in general (Singleton refers to passages at Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 399; *RGV*, AA, 06: 23-24), the choice to perform moral actions follows from practical interest founded on feeling of respect for the moral law. This process of moral motivation that proceeds from respect for the moral law is “the phenomenal counterpart” to the intelligible process of moral motivation stemming from the moral law (Singleton 2007, 50).

### **1.3. Transcendental Interpretations of Kant’s Account of Moral Motivation**

The transcendental interpretation considers Kant’s discussion of moral motivation as involving how rational agents get motivated by the moral law of pure reason from a practical point of view.<sup>73</sup> It presupposes that the moral law is the only incentive of morality and that it gives us justifying reasons for performing moral actions. Additionally, it takes Kant’s discussion of the process of

---

<sup>73</sup> In discussing the interpretative strand that gives a non-empiricist, transcendental account of moral motivation, Frierson (2014, 118) uses the term “practical...point of view” to refer a viewpoint that is “*not* empirical” (see p. 81 in section 1 above). That would mean that Allison-Reath’s transcendental interpretation gives an account of how all rational agents are motivated to perform moral actions from a point of view that is *not third-personal or scientific*. Although Frierson (121) identifies this “practical point of view” with a “from within” standpoint, the latter term is quite ambiguous as it could refer to a first-personal, phenomenological point of view. By “practical point of view” (that has been attributed to Allison-Reath’s interpretation throughout this chapter), I mean a non-empirical, non-phenomenological, deliberative standpoint of judging actions using reasons. Thus, when I mention that Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) read Kant’s discussion of the process of moral motivation in rational agents *from a practical viewpoint*, I mean that, for them, the discussion entails an account of how rational agents choose specific reasons (as maxims) to perform specific actions in practical circumstances.

motivation by the moral law as an integral part of his justification of the validity of the moral law. In sections 1.3.1. and 1.3.2. that follow, I discuss Allison's (1990) and Reath's (1989) transcendental interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation in some detail.

### **1.3.1. Allison's Transcendental Interpretation**

In his book *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, Allison (1990, 03) aims "to provide an analysis and defense of...[Kant's] theory [of freedom] in both its theoretical and practical dimensions". He takes up the crucial problems surrounding Kant's notion of transcendental freedom and attempts to provide solutions for its defence. He addresses each of the following problems in three parts of his book in detail: (i) "standard objections to Kant's appeal to the phenomenal-noumenal distinction, in order to reconcile his indeterministic conception of freedom with the causal determinism"; (ii) "objections raised against the ethical dimensions of Kant's theory [of freedom]..., particularly insofar as they relate to his moral psychology"; and, (iii) "serious difficulties with Kant's endeavor to establish the validity of the moral law and with it his peculiar conception of freedom...in both the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*" (03). He relies on his two-aspect or two-standpoint interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism to tackle the first set of problems concerning how free actions in the noumenal realm have plausible implications in the causally closed phenomenal realm. Accordingly, a human action can be "a single occurrence" attributed to two different characters (intelligible and empirical characters) from "two points of view" (04). To deal with the second set of problems (mentioned above), Allison first considers the question of how the dual-characters can be attributed to a single human agent in the practical realm. He argues that the feature of spontaneity of our faculty of understanding (which, in turn, is a manifestation of the idea of transcendental freedom) has "a practical analogue" in our capacity to freely deliberate actions in the practical realm. In other words, it is our free "rational agency that supposedly has both an empirical and an intelligible character" (05). He then uses Kant's 'incorporation thesis' – the thesis that an agent can act upon a desire *only* by incorporating it into a maxim of action (Kant *RGV*, AA, 06: 23-24) – as evidence for this 'thicker' conception of rational agency and, thereby, defends Kant's moral psychology against criticisms. Finally, as a solution to the final set of problems, Allison (1990) first argues that Kant's doctrine of "fact of reason" in the second *Critique* suffices to justify the validity of the moral law. He shows that our capacity for autonomous willing, which is a particular mode of rational agency, serves as the necessary and the sufficient condition for our recognition of the moral law. Further, he uses Kant's

‘reciprocity thesis’ – the thesis that the moral law and freedom reciprocally imply each other (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 446-447; *KpV*, AA, 05: 29) – in a non-question-begging manner to show that our recognition of the moral law justifies the reality of transcendental freedom. Thus, Allison (1990) develops a comprehensive account of Kant’s incompatibilist notion of freedom by responding to three sets of standard problems raised against it.

Although he does not deal with it in its own right, Allison (1990) discusses Kant’s account of moral motivation as part of his defence of Kant’s moral psychology in the second part of his book. His transcendental interpretation of Kant’s moral motivation revolves around his analysis of the notion of autonomy – both as a property of the will and as a supreme principle of morality. He first claims that Kant’s definition of autonomous will (at Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 440) must be understood as our capacity to be motivated exclusively by the moral law of pure reason from a practical point of view. To back this claim, he first points out a common misunderstanding about Kant’s notion of heteronomous willing. He observes that, in order to show it in contrast to our capacity for free actions, heteronomy is generally mistaken as *causal* determination of the will by one’s sensible needs. This leads to an “absurd view” that “we are not responsible for our immoral acts” (Allison 1990, 02). Rather, he argues, heteronomous willing should be understood as our capacity to be freely motivated by our sensible needs. He supports this view using Kant’s ‘incorporation thesis’ that is central to his conception of free rational agency. He writes, “the Incorporation Thesis requires us to regard the empirical causes...as “not so determining” so as to exclude a causality of the will...[in a way that] it points to the “moment” of spontaneity... which must be presupposed in our conception of ourselves as [free] rational agents” (52). Taking ‘incorporation thesis’ into consideration, Allison writes that our sensible needs should not be taken as “causal determinants of behavior”, but they must be taken as “sources of motivation or reasons to act” (97). If so, then heteronomy is our capacity to perform “genuine intentional actions based on maxims rather than mere bits of behavior causally conditioned by stimuli” (97). Now, Allison argues that, if Kant’s notion of heteronomous willing must be understood in this motivational sense (as opposed to causal sense) from a practical viewpoint (as opposed to an empirical viewpoint), then its correlative, autonomous willing, must also be understood in the same way. This means, Kant’s negative definition of autonomy must be read as “a motivational independence, that is, a capacity for self-determination independently of, and even contrary to, these needs” and not as “independence from causal determination by one’s needs as a sensuous being” (97). Positively put,

it must be understood as “the capacity to be moved to action by a rule of action (practical principle) that makes no reference to an agent’s needs or interests as a sensuous being” (98). Thus, for Allison, autonomy as a property of the will must be taken as a capacity for moral motivation stemming from pure practical reason.

In addition to considering it as a property of the will in a motivational sense from a practical point of view, Allison (1990) also considers autonomy as the supreme principle that conditions the possibility of morality all by itself. He writes that, for Kant, “the analysis of autonomy as a property of the will is clearly the basis of the analysis of it as a [supreme] principle” that conditions the possibility of morality (Allison 1990, 95). In the first two sections of the *Groundwork*, Kant analyses the concept of morality to show that it is based on the principle of categorical imperative. Categorical “imperative requires not merely that we adopt maxims that are in fact universalizable...but also that we choose our maxims precisely *because* of their suitability for universal law” (101). In particular, Allison observes Kant’s emphasis on “the exclusion of interest as an incentive (*Triebfeder*)” in his discussion of what the categorical imperative essentially requires (104). This requirement can be met practically only if an agent can act independently of motivation stemming from interests based on sensible needs. Now, as discussed above, the will with the property of autonomy is this capacity to be moved by pure practical interest. Hence, in Allison’s words, “morality (as based on a categorical imperative) is possible if the will has the property of autonomy” (104). Further, he shows that Kant uses our autonomous willing to justify the moral law as the ‘fact of reason’ in the second *Critique*: “If...the [moral] law of which we are conscious is indeed one that the will legislates to itself, independently of any empirical interest, then that law must be a product of pure reason...[T]hat is the clear implication of Kant’s conception of autonomy” (237). Thus, for Allison, Kant’s notion of autonomy solely justifies the validity of the moral law and, thereby, conditions the possibility of morality. Allison, therefore, uses both these points about Kant’s notion of autonomy – that it is a property of will that aids in moral motivation from a practical point of view, and, that it is the condition that satisfies the requirement of categorical imperative to make morality possible – to argue for his transcendental interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation.

According to Allison’s (1990) transcendental interpretation, the process of moral motivation begins with an internal conflict between two types of rational principles “each of which claims to

be the supreme ground for the selection of maxims”: on the one hand, the principles of self-conceit and self-love aim to make “the satisfaction of inclination into a matter of unconditioned right” and, on the other hand, the moral law of pure reason aims to serve as “the ultimate ground of the justification of maxims” (Allison 1990, 126-127). The former represents our capacity for heteronomous willing and the latter represents our capacity for autonomous willing. During this conflict, we become aware of the unconditional value of our capacity to be motivated by the moral law given by our own reason (i.e., self-legislation), independently of other external reasons. This very recognition of the unconditional value of the moral law is respect for the moral law. Allison writes, “respect for the law consists simply in the recognition of its supremely authoritative character, which is to be taken to mean that it provides a reason for action that outweighs or overrides all other reasons, particularly those stemming from one's desires” (123). This is no different from saying that respect refers to the consciousness or recognition of autonomy as the property of our will. As Allison notes about it, “consciousness of this [self-imposed] constraint [of reason] is also a consciousness of oneself as an autonomous moral agent” (125).<sup>74</sup> By enabling us to recognize our own capacity for autonomous willing, respect serves as the moral incentive, leading us to perform moral actions.

### **1.3.2. Reath's Transcendental Interpretation**

In his paper “Kant's Theory of Moral Sensibility”, Reath (1989, 284) aims to develop an “interpretation of Kant's general theory of motivation and choice” by studying both moral motivation and non-moral motivation in relation to each other from within Kant's moral psychology. Specifically, he seeks to understand how “respect for the Moral Law as the motive to moral conduct and the influence of inclinations on the will” interact on a “common ground” to make actions possible (284). He argues that “[e]ven though these [two] kinds of motives may originate in different parts of the self”, they motivate the will to perform actions by serving as “sources of sufficient reasons” (301). Hence, it is within the “framework of reasons” where sensible and rational motives interact. In establishing this main claim of his, Reath offers a transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation – one that takes moral

---

<sup>74</sup> Allison (1990, 125) again writes, “Kant viewed his account of respect as the incentive to morality to be intimately connected with his conception of autonomy”

motivation as crucial in establishing the validity of morality for us and, one that, quite evidently, views the process of moral motivation as taking place from a practical viewpoint.

Unlike Allison (1990), Reath's (1989) discussion of how moral motivation conditions the possibility of morality does not include an elaborate defence of Kant's justification of the validity of the moral law. Rather, he argues that motivation to perform moral actions conditions the possibility of morality because it belongs to Kant's doctrine of "fact of reason". For this, he presupposes that Kant's doctrine of "fact of reason" in the second *Critique* effectively justifies the validity of the moral law. He then argues that "[s]ince the [fact of the] Moral Law is an expression of pure practical reason, this suffices to show that pure reason is practical" (Reath 1989, 285). That is, our consciousness of morality (i.e., the fact of pure reason) is sufficient to show that we acknowledge the unconditional authority of the moral law and perform actions according to it (i.e., practicality of pure reason). This also means that "[we] cannot explain our ability, or interest, in acting morally as a feature of our psychological constitution, or by introducing any motivational factor beyond the recognition of the validity of the Moral Law". "Such a view [i.e., relying on an external source of justification] would in effect grant that pure reason is not practical" and, thereby, would go against Kant's doctrine of "fact of reason" (288). Since the fact of the moral law (via our consciousness of it) entails our motivation to act morally, Kant's account of moral motivation conditions the possibility of morality.

Reath's (1989) argument for presenting Kant's account of moral motivation from a practical viewpoint is similar to that of Allison's (1990).<sup>75</sup> He too uses Kant's 'incorporation thesis' (or "principle of election", as he calls it) to argue that motivation to perform moral actions happens via justifying reasons emerging from the moral law. First, he argues that "to fully understand how the Moral Law functions as an incentive, one must see how it limits the influence of inclinations". Further, he adds, to see how the moral law limits the influence of inclinations, one must see "how inclinations influence the will" (Reath 1989, 291). According to Kant's 'incorporation thesis', it is impossible for incentives of inclinations to determine the will unless they are incorporated into maxims. Reath writes, "[A]s Kant's view is that no incentives (including sensible incentives) determine the will directly except through a choice by the individual [via adoption of maxims],

---

<sup>75</sup> Reath's (1989) article was published a year before Allison's (1990) book, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*. Allison (1990, 102-103, 126) admits to agreeing with key points of Reath about rational agency and motivation in his book.

similar considerations should apply to actions done from inclination” (295-296). Further, since free choice in the adoption of these maxims involves treating actions for the satisfaction of inclinations as good in some way, these maxims represent justifying reasons for these actions. As Reath puts it, “the role of the maxim is to express the [justifying] reason for action in a form which can be assessed and cited to others” (297). Now, since incentives of inclinations motivate us by serving as justifying reasons for actions, the only way for the moral law to counteract the influence of inclinations is by serving as another source of justifying reason with a higher value. Reath writes, “Since inclinations influence the will through the value which the agent supposes them to have, the Moral Law can limit their influence by showing that they do not have this value, and by presenting a higher form of value” (296). Thus, by serving as the source of sufficient reasons for actions, the moral law moves human agents towards the performance of moral actions from a practical point of view.

Taking the two points discussed above, Reath’s (1989) transcendental interpretation, therefore, involves his view that, for Kant, our recognition of the moral law, that moves us towards moral actions, conditions the possibility of morality and his treatment of the process of moral motivation from a practical viewpoint. According to this interpretation of his, the process of moral motivation begins with a conflict between motivational tendencies emerging from self-love and self-conceit (belonging to our sensible nature) and moral disposition (belonging to our intelligible nature). This conflict presents itself as a conflict between two kinds of justifying reasons that we must adopt to perform actions. Due to its unconditional worth, we recognize reasons for actions that emerge from the moral law as having more value than reasons for actions emerging from self-love and self-conceit. This recognition of the unconditional value of the moral law or our moral consciousness is identical to Kant’s notion of respect for the moral law. Reath (1989, 287) writes, “Respect [of the moral law] is the attitude which it is appropriate to have towards a law, in which one acknowledges its authority and is motivated to act accordingly”. Thus, during the process of moral motivation, the intellectual attitude of respect motivates us to adopt moral maxims by restricting reasons emerging from self-love and by striking down reasons emerging from self-conceit. This is why, Reath writes, “To be moved by, or to act out of, respect is to recognize the Moral Law as a source of value, or reasons for action, that are unconditionally valid and overriding relative to other kinds of reasons” (287). Thus, by being our recognition of the unconditional authority and

value of the moral law, respect serves as the moral incentive and moves us towards the performance of moral actions.

## **2. A Critical Overview of Debates between the Interpretative Positions**

In the previous section, I discussed three kinds of interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation. I showed that some scholars like Grenberg (2013) and Ware (2014) read Kant's account of moral motivation phenomenologically, some others like Frierson (2014, 2016a) and Singleton (2007) read it empirically, and some like Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) read it transcendently. In this section, I explore the debates amongst these three interpretative positions. Empirical and phenomenological interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation arose as alternatives to the transcendental interpretation of Allison and Reath. More specifically, they came about as reactions to Allison-Reath's transcendental interpretation because the notion of moral feeling is excluded from (i) their reading of Kant's moral motivational structure and, (ii) more importantly, from their reading of Kant's main argument for establishing the validity of the moral law. There are some disagreements amongst scholars who propose these alternate interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation. Disagreements between scholars from across the two types of interpretations are evident from the on-going debate between Frierson (2016a, 2016b) and Grenberg (2016) on the nature of Kant's account of moral motivation. Further, Ware's (2015) criticism of Grenberg's (2013) views is an instance of disagreements between scholars from within a particular type of interpretation. In addition to these on-going debates and unresolved disagreements, interpretations proposed as alternatives to Allison-Reath's transcendental interpretation face problems and inadequacies of their own. One problem that is common to both empirical and phenomenological interpretations is the way they treat the *a priori* status of moral feeling. Another problem that these alternative interpretations suffer from is the lack of understanding about Kant's problem of moral motivation.

Let us explore these points in detail below. In section 2.1., I show that the alternative interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation arose because the standard transcendental interpretation failed to include the notion of moral feeling into Kant's moral motivational structure and his proof of the validity of the moral law. In section 2.2., I discuss the on-going debates and disagreements between scholars from across the two alternative interpretations and between scholars who propose



the same type of interpretation. In section 2.3., I discuss two specific criticisms against these two alternative interpretations.

## **2.1. Emergence of Alternatives as Reactions to Allison-Reath's Transcendental Interpretation**

Historically, empirical and phenomenological interpretations succeeded the transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation put forward by Allison (1990) and Reath (1989). In fact, these two alternate interpretations emerged as critical reactions to Allison-Reath's reading of Kant's passages on moral motivation in rational agents. One of the main objections that scholars often raise against Allison-Reath's transcendental interpretation revolves around the way it treats the notion of moral feeling of respect. More specifically, they accuse Allison and Reath of not considering moral feeling of respect as an essential part of Kant's moral motivational structure, but rather as a mere effect of motivation caused by the moral law. Frierson (2014, 120) notes this position of theirs as follows:

[S]everal commentators (e.g. Allison, Reath) ... argue that respect for the moral law cannot be a feeling that interposes between consciousness of the moral law and motivation to obey that law. Instead, it is best understood either as the will's determination by (consciousness of) the moral law itself or as the affective consequence of such determination. On neither account does feeling play any positive role in effecting moral action.

As discussed in section 1.3., for Allison (1990) and Reath (1989), Kant's process of moral motivation essentially involves consciousness or recognition of the unconditional value of the moral law (see pp. 96-97, 99). Both identify this recognition of the supreme authority of the moral law with an intellectual attitude of respect for the moral law. Although this position explains how respect for the moral law serves as the moral incentive, it does not clarify why Kant refers to respect as a feeling throughout his writings. In other words, if, according to Allison-Reath's view, respect aids us in merely recognizing the unconditional worth of the moral law intellectually, why does Kant call it as "an obscure feeling" in his *Groundwork* (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 401n) and as "a special kind of *feeling*" in his second *Critique* (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 92)? In order to account for this, both Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) consider respect for the moral law as having two aspects: intellectual and affective aspects. Allison (1990, 123) writes, "Respect itself is ... a complex phenomenon, having both an intellectual and a sensible [or affective] component". Reath

(1989, 287) too notes that “in addition to its intellectual aspect, Kant...makes it clear that respect has an “affective” side”. Making this division, both argue that it is only the intellectual aspect of respect that serves as the moral incentive, while its affective aspect is a psychological after-effect of the process of moral motivation. In other words, the elevating feeling of respect is an effect of moral motivation caused by the intellectual attitude of respect for the moral law. As Reath (1989, 287) puts it, “it is the intellectual aspect which is active in motivating moral conduct, while the affective side, or feeling of respect, is its effect on certain sensible tendencies”. Allison (1990, 123) too notes that the recognition of the unconditional value of the moral law “effects...a [moral] feeling of a peculiar sort, with both a negative and a positive aspect”. Thus, for Allison and Reath, Kant’s references to feeling of respect (“*Gefühl der Achtung*”) point to the effect of the intellectual recognition of the unconditional value of the moral law in the minds of human agents. It is this view of Allison and Reath that scholars who provide alternate interpretations of Kant’s account of moral motivation are dissatisfied with. For instance, Singleton (2007, 50) disagrees with Reath’s (1989) position that “it is consciousness of the moral law [alone that]... is active in motivating moral conduct” and writes that he “misinterprets the sense of effect that is operative when Kant describes the feeling of respect as an effect” of moral motivation. Frierson (2014, 148) writes that while Reath’s “position is correct about the practical point of view...he is wrong to see this point of view as the only point of view on moral motivation”. He also criticizes Allison for setting up a “false contrast” between two types of rational principles in his reading by neglecting feelings from process of moral motivation (124n). Ware (2014, 741) too writes that “Reath’s view that moral feeling plays no motivational role in Kant’s account...faces a number of difficulties”.

At a first glance, these disagreements could just be taken to be about the role of moral feeling within Kant’s moral motivational structure alone. Taken this way, these disagreements lead us to the ongoing debate between intellectualist and affectivist interpretations of Kant’s moral motivation (which I briefly discussed in footnote 20 at pp. 24-25 of the first chapter). However, observed closely, these disagreements are also about the extent to which moral feeling plays a role in Kant’s justification of the validity of the moral law. Grenberg (2013) expresses this when she observes that scholars like Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) interpret Kant’s proof of the unconditional authority of the moral law without appealing to the notion of moral feeling. Citing both Allison and Reath in the footnote, she writes the following passage about this view of theirs:

Most frequently, interpreters limit the role that moral feeling can play. For example, it has been argued that recognition of the validity of the moral law must occur purely rationally, with no appeal to feeling... [For them,] we have to act in accordance with moral principles out of respect for them; but proof of the authority those principles have over us must be accomplished entirely independently of appeal to feelings of any sort. (Grenberg 2013, 71)

As we saw in section 1.3., according to Allison-Reath's transcendental interpretation, Kant's discussion of moral motivation is not only about how rational agents get motivated by the moral law from a practical viewpoint, but is also about how this motivation caused by the moral law conditions the possibility of morality (see pp. 93-100). Since they do not assign any positive role to moral feeling within Kant's moral motivational structure, they cannot but be seen as omitting the notion of moral feeling from Kant's main project of proving the practicality of pure reason. Reath (1989, 285) expresses this position when he writes,

[T]hrough the doctrine of the Fact of Reason [in the first chapter of his second *Critique*]...Kant holds that our ordinary moral consciousness shows us that we do recognize the authority of the Moral Law and can act from its principles. Since the Moral Law is an expression of pure practical reason, this suffices to show that pure reason is practical.

By the third chapter of the [second] *Critique*, Kant has established that the Moral Law can influence the will, or in his phrase, functions as an "incentive" (*Triebfeder*). [This means the]...purpose of [his discussion of feeling of respect in] this chapter is to explore the effects of the moral consciousness on the faculty of desire.

Allison (1990, 237) too similarly notes that the "analysis of [the feeling of] respect presupposes the doctrine of "fact of reason", since it assumes the validity of the moral law and investigates the effects of the consciousness of this law on sensuously affected rational agents such as ourselves". Thus, for Allison and Reath, Kant's doctrine of "fact of reason" is sufficient to show how the moral law motivates all the rational agents, and thereby, prove its practicality. If so, the discussion of moral feeling as an effect on our minds merely follows from it, and is therefore, not a part of the proof of the validity of the moral law. It is precisely this position of Allison-Reath's transcendental interpretation of Kant's moral motivation that scholars who propose alternate interpretations find as problematic. For instance, Grenberg (2013, 142) argues that this view of Allison "cannot work

because of the limits of reason in sensibly affected rational beings”. She writes, “As such, we *must* rely on something like sensibility, receptivity...as the means by which we recognize pure a priori practical principles” (143). If so, “How...does Allison ground that consciousness of the validity and authority of the moral law if not via appeal to our capacity for receptivity?” (144). Criticizing his view, she writes that “Allison needs to admit that feeling is involved in... [the] consciousness [of the moral law] more than he does... [because] there is no other epistemic means for the common person to access this forced awareness” of the moral law (148). Ware (2015, 308) too expresses his discontent with Allison’s (1990) view that “Kant’s analysis of moral feeling in the second *Critique* carries no justificatory weight”. He also claims that “the difficulty for Reath’s interpretation is that it does not fit neatly into the structure of Kant’s [main] argument [for establishing the validity of the moral law] from the second *Critique*” (Ware 2014, 742). That is, he considers Reath’s (1989) denial of a justificatory function to moral feeling to not go hand in hand with the fact that Kant’s discussion of it in the second *Critique* takes place within his main project of proving the practicality of pure reason.

## **2.2. Disagreements amongst Scholars with Alternative Interpretative Positions**

In light of their criticisms against Allison-Reath’s (i) denial of any role to moral feeling within Kant’s moral motivational structure and (ii) disregard for the relevance of moral feeling to Kant’s justification of the validity of the moral law within their transcendental interpretation, scholars like Frierson (2014, 2016a), Singleton (2007), Grenberg (2013) and Ware (2014) have proposed empirical and phenomenological interpretations of Kant’s account of moral motivation respectively. In proposing their interpretations, these scholars have engaged in debates and exchanged disagreements with each other’s respective positions. These debates and disagreements have been between scholars from across the two types of alternative interpretations and between scholars who propose the same kind of interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation. In section 2.2.1 that follows, I discuss the former with a specific reference to the debate between Frierson (2016a, 2016b), who represents the empirical interpretative strand, and Grenberg (2016), who represents the phenomenological interpretative strand. In section 2.2.2., I discuss the latter with a specific reference to Ware’s (2015) disagreements with Grenberg’s (2013) phenomenological interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation.

### 2.2.1. Debate between Frierson and Grenberg

Frierson (2016a, 2016b), representing the empirical interpretation, and Grenberg (2016), representing the phenomenological interpretation, engaged in a debate and exchanged their disagreements about each other's positions in an issue of *Con-textos Kantianos* published in 2016. In the article, "Kantian Feeling: Empirical Psychology, Transcendental Critique, and Phenomenology" from this issue, Frierson (2016a) disagrees with Grenberg's (2013) view that Kant's phenomenology of respect grounds the basic tenets of his moral philosophy. As I showed in section 1.1.1., Grenberg's phenomenological interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation is a part of her project of showing that a phenomenological method is inherent in Kant's defence of morality based on pure reason (see pp. 82-83). This means, Kant's discussion of moral motivation, which, in Grenberg's phenomenological interpretation, is about how first-personal experience of moral feeling enables access into the categorical necessity of the moral law, proves the practicality of the moral law of pure reason. In other words, Kant's account of moral motivation that deals with how we are moved to act according to the moral law via common, felt, first-personal experience of it justifies the validity of the moral law. Now, this is an indirect attempt of Grenberg to restore the role of moral feeling within Kant's justification of the validity of the moral law – a step that transcendental interpretation of Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) failed at. Since the problem with Allison-Reath's transcendental interpretation revolves around the lack of moral feeling, Grenberg could have resolved it by directly adding the missing element of moral feeling into the standard transcendental interpretation already proposed. Instead of working with the transcendental interpretation of Allison and Reath, she proposes a novel phenomenological interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation, one that revolves around moral feeling, and then considers it as conditioning the possibility of morality. In his article, Frierson (2016a, 362) agrees with Grenberg's view that "[t]here is a "feel" to how the moral law shows up as a reason (from within), and this feel can...rightly [be] called "phenomenological"". Yet, he argues that "the fact [of morality] for which Kant seeks conditions of possibility (in the second *Critique*) is not any particular phenomenological feel of moral obligation" (367). That is, for Frierson, although Kant's discussion of the way the moral law shows itself to us may have a scope for Grenberg to read it phenomenologically, this "phenomenology [of moral feeling] is not at the heart of [Kant's] transcendental argumentation" for justifying the validity of the moral law. He further writes:

[T]he phenomenology of respect that Kant lays out in the “Incentives” chapter of the second *Critique* is not very systematically important. Had Kant simply never written this chapter, and never discussed the phenomenology of respect at all, we would have missed a very interesting phenomenological analysis, but no other parts of his philosophy would be affected at all (369-370).

Interestingly, in expressing his disagreement with Grenberg’s (2013) indirect attempt at it, Frierson (2016a) does take a step towards restoring moral feeling within Kant’s justification of the validity of the moral law – a step that would fix the problem of Allison-Reath’s transcendental interpretation in a more direct manner. This is evident from a brief note towards the end of his article in which he considers the possibility of reading moral feeling from a transcendental perspective due to the *a priori* status attributed to it.<sup>76</sup> He writes, “[G]iven the general nature of our empirical psychology...and the normative status of the moral law..., we can know *a priori* that there must be a capacity for feeling a respect for the moral law that can outweigh non-moral feelings”. He observes that “[i]n this case – and in this case alone... [Kant’s] description of the nature of respect...has a second-order transcendental status” (Frierson 2016a, 369). However, he quickly retracts from this step in his article, “Towards a Transcendental Critique of Feeling (A Response to Grenberg)” as he engages in a historical analysis of how a transcendental critique of the faculty of feeling developed in Kant’s texts. His argument is that Kant’s attribution of transcendental status to *a priori* principles underlying the workings of the faculty of feeling reached its full development only in his third *Critique*. If so, Kant’s discussion of moral feeling in the second *Critique* was very close to, but not yet a transcendental philosophy of feeling. This is why, he writes: “I still don’t think that, from-within or phenomenologically or transcendently,

---

<sup>76</sup> One can also see him hinting at taking this direction earlier in his book, *Kant’s Empirical Psychology*, when he writes the following:

Kant sometimes also considers psychological conditions of possibility of the obligation recognized from this practical point of view. Thus he justifies the claim that we cognize respect *a priori* because he uses the *a priori* fact of the moral law and our obligation to obey it to argue that it must be possible for us to act in accordance with that obligation. Given our empirical psychology, to act in accordance with the moral law, we must be able to have a feeling that can effect a transition from cognition of it to a desire to act in accordance with it. (Frierson 2014, 118)

In the passage above, he tries to consider Kant’s notion moral feeling as an *a priori* condition that *must* be effected in our minds for us to get motivated by the moral law from a practical standpoint. This is not any different from Allison-Reath’s standard transcendental interpretation except with an addition of the moral feeling into its equation. But, he does not pursue this line of interpretation further in the book.

the feeling of respect, or the philosophical analysis of it, or reflection on it, contribute to justifying the authority of the moral law, nor even to enabling us to recognize that the moral law is justifying” (Frierson 2016b, 389).

Excluding moral feeling from it, Frierson takes Kant’s justification of the validity of the moral law to involve “first-order transcendental claims” about the categorical nature of morality and “second-order [transcendental] claims” about the necessity of freedom (Frierson 2016a, 366-367). In other words, for Frierson, Kant’s arguments essentially involve how categorical imperative, that shows up as reasons for actions from a practical standpoint, and how freedom, that is presupposed in these moral commands, condition the possibility of morality. In order to compensate for missing it from Kant’s transcendental argument, he reads moral feeling as playing a crucial transitional role from cognition of the moral law to the desire to act from it within Kant’s moral motivational structure from an empirical viewpoint. That is, as we saw in section 1.2.1., according to his empirical interpretation, the notion of moral feeling is significant in explaining how we convert moral judgements of reason into a desire to perform moral actions from a third-personal, scientific point of view (see pp. 90-91). Thus, for Frierson, while Kant’s argument for establishing the validity of morality is transcendental – i.e., it revolves around how the fact of reason, that shows up from the practical point of view, conditions the possibility of morality, his discussion of moral motivation is empirical – i.e., it revolves around how human agents get motivated to act according to the commands of the moral law with the aid of the incentive of moral feeling from a third-personal, scientific point of view.

In her article, “Response to Frierson’s “Kantian Feeling: Empirical Psychology, Transcendental Critique and Phenomenology”” from the same issue of *Con-textos Kantianos*, Grenberg (2016) calls Frierson’s lack of readiness to include moral feeling into Kant’s transcendental analysis as “Paton Problem” or “Korsgaard Krankheit”. She explains this problem of his as follows: “[I]n a misguided effort to protect pure reason from the undue influence of sensibility, the genuine role for feeling in Kant’s practical transcendental philosophy is rejected” (Grenberg 2016, 375). That is, for her, it is Frierson’s unwarranted attempt to safeguard the ‘purity’ of Kant’s transcendental argument for establishing the validity of the moral law that leads him to exclude moral feeling from it. This problem of his, she claims, “put[s] Patrick in some awkward positions in relation to Kant’s texts”. More particularly, she finds it “odd that a feeling Kant describes as the only feeling

that “can be *cognized* a priori” (5:78/67, emphasis added) is now to be *cognized* only empirically, or cognized a priori but with no essential import or meaning” (374). In addition to expressing her criticisms against his reading, she also defends her own stance against Frierson’s criticisms. She argues that he wrongly attributes a ““reductionist” conception of phenomenology” of moral feeling, one that is “inert” and “non-agential”, to her (378). She further clarifies that her phenomenological interpretation does not take moral feeling as directly conditioning the possibility of morality (as Frierson reads her), but as playing an indirect epistemic role to enable access into reasons that justify the validity of the moral law. She writes,

I hope my...point is clear: although feeling cannot play a justificatory role in the grounding of moral reasons, and although it is not itself a direct condition for the possibility of the authority of those reasons, it does nonetheless play a crucial moral epistemic role in helping us gain access to those things which do act as justifications and conditions. As such, the attentive, felt phenomenological reflection in which one must engage to get to our moral rational selves is...deeply implicated in Kant’s...[main project] (378).

By criticizing Frierson’s exclusion of moral feeling from Kant’s transcendental argument, and by defending her phenomenological interpretation against Frierson’s criticisms, Grenberg appeals for “a robust role for attentive reflection upon felt, phenomenological experience...in [Kant’s] transcendental argument” (380).

### **2.2.2. Ware’s Disagreements with Grenberg’s views**

In addition to the debates between the scholars from across two types of interpretation, one can also see disagreements between scholars from within a particular kind of interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation in the secondary literature. For instance, in his article titled, “Accessing the Moral Law through Feeling”, Ware (2015) expresses his criticisms against Grenberg’s (2013) phenomenological interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation. First, he provides a critical evaluation of what he calls as Grenberg’s “*Affect of Reason interpretation*” – it refers to her thesis that the moral law of pure reason is a phenomenologically felt fact (Ware 2015, 301). Ware observes that, in order to establish her “affect of reason interpretation”, Grenberg presupposes that, for Kant, facts force themselves upon us via our sensibility. While he accepts her view that facts force themselves upon us, he disagrees with her view that they do so only via our sensibility. He writes,



[F]or the Affect of reason interpretation to work, we must justify the claim that whatever is given to us – ...our experience of categorical demands – can only appear via sensibility. But this claim strikes me as false. I think Kant would say that many representations have a forceful quality without necessarily linking to our sensible faculty (304).

Ware (2015) particularly cites Kant's passages from his first *Critique* to show that pure concepts from our cognitive faculty too are referred to as forced facts. Given that they are cognitive categories, it would be absurd to consider them as accessible only via sensibility. By making this comparison with the theoretical sphere, he argues that the moral law, a fact of pure reason, need not be taken as a felt fact accessible only through our sensibility. He writes, "Kant says that our consciousness of the moral law 'forces itself' upon us, we need not take him to mean this consciousness is felt. Nor must we assume that our consciousness of the moral law operates via sensibility because it is something 'given'" (Ware 2015, 306). By arguing thus, he points out Grenberg's mistaken presumption of restricting the scope of accessing the forced fact of pure reason solely via sensibility in putting forward her "affect of reason interpretation". He expresses this as follows: "We can take Kant to mean that we are actually conscious of necessity in moral laws, in the same way that we are actually conscious of necessity in pure theoretical principles. Calling these cognitions 'facts' means only that they are real, not that our grasp of them operates via feeling, as Grenberg supposes." (306).

Ware (2015, 302) also offers his critical comments against Grenberg's "*Feeling Thesis*" – the thesis that moral feeling epistemically enables the justification of the validity of the moral law. Taken together with her "affect of reason interpretation", this thesis of Grenberg establishes that the moral feeling and the fact of reason share a relation of identity.<sup>77</sup> This is because, not only is the fact of reason a *felt* fact, it is this moral feeling that justifies the validity of the moral law. Ware acknowledges that she puts her "feeling thesis" forward as a way of criticizing and fixing Allison-Reath's transcendental interpretation that excludes moral feeling from Kant's argument for justifying the validity of the moral law. However, he states that Grenberg's way of bringing the notion of feeling into it does not have strong textual evidence. Taking into consideration

---

<sup>77</sup> Although Ware (2015, 310n) does not fully endorse this view, he acknowledges that he sometimes reads Grenberg's view on the relationship between moral feeling and the fact of reason in terms of identity. He cites specific lines from Grenberg (2013: 236, 261, 263) to show this analytic connection between the two notions.

Grenberg's use of textual support for establishing the analytic connection between Kant's fact of reason and moral feeling, he points out that "there is also textual evidence supporting the opposite view – upheld by Allison" (307). Hence, he argues that "the burden of proof [for providing more textual support] lands on Grenberg's side" as her interpretation is a revisionary one, unlike Allison's, which is more straightforward. Now, given that Grenberg's "feeling thesis" does not have a strong textual support, Ware questions if Allison-Reath's denial of moral feeling from Kant's justification of the validity of the moral law is the only alternate way of reading the connection between fact of reason and moral feeling. Like Frierson (2016a), he makes an attempt to provide a more direct way of including the notion of moral feeling in Kant's justification of the validity of the moral law. He argues that it is possible to include moral feeling into Kant's main transcendental argument by establishing a positive connection between moral feeling and fact of reason, "without making it identical to the fact of reason" (Ware 2015, 308-309). That is, for Ware, unlike Grenberg's view, the fact of reason need not be reduced to moral feeling, and still, the latter can play a justificatory role in Kant's project. He again writes, "[W]e can distinguish the fact of reason (as our consciousness of the moral law's authority) and the feeling of respect (as the effect this consciousness has on our sensibility), yet maintain that Kant's analysis of respect is central to his project of justification" (309). This is possible by reading Kant's doctrine of "fact of reason" as justifying the validity of the moral law only to an extent. In addition to his claim that the moral law is presented to us as a fact of reason, there is a need to show how it effects an appropriate moral feeling in our minds for moral actions to occur. Only then his project of establishing the validity of the moral law will be complete. To do this, Ware reads the third chapter on incentives in the second *Critique* as completing the project of justifying the validity of the moral law. He writes, "On this reading, chapter III seeks to show how our consciousness of the moral law can exert an appropriate effect on sensibility, one that does not reduce to a pathological feeling of pleasure or pain" (309). In other words, the only way for Kant to *fully* prove that pure reason is practical via the moral law is by showing in this chapter how it effects an appropriate moral feeling in our minds for moral actions to occur. Since he considers moral feeling to justify the validity of the moral law independently of the fact of reason, Ware (309) argues, "[w]e can separate the 'fact' from 'respect', with Allison, yet still argue that chapter III of the second Critique is essential to Kant's larger project".

### **2.3. Two Problems with Alternative Interpretations of Kant's Account of Moral Motivation**

In addition to the debates and disagreements amongst scholars who propose alternative interpretations (discussed above), one can also see that the phenomenological and empirical interpretations face some problems of their own. One common issue that arises in these interpretations is regarding how they accommodate the *a priori* status that Kant's attributes to his notion of moral feeling. The second problem common to these two interpretations revolves around the extent to which Kant's problem of moral motivation has been understood and articulated by scholars who propose them. In this section, I discuss these two issues with specific references to Frierson (2016a, 2016b), Grenberg (2013, 2016) and Ware (2014). In section 2.3.1, I discuss that Kant's attribution of *a priori* status to moral feeling is both a point of debate and a problem for Frierson (2014, 2016a, 2016b) and Grenberg (2013, 2016). In section 2.3.2, I discuss Ware's (2014) misunderstanding of the problem of moral motivation in Kant is incompatible with his phenomenological interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation.

#### **2.3.1. A *Priori* Status of Moral Feeling: A Problem for Frierson and Grenberg**

The debate between Frierson (2016a, 2016b) and Grenberg (2016) (discussed in section 2.2.1 at pp. 105-108) is an instance of and shows the possibility of disagreements between scholars from across two kinds of interpretations – empirical and phenomenological. In addition, these two interpretations, which were proposed as alternatives to Allison-Reath's transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation, are susceptible to problems of their own. One obvious problem that is common to both these interpretations revolves around the way they treat the *a priori* status of moral feeling. In fact, as mentioned above in section 2.2.1., this is the point that Grenberg (2016) raises against Frierson (2014, 2016a) when she discusses about the “awkward positions” that he is in relation to Kant's texts (see pp. 107-108). The problem is: while Kant refers to moral feeling as that which is “cognized a priori” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 72, 73, 78, 90), Frierson (2016a, 357) insists that Kant's notion of moral feeling must be taken as having an empirical status. In other words, Frierson compromises on the *a priori* status of moral feeling in putting forward his view that it plays a key motivational role in empirically causing moral actions from a phenomenal point of view. However, he does not completely neglect Kant's attribution of *a priori* status to moral feeling. This is evident from his brief attempt to connect moral feeling with Kant's transcendental argument for justifying the validity of the moral law (as observed using references from his book and his article at p. 106 in section 2.2.1. above). However, as discussed

in section 2.2.1. above, he does not hold on to this position consistently, and even retracts from it later in his article as he thinks that Kant did not have a fully-fledged transcendental critique of feeling until his later writings (see pp. 106-107). He also makes an attempt to reconcile the *a priori* status of moral feeling with his empirical interpretation of it. He does this by claiming that its *a priori* nature is by virtue of its epistemic source (i.e., the moral law) and its empirical nature is by virtue of its function within the moral motivational structure. However, he backtracks from this view as well by calling it as a “naïve reading” (Frierson 2016b, 386).<sup>78</sup> Hence, a problem that certainly threatens the credibility of Frierson’s empirical interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation is that the empirical status assigned to moral feeling is not compatible with Kant’s attribution of *a priori* status to it. On the one hand, its empirical status means that its role as the moral incentive is applicable to some of us generally, with some exceptions (contingently) and, on the other hand, its *a priori* status means that its role as the moral incentive is applicable to all of us universally, without exceptions (necessarily). This incompatibility is a part and parcel of any empirical interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation (and is not specific to Frierson’s reading) because it treats moral feeling as a psychological feeling derived from experience. That is, the nature of any empirical interpretation of moral motivation is such that it considers all of its essential elements, including the incentive of moral feeling as derived from experience. Experience, for Kant, can only give us the knowledge of “what is”, but “never that it must necessarily be thus” and with “no true universality” (Kant Kant *KrV*, AA, A1). Hence, moral feeling considered from an empirical standpoint always lacks *a priori* status.

Criticizing Frierson (2014, 2016a) for not reconciling his empirical interpretation with *a priori* status of moral feeling in a sound manner, Grenberg (2013) tries her best to avoid this problem in providing her interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation. In her book, anticipating this

---

<sup>78</sup> Frierson (2016b) eventually holds on to a more confusing stance of considering moral feeling as an *a priori* feeling, and yet, not qualifying it as a transcendental psychological condition. The confusion is evident when he writes on the one hand that Kant’s notion of moral feeling is an *a priori* basis of morality, and on the other hand that Kant’s transcendental standpoint is a standpoint of reasons alone. He first writes, “I read the “Incentives” chapter of the second *Critique*...[as] a properly transcendental analysis of feeling. Kant is examining feeling from within...He’s developing an *a priori* basis for insisting that humans must or should have this sort of feeling.” (Frierson 2016b, 388). Following this, he also writes, “I still fundamentally see the from-within transcendental perspective as a normatively governed space of reasons...I really do think that the “Incentives,” in terms of the project of the second *Critique*, is an afterthought...[I]t’s not that important as a *Critique of Practical Reason*, since it relates only to the aftereffects of reason determining desire” (389). Moreover, it is unclear how he would reconcile such a position with his empirical reading of moral feeling that he puts forth mostly in his works.

problem, she makes a clear distinction between felt experience of morality in an empirical sense and in a phenomenological sense. She writes that, on one the hand, the “empirical experience [of moral feeling] is third-personal in nature” and that this view takes “the attitude of science, [and] of theoretical philosophy”. On the other hand, she writes, “phenomenological experience of morality is irreducibly subjective and first-personal...felt experience of oneself as an acting agent” (Grenberg 2013, 40). Making this distinction, she points out that the empirical reading of moral feeling suffers from the threat of missing the *a priori* status attributed to it. She writes: “It appears that any appeal to experience, including felt experience [of morality], is subject to this charge that its resulting claims hold only with empirical generality, not strict necessity. Appeal to inductive experience thus seems simultaneously an abandonment of a priori morality.” (30). She therefore prefers to appeal to the phenomenology of moral feeling which, she argues, does not disregard the attribution of *a priori* status to it. She writes, “Instead of an inductive appeal to empirical experience, Kant makes an attentive appeal to felt, and object-less phenomenological experience [and]...thus makes space for...appeals to experience in a way that makes possible an a priori status” (32). Despite making this clear-cut distinction and favoring a phenomenological account of moral feeling over an empirical reading for this purpose, Grenberg’s interpretation fails to avoid the problem that Frierson faces. The problem specific to her interpretation is: in elucidating her phenomenological account of moral feeling, she attaches only a softer version of *a priori* status to it – one that represents objective necessity, but not strict universality. To see how, first, it should be observed that she explains Kant’s attribution of *a priori* status to moral feeling by pointing out its intelligible, rational cause – the moral law. She writes, “when Kant calls moral feeling “a priori,” he means simply that this feeling...does not have an empirical, contingent cause. Instead, its cause is intelligible” (Grenberg 2013, 62). She immediately follows it with a note that it is by virtue of its intelligible cause that this moral feeling is experienced universally and necessarily. Now, as discussed in section 1.1.1., Grenberg’s main argument is that Kant appeals to common, first-personal felt experience of morality in order to justify the validity of the moral law (see pp. 82-83). More specifically, she argues that this first-personal experience of moral feeling enables access to the moral law, and this is the only way the validity of latter can be justified. She writes, “[Moral] [f]eeling becomes the means via which sensibly affected rational beings access deep truths about their rational natures. Ironically, then, because it is only through appeal to felt experience that we can access our rational natures, it is only through appeal to our felt experiences

that we can vindicate the practicality of pure reason” (72). Again, she notes that it is the “felt awareness of respect for the moral law as authoritative which reveals...[the moral] law’s indissolvable, categorical, and authoritative status” (175). Keeping this in mind, her argument that moral feeling acquires *a priori* status by virtue of its origination from the moral law does not hold good. The problem is: on the one hand, the experience of moral feeling is universal and necessary because it is caused by the moral law and, on the other hand, the moral law is universally and necessarily valid because of the experience of this moral feeling. Given that her main aim is to prove that the felt experience of morality vindicates the moral law as the fact of reason, she cannot backtrack on this point only to avoid this circularity. The only way for Grenberg to avoid this circularity is by not relying on the moral law for justifying the *a priori* status of moral feeling. This would mean that the first-personal, felt experience of morality must have the elements of universality and necessity independent of its origination from the moral law. Grenberg consistently refers to the first-personal felt experience of categorical obligation as an experience characterized by *necessity*. By this, she means that, in practical circumstances, agents feel that the demands of moral obligation have a categorical hold on their will, along with a powerful constraint on our need for happiness. For instance, in discussing Kant’s Gallows Man example, she writes “[T]he obligation to tell the truth is something this man experiences as *categorically necessary*, that is, as holding no matter what pressures it puts on his love of life [emphasis added]” (41). This shows that, in her view, the moral feeling that we experience first-personally, from within, contains an element of necessity in enabling us access to the moral law and driving us to perform moral actions. While this cannot be disputed (as the appeal is made to the subjective experiences of individual human agents), she fails to explain how this felt experience of categorical obligation is also universally applicable to all human agents within her interpretation. While she does refer to it as “a commonly felt human feeling” (60) repeatedly, this does not suffice to capture the strict universality aspect of moral feeling that Kant writes about. The “commonness” of moral feeling means that it is inductively verifiable and that it has the feature of empirical or comparative universality. This means, it is still not strictly universal for it to be qualified as having the *a priori* status. This problem of attributing a ‘soft’ version of *a priori* status of moral feeling is not specific to Grenberg, but applies to any phenomenological reading of it. This is because, a phenomenological account of moral feeling solely entails a first-personal experience of what it feels like from within. As discussed in section 1.1., one of the arguments that scholars who provide

a phenomenological interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation rely on is Kant's view that feelings are subjective mental states belonging to sensibility (see pp. 84, 86-87). Given that it has to do only with how an individual human agent subjectively feels from within when encountering the moral law of pure reason, a phenomenological reading will evidently fail to justify how this feeling is also universally experienced by all human agents. Thus, moral feeling considered from a phenomenological standpoint always lacks a thick version of *a priori* status that Kant attributes to it.

### **2.3.2. Ware's Misunderstanding of the Problem of Moral Motivation**

Ware's (2015) disagreement with Grenberg's (2013) views (discussed in section 2.2.2. at pp. 108-110) is an instance of perspectival differences between scholars who offer interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation of the same kind. While Ware points out problems in Grenberg's interpretation to express his disagreements, his own attempt to include moral feeling into Kant's argument for justifying the validity of the moral law faces a problem. As mentioned in section 2.2.2., Ware resolves this problem of Allison-Reath's transcendental interpretation directly by reading Kant's discussion of the incentive of moral feeling (i.e., the third chapter on incentives in the second *Critique*) as a part of Kant's larger project of proving the practicality of pure reason (see p. 110). However, this step that he takes does not fit well with the phenomenological interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation that he offers. More specifically, including moral feeling as a part of Kant's justification of the validity of the moral law begs the question that Ware (2014) thinks Kant was seeking an answer for through his phenomenological account of moral motivation. As discussed in section 1.1.2. of this chapter, Ware (2014, 728) thinks that Kant's account of moral motivation is a response to what he calls as "*motivational effect skepticism*" – a problem concerning the nature of effect of the moral law on the minds of human agents (see p. 86). More specifically, the question that Ware thinks Kant intends to answer through his phenomenological discussion of the incentive of moral feeling is the following: how is the effect of the moral law different from sensible feelings of pleasure for it to be considered as the moral incentive? As it is concerned only with the sort of effect that it has on us, it is obvious that this question presupposes that the moral law *does* cause an effect on us – i.e., that it binds our will unconditionally. In other words, the problem of motivational effect skepticism in Kant takes the validity of the moral law for granted. Given that the problem presupposes the validity of the moral law, Kant's solution, i.e., his phenomenology of moral feeling and moral motivation in the third

chapter of his second *Critique*, too presupposes that pure reason is practical via the moral law. This is because, as a solution to motivational effect skepticism, Kant's account of moral feeling becomes a discussion of *how* the effect of the moral law differs from the effect of empirical cognition on our sensibility (i.e., sensible feelings of pleasure). Such a discussion presupposes that the moral law of pure reason *is* practical and *does* have an effect in our minds. If this is so, moral feeling cannot serve any positive justificatory function within Kant's transcendental argument for establishing the validity of the moral law (as Ware maintains). The most that moral feeling can then do, in such a reading, is to *explain* the practicality of the moral law in human agents.<sup>79</sup> Such a view is in fact similar to Allison-Reath's interpretation because, as discussed in section 2.1., their interpretation too considers Kant's discussion of moral feeling as an exploration of effects that the moral law has on our minds (see pp. 101-102). Thus, Ware's attempt to attribute a justificatory function to moral feeling in Kant's transcendental argument fails as his reading also suggests that Kant's doctrine of moral feeling presupposes the proof of the practicality of the moral law. One main reason why Ware's reading falls into such a problem is because of his misunderstanding of Kant's main question to which he offers his account of moral motivation as the solution. To be specific, it is taking motivational effect skepticism as Kant's main problem of moral motivation that prevents him from including moral feeling as a part of Kant's argument for justifying the validity of the moral law. Since this problem presupposes the practicality of the moral law of pure reason, Kant's solution to it via his doctrine of moral feeling cannot add any significance to his justification of the practicality of the moral law. As I showed in section 1.3. of the first chapter, the problem of motivational effect skepticism gains prominence in the light of Ware's dismissal of the philosophical relevance of motivational skepticism about practical reason (see pp. 25-26). He uses Kant's view that we can never know how the moral law causes an effect on us (i.e., our epistemic inaccessibility into the moral law) to push *motivational skepticism about practical reason* to the background and bring *motivational effect skepticism* to the foreground. The dismissal

---

<sup>79</sup> One may raise an objection on behalf of Ware that he is entitled to take the validity of the moral law for granted if he is working within Kant's moral system. It is true that as a scholar interpreting Kant, Ware must subscribe to the validity of the moral law. In fact, his presumption of the validity of the moral law would not be a problem by itself. The problem arises only because he simultaneously wants to show how moral feeling belongs to Kant's argument for justifying the validity of the moral law (as I pointed out above). Since he wants to show the latter, he must be open to studying and assessing Kant's argument for the validity of the moral law without taking it for granted. Only then would it be possible for him to see if the notion of moral feeling appropriately belongs Kant's justification of the validity of the moral law.



of the validity of the question about motivational efficacy of practical reason (i.e., motivational skepticism about practical reason) goes hand in hand with Ware's assumption that the moral law of pure reason *does* have a motivational effect on our minds. Assuming this, Ware finds the question of how this effect of the moral law is different from sensible feelings of pleasure (i.e., motivational effect skepticism) as more pertinent. As I discussed above, it is this assumption that makes Ware's attempt to include moral feeling within Kant's justification of the validity of the moral law problematic. If Ware had taken motivational skepticism about practical reason as a serious problem in Kant, then the assumption that the moral law *does* have a motivational effect on our minds would have been doubted. This would have provided a space for the inclusion of moral feeling within Kant's motivational account of the moral law and within his proof of the practicality of pure reason. Hence, Ware's move of dismissing motivational skepticism about practical reason leads to his unsuccessful appropriation of moral feeling into Kant's transcendental argument for establishing the validity of the moral law.

This critical remark concerning the improper understanding of Kant's problem of moral motivation in fact extends to other scholars who provide alternate interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation. This problem comes up very evidently in their attempts to reinstate the notion of moral feeling both within Kant's moral motivational structure and within Kant's main argument to establish the validity of the moral law. For instance, as discussed in section 1.1.1., Grenberg (2013) assigns an epistemically enabling role for moral feeling within her phenomenological interpretation of moral motivation (see p. 84). Further, for her, it is this epistemically enabling role of moral feeling that is crucial for grounding Kant's justification of the validity of the moral law as well. To recall her quote pointed out a few pages earlier (pp. 113-114), she writes "...it is only through appeal to our felt experiences [of morality] that we can vindicate the practicality of pure reason" (Grenberg 2013, 72). Now, attributing this role of providing epistemic access into the moral law presupposes that we do not have direct epistemic access into the moral law. A lack of epistemic access into it does not mean that the moral law is not unconditionally binding. It only means that we do not know how it categorically binds our will. An attentive reflection upon how its unconditionally binding nature feels from within (in circumstances of moral dilemma) merely brings us awareness of it, so that we can allow ourselves to be morally motivated. If this is so, then moral feeling cannot be seen as that which proves the practicality of the moral law. Rather, it can only be seen as that which brings us awareness about the validity of the moral law upon an attentive

reflection on it.<sup>80</sup> Hence, the epistemically enabling moral feeling cannot be taken as crucial to Kant's justification of the validity of the moral law, as Grenberg argues. Once again, this problem occurs in Grenberg's reading because she does not articulate Kant's actual problem of moral motivation for which her phenomenological reading of moral feeling (as enabler of access into the moral law) is a solution.<sup>81</sup> More specifically, like Ware (2014), she does not take Kant's epistemic inaccessibility into how the moral law binds our will as a symptom of a larger problem of how it is possible for the moral law to bind our will at all. As I showed in section 3.4.3. of the first chapter, our lack of epistemic access into how the moral law can cause motivation in our minds adds to Kant's skeptical worries about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason (see pp. 60-66). Instead of taking Kant's inaccessibility thesis as causing motivational skepticism about pure practical reason, Grenberg takes it as a standalone issue and reads Kant's account of moral feeling as providing epistemic access into how the moral law moves us – something that we normally do not have. Frierson (2014, 2016a) too fails to include moral feeling within Kant's argument for establishing the validity of the moral law for the same reason. If he had articulated the actual problem of moral motivation in Kant – which is motivational skepticism about pure practical reason, then he would not have proposed an empirical interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation in the first place. As discussed in the previous chapter, the problem of moral motivation that Kant encounters in his moral theory is the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. As I showed in section 3.4. of the first chapter, in his endeavor to establish pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality, Kant faced skeptical challenges regarding how the moral law of pure reason could serve as the *a priori* principle conditioning the possibility of moral motivation in all human agents without exceptions (see pp. 50-66). Hence,

---

<sup>80</sup> The difference between them is that the practicality of the moral law refers to the actual unconditional determination of our will by the moral law, whereas the awareness of the validity of the moral law refers to our epistemic access into the fact that the moral law is the unconditional determining ground of our will.

<sup>81</sup> Only once, in a footnote, does Grenberg (2013) mention that the role of moral feeling as an epistemic enabler resolves the problem of philosopher's stone. She writes that her thesis, "Kant's practical philosophy [is] grounded in attentiveness to common experience" gives her confidence to resolve this problem by providing a phenomenological reading of moral feeling (Grenberg 2013, 59-60n). However, this is a misunderstanding of the problem of philosopher's stone because, as discussed in section 3.4.3. of the first chapter, this problem is not about the lack of epistemic access into moral motivation, but is about the conversion of moral judgements into actions (given that practical reason is the source of these moral judgements) (see p. 60). The lack of epistemic access into the process of moral motivation merely adds to the problem of philosopher's stone, which has its primary roots in the formal nature of the moral law of pure reason and our imperfect will (as I discussed in sections 3.4.1. and 3.4.2 of the first chapter (see pp. 52-55, 55-60)). Hence, taking moral feeling as an epistemic enabler, as Grenberg does, may resolve the epistemic inaccessibility problem, but not problem of philosopher's stone.

what is required to resolve this problem is a principle of pure reason that conditions the possibility of moral motivation *a priori*. Given this requirement, Frierson's empirical reading of Kant's discussion of the incentive of moral feeling is not compatible with Kant's search for an *a priori* moral incentive. As I show in the third chapter, for Kant, the notion of moral feeling is an *a priori* principle produced by pure reason upon its influence on our sensibility. Furthermore, I show that since the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason belongs to Kant's search for the supreme principle of morality, his discussion of moral feeling as an *a priori* incentive belongs to his justification of validity of the moral law as the principle of morality. In comparison, Frierson's (2014, 2016a) empirical reading cannot take the notion of moral feeling as a part of Kant's proof of the practicality of the moral law as it does not take Kant's discussion of moral feeling as a response to the problem of how pure reason could possibly cause moral motivation *a priori*. Thus, a lack of proper understanding or articulation of the problem of moral motivation in Kant is a common problem to be observed in the alternate interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation.

### **3. Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to critically explore the interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation in the secondary literature. I began by looking into Frierson's (2014, 2016a) division of the scholarly interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation into phenomenological, empirical and transcendental kinds. Phenomenological interpretations, which have emerged from scholars like Grenberg (2013) and Ware (2014), take Kant's discussion of moral motivation to be a first-personal description of how it feels like (from within) when human agents get motivated by the moral law to perform moral actions. Empirical interpretations put forward by scholars like Frierson (2014, 2016a) and Singleton (2007) take Kant's discussion of moral motivation to be a scientific explanation of what happens when the moral law causes motivation in human agents to perform moral actions. Transcendental interpretations spearheaded by scholars like Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) consider Kant's account of moral motivation both as a discussion about how the moral law motivates all the rational agents from a practical viewpoint and as a part of his main argument to establish the validity of the moral law as the supreme principle of morality. I then showed that empirical and phenomenological interpretations arose as critical reactions to transcendental interpretations of Allison and Reath. The main criticism levelled against Allison and Reath is concerning the way Kant's notion of moral feeling has been treated in their

interpretations. Not only have they dismissed a positive role to it within Kant's moral motivational structure, but they have also not attributed any space for it within Kant's argument for proving the practicality of pure reason. I then showed that there are ongoing debates and disagreements between scholars from across two kinds of interpretations (which I illustrated with a discussion on the debate between Grenberg (2016) and Frierson (2016a, 2016b)) and between scholars who propose the same type of interpretations (which I illustrated with a discussion on Ware's (2015) disagreements with Grenberg's (2013) interpretation). I then showed that empirical and phenomenological interpretations, proposed as alternatives to transcendental interpretations, have not been devoid of problems and weaknesses of their own. I pointed out that the *a priori* nature of moral feeling in Kant's account can pose a serious challenge for both empirical and phenomenological interpretations. I specifically showed this in both Grenberg's (2013, 2016) and Frierson's (2014, 2016a, 2016b) interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation. Finally, I also showed that a misunderstanding of how the problem of moral motivation occurs in Kant can lead to problematic interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation. I particularly took up Ware's (2014) misconception of Kant's problem of moral motivation (as a psychological problem called motivational effect skepticism) to illustrate it. In the first chapter, I showed that the problem of moral motivation in Kant is the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason that occurs as a part of Kant's moral philosophical project throughout his writings. In the next chapter, I will show that the notion of moral feeling (as the correct moral incentive) emerges an appropriate response to this problem from within Kant's critical investigation into the metaphysical first principles founding morality. I will show that such a reading is a revised, corrected version of the transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation.

### **CHAPTER 3: MORAL FEELING AS KANT'S SOLUTION TO MOTIVATIONAL SKEPTICISM ABOUT PURE PRACTICAL REASON – A REVISED TRANSCENDENTAL INTERPRETATION**

In the light of a detailed review of secondary literature on Kant's account of moral motivation in the second chapter, I propose a revised transcendental reading of Kant's account of moral motivation – one that not only takes moral feeling as moving the will of finite rational agents from a practical point of view, but also one that considers this motivation from moral feeling as a necessary condition for the possibility of moral actions. Such a reading emerges from considering Kant's discussions of the incentive of moral feeling as a response to his problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. As I discussed in the first chapter, as a problem that occurs as a part of his project to establish the moral law of pure reason as the supreme principle of morality, the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason is integral to Kant's moral philosophy. This means, motivational skepticism about pure practical reason belongs to Kant's metaphysics of morals and requires a critique of pure practical reason for its resolution. Engaging in this critical investigation, Kant arrives at *feeling* as an *a priori* principle that conditions the possibility of moral motivation in finite rational agents. His argument, as I interpret it, is: only a *feeling* emerges as a result of a practical influence of pure reason on our sensibility because feelings share an analogy with *a priori* forms of sensible intuition. Further, for this *a priori* feeling to be an *appropriate* solution to the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason, it should possess characteristics that enable it to overcome the challenges that beset the problem. For this purpose, Kant develops his account of moral feeling in such a way that: (i) it does not provide any material ends to the moral law, so that the latter retains its formality; (ii) it is capable of overruling the sensible needs of human agents; and (iii) it does not provide us with any knowledge of how we get motivated by the moral law. Since motivational skepticism about pure practical reason belongs to Kant's project of proving the moral law as the supreme principle of morality, Kant's account of moral feeling as the correct moral incentive not only resolves this problem, but also adds significantly to Kant's justification of the validity of the moral law. Such an interpretation is a *revised* transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation because, unlike Allison-Reath's reading, it includes moral feeling both within Kant's moral motivational structure and within Kant's proof of the practicality of pure reason via the moral law.

To put forward my interpretation, in section 1, I begin by situating the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason within Kant's metaphysics of morals. I show that, as a response to the problem, Kant identifies moral feeling as the correct incentive of morality in his critique of pure reason in its practical use. More specifically, for him, the moral law effects this feeling in our minds for conditioning the possibility of moral motivation. Then, in section 2, I reconstruct Kant's argument for arriving at *feeling* as the correct *a priori* incentive of morality in his critical investigation into pure practical reason. First, for Kant, pure reason is one unified faculty with two different sets of *a priori* principles founding its theoretical and practical applications (section 2.1.). Second, by virtue of the unity of pure reason, Kant thinks that there must be an analogy between the analytic of pure speculative reason and the analytic of pure practical reason (i.e., the critical analyses of *a priori* conditions that make up the theoretical and practical cognition respectively) (section 2.2.). Third, by virtue of this broader analogy, the *a priori* principle of moral motivation (to be discovered in the aesthetic of the second *Critique*) must be analogous to the *a priori* forms of sensible intuition from the aesthetic section of the first *Critique*. Since feeling is the appropriate practical analogue to space and time (by virtue of the similarities and the dissimilarity they share), Kant uncovers a feeling as the *a priori* incentive of morality in aesthetic section the analytic of pure practical reason (section 2.3.). Then, in section 3, I show how Kant develops his account of this feeling-based incentive in the chapter "On the incentives of pure practical reason" (especially, at *KpV*, AA, 05: 72-81) of his second *Critique* in a way that specific motivational skeptical challenges are appropriately addressed. First, he conceives of this feeling-based incentive as a moral feeling that must be produced by the moral law in our minds. Conceiving it as an effect (and not as an antecedent ground) of the moral law enables moral feeling to serve as the moral incentive without violating the formal nature of the moral law (section 3.1.). Second, Kant conceives of moral feeling as constituted of a negative feeling of humiliation towards our sensible nature and a positive feeling of respect for the moral law. Conceiving it as made up of these two constituent feelings enables moral feeling to serve as the moral incentive capable of overcoming the forceful needs and tendencies of our sensible nature (section 3.2.). Third, given that moral feeling is a product of the moral law, Kant thinks about motivation from moral feeling along similar lines as the notion of causality of freedom. Such a view restricts epistemic access into the process of moral motivation (section 3.3.). Finally, in section 4, I point out a flaw in Allison-Reath's standard transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation and

show how my revised interpretation resolves it. I argue that Allison-Reath's use of Kant's 'incorporation thesis' to establish their interpretation is unbalanced as it is applied only to the explanation of how non-moral actions motivated by sensible incentives occur. I show that the inclusion of moral feeling within Kant's moral motivational structure (that my interpretation defends) is compatible with a consistent application of Kant's 'incorporation thesis' to explain both non-moral and moral actions.

### **1. Moral Feeling as Kant's Critical Solution to the Motivational Problem from within Metaphysics of Morals**

Kant had a detailed taxonomy of philosophical disciplines and their objects.<sup>82</sup> As I briefly discussed in footnote 32 at p. 42 in section 3.2. of the first chapter, Kant divides a philosophy of any discipline, in so far as it is material, into pure and empirical parts. Pure philosophy of any object investigates the fundamental *a priori* principle that conditions the possibility of that object. Empirical philosophy of the same object studies *a posteriori* principles underlying the workings of that object. In his *Groundwork*, Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 388) writes, "All philosophy insofar as it is based on grounds of experience can be called *empirical*; but insofar as it sets forth its teachings simply from a priori principles it can be called *pure* philosophy". Since "philosophy is a **system** of rational cognition through concepts" (Kant *EEKU*, AA, 20: 195), he also writes about this distinction in his first *Critique* as follows: "All philosophy, however, is either cognition from pure reason or rational cognition from empirical principles. The former is called pure philosophy, the latter empirical" (Kant *KrV*, AA, A840/B868). Keeping this distinction in mind, Kant also writes about two types of objects that our reason aims to investigate philosophically: nature, which is an investigation into what is, and freedom, which is an investigation into what ought to be. To put it in his words, "[T]he legislation of human reason (philosophy) has two objects, nature and freedom...The philosophy of nature pertains to everything that **is**; that of morals only to that which **should be**" (A840/B868). Taking the distinction between two parts of philosophy and two objects

---

<sup>82</sup> In the "Preface" of his *Groundwork*, Kant states the importance of segregating philosophy into distinct and specialized compartments of study. For him, doing so leads to a needed "division of labor", so that investigations within philosophical disciplines can be undertaken "most perfectly and with greater facility" (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 388). Again, in the first *Critique*, making comparisons with the work of chemists and mathematicians, he writes that "[i]t is of the utmost importance [for a philosopher] to isolate cognitions that differ from one another in their species and origin, and carefully to avoid mixing them together with others with which they are usually connected in their use". Only then can the "proper value" of "a special kind of [philosophical] cognition" be "securely determine[d]" (Kant *KrV*, AA, A842/B870).

of philosophy into consideration, we have the following taxonomy: pure philosophy of nature, pure philosophy of freedom, empirical philosophy of nature and empirical philosophy of morals (or moral anthropology). When these two objects, nature and freedom, are investigated within these disciplines, they are subject to “laws of nature” and “laws of freedom” respectively (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 387). This means, the founding *a priori* principles to be investigated within pure philosophy of nature and freedom are these natural laws and moral laws respectively (Kant *KrV*, AA, A838/B866). Kant calls pure philosophy of any discipline as metaphysics. In his *Metaphysics of Morals*, he notes: “A *philosophy* of any subject (a system of rational cognition from concepts) requires a system of *pure rational* concepts independent of any conditions of intuition, that is, a *metaphysics*” (Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 375). More precisely, in his *Groundwork*, he states that if pure philosophy “is limited to determinate objects of the understanding it is called *metaphysics*” (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 388). Given the two types of objects of pure philosophy (i.e., nature and freedom), “there arises the idea of a twofold metaphysics, a *metaphysics of nature* and a *metaphysics of morals*” (04: 388). Since pure reason is used in the investigations of *a priori* principles (i.e., the natural law and the moral law) founding nature and morality, Kant (*KrV*, AA, A841/B869) writes about this distinction as follows:

Metaphysics is divided into the metaphysics of the **speculative** and the **practical** use of pure reason, and is therefore either **metaphysics of nature** or **metaphysics of morals**. The former contains all rational principles from mere concepts (hence with the exclusion of mathematics) for the **theoretical** cognition of all things; the latter, the principles which determine **action and omission** *a priori* and make them necessary. Now morality is the only lawfulness of actions which can be derived entirely *a priori* from principles.

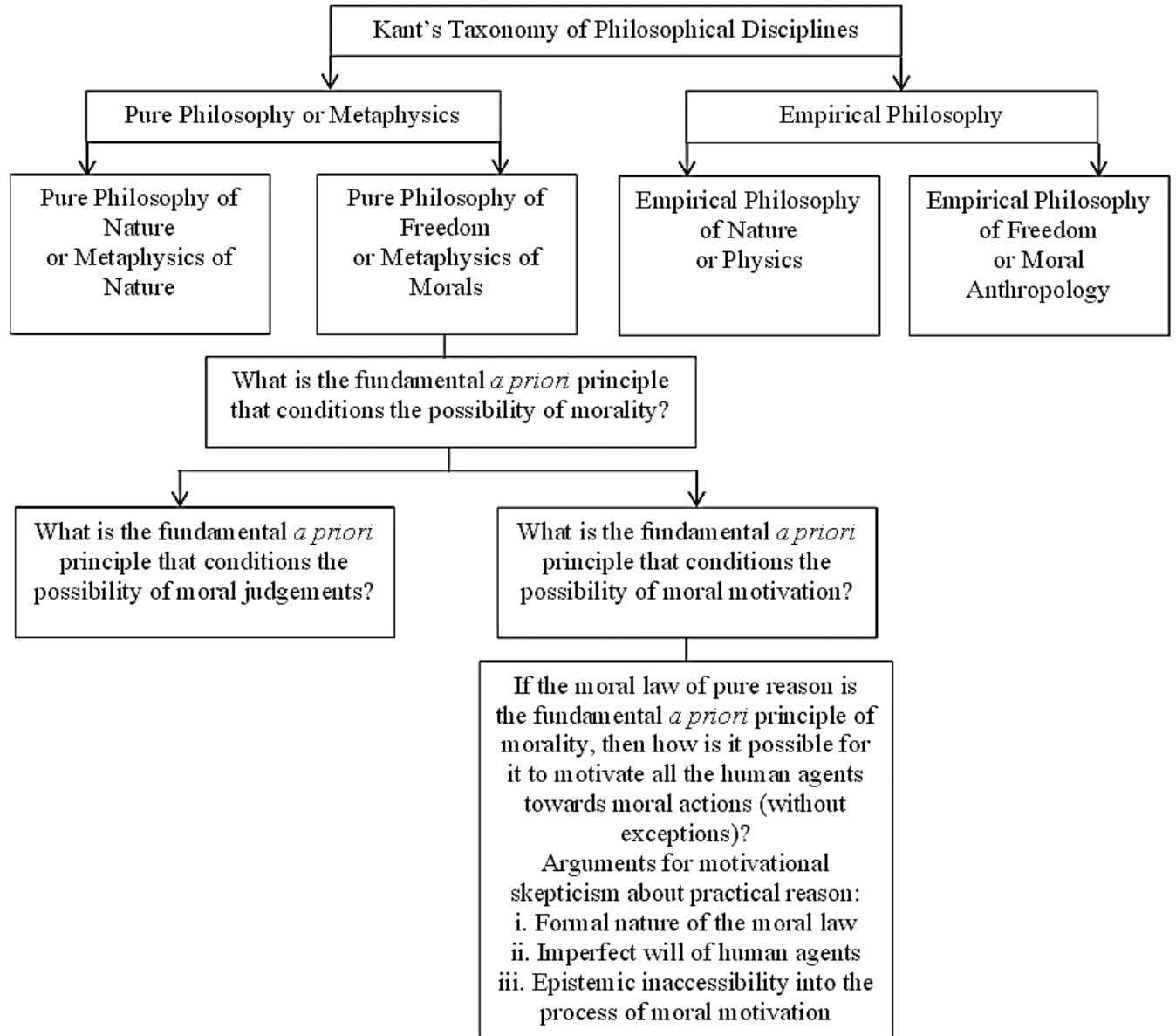
Clearly, for Kant, investigations about whether and how the moral law of pure reason serves as the supreme *a priori* principle of morality belong to metaphysics of morals. Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 390) specifically writes that “the moral law in its purity and genuineness...is to be sought nowhere else than in a pure philosophy [of morals]”. Now, if Kant’s main problem concerning the supreme principle of morality belongs to his metaphysics of morals, then the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason belongs to it too. This is because, as I argued in the first chapter of this thesis, the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason emerges as a part of Kant’s project of proving pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality.



First, in section 3.1., I showed that Kant's main focus in his mature works on moral philosophy was to uncover the supreme principle that underlies the fact of quotidian morality (see pp. 40-41). Then, in section 3.2., I showed that during the Critical Period, Kant thought that this supreme principle of morality must have an *a priori* status for it to have certainty and reliability (see pp. 42-43). In other words, if the supreme principle of morality is derived from *a posteriori* sources, then the norms and resources for making moral judgements and performing moral actions respectively will be unreliable and uncertain. Then, in the same section, I showed that, for Kant, the supreme principle of morality must be practical in a way that it serves as the fundamental principle underlying moral appraisal and as the fundamental principle underlying moral execution (see pp. 43-44). Taking these two points together means that, in order to condition the possibility of making moral judgments and performing moral actions, the supreme principle of morality must serve as the supreme principle of moral appraisal and moral execution (respectively) for all moral agents without exceptions (see pp. 45-46). Then, I showed that Kant was dissatisfied with the attempts of modern moral philosophers to derive the supreme principle of morality from sources other than pure reason because pure reason is the only source capable of giving a supreme principle of morality that is practical *a priori* (see pp. 46-50). If so, in the process of proving pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality, one question that Kant has to deal with is the question of how it is possible for the moral law of pure reason to move all the rational agents to perform moral actions without exceptions. As shown in section 3.4., in addressing this question, he faces skeptical challenges concerning how it is possible for the moral law of pure reason to move all the human agents universally and necessarily without exceptions (see pp. 50-66). As discussed in sections 3.4.1., 3.4.2. and 3.4.3. respectively, these skeptical challenges are about: (i) formal nature of the moral law, (ii) sensible nature of human agents and (iii) our epistemic inaccessibility into the process of moral motivation (see pp. 52-55, 55-60, 60-66). Since these skeptical challenges about the motivational efficacy of the moral law of pure reason emerge in the light of proving the *a priori* practicality of pure reason, motivational skepticism about pure practical reason belongs to Kant's main philosophical question regarding the supreme principle of morality. Furthermore, since Kant's main philosophical problem concerning the supreme principle of morality belongs to metaphysics of morals, the question of how it is possible for pure reason to cause moral motivation in human agents is a question to be addressed from within his metaphysics of morals. Since, for Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 390), "without ...[metaphysics of morals] there can be

no moral philosophy at all”, the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason that has philosophical validity (by virtue of its intricate connection with the problem of proving the moral law of pure reason as the correct supreme principle of morality) belongs to it (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Motivational Skepticism about Pure Practical Reason within Kant’s Philosophical System**



For Kant, a critical investigation into our faculty of pure reason is required to uncover the fundamental *a priori* principle that conditions the possibility of morality from within his

metaphysics of morals. This point comes from Kant’s general position that, a complete critique of pure reason is required for uncovering the metaphysical *a priori* principles that condition the possibility of both nature and morality.<sup>83</sup> In the “Introduction” to his first *Critique*, Kant (*KrV*, AA, A11/B24) writes that, since *a priori* principles cannot be known from experience, it must be “pure reason...which contains the principles for cognizing something absolutely *a priori*”. He considers the critical investigation into these principles of pure reason as a special “science of the mere estimation of pure reason, of its sources and boundaries, as the propaedeutic to the system of pure reason” (A11/B25). He defines this critique as “the philosophy of pure reason [that] is...propaedeutic (preparation), [and that] which investigates the faculty of reason in regard to all pure *a priori* cognition” (A841/B869). That is, a critique of pure reason must be undertaken as a preparation for discovering an exhaustive sum of all *a priori* principles. Since engaging in this critique enables the discovery of *a priori* principles that condition the possibility of objects of reason, Kant calls it as a transcendental critique. This investigation not only examines the possibility of discovering *a priori* principles founding the objects of reason, but also aims at “their correction...[in order] to supply the touchstone of the worth or worthlessness of all cognitions *a priori*” (A12/B26). Thus, a transcendental critique of pure reason is inevitable for investigating the possibility of our philosophical cognition of nature and morality.<sup>84</sup> It “contains a philosophical investigation of the possibility of such cognition” and also, “outlines and examines the very idea of it in the first place” (Kant *EEKU*, AA, 20: 195). Kant therefore undertakes a critical investigation into the practical use of pure reason via his second *Critique* to respond to the question

---

<sup>83</sup> Kant also notes that metaphysics and critique, when taken together, constitute philosophy in a true sense. He writes, “the metaphysics of nature as well as morals, but above all the preparatory (propaedeutic) critique of reason that dares to fly with its own wings, alone constitute that which we can call philosophy in a genuine sense” (Kant *KrV*, AA, A850/B878). In fact, Kant includes the critique within metaphysics when he writes that the “name [“metaphysics”] can also be given to all of pure philosophy including the critique, in order to comprehend the investigation of everything that can ever be cognized *a priori* as well as the presentation of that which constitutes a system of pure philosophical cognitions of this kind” (A841/B869).

<sup>84</sup> While traditional metaphysics assumes that our cognition conforms to objects, Kant reverses this and maintains that objects conform to our cognition for making the sort of metaphysics that he envisions to be possible. In his short discussion on his Copernican revolution in the Preface of the B-edition of his first *Critique*, Kant writes, on the presupposition that “all our cognition must conform to the objects...all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition...[would] come to nothing” On the other hand, “assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition...would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us” (Kant *KrV*, AA, Bxvi). From within a metaphysics that presupposes our cognition to conform to objects, a critique of our faculty of cognition will not make sense. However, for an investigation into the *a priori* cognition of objects from within a metaphysics that presupposes objects as conforming to our cognition, there is a need for a critique of the faculty of cognition (i.e., pure reason).

about the metaphysical first principles of morality. His aim in the *Critique of Practical Reason* is to “criticiz[e] reason’s entire *practical faculty*” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 03).

In doing so, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 31, 46-47) first uncovers the moral law as a fact of pure reason that fundamentally conditions the possibility of morality by presenting itself in the consciousness of all the rational agents. While this doctrine of “fact of reason” is sufficient to explain the possibility of making moral judgements (by virtue of the form of the universal law it has (as briefly discussed in footnote 45 at p. 54 of section 3.4.1.)), Kant still needs to show how this fundamental *a priori* principle conditions the possibility of moral motivation. Since the supreme principle of morality must serve both as the supreme moral norm and as the supreme moral motive, it must be the moral law itself that must serve as the incentive for moving all the rational agents (including finite ones, like human agents) to perform moral actions without exceptions. If the moral law is restricted to providing the supreme norm of actions, with determination of the will for the execution of these actions happening by “means of a feeling, of whatever kind”, then this supreme *a priori* principle can be taken to be only legally practical and not morally practical.<sup>85</sup> This is why, the chapter “On the incentives of pure practical reason” begins with Kant’s note that “*the moral law [must] determine the will immediately*” for the actions to have moral worth (05: 71). In his critical investigation into whether and how the moral law could serve as the *a priori* principle underlying moral motivation, Kant encounters motivational skepticism about pure practical reason (as discussed in detail in the first chapter). As a response to this problem from within his moral metaphysics, Kant identifies moral feeling (or feeling of respect<sup>86</sup>) as the *a priori* incentive that motivates all the finite rational agents (such as human beings) to perform moral actions without exceptions. He writes, “[Feeling of] [r]espect for the moral law is... the sole and also the undoubted moral incentive” (05: 78). He clarifies that this moral feeling “does not serve for appraising actions

---

<sup>85</sup> Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 71) specifically notes that actions stemming from such a principle “will contain *legality* indeed but not *morality*”

<sup>86</sup> Although Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 75) writes that the feeling of respect constitutes only the positive aspect of moral feeling (the negative aspect being feeling of humiliation on our sensibility), he uses the terms ‘respect for the moral law’ and ‘moral feeling’ synonymously in the general context of uncovering the *a priori* incentive conditioning the possibility of moral motivation. For instance, in the same chapter, “On the incentives of pure practical reason”, Kant notes that “respect for the moral law itself...is the *moral feeling* properly speaking” (05: 80). Again, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, he writes that “[r]espect for the law...in its subjective aspect is called moral feeling” (Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 464). Only in the specific context of how moral motivation occurs in human agents from a practical standpoint does Kant’s nuanced distinction between moral feeling and feeling of respect gains relevance. I discuss this case in section 3.2. in detail below.

and certainly not for grounding the objective moral law itself, but only as an incentive to make this [moral] law its maxim” (05: 76). Since it must be the moral law that should serve both as the norm for making moral judgements and as the resource for moral motivation, this moral feeling that makes moral motivation possible cannot be conceived as independent of and unconnected to the moral law. Kant conceives of it as a direct product of the moral law. He writes that “the moral law... has influence on the sensibility of the subject and effects a feeling conducive to the influence of the law upon the will” (05: 75). Again, he notes that “the pure moral law...subjectively effects [a feeling of] respect for their higher vocation in human beings, who are at the same time conscious of their sensible existence and of the dependence, connected with it, on their pathologically affected nature” (05: 88). Since Kant considers moral feeling as a direct effect of the moral law, and therefore “as the incentive to compliance with the [moral] law” (05: 79), actions performed due to motivation from this feeling are not only in conformity with the moral law, but are also stemming from it. In other words, as the supreme principle of morality, the moral law is practical by serving as an objective standard for judging right actions and by effecting moral feeling that serves as the subjective resource for moral motivation in finite rational agents. He calls this moral feeling “as the sole way of determining the will by the law...and on...[which] rests the distinction between consciousness of having acted *in conformity with duty* and *from duty*” (05: 81). That is, on the one hand, acting in conformity with duty is possible in human agents when the moral law is practical in a way that it serves only as the fundamental principle underlying the appraisal of actions, and allows these actions to be performed by means of some feelings. On the other hand, acting from duty (or performing actions having moral worth) is possible in human agents only when the moral law is practical in a way that it not only serves as the fundamental principle underlying the appraisal of actions, but also effects a moral feeling in our minds which in turn serves as the fundamental principle underlying execution of these actions. Kant writes, “No other subjective principle [than this moral feeling] must be assumed as incentive, for then the action can indeed turn out as the law prescribes, but since, though in conformity with duty it was not done from duty, the disposition to the action is not moral; and in this lawgiving it is really the disposition that matters” (05: 82). Thus, for Kant, while the moral law, the supreme principle of pure reason, conditions the possibility of moral judgements solely by itself, it produces a moral feeling in the minds of finite rational agents (such as human agents) to condition the possibility of moral

motivation.<sup>87</sup> It is in his chapter “On the incentives of pure practical reason” of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant “show[s] a priori” that the moral law “effects (or, to put it better, must effect) [a moral feeling] in the mind insofar as it is an incentive” (05: 72).<sup>88</sup> This discussion belongs to his critical investigation into the practical use of pure reason for establishing the moral law as the correct supreme principle of morality. More specifically, it resolves the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason that emerges in Kant’s metaphysical project of establishing the validity of the moral law. Thus, by being an integral part of Kant’s justification of the moral law as the supreme principle of morality from within the context of his metaphysics of morals, moral feeling also serves as an essential part of Kant’s moral motivational structure.

While Kant’s realization that it is reason, and not moral feeling, that is the source of the supreme principle of morality came about in 1770s (as discussed in footnote 24 at p. 31 of the first chapter), his view that moral feeling produced by the moral law of pure reason serves as the incentive for moral actions emerged only in mid-1780s. In fact, in his *Critique of Pure Reason* published in 1781, one can see Kant considering the motive of worthiness to be happy (at *KrV*, AA, A806/B834), postulate of God and the hope for an afterlife (A812-813/B840-841) as possible

---

<sup>87</sup> It should be remembered that, as the supreme principle of morality, the moral law *solely* serves as the *a priori* principle conditioning the possibility of both moral judgement and moral motivation in purely rational agents. That is, it does not need to produce another *a priori* principle (such as moral feeling) to move the holy will of these pure rational agents to perform moral actions. In fact, as briefly discussed in footnote 48 at p. 56 of the first chapter, the holy will of purely rational agents is always determined by the moral law necessarily. In comparison, as I showed in section 3.4.2. of the first chapter, the finite will of human agents who possess a sensible nature (in addition to reason) needs an additional *a priori* principle (i.e., moral feeling) for the will to be sufficiently determined by the moral law (see pp. 55-60). Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 76) specifically writes that “[the a priori feeling of] respect presupposes...sensibility and so too the finitude of such beings on whom the moral law imposes respect, and that [this moral feeling of] respect for the *law* cannot be attributed to a supreme being or even to one free from all sensibility”.

<sup>88</sup> Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 72) uses the term “must effect” within parenthesis and emphasizes that that is a “better” way of putting the connection between the moral law and moral feeling. That is, he suggests that it is “better” to consider moral feeling as that which the moral law *must effect* in our minds for it to serve as the incentive than to take it as that which the moral law *effects* in our minds for it to serve as the incentive. Ignoring this emphasis of Kant can lead to an empirical interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation – one that empirically explains moral feeling as an effect caused by the moral law from a third-personal, scientific standpoint (as I discussed in section 1.2. at pp. 88-93 of the second chapter). As discussed in section 2.3.1. of the second chapter, one problem with empirical interpretation is that it fails to accommodate the *a priori* status that Kant attributes to moral feeling (see pp. 111-115). In contrast, taking Kant’s emphasis on “must” into account leads to a transcendental interpretation of his account of moral motivation. As I discussed in section 1.3. of the second chapter, the transcendental interpretation considers the process of moral motivation as conditioning the possibility of morality in all the rational agents (see pp. 93-100). Accordingly, Kant’s point here is that a moral feeling *must* be effected by the moral law for moral motivation to be possible in human agents. That is, for the moral law of pure reason to serve as the supreme principle of morality in all the rational agents, it *must* effect a moral feeling in the minds of finite rational agents such as human beings. I argue for such a transcendental reading throughout this chapter.

candidates for the incentive of morality. As Walschots (2015, 105) rightly points out “this seems to indicate that at the time of the first *Critique* Kant had not yet come to view that “[moral feeling of] respect [*Achtung*]”...is the moral motive”. This is also the reason why Allison (1990, 67) calls Kant’s moral theory expounded in his first *Critique* as “semi-critical”. It is in his *Groundwork* published in 1785 that we find Kant writing about moral feeling of respect as the correct incentive of morality for the first time. In it, he writes that “[feeling of] respect for the law is that incentive which can give actions a moral worth”. Further, he observes that “the proper object of [this feeling of] respect” is “[o]ur own will insofar as it would act only under the condition of a possible giving of universal law [i.e., the moral law] through its maxims” (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 440). From then on, in his works that followed, Kant consistently maintains that moral feeling is the incentive that motivates agents to perform actions in accordance with the moral law. For instance, in a lecture on ethics recorded by Mrongovius (in 1785), Kant (*V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 625) writes about the incentive of moral feeling as follows:

One might still grant the moral feeling, if it were a question of the mind’s incentives to morality; but not as a principle for the judgement of moral action. It may be the receptivity of our will, to be moved by moral laws as incentives. The judgement of morality consists in objective principles, but the incentive is subjective; this makes the will practical. If reason itself can determine our will, then it has moral feeling.

Again, in *The Metaphysics of Morals* published in 1797, he defines moral feeling as “a *susceptibility* on the part of free choice to be moved by pure practical reason (and its [moral] law)” (Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 400). Thus, for Kant, the incentive that moves our subjective will to freely perform actions according to the moral law of reason is moral feeling. In these mature works on moral philosophy too, Kant considers this moral feeling as a direct product or an immediate effect of the moral law and thereby, maintains that the practicality of the moral law involves its function as the ultimate principle both of moral appraisal and moral execution. For instance, in his *Groundwork*, Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 401n) identifies feeling of respect “as the *effect* of the law on the subject, and not as the *cause* of the law”. Taking this feeling as a product of the moral law, he claims that moral actions (i.e., actions from duty and not the ones that just conform to duty) are possible when the will is determined “objectively [by] the [*moral*] law and subjectively [by] *pure respect* for this practical law” (04: 400). That is, as mentioned above, the moral law of pure reason

becomes practical by serving as the objective norm of moral judgements and by effecting a feeling of respect that acts as the subjective motivational resource for performing moral actions. Again, towards the end of *Groundwork*, Kant asserts that moral feeling must be “regarded as the *subjective* effect that the law exercises on the will, to which reason alone delivers the objective grounds” (04: 460). Similarly, in his *Metaphysics of Morals*, he refers to moral feeling as “a feeling of the effect that the [moral] lawgiving will within the human being exercises on his capacity to act in accordance with his will” (Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 387). That is, this feeling is produced by the moral law in order to make the performance of actions in accordance with this law possible.

Given that, for Kant, moral feeling, an effect of the moral law, is the key to resolving the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason, two questions need addressing:

1. How does Kant arrive at a *feeling* as the appropriate candidate for serving as the *a priori* principle during his critical investigation into the practical use of pure reason?
2. How does Kant conceive of this feeling for it to serve as an appropriate incentive for conditioning the possibility of moral motivation in human agents?

I discuss responses to these two questions in the two sections that follow.

## **2. Kant’s Argument for Establishing Feeling as the *A Priori* Moral Incentive: A Reconstruction**

Given Kant’s identification of moral feeling as a direct product of the moral law, scholars (such as Frierson (2016a, 2016b) and Grenberg (2013, 2016), as shown at pp. 112-113 in section 2.3.1. of the second chapter) read Kant’s attribution of *a priori* status to moral feeling *solely* as a result of its origination from the moral law. In the chapter “On the incentives of pure practical reason” of his second *Critique*, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 78) himself notes that the “effect [of the moral law] on feeling...*can be cognized a priori from the moral law* [emphasis added]”. However, reading it this way misses the independent *a priori* status that Kant allots to moral feeling in his critical investigation into *a priori* principles from within his metaphysics of morals. That is, for Kant, moral feeling is primarily cognized *a priori* because it emerges as a principle of pure reason during a critical investigation into the latter’s practical use. This is evident in the same chapter “On the incentives of pure practical reason” when Kant notes that “we can cognize [respect for the moral law] completely *a priori*” because it “is a feeling that is produced by an intellectual ground” (05:



73). By the phrase, “produced by an intellectual ground”, he means that moral feeling is “produced solely by reason” (05: 76). More clearly, in the section “Critical Elucidation of the Analytic of Pure Practical Reason” of the same chapter, Kant refers to moral feeling as that which is “cognized *a priori*” because it is known as a direct product of pure reason in its relation to sensibility during the critical investigation into the practical use of pure reason. He notes that moral feeling is cognized *a priori* as a “necessary influence [of pure reason] upon sensibility” during the critical analysis of “the relation of pure practical reason to sensibility” (05: 90). Hence, it is not the case that moral feeling acquires *a priori* status by virtue of its causal connection with the moral law. In other words, the *a priori* status of moral feeling is not because of its origination from the moral law. Instead, it acquires *a priori* status primarily due to its origination from pure reason when the latter has an influence upon sensibility in its practical employment.<sup>89</sup> This means, just as the moral law has an independent *a priori* status by virtue of its origination from pure reason, moral feeling too is a direct product of pure reason with an independent *a priori* status. Now, as I mentioned at the end of the previous section, the question that needs answering is: How does Kant arrive at a *feeling*, and not any other principle, as an independent *a priori* principle during his investigation into the practical influence of pure reason upon sensibility in his second *Critique*? As I show in the sub-sections that follow, Kant’s answer to this question comes about in three argumentative steps:

1. As I show in section 2.1., for Kant, pure reason is one united faculty with two different applications in the theoretical and practical realms. He argues that the natural function of reason to systematize and unite all rational cognition is impossible if the two sets of *a priori* principles founding all the theoretical and practical cognition are in conflict and disharmony. Hence, there must be one unified source, i.e., pure reason, for all the *a priori* principles that found our theoretical and practical cognition.

---

<sup>89</sup> My use of the term “primarily” is to lay emphasis on the logical precedence of origination of moral feeling from pure reason in comparison to its origination from the moral law. As I show in section 3.1. below (pp. 157-158), to the view that *a priori* moral feeling independently originates from pure reason, Kant adds another qualification that it emerges as a product of the moral law. Since the moral law is itself a direct product of pure reason, the origination of moral feeling from pure reason logically precedes its origination from the moral law. Hence, despite its cognition *a priori* as the product of the moral law, the *a priori* status of moral feeling traces its roots independently to its origination from pure reason.

2. In section 2.2., I show that, for Kant, since it is the same reason that is under critical investigation in both his *Critiques*, the analytic of pure practical reason must share an analogical connection with the analytic of pure speculative reason. That is, by virtue of the unity of pure reason, there must be an analogy between the critical analysis of *a priori* principles of pure speculative reason and the critical analysis of *a priori* principles of pure practical reason.

3. Due to the broader analogy between the analytic of pure theoretical reason and the analytic of pure practical reason, specific *a priori* principles discovered in the two *Critiques* must share analogical connections. In section 2.3., I show that, by virtue of the common properties and the difference that it shares with space and time (i.e., the *a priori* forms of sensible intuition), a feeling is discovered as the *a priori* principle of moral motivation in the aesthetic section of the critical investigation into pure practical reason.

### **2.1. Unity of Pure Reason Underlying Its Divergent Applications in the Theoretical and Practical Realm**

For Kant, although there are two sets of *a priori* principles for conditioning the possibility of nature and freedom that are to be investigated from within metaphysics of nature and metaphysics of morals respectively, there are not two different faculties of pure reason for each of them to be subjected to a transcendental critique separately. In other words, there is only one faculty of reason that has two different uses in uncovering the fundamental metaphysical principles of nature and morality. Hence, the critique, which is necessary for such an investigation, is a critical inquiry into *one* reason with two different kinds of applications. In the “Preface” of his *Groundwork*, Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 391) writes, “there is really no other foundation for a metaphysics of morals than the critique of a *pure practical reason*, just as that of metaphysics [of nature] is the critique of pure speculative reason”. He immediately follows this with a note that “there can, in the end, *be only one and the same reason*, which must be distinguished merely in its application [emphasis added]”.<sup>90</sup> Kant’s argument for the *a priori* unity of reason is based on the natural function of the

---

<sup>90</sup> In fact, Kant considers his very project of undertaking a critical investigation into practical reason (via second Critique) as demonstrating the unity of reason. Although he refers to it as “critique of a *pure practical reason*” in his *Groundwork* (at *GMS*, AA, 04: 391, as mentioned above), Kant revises the title of the second *Critique* to “*Critique of Practical Reason*” because it is one and same reason that is subject to critique in its practical use (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 03). In the “*Introduction*” section of the second *Critique*, he writes, “we shall not have to do a critique of *pure practical reason* but only of *practical reason* as such. For, pure reason, once it is shown to exist, needs no critique. It is pure reason that itself contains the standard for the critical examination of every use of it” (05: 15-16). These lines indicate that it is the same reason that is subject to two kinds of critical inquiries – one into its theoretical use and other into its practical use. In fact, they indicate that Kant’s very undertaking of *Critique of Practical Reason* alongside the results

faculty of reason in general. For him, reason is a “supreme faculty of cognition” that seeks to provide completion to the manifold of cognitions by bringing it under “the highest unity of thinking” (Kant *KrV*, AA, A299/B355). As “the **faculty of principles**”, reason effects “the highest unity” to the manifold of cognitions by bringing them under the “smallest number of principles” (A305/B361). Kant specifically writes that, in its regulative use, “reason quite uniquely prescribes and seeks to bring about...the **systematic** in cognition, i.e., its interconnection based on one principle” (A645/B673). He calls this aim of making a system out of the given cognitions as an “undeniable need of human reason” and writes that it “finds complete satisfaction only in a complete systematic unity of its cognitions” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 91). This essential feature of reason (i.e., systematizing cognition) certainly applies to both its theoretical and practical uses separately. That is, reason in its theoretical use systematizes knowledge about the natural world into one unified idea of nature and reason in its practical use too aims to systematize knowledge about determination of will to actions into one unified the idea of morality. This essential objective of reason to systematize cognition further extends to cognition from both these parts of reason taken together. That is, reason brings the two sets of cognition (theoretical and practical cognitions) under one unified and coherent whole. Kant (*KrV*, AA, A832/B860) writes that “[u]nder the government of reason our cognitions cannot at all constitute a rhapsody but must constitute a system, in which alone they can support and advance its essential ends”. He refers to the natural function of reason to form this systematic unity of all cognitions as an architectonic. He writes, “Human reason is by nature architectonic, i.e., it considers all cognitions as belonging to a possible system” (A474/B502). He defines architectonic as the “art of making systems” out of “a mere aggregate of” manifold cognitions belonging to the theoretical and practical dimensions of reason. He defines a system as “the unity of the manifold cognitions under one idea” (A832/B860). Thus, in performing its architectonic function, reason aims to bring all of its theoretical and practical principles under one unified idea. If all the possible theoretical and practical cognitions stand under one unified idea (by virtue of reason’s architectonic function), then principles about nature and morality (such as natural laws and moral principles) must be able to be together in harmony. Kant writes that the systematic unity of all cognitions that reason brings about “permits only such

---

of the critique of pure reason in its speculative use illustrates the unity of reason albeit its two different applications in theoretical and practical domains. In the passage from the “Preface” of his *Groundwork* mentioned above Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 391) notes that one of the objectives of his critical inquiry into the practical use of pure reason is to “present the unity of practical with speculative reason in a common principle”.

principles as at least do not render an intended cognition incapable of standing together with others in some system or other” (A474/B502). In other words, cognitions arising from theoretical and practical uses of reason cannot be in conflict with each other by virtue of the fact that they form a coherent and a unified system of knowledge. Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 120) notes this when he writes that “the possibility of any use of reason” requires that “its principles and affirmations must not contradict one another”.

In undertaking his critical inquiry into pure reason, Kant argues that the systematic unity of the theoretical and practical cognitions of reason presupposes a form of unity of all rational cognitions *a priori*. For all the determinate cognitions of reason to come under a unified whole, there must be an *a priori* form of a unified whole under which all the possible cognitions of reason must necessarily stand. Kant (*KrV*, AA, A645/B673) specifically writes that “the form of a whole of cognition...precedes the determinate cognition of the parts and contains the conditions for determining *a priori* the place of each part and its relation to the others”. In other words, he writes that “the domain of the manifold as well as the position of the parts with respect to each other is determined *a priori*” through “the rational concept of the form of a whole” (A832/B860). Now, this form of a whole is constituted of fundamental *a priori* principles that condition the possibility of all determinate knowledge that is brought under it. In other words, *a priori* systematic unity of all possible rational cognitions contains *a priori* principles which found theoretical and practical cognitions about nature and freedom respectively. These *a priori* principles founding the theoretical and practical uses of reason belong to pure speculative reason and pure practical reason respectively. Given that the two kinds of determinate cognitions must stand in harmony with one another by virtue of a systematic unity of all cognitions in one principle, it is impossible for the fundamental principles of pure speculative reason and pure practical reason (that make up the *a priori* whole of all possible cognition) too to be in conflict with each other. If there is a conflict between these two sets of *a priori* principles, then pure speculative reason would not accept the validity of the moral law (i.e., fundamental *a priori* principle of morality) in the theoretical domain of knowledge. Furthermore, ideas associated with the moral law (such as postulates of freedom, God and immortality<sup>91</sup>) would not be subject to the limits imposed by pure speculative reason, and

---

<sup>91</sup> As mentioned in section 3.4.3. of the first chapter, Kant claims that freedom is the ontological condition for our access into the fact of the moral law (and the moral law is the epistemic condition for our awareness of freedom) (see

hence, pure practical reason would allow them into its domain as real objects that can be known and probed into without limits. Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 121) writes that in such a case of a conflict “the first [i.e., pure speculative reason] would of itself close its boundaries strictly and admit nothing from the latter [i.e., pure practical reason] into its domain, while the latter [i.e., pure practical reason] would extend its boundaries over everything”. Now, since *a priori* systematic unity of all possible cognitions does not come from determinate cognitions themselves, it must come from a single unified faculty of pure reason. In other words, unless pure speculative reason and pure practical reason make up an *a priori* unity of reason, unification of their respective *a priori* principles as a form of a whole would not be possible. This is why, Kant (*KrV*, AA, A645/B673) writes that the “unity of reason always presupposes an idea, namely that of the form of a whole of cognition”. That is, by virtue of the *a priori* idea of the whole system of knowledge (i.e., *a priori* systematic unity of theoretical and practical cognitions), we arrive at pure reason as a single unified faculty. Again, this is why, for Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 91), “to derive everything from one principle” is synonymous with attaining “insight into the unity of the whole pure rational faculty (theoretical as well as practical)”. Kant also puts this argument for the *a priori* unity of reason in the following way: For the fundamental *a priori* principles of pure speculative reason and pure practical reason to not contradict each other, their source must be a single united faculty of pure reason. Kant writes that “the condition of having [one faculty of] reason at all” is primarily constituted by a requirement that “its [fundamental] principles and affirmations must not contradict each other” (05: 120). In other words, it is its “mere consistency with itself” that makes pure reason one united faculty. Thus, as Kant puts it, “the union of pure speculative with pure practical reason in one cognition” is “based a priori on reason itself and therefore necessary” (05: 121).<sup>92</sup>

## 2.2. Analogy between Analytic of Pure Speculative Reason and Analytic of Pure Practical Reason

Kant’s idea of the unity of pure reason sets the direction in which the critical investigation into practical use of reason unfolds in his second *Critique*. Since it is the same reason that is subjected

---

p. 64). While God and immortality are not directly preconditions of the moral law, they make the “necessary object of a will determined by this law” (i.e., the highest moral good) possible. (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 04).

<sup>92</sup> Kant uses the *a priori* unity of reason as a premise to establish the primacy of the practical use of reason over its theoretical use. That is, given that the two kinds of interests and the principles underlying them cannot contradict each other by virtue of its origination in one pure reason, one of the two uses of reason must be subordinate to the other. Since it is in its practical use that the interest of speculative reason attains completion, Kant argues for the primacy of the practical use of reason over its theoretical use. (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 120-121)

to a critical investigation into its practical use, Kant makes his *Critique of Practical Reason* comparable to *Critique of Pure Reason* in its form. In the “Preface” of the second *Critique*, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 07) writes “[R]eason is considered in transition to a quite different use of those concepts from what it made of them *there* [i.e., in the first *Critique*]. Such a transition makes it necessary to compare the old use with the new, in order to distinguish well the new path from the previous one and at the same time to draw attention to their connection”. That is, taking his second *Critique* as a study of reason’s use “in transition” from the study of its speculative use in his first *Critique*, Kant finds it important to compare the two by paying attention to the way both the critical investigations are partly different and partly same to each other. Again, in the section, “Critical Elucidation” of the chapter “On the incentives of pure practical reason”, he writes that since “practical reason has as its basis the same cognitive faculty as does speculative reason so far as both are pure reason”, “the difference in the systematic form of the one [i.e., *Critique of Practical Reason*] from that of the other [i.e., *Critique of Pure Reason*] must be determined by a comparison of the two” (05: 89). To add to this point, in the “Preface” section of his second *Critique*, Kant observes that the critical examination into the practical use of reason must be undertaken by keeping the broader systematic unity of reason’s *a priori* principles (i.e., the form of the whole) in mind. He writes that, while it primarily focusses on uncovering individual *a priori* principles underlying the practical use of reason, *Critique of Practical Reason* also needs “to grasp correctly the *idea of the whole* and from this idea to see all those parts in their mutual relation by means of their derivation from the concept of that whole in a pure rational faculty”. He further writes that “[t]his examination and guarantee is possible only through the most intimate acquaintance with the system” (05: 10). This means that the lack of acquaintance with the systematic unity of pure reason may direct *Critique of Practical Reason* in a way that would lead us to the discovery of *a priori* principles of practical reason that are in conflict with *a priori* principles of theoretical reason and, also with *a priori* systematic unity of reason as a whole. The awareness of the unity of pure reason and the idea of the whole imposes limitations on the structure of Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason*. This is why, in the “Introduction” section, Kant writes that, since “it is still pure reason whose cognition here lies at the basis of its practical use, the division of a *Critique of Practical Reason* must in its general outline be *arranged in conformity* with that of the speculative [emphasis added]” (05: 16). More specifically, he writes that the structure of critical inquiry into the practical use of pure reason must share an analogical relationship with the structure of critical

inquiry into the speculative use of pure reason (05: 90). In other words, Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* must share structural similarities with his *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Keeping this in mind, just as the *Critique of Pure Reason* is divided into *Doctrine of Elements* and *Doctrine of Method* (Kant *KrV*, AA, A15/B29), Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 16) writes that *Critique of Practical Reason* has “to have a *Doctrine of Elements*' and a *Doctrine of Method*” as two parts of it. Further, just as the *Doctrine of Elements* of the first *Critique* consists of “The Transcendental Analytic” and “Transcendental Dialectic”, the *Doctrine of the elements of pure practical reason* has “an *Analytic*...as the first part, and a *Dialectic*” (05: 16). Now, the “Analytic” section of the critical investigation into the speculative use of reason aims to provide an analysis of *a priori* principles that condition the possibility of theoretical cognition of our natural world (Kant *KrV*, AA, A64/B89). Corresponding to three general faculties of cognition – sensibility, understanding and reason, the analytic of pure speculative reason in the first *Critique* is divided into analytic of sensible intuition (in the section titled “The Transcendental Aesthetic”), analytic of concepts of understanding and analytic of theoretical principles (in the section titled “The Transcendental Logic”).<sup>93</sup> In these sub-sections, arranged in a sequential order, space-time, categories (or pure concepts) and pure principles of reason are uncovered as *a priori* principles underlying the workings of sensibility, understanding and reason. They condition the possibility of sensible intuition, concepts and judgements about our natural world respectively. In comparison, the section on “Book one: The analytic of pure practical reason” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 19-106) of the second *Critique*, which provides an analysis of conditions that make the practicality of pure reason possible, is arranged with a similar structure of sub-sections, but in reverse order. That is, similar to subdivisions of the analytic section of the first *Critique*, the analytic section of the second *Critique* is divided into analytic of moral incentive (“Chapter III: On the incentives of pure practical reason” (05: 71-106)), analytic of moral concepts (“Chapter II: On the concept of an object of pure practical reason” (05: 57-70)) and analytic of practical principles (“Chapter I: On the Principles of Pure Practical Reason” (05: 19-57)). The first sub-section, analytic of moral incentive, represents the Aesthetic of pure practical reason and the two latter sub-sections, analytic

---

<sup>93</sup> Although in his *Critique of Pure Reason* “The Transcendental Aesthetic” forms a section on its own and does not fall under “The Transcendental Analytic” of pure speculative reason, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 90) writes about the former as a part of the latter section in his *Critique of Practical Reason* in order to emphasize the analogy between the structure of “Doctrine of Elements” of the two *Critiques* and their respective *a priori* principles.

of moral concepts and practical principles, represents the Logic of pure practical reason. In the former, moral feeling is identified as the *a priori* incentive that underlies the workings of feeling and desire, and thereby, conditions the possibility of motivation to perform moral actions. In the latter the moral law is determined as the fundamental *a priori* practical principle that underlies the workings of cognition, and thereby, conditions the possibility of making moral principles. However, unlike the order of arrangements of the subdivisions of the analytic of pure speculative reason, the analytic of pure practical reason starts with the sub-section on the critical investigation into the possibility of practical principles, then proceed to the discussion of how moral concepts are possible and finally move on to the *a priori* incentive underlying the possibility of moral actions. About this reversal of the order of subdivisions, Kant notes, “the order in the subdivision of the Analytic will be the reverse of that in the *Critique* of pure speculative reason (05: 16). For, in the present *Critique* we shall begin with *principles* and proceed to *concepts*, and only then, where possible, from them to the senses, whereas in the case of speculative reason we had to begin with the senses and end with principles”. More specifically, about the different ordering of second *Critique* (in comparison to the first) Kant notes,

[A] critique of 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 first to give them in keeping with those principles (for, prior to those principles these cannot possibly be given as good and evil by any cognitive faculty), and only then could the last chapter conclude this part, namely the chapter 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* (05: 89-90).

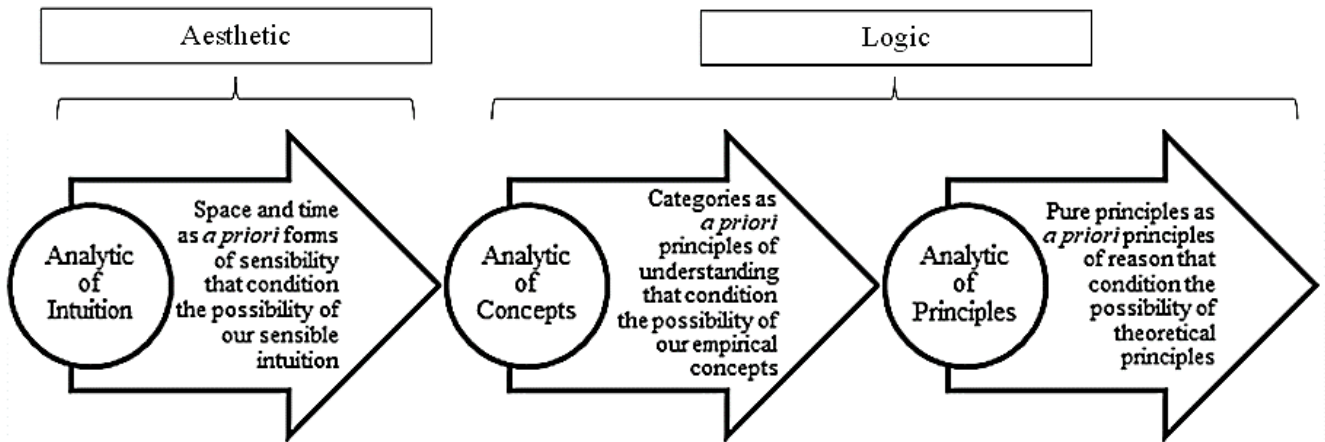
Kant observes that the reason for reversing the arrangement of these subdivisions lies with the difference between the nature of theoretical and practical reason. While reason in its speculative use deals with objects in the external world, reason in its practical use deals with the determination of the will to actions. Since unlike the former, the latter deals with an unconditioned causal principle (i.e., the moral law) underlying moral actions, the critical investigation into the possibility of pure practical reason must start from practical principles and not otherwise. Kant writes,



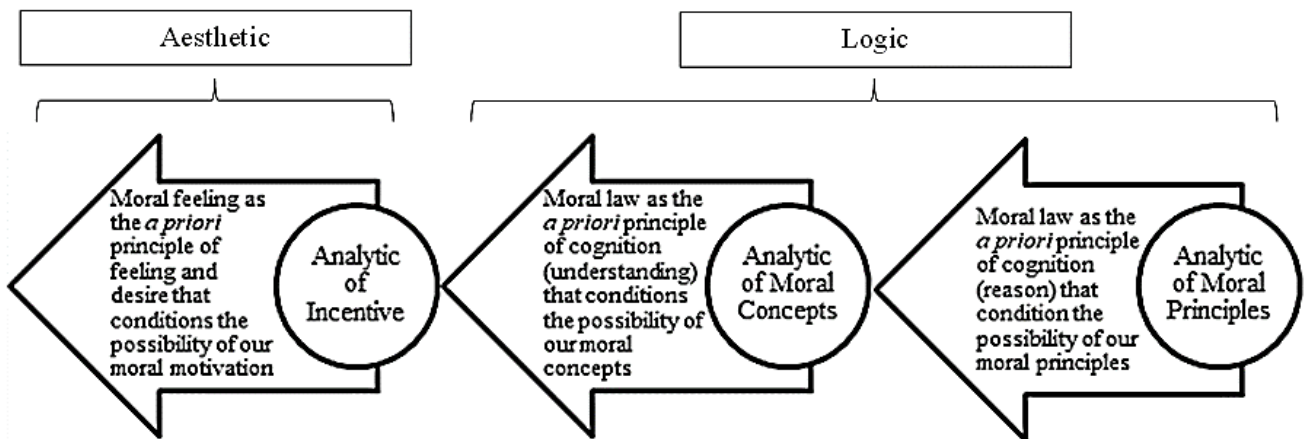
[In the second *Critique*,] we have to do with a will and have to consider reason not in its relation to objects but in relation to this will and its causality; thus the principles of empirically unconditioned causality must come first, and only afterward can the attempt be made to establish our concepts of the determining ground of such a will, of their application to objects and finally to the subject and its sensibility (05: 16).

**Figure 5: Analogy between Analytic of Pure Speculative Reason and Pure Practical Reason in the Two *Critiques***

**1. Analytic of Pure Speculative Reason in the First *Critique***



**2. Analytic of Pure Practical Reason in the Second *Critique***



Thus, there is “a remarkable analogy” between the analytic of pure practical reason and the analytic of pure theoretical reason (05: 16) (see Figure 5). Generally, an analogical relation must account for both sameness and difference between the two objects under consideration. In his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Kant (*Prol*, AA, 04: 357) writes, “[A]nalogy...surely does not signify,

as the word is usually taken, an imperfect similarity between two things, but rather a perfect similarity between two relations in wholly dissimilar things”. That is, analogy must account for commonalities between two things, when there are also distinguishing features between the two things. Again, in a lecture, he also stresses that, for two objects to be analogous, “*identity of the ground (par ratio)* is not required” (Kant *Log*, AA, 09: 133n). It is not necessary for two analogous things to share properties that are identical to each other. Rather, there should be some sameness and some differences. In the analogy between the analytic of pure practical reason and the analytic of pure theoretical reason, the sameness lies in the types of *a priori* principles involved (i.e., principles, concepts and senses) and the difference lies in way the analyses of these principles are ordered and carried out (i.e., senses-concepts-principles in the first *Critique* and principles-concepts-senses in the second *Critique*).<sup>94</sup> Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 90) writes,

[T]he Analytic of practical pure reason divides the whole sphere of all the conditions of its use quite analogously with that of theoretical reason, but in reverse order. The Analytic of theoretical pure reason was divided into transcendental Aesthetic and transcendental Logic; that of practical reason, reversely, into Logic and Aesthetic of pure practical reason...; the Logic in turn was there divided into Analytic of concepts and Analytic of principles, here into that of principles and concepts. The Aesthetic there had two parts, because of the twofold kind of sensible intuition; here sensibility is not regarded as a capacity for intuition at all but only as feeling...

Given that the structure of two *Critiques* must share an analogous relationship such as this (by virtue of the unity of pure reason), Kant firmly emphasizes that the *Critique of Practical Reason* “must have precisely this and no other systematic form when it is compared with another system [i.e., *Critique of Pure Reason*] having a similar cognitive faculty as its basis” (05: 89).<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup> Using Kant’s own characterization of analogy mentioned above, one can say that the “perfect similarity” between the analytic of pure theoretical reason and the analytic of pure practical reason lies in the kinds of *a priori* principles involved. They are also “dissimilar” because of the order in which the analyses of these principles are carried out.

<sup>95</sup> Kant does not give an argument for why *only* an analogous relationship between the structures of the two *Critiques* can retain the consistency and harmony between the theoretical and practical principles of pure reason. My interest here is to examine how he arrived at a feeling-candidate as an incentive in the aesthetic section of the analytic of pure practical reason *if* he assumed that the analytic of pure theoretical reason and the analytic of pure practical reason must share an analogy.

### 2.3. Feeling as the Appropriate Practical Analogue to Space and Time

I showed above that, for Kant, by virtue of the unity of pure reason and the harmony of its *a priori* principles, the structures of critical investigations into speculative and practical uses of reason must be analogous. That is, *Critique of Practical Reason* must have a similar (i.e., partly same and partly different) structure in comparison with *Critique of Pure Reason*. More specifically, the analytic of pure practical reason in the second *Critique* must be analogous to the analytic of pure theoretical reason in the first *Critique*. Since the analytic of pure reason involves the discovery of *a priori* principles underlying all rational cognition, this broader analogy between the analytic of pure theoretical reason and the analytic of pure practical reason must reflect on the specific *a priori* principles belonging to them. In other words, the specific *a priori* principles of theoretical and practical reason must share an analogical relation between each other by virtue of the broader analogy between the analytic of pure theoretical reason and the analytic of pure practical reason.<sup>96</sup> In his works, Kant consistently writes about the relation between moral law, the *a priori* principle underlying the possibility of moral principles, and the natural law, the *a priori* principle underlying theoretical principles about nature, in analogical terms.<sup>97</sup> For example, in his *Groundwork*, after claiming that the categorical imperative requires that an action must be done from a maxim that can be willed as the universal law, Kant mentions that “the universality of [the moral] law...constitutes what is properly called *nature* in the most general sense (as regards its form)” (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 421). That is, the universality of the moral law makes it similar to the law of nature (i.e., nature in the formal sense). Following this, he defines the categorical imperative in terms of the natural law: “act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a

---

<sup>96</sup> Although analogy is involved, this is a deductive claim. The major premise is that there is analogy between the analytic of pure theoretical reason and the analytic of pure practical reason. The minor premise is that the analytic of both these aspects of pure reason is made up of their respective *a priori* principles. Hence, I arrived at the conclusion that the specific *a priori* principles of pure theoretical reason and pure practical reason must share analogous connections with each other.

<sup>97</sup> In her article, “Kant’s Analogy between the Moral Law and the Law of Nature”, Manja Kisner (2019, 137-152) proves this analogical connection between the moral law and the natural law using Kant’s lecture notes recorded by Feyerabend (*Naturrecht Feyerabend* (1785)) and Mrongovius (*Moral Mrongovius II* (1784-85)). Using these two texts, she first shows that the common feature that both the moral law and the natural law share is the element of lawfulness (141-143). Then, she shows that, despite their lawfulness, the moral law and the natural law differ in their objects of legislation. Thus, “[t]he moral law and the law of nature are perfectly similar with regard to their lawfulness, but they are nevertheless two different laws”. For Kisner, this sameness and difference between the natural law and the moral law constitutes the analogy between these two types of laws. I borrow Kisner’s point here to also show that there is an analogy between moral feeling, the *a priori* incentive of morality, and space-time, *a priori* forms of sensible intuition.

**universal law of nature**” (04: 421). A few pages later, he explicitly states that “the conformity of actions with universal law [(i.e., the categorical imperative) is] similar to a *natural order*” (04: 431). Following this, he also writes that “the validity of the will as a universal law for possible actions [(i.e., the moral law)] has an analogy with the universal connection of the existence of things in accordance with universal [natural] laws, which is the formal aspect of nature in general” (04: 437).<sup>98</sup> It is this obvious analogy between the moral law and natural law that Kant presumes when he writes about the similarity in the way rational agents become aware of these two laws. In his second *Critique*, in responding to the question of how the consciousness of the moral law is possible, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 30) writes: “We can become aware of pure practical laws *just as we are aware of pure theoretical principles*, by attending to the necessity with which reason prescribes them to us and to the setting aside of all empirical conditions to which reason directs us” [emphasis added]. That is, since the elements of necessity and purity (i.e., unmixed of anything empirical) are common in the way reason prescribes the two types of laws to us, we become aware of the moral law in the same way as we become aware of the natural law.<sup>99</sup> In expressing these views, Kant presupposes the analogy between the moral law and the natural law. Only because they share common properties like necessity and purity, reason presents the moral law and the natural law in a similar way. At the same time, these are two different laws: the natural law “point[s] merely to the conditions under which a thing does happen” and the moral law “indicate[s] that such-and-such ought to happen” and has “to do with the will and freedom” of rational agents (Kant *V-MS/Vigil*, AA, 27: 485). Thus, the moral law, the *a priori* principle discovered in the logic section of the analytic of pure practical reason, and the natural law, the *a priori* principle discovered in the logic section of the analytic of pure theoretical reason, share an analogical relation. In a note, Kant (*Refl*, AA, 19: 246) writes, “The principle of the unity of freedom under laws [(i.e., the moral law)] establishes an *analogon* with that principle that we call nature [(i.e., the natural law)]”. This analogy between the *a priori* principle of the logic section of the analytic of pure practical reason

---

<sup>98</sup> Kisner (2019, 138) also refers to the analogy between the kingdom of ends (in moral realm) and the kingdom of nature (in the natural realm) that Kant mentions at *GMS*, AA, 04: 438 to emphasize that the “association between two different types of law [(i.e., the natural law and the moral law)]” is “an analogical relation”.

<sup>99</sup> In his recent book *Kant’s Justification of Ethics*, Ware (2021, 50-52) traces the similarity between Kant’s doctrine of “fact of reason” in the second *Critique* and his uses of the term “fact” to refer to pure theoretical principles in the first *Critique*. He shows Kant’s passages from the first *Critique* to argue that the way consciousness of the moral law is presented to us as a fact of reason is similar to the way pure theoretical principles (i.e., the natural laws) are presented to us as a fact with an element of necessity. This similarity in the way they are presented to us shows that the two types of laws are analogous to each other.

and the *a priori* principle of the logic section of the analytic of pure speculative reason is due to the broader analogy between the two *Critiques*.

Now, similar to the specific analogical relation between the moral law and the natural law, the *a priori* incentive in the aesthetic section of the analytic of pure practical reason must be analogous to space and time, the *a priori* forms of sensible intuition.<sup>100</sup> This specific analogy is due to the broader structural analogy between the analytic of pure practical reason and the analytic of pure theoretical reason. The aesthetic section of the analytic of pure speculative reason is an investigation into the *a priori* conditions that make our sensible intuitions about the natural world possible, so that they can be thought through the concepts of understanding. About this investigation, Kant (*KrV*, AA, A22/B36) writes,

In the transcendental aesthetic we will...first isolate sensibility by separating off everything that the understanding thinks through its concepts, so that nothing but empirical intuition remains. Second, we will then detach from the latter everything that belongs to sensation, so that nothing remains except pure intuition and the mere form of appearances, which is the only thing that sensibility can make available *a priori*.

He arrives at the conclusion that space and time are the two *a priori* conditions under which we receive objects from the external world (sensation) via our sensibility in order to make intuitions about our natural world possible. In short, space and time are “two pure forms of sensible intuition” (Kant *KrV*, AA, A22/B36). Now, Kant identifies moral feeling as the *a priori* incentive underlying moral motivation in the aesthetic section of the analytic of pure practical reason because only a *feeling* can be an appropriate practical analogue to space and time. To discover a feeling-based incentive as the correct practical analogue to space and time within the aesthetic section of the critique of practical reason, Kant relies on the empirical psychological account of actions in general. For him, relying on the truths of empirical psychology during the process of uncovering pure objects of metaphysics is valid in so far as “[w]e take from experience nothing more than what is necessary” (A848/B876). Although he does not presume their existence for *a priori* cognition of the moral law (because it is a fact that we are *a priori* conscious of (Kant *KpV*, AA,

---

<sup>100</sup> I showed the analogy between the moral law and the natural law only to confirm the claim that the broad analogy between the analytic of pure theoretical reason and the analytic of pure practical reason reflects on the connections among their respective *a priori* principles.

05: 46-47)), he evidently assumes the basic faculties of action from empirical psychology for discovering and developing an account of the *a priori* principle underlying moral motivation. In a footnote in the “Preface” section of the second *Critique*, he admits that the “concepts [of feeling, desire and their interconnection are] borrowed from [empirical] psychology” during his critical investigation into the possibility of pure practical reason (05: 09n). Keeping this in mind, I now show how a feeling, a concept that has its roots in empirical psychology, is cognized as a practical analogue to space and time during Kant’s search for the *a priori* principle underlying moral motivation.

First, for Kant, two important features that characterize space and time are receptivity and subjectivity. The property of receptivity refers to the capacity “of our mind to receive representations insofar as it is affected (by objects) in some way” (Kant *KrV*, AA, A51/B75). Since sensibility is a “capacity ...to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects”, its essential feature is receptivity (A19/B33). In other words, the “receptivity of our cognitive capacity is called sensibility” because “the appearance of something and the way in which we are affected by it” occurs through it (A44/B61). Since space and time are identified as *a priori* forms of sensibility, they are “conditions of the receptivity of our mind, under which alone it can receive representations of objects” (A77/B102). The property of subjectivity refers to the condition of being an individual subject affected by varying representations, and thereby, undergoing modifications in the presence of them.<sup>101</sup> Since sensibility is the capacity of individual knowing subjects to be affected by these representations (through senses such as sight etc.), it is the “subjective constitution of our mind(s)” (A23/B38). Since space and time are *a priori* forms of sensibility, they are the subjective conditions of our sensibility and our sensible intuitions. More specifically, for Kant (A26/B42, A33/B49) space is the subjective condition under which outer intuitions are possible and time is the subjective condition under which inner intuitions are possible. Given that space and time, which are determined as *a priori* forms of sensibility, have

---

<sup>101</sup> Kant (*KrV*, AA, A19-20/B34) calls these representations as sensations and defines it as “[t]he effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it”. Since they are “subjective representation[s], by which one can only be conscious that the subject is affected” (A165/B207), modifications in their content leads to modifications in the capacity for these representations in the subject. Further, since individual subjects may be differently constituted in their capacity to receive these sensations, these modifications too will be differently experienced by different subjects. This why, Kant writes that sensations “like colors, taste, etc., are correctly considered not as qualities of things but as mere alterations of our subject, which can even be different in different people” (A28/B45).

the properties of receptivity and subjectivity, the *a priori* moral incentive that Kant aims to discover in the aesthetic section of the second *Critique* must also have these properties by analogy.<sup>102</sup>

Among the basic faculties of action from within Kant's empirical psychology,<sup>103</sup> it is feeling that has the properties of receptivity and subjectivity.<sup>104</sup> Feeling is receptive because feelings of pleasure or displeasure occur due to the reception of representations from cognitive faculty. In other words, for feelings of pleasure or displeasure to occur, representations from cognitive faculty are a necessary prerequisite. For instance, pleasure in mango occurs *only* through the received taste of it (see Frierson 2014, 56). This is why, Kant (*V-Met/Mron*, AA, 29: 877-878) says that "the cognitive faculty precedes pleasure" and that "what gives me pleasure or displeasure...[is] based on the cognitive faculty". Although he does not mention about the receptive quality of feeling per se, he claims that irrespective of whether the representations that it receives for its occurrence is "sensible or intellectual", it "belongs to sensibility" (Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 212n). He also observes that "the susceptibility to the representation [from cognition] is called *feeling*" after calling the "susceptibility to such a representation...[as] *sense*" (06: 212n). As mentioned earlier, for Kant, by virtue of its capacity to acquire representations from outside, sensibility or sense possesses the property of receptivity. If so, feeling, which is considered to belong to sensibility by virtue of its

---

<sup>102</sup> It should be recalled that the motivational resource that is needed in order to resolve the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason already has the quality of subjectivity. This is evident from Kant's definition of incentive as "the *subjective* determining ground of the will... [emphasis added]" (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 72). While the notion of moral incentive is subjective by definition, this property of subjectivity, along with receptivity, are also attributed to it by virtue of its analogical connection with *a priori* forms of sensible intuition. These hints about the sort of qualities that the *a priori* moral incentive must possess leads Kant to identify moral feeling as the correct moral incentive.

<sup>103</sup> Throughout his works, Kant consistently makes a classification of basic faculties of action into cognition, feeling and desire. In a lecture, Kant (*V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 597) says, "The faculty of knowledge, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, and the faculty of desire, are the three powers of the human soul" (see also Kant *V-Met-LI/Pölitz*, AA, 28: 228; *V-Met/Mron*, AA, 29: 877). Again, in the "Introduction" to the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant (*KU*, AA, 05: 177-178) writes, "For all faculties or capacities of the soul can be reduced to the three that cannot be further derived from a common ground: the faculty of cognition, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, and the faculty of desire". Hence, for Kant, the wide-ranging operations of our minds that cause the performances of all our actions can be reduced to the functioning of these three faculties. In a lecture, he even says that "[t]aken together, these three major powers of the soul constitute its life" (Kant *V-Met/Mron*, AA, 29: 878).

<sup>104</sup> The conative faculty of desire cannot be receptive because, unlike feeling, it is non-representational. It is non-representational in the sense that it does not represent thoughts or feelings about objects by itself. Rather, it causes actions in accordance with the representations given by the faculties of cognition and desire. This view is evident from the fact that (1) Kant (*V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25: 1334) treats desire as volition (which is non-representational) that is determined by feeling (via inclinations) and cognition (via reason) and (2) for Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 411), incentives that belong to the faculty of desire do not emerge from desire itself but from cognition and feeling.

reliance on the received cognitive representations for its occurrence, has the quality of receptivity. Further, its belongingness to sensibility also indicates that feeling additionally has the quality of subjectivity. That is, since its occurrence is predicated on *the way objects affect us*, and not on the objects themselves, feeling is a subjective state of mind (and not the state of an object). In other words, relying on received representations of objects for its occurrence, feeling of pleasure or displeasure refers to the state that the individual subject is in and not anything about the objects themselves. Kant, in fact, defines feeling of pleasure and displeasure as the subjective state of an agent when she is affected by certain representations of some objects or states of affairs. Kant (*KU*, AA, 05: 204) writes that “feeling of pleasure and displeasure, by means of which nothing at all in the object is designated, but in which the subject feels itself as it is affected by the representation”. Again, he notes that feeling “involves *only* a relation of the representation of the *subject* and nothing that can be used for cognition of an object” (Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 212n). Hence, like space and time, feelings generally possess the qualities of receptivity and subjectivity.

As mentioned above, for two things to be analogous, in addition to sharing similar properties, they should be dissimilar or different too. Hence, in addition to sharing properties of receptivity and subjectivity with them, feeling must also be different from space and time for one of its kinds to be considered as an appropriate analogue to *a priori* forms of sensible intuition. This difference reflects the difference in the object that the *a priori* principle under investigation in the “Aesthetic” section of the second *Critique* grounds, in comparison to the object that the *a priori* forms of space and time grounds (as discovered in the “Transcendental Aesthetic” section of the first *Critique*). While the aesthetic section of the first *Critique* aims to uncover the *a priori* forms underlying the reception of intuitions via sensibility, the aesthetic section of the second *Critique* aims to uncover the *a priori* principle underlying the determination of the will of finite rational agents to actions by pure practical reason. Kant emphasizes that the aesthetic of pure practical reason has to do, not with our capacity for sensible intuition, but with the capacity of our will to get motivated by the maxims derived from the moral law. He writes that critical investigation into pure practical reason is “an investigation into the possibility of objects of volition, the intuition of which is accordingly no component of the practical problem”. That is, “[i]t is here a question only of the determination of the will and of the determining ground of its maxims as a free will, not of [the intuition of] its result” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 45). It is this difference in the kind of object under investigation in metaphysics of morals (in comparison to the object under investigation in metaphysics of nature)



that requires an *a priori* principle unlike space and time within the aesthetic of pure practical reason.<sup>105</sup> Now, feeling, that shares common properties with space and time, fits this requirement because, unlike space and time, it has the capacity to cause actions by determining the faculty of desire. As Kant (*V-Met-L2/Pölitz*, AA, 28: 586) puts it, since feeling of pleasure seeks for its continuance “by producing again the same representation [that caused it], or... [by] continuing it when it is there”, the only way for it to do so is by serving as the determining ground of the faculty of desire. When the feeling of pleasure determines the faculty of desire, the latter acquires the objects of pleasure via actions.<sup>106</sup> For instance, it is the pleasure in eating a mango that leads to the actual eating of the mango (see Frierson 2014, 59). Similarly, when the feeling of displeasure determines the faculty of desire, the latter avoids the objects of displeasure via actions. Regarding the connection between feeling and desire, Kant says, “[p]leasure precedes the faculty of desire ... we can desire or abhor nothing which is not based on pleasure or displeasure. For that which gives me no pleasure, I also do not want. Thus pleasure or displeasure precedes desire or abhorrence.” (Kant *V-Met/Mron*, AA, 29: 877-878; see also Kant *V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25: 1334) Further, he refers to this inextricable connection between feeling and desire using the term “life”.<sup>107</sup> This quality of having an immediate association with faculty of desire and bringing about the objects of pleasure into reality by determining it makes feeling different from space and time (which, by contrast, has to do with the capacity for sensible intuition of reality). Combining this difference with the common qualities that it shares with space and time, feeling satisfies the requirement of being an appropriate analogue to the two forms of sensible intuition.<sup>108</sup> Hence, a feeling is uncovered as an

---

<sup>105</sup> It should be recalled that it is this distinction between the kinds of objects of metaphysics that results in the reverse ordering of the subdivisions of critique of pure practical reason in comparison with the critique of pure speculative reason.

<sup>106</sup> From within Kant’s empirical psychology, faculty of desire immediately and directly causes the performances of actions. Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 09n) defines desire as “a being’s faculty to be by means of its representations *the cause of the reality of the objects* of these representations [emphasis added]”. Again, in a lecture, he says, “All desires are directed to activity, for living beings do something according to the faculty of desire” (Kant *V-Anth/Fried*, AA, 25: 577; see also Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 211; *V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25:1335; *V-Met-K3/Arnoldt*, AA 29: 1024).

<sup>107</sup> In the preface of the second *Critique*, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 09n) defines feeling as “*the representation of the agreement of...an action with the subjective conditions of life*”. He then defines life as “the faculty of a being to act in accordance with laws of the faculty of desire”. Thus, life involves the combined activity of the faculties of feeling and desire (see also Kant *V-Met-L1/Pölitz*, AA, 28: 247). I briefly touched on these points (regarding the nature of feelings and their connection with desire) earlier in footnote 52 at p. 56 of the first chapter in the context of explaining how the sensible nature of human agents precludes the formal moral law from moving our will to moral actions.

<sup>108</sup> One may raise an objection to the way analogy has been understood and used in this discussion. To claim that there is an analogy between two concepts just because there are similarities and differences between them may seem absurd. However, it must be recalled that, in my view, Kant was not looking for *any* concept that would share an analogy with

*a priori* moral incentive in the aesthetic section of the analytic of pure practical reason in the second *Critique*. This is why, Kant notes, “The Aesthetic there [in the first *Critique*] had two parts, because of the twofold kind of sensible intuition [i.e., inner and outer intuition corresponding to inner and outer senses]; here [in the aesthetic section of the second *Critique*] sensibility is not regarded as a capacity for intuition at all but only as feeling (which can be a subjective ground of desire)” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 90).

To sum up this section, I showed how Kant arrives at a *feeling* as the correct candidate for *a priori* moral incentive during his investigation into the practical influence of pure reason on our sensibility. First, by virtue of the unity of pure reason and harmony of the *a priori* principles that make up the form of a whole of rational knowledge, there must be an analogical relation between the critical structures of theoretical and practical reason. Second, by virtue of this broader analogy, *a priori* principles belonging to the analytic of pure theoretical reason and the analytic of pure practical reason must be analogous to each other. For instance, I showed that Kant presumed the analogy between the natural law, the *a priori* principle found in the logic section of the analytic of pure theoretical reason, and the moral law, the *a priori* principle found in the logic section of the analytic of pure practical reason, in his discussions about these two kinds of laws. Given this, the *a priori* moral incentive (under investigation in the aesthetic section of the analytic of pure practical reason) *must* share an analogy with the *a priori* forms of sensible intuition (discovered in the aesthetic section of the analytic of pure theoretical reason). A feeling of some kind is an appropriate candidate for this *a priori* incentive due to the analogical relation that it shares with space and time. I specifically showed that feeling not only shares common properties like receptivity and subjectivity with space and time, but is also different in the sort of object it makes possible. While this is how Kant arrives at a *feeling* as an *a priori* principle that conditions the

---

space and time. Rather, he was in search of a particular principle that conditions the possibility of *actions* of a particular kind (i.e., moral actions). His search for a principle that makes a particular kind of *action* possible (and not a particular type of *cognition* possible), already makes this principle “wholly dissimilar” from space and time (i.e., *a priori* principles underlying the possibility of intuition). As I mentioned above, among the faculties of action, feeling is the only faculty capable of producing representations which have the features of subjectivity and receptivity (see footnote 104 at p. 147). This means, despite their “wholly dissimilar” natures, feeling shares a “perfect similarity” with space-time by virtue of the common properties (i.e., receptivity and subjectivity) they have. Hence, from the viewpoint of Kant’s characterization of analogy (Kant *Prologomena*, AA, 04: 357, as mentioned in pp. 141-142), feeling and space-time are analogous because they are “wholly dissimilar” concepts which share “perfect similarity” in specific characteristics. Since feeling is analogous with space-time, Kant came up with a feeling as the correct candidate for an incentive that conditions the possibility of moral motivation in all finite rational agents.

possibility of moral motivation, the question of why it should be a *moral* feeling with a peculiar set of characteristics leads us to the specific problem that it serves to resolve – motivational skepticism about pure practical reason.

### **3. Kant's Peculiar Conception of Moral Feeling to Resolve Specific Motivational Skeptical Challenges**

As I discussed in the first chapter, motivational skepticism about pure practical reason in Kant is a problem of how it is possible for the moral law of pure reason to move all the human agents to perform moral actions without exceptions, given that:

1. The moral law is a formal principle that does not have material ends;
2. Human agents have a sensible nature whose needs are forceful and demanding;
3. We can never know how the moral law moves us to perform moral actions (see pp. 42-66).

As I showed in section 1 above, this is a problem from within Kant's metaphysics of morals and the solution to this problem can be known during a critical investigation into the practicality of pure reason (see pp. 123-132). As discussed in section 2 above, during this investigation, Kant identifies a feeling to play the role of an *a priori* incentive to serve as the condition for the possibility of moral motivation in human agents, and thereby, resolves the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason (see pp. 132-150). Now, for this *a priori* feeling to be the appropriate solution to this problem, it should possess characteristics that enable it to overrule the challenges that found the problem. That is, the nature of this feeling-based incentive should be such that it should be capable of serving as the moral incentive by overcoming the specific challenges that beset the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. Accordingly, as I show in this section, Kant develops his account of moral feeling in such a way that:

1. It does not provide any material ends to the moral law, so that the latter retains its formality.
2. It is capable of overruling the sensible needs of human agents, and
3. It does not provide us with any knowledge of how we get motivated by the moral law

First, the essential nature of the *a priori* feeling should be such that the moral law, to which it serves as an incentive, retains its formality. In section 3.1. I show that, in addition to cognizing it

as an *a priori* product of the influence of pure practical reason on sensibility, Kant also conceives of this feeling as an *a priori* moral feeling produced by the moral law of pure reason. Cognizing it *a priori* as an effect of the moral law, and not as an antecedent ground of it, makes this moral feeling different from empirical (physical and moral) feelings, particularly in its capacity to function as an incentive for a supreme practical principle without giving it material ends to aim for. Second, this *a priori* feeling should be capable of resisting and removing the naturally forceful influences of sensible nature upon our will. In doing so, it should also be able to positively move the will of all finite rational agents to perform actions in accordance with the moral law without exceptions. As I show in section 3.2., Kant conceives of this *a priori* moral feeling as made up of two specific feelings: feeling of humiliation towards the needs of our sensible nature and feeling of respect for the moral law. He argues that the way the moral law could possibly thwart and strike down the forceful influences of our sensibility is by effecting a feeling of humiliation towards our subjective dimension. Since this humiliation occurs in comparing our subjective sensible nature with the objective authority of the moral law, a feeling of respect for the moral law simultaneously emerges and motivates us to perform actions in accordance with the moral law. Only by being both a feeling of humiliation and a feeling of respect can moral feeling possibly serve the *a priori* incentive conditioning the possibility of moral motivation in all human agents without exceptions. Taking the two points together, moral feeling, an *a priori* effect of the moral law made up of feelings of humiliation and respect, resolves motivational skepticism about pure practical reason based on formal nature of the moral law and our imperfect will. If so, our lack of epistemic access into the process of moral motivation cannot independently lead to doubts about the consideration of pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of moral motivation. However, the nature of moral feeling should be such that its role as the incentive of morality does not violate Kant's crucial thesis concerning our epistemic inaccessibility into how the moral law causes moral actions. As I show in section 3.3., Kant conceives of motivation from moral feeling along similar lines as his idea of free will. That is, the way moral feeling motivates the will of human agents is no different from the way the law of freedom determines the will of rational agents. Since it is an effect of the moral law that shares an analytical relationship with freedom, motivation from moral feeling must be identical with causality of freedom. More specifically, taking moral feeling as having a negative feeling of humiliation and a positive feeling of respect corresponds to Kant's division of freedom into its negative and positive notions respectively. Thus, by conceiving motivation from moral

feeling as identical with causality of freedom, Kant retains his epistemological stance that we cannot know how the moral law motivates us towards the performance of moral actions.

### **3.1. Moral Feeling does not Violate the Formal Nature of the Moral Law**

In section 3.4.1. of the first chapter, I showed that, in Kant's works of the Critical Period, the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason emerges due to the formal nature of the moral law (see pp. 52-55). As shown in that section, by virtue of its *a priori* status (as a fact of pure reason), the moral law has only the form of universality and necessity (i.e., form of the universal law) without any material ends or incentives. How is it possible for this formal moral law of pure reason to move all the human agents to perform moral actions without exceptions? Only by answering this question would Kant be able to complete his project of establishing pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality. As discussed above in section 2, Kant identifies a feeling as an appropriate *a priori* candidate for serving as the moral incentive that moves finite rational agents to perform moral actions (see pp. 132-151). Given that he relies on empirical psychology to uncover this *a priori* principle underlying moral motivation, one would expect Kant to draw specific characteristics from empirical feelings and attribute them to this *a priori* feeling in a way that the latter becomes an incentive without violating the formality of the moral law. However, any step in the direction of relying on empirical psychology for ascribing specific features to the *a priori* feeling (identified as the moral incentive) is bound to violate the formality condition of the moral law. This is because, the nature of empirical feeling is such that any foundational practical principle for which it serves as an incentive, will aim for material ends. In the footnote in the "Preface" of second *Critique* (which was briefly referred to at p. 146 in section 2.3.), where he admits of borrowing the concepts of feeling, desire and their interconnection from empirical psychology, Kant additionally expresses caution in not breaching a certain boundary in his reliance on empirical psychology for his critical investigation into the practical use of pure reason. He mentions that presupposing the empirical notion of feeling as such would mean that it serves as the determining ground of desire, and thereby makes the supreme practical principle underlying it as an empirical principle with material ends (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 09n). Let me first take Kant's account of physical feeling to demonstrate this. From within empirical psychology, physical feelings of pleasure (or happiness) and displeasure (or unhappiness) emerge as a response to sensible representations (or intuitions) of objects received through physical senses (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 204; *V-Met-L1/Pölitz*, AA, 28: 247). The nature of

physical feeling of pleasure (or happiness) is such that it requires the agents to maintain it via reproduction or continuation of the representations that caused it. Similarly, the nature of physical feeling of displeasure (or unhappiness) is such that it requires the agents to get rid of it via dismissal or elimination of the representations that caused it. Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 220) in fact defines pleasure and displeasure by referring to this nature of theirs as follows: “The consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject, **for maintaining** it in that state, can here designate in general what is called pleasure; in contrast to which displeasure is that representation that contains the ground for determining the state of the representations to their own opposite (hindering or getting rid of them)”. Frierson (2014, 58) too writes about it in simple words: “when one feels pleasure, one feels like continuing in one’s state...When one feels displeasure one feels like ending one’s state”. If this is the nature of these two types of physical feelings, then the maxims, for which they would serve as incentives, will naturally aim for the reproduction of sensible representations that cause pleasure (or happiness) or the dismissal of representations that causes displeasure (or unhappiness). In other words, physical feelings of pleasure (or happiness) and displeasure (or unhappiness) cannot serve as incentives for actions without simultaneously serving as the ground of maxims that underlie them. This means, the fundamental practical principle, for which faculty of physical feeling provides an incentive, will determine the faculty of desire of finite rational agents (with sensibility) with the condition that the latter aims for material ends such as attainment of pleasure (or happiness) or avoidance of displeasure (or unhappiness).<sup>109</sup> In other words, faculty of physical feeling cannot be the source of moral motivation without serving as the material ground of the supreme practical principle of actions. Hence the *a priori* feeling, that Kant identifies as the moral incentive, cannot draw any features from physical feeling without violating the condition of the formality of the moral law.

---

<sup>109</sup> Such a fundamental principle is no different from the supreme principle of morality founded upon physical feeling that the modern followers of Epicurus subscribed to. They are a subset of modern moral philosophers who derived the supreme principle of morality from internal empirical sources (see footnote 39 at p. 47 of the first chapter). As shown in section 3.3. of the first chapter, Kant was critical of these thinkers who thought physical feeling provides us the correct supreme principle of morality (see p. 48). His argument is that, since the sensible representations that cause pleasure (or happiness) and displeasure (or unhappiness) vary among individual agents, the supreme principle based on the faculty of physical feeling cannot be practical *a priori*.

This point is also true of empirical moral feeling that the moral sentimentalists (or moral sense theorists), to whom Kant was mostly responding to, took as the incentive of moral actions.<sup>110</sup> Their notion of empirical moral feeling refers to feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction that emerge independently of objects received through physical senses. More specifically, for them, these two types of moral feelings arise as a response to the appraisal of actions as right and wrong by our moral sense (as mentioned in footnote 43 at p. 48 of the first chapter).<sup>111</sup> In his *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions*, Hutcheson (1756: ix, 89), a proponent of this moral sense theory, writes that “we have a moral sense” and claims that, “The Apprehension of morally good Qualities, is the necessary Cause of Approbation, by our moral Sense”.<sup>112</sup> About it, Kant (*V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 625) notes, “There is said to be an inner[moral] sense, whereby we become capable of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in moral actions...Feeling is a satisfaction that rests on the constitution of a [moral] sense”. Again, in the second *Critique*, he mentions about this “special moral sense...in accordance with which consciousness of virtue is immediately connected with satisfaction and pleasure, and consciousness of vice with mental unease and pain” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 38). Now, to the question of how this moral sense appraises actions as right and wrong, the moral sense in turn relies on moral feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction that emerges from the performance of actions. That is, actions that are judged by the moral sense as right actions are the ones that result in moral feelings of satisfaction, and actions that are judged by the moral sense as wrong actions are the ones that result in moral feelings of dissatisfaction. In short, as Hutcheson (1756, 37) puts it, “a virtuous Action may give the Agent the Pleasures of the Moral Sense”. Thus, on the one hand, moral feelings emerge as a response to the judgement of right and wrong actions by the moral sense, and on the other hand, the judgements of right and wrong actions are based on

---

<sup>110</sup> As discussed in section 2.2. of the first chapter, influenced by these moral sentimentalists, Kant was confused if it is this moral feeling or the moral law of reason that serves as the source of the supreme principle of morality during the pre-Critical period (see pp. 30-31). As shown in section 3.3. of the first chapter, during the Critical period, Kant included these moral sentimentalists under the set of modern moral philosophers who derived the supreme principle of morality from internal empirical sources and criticized them for proposing a principle of morality that lacks the feature of *a priori* practicality (see p. 48).

<sup>111</sup> One obvious problem in taking moral sense as a faculty of judging moral actions is: how is it possible for a faculty of ‘sense’ (which is generally characterized by receptivity) to actively make judgements concerning the concepts of good and evil? This is perhaps why, Kant (*Refl*, AA, 15: 353) writes that “[a] moral sense is a contradiction”.

<sup>112</sup> As mentioned in footnote 33 at p. 44 of the first chapter, for Hutcheson, approbation is a quality of an action that was reflected and judged before the performance of it.

these moral feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Although this is a problematic circle,<sup>113</sup> it can be avoided if the relationship between moral sense and moral feeling is understood as not any different from the relationship between physical sense and physical feeling. As mentioned above, while physical feelings of pleasure are caused by certain sensible intuitions received by physical senses, these sensible intuitions are in turn caused by physical feelings of pleasure. This is because the nature of physical feeling of pleasure is such that it maintains itself by determining the faculty of desire of agents towards actions for reproducing sensible intuitions that caused pleasure in the first place. For example, pleasure in mango is caused by the received taste of it and it is the need to reproduce this pleasure that leads to receiving the taste of the mango again (via the action of eating of the mango again). Similarly, while moral feelings of satisfaction are caused by moral judgements of the moral sense, the moral sense in turn makes these moral judgements on the basis of whether actions provide feelings of satisfaction during their performances. This is because, like physical feeling of pleasure, the nature of moral feeling of satisfaction is such that it seeks for its own maintenance by reproducing actions that moral sense judges as morally right.<sup>114</sup> As a corollary, like physical feeling of displeasure, the nature of moral feeling of dissatisfaction is such that it seeks the avoidance of the performance of actions that moral sense judges as morally wrong. Given that this is the nature of these two types of moral feelings, the maxims, for which these moral feelings would serve as incentives, will aim to perform right actions for the sake of attaining satisfaction and avoid wrong actions for the sake of avoiding dissatisfaction. That is, these moral feelings cannot be incorporated as incentives into maxims without serving as the determining ground of their ends (i.e., attaining satisfaction and avoiding dissatisfaction). Given its striking

---

<sup>113</sup> Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 38) hints at this problematic circle in the following passage:

In order to represent someone vicious as tormented with mental unease by consciousness of his offenses they must first represent him as morally good, at least to some degree, in what is most basic to his character, just as they must represent someone who is delighted by consciousness of his dutiful actions as already virtuous. The concept of morality and duty would therefore have to precede any regard for this satisfaction and cannot be derived from it...one cannot feel such satisfaction or mental unease prior to cognition of obligation and cannot make it the basis of the latter.

Kant's point is that the moral sense must rely on a correct supreme principle of morality for it to discriminate between what is right and wrong and thereby make moral judgements. In other words, the awareness of what is morally right and wrong and the cognition of moral obligation must precede the appraisal of attainment of feelings of satisfaction and avoidance of feelings of dissatisfaction as right and wrong (respectively) by the moral sense. Instead of preceding them, the moral sense in turn depends on these moral feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction for it to arrive at moral judgements.

<sup>114</sup> To treat empirical moral feeling like physical feeling of pleasure (that seeks to maintain itself), Kant refers to moral feeling as "intellectual pleasure" (Kant *V-Met-L1/Pölitz*, AA, 28: 250; *V-Met-L2/Pölitz*, AA, 28: 584)



resemblance with physical feeling of pleasure (or happiness), Kant claims (*KpV*, AA, 05: 38) that the role of moral feeling as an incentive in maxims of actions can be “reduced to desire for one’s own happiness”.<sup>115</sup> This means, like the case of the highest practical principle derived from physical feeling, the supreme practical principle, for which the faculty of moral feeling serves as the source of the incentive, will determine the faculty of desire of human agents with the condition that the latter aims for material ends such as attainment of satisfaction or avoidance of dissatisfaction.<sup>116</sup> Taking such a highest practical principle as no different from the highest practical principle based on pleasure or happiness, Kant (*GMS*, AA, 04: 442n) writes, “I count the principle of moral feeling under that of happiness because every empirical interest promises to contribute to our well-being by the agreeableness that something affords, whether this happens immediately and without a view to advantage or with regard for it”. Thus, like faculty of physical feeling, faculty of moral feeling cannot be the source of moral motivation without serving as the material ground of the supreme practical principle of actions. This means that the *a priori* feeling that Kant recognizes as the moral incentive cannot be, in essence, akin to empirical moral feeling because doing so would take away the formal nature of the moral law and give it material ends such as moral satisfaction.

Thus, *a priori* feeling, identified as the moral incentive, cannot be attributed characteristics of empirical physical feelings and empirical moral feelings because that would additionally make it an antecedent ground of the moral law, providing material ends for it. Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 75) is very clear that “[t]here is...no *antecedent* feeling in the subject that would be attuned to morality: that is impossible, since all feeling is sensible whereas the incentive of the moral disposition must be free from any sensible condition”. For the *a priori* feeling underlying moral motivation to not be akin to the two kinds of empirical feelings, it must be considered as an effect produced by the moral law itself. Kant makes this move in the light of two already-established theses at this point

---

<sup>115</sup> Reducing the two kinds of moral feelings to physical feelings of pleasure and pain, Kant (*V-Mo/Mron II*, AA, 29: 625) notes, “The principle of moral feeling...is null and void...At bottom we have only one feeling, namely pleasure and pain, and this is the judgement upon our overall well-being. There are various kinds of sense, but only one feeling of pleasure. If there were several feelings, or a power of distinguishing by satisfaction, we could not distinguish feeling by degree”.

<sup>116</sup> Such a fundamental principle is no different from the supreme principle of morality founded upon moral feeling that the moral sentimentalists subscribed to. For Kant, since this principle depends on empirical feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction for moral judgement and moral motivation, it has only an *a posteriori* status and therefore, cannot be taken to be the correct supreme principle of morality.

during his critical investigation into the practicality of pure reason: first, the moral law is a fundamental *a priori* fact of pure reason in its practical use; second, an *a priori* feeling is an independent product of the influence of pure practical reason upon sensibility. Given that both the moral law and the feeling-based incentive are cognized *a priori* as direct products of pure practical reason, Kant attributes an additional causal connection between these two *a priori* principles. That is, since the feeling identified as an incentive is already conceived of as a product of the influence of pure reason on sensibility, Kant adds a caveat that this feeling-based incentive is also an effect of the moral law of pure reason. This is why, as mentioned at the introduction to section 2, in addition to referring to this feeling as “cognized *a priori*” due to a “necessary influence [of pure reason] upon sensibility” (05: 90), he also precisely refers to it as “cognized *a priori* from the moral law” (05: 78) (see pp. 132-133). This additional qualification of the feeling-based incentive as an effect of the moral law does not conflict with its original conception as the product of pure practical reason because the moral law too is a direct product of pure practical reason. Cognizing it as “a feeling [that] is inseparably connected with the representation of the moral law”, Kant qualifies it as a special type of a *moral feeling* that is practical *a priori* (05: 80). In contrast to empirical moral feeling that can only serve “as the [antecedent] standard of our moral appraisal”, *a priori* moral feeling “must...be regarded as the *subjective* effect that the [moral] law exercises on the will” (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 460). Similarly, as opposed to empirical physical feeling “which precedes the representation of the law”, *a priori* moral feeling is “that which can only follow upon it” (Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 399).<sup>117</sup> Thus, as a product of the moral law, the nature of *a priori* moral feeling is unlike empirical feelings of pleasure (or displeasure) and satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 77) writes that “[s]o little is [this *a priori* moral feeling of] respect a feeling of pleasure” and “in turn, so little *displeasure* is there in it” too. Instead, he writes, “it is a feeling which is directed only to the practical and which depends on the representation of a law only as to its form and not on account of any object of the law; thus it cannot be reckoned either as enjoyment or as pain, and yet it produces an *interest* in compliance with the law which we call *moral interest*”

---

<sup>117</sup> It is this peculiar nature of *a priori* moral feeling (i.e., that it does not precede the moral law, but succeeds it) that makes the moral law retain its supreme authority over both moral judgement and moral motivation in finite rational agents. In other words, only by taking the *a priori* moral feeling as a by-product of the moral law, Kant maintains that the moral law *solely* serves as the fundamental principle that conditions the possibility of both moral appraisal and moral execution of all the rational agents (including human agents) without exceptions. Notably, it is in serving as the latter in human agents that the moral law effects this moral feeling in our minds, so that we get motivated to perform the moral actions.

(05: 80). In other words, unlike empirical feelings of pleasure which depends on the material ends of the maxims for their perpetual maintenance, the incentive of moral feeling relies solely on the form of the universal law (which is the formal end of the moral law) to enable human agents to take practical interest in acting from duty.<sup>118</sup> Kant makes these points regarding the nature of the *a priori* feeling in the following passage:

[Moral feeling of] [r]espect, and not the gratification or enjoyment of happiness, is thus something for which there can be no feeling *antecedent* to reason and underlying it (for this would always be aesthetic and pathological): respect as consciousness of direct necessitation of the will by the law is hardly an analogue of the feeling of pleasure, although in relation to the faculty of desire it does the same thing but from different sources; only by this way of representing things, however, can one attain what one seeks, namely that actions be done not merely in conformity with duty (as a result of pleasant feelings) but from duty... (05: 117).

That is, as an effect of the moral law (and not its antecedent ground), *a priori* moral feeling is certainly unlike the feeling of pleasure or happiness. Despite this, it is still a *feeling* of some sort, and hence, it has the capacity to determine the faculty of desire of agents towards the performance of a certain sort of actions. As an effect of the moral law which has only the form of universality and necessity, this moral feeling determines desire and moves the will of all the finite rational agents to perform actions from duty. Thus, by being different from empirical feelings (as a result of its origination from the moral law), *a priori* moral feeling serves as the moral incentive in all the human agents without bypassing the formality condition of the moral law.

### **3.2. Moral Feeling is Capable of Overruling the Tendencies of Our Sensible Nature**

In section 3.4.2. of the first chapter, I discussed how skeptical concerns about the motivational efficacy of the moral law of pure reason emerges in Kant's moral theory as a result of our imperfect

---

<sup>118</sup> As mentioned in footnote 57 at p. 60 of the first chapter, dividing the notion of interest into pathological and practical ones, Kant defines the latter as taking interest in acting in accordance with the categorical commands of the moral law of pure reason (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 413n). He also maintains more specifically that practical interest actually emerges from moral feeling of the moral law because only “[f]rom the concept of an incentive arises that of an *interest*”. Due to this, he refers to practical interest also as moral interest and defines it as “a pure sense-free interest of practical reason alone”. Furthermore, since “[o]n the concept of an interest is based that of a *maxim*”, “morally genuine” maxims emerge out of “the [moral] interest [that] one takes in compliance with the law”. (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 79). Thus, as a moral incentive, *a priori* moral feeling causes a moral interest in finite rational agents, which in turn leads them to forming and adopting moral maxims for performing moral actions.

will (see pp. 55-60). Human agents are naturally constituted in a way that we, not only possess an intelligible nature (that provides us with commands of the moral law), but also possess a sensible nature with its own set of needs. In addition to requiring constant satisfaction, these sensible needs are such that they have the capacity to overrule the categorical and unconditional demands of the moral law. If this is the case, emergence of doubts concerning how the moral law could solely move all the human agents to perform actions in accordance with its commands is inevitable. Now, given that the moral law effects a moral feeling *a priori* in the minds of finite rational agents for conditioning the possibility of moral motivation in them (as shown above in section 3.1.), this moral feeling must be such that it should be capable of overriding the naturally forceful needs of our sensibility, and thereby move all the human agents towards the performance of moral actions. To see how Kant draws out the specificities of moral feeling for this purpose, it is first important to go through the nuances of how exactly our sensible nature forcefully moves us towards actions for the satisfaction of its needs. The way this *a priori* moral feeling must be conceived is conditional on the way our sensible needs move us because it is the force of the latter that the former needs to override.

As mentioned in footnote 49 at p. 56 of the first chapter, faculties belonging to our sensible nature include the lower faculty of cognition that produces representations in so far as it is affected by empirical objects and the lower faculty of feeling that produces pleasure and displeasure as a response to the objects that affect it. The former is sensibility (five external senses and one internal sense) and the latter is physical feeling. As discussed in section 3.4.2. of the first chapter, our sensibility produces intuitions when it is affected by objects from outside (see p. 56). These sensible intuitions in turn cause feelings of pleasure and displeasure by affecting the faculty of physical feeling. As discussed earlier, the nature of physical feeling of pleasure is such that it requires the agents to maintain it via performance of actions for reproducing the intuitions that caused it (see pp. 153-154). In other words, physical feeling serves as the determining ground of desire with a condition that the agents perform actions for attaining pleasure. At different points in his texts, Kant writes about three types of sensible needs depending on the way physical feeling determines desire for the attainment of pleasure.<sup>119</sup> First, when physical feeling determines desire

---

<sup>119</sup> Thanks to Prof. Samuel Kahn for drawing my attention to Kant's nuanced distinction between actions performed for satisfying individual inclinations and actions performed for happiness, during my personal correspondence with him in June, 2019. In his paper titled, "Kant and the Duty to Promote One's Own Happiness", Kahn (2018: 06) argues

without any additional involvement of reason, then its condition takes the form of instincts. As discussed in footnote 50 at p. 56 of the first chapter, instincts refer to basic desires which requires immediate gratification and they do not involve higher cognition (e.g., hunger and sex) (Kant *Anth*, AA, 07: 265; *V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25: 1334, 1339). Second, when physical feeling determines desire with reason involved in providing the means to given ends, then its condition takes the form of single inclinations. As discussed in footnote 51 at p. 56 of the first chapter, inclinations refer to complex, habitual desires (arising out of instincts) which require satisfaction on a regular basis (e.g., inclinations for smoking, drinking, money etc.). (Kant *RGV*, AA, 06: 29; *MS*, AA, 212; *Anth*, AA, 07: 251; *V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25: 1334, 1339). In the case of an inclination, reason plays a instrumental role of serving as a means to the satisfaction of its condition (which leads to attainment of feeling of pleasure). As Kant (*V-Anth/Mron*, AA, 25: 1334) puts it, "...reason is often used in the service of inclination, as reason must find out the means by which inclination can attain its end". To be more precise, the role of reason is restricted to providing practical rules which prescribe actions to satisfy the conditions of inclinations, and thereby, attain pleasure.<sup>120</sup> Third, when physical feeling determines desire with reason involved both in providing the means and judging the ends of actions, then its condition takes the form of happiness or well-being. As discussed in footnote 55 at p. 57 of the first chapter, happiness refers to the desire to satisfy the sum of all inclinations (Kant *KrV*, AA, A806/B834; *GMS*, AA, 04: 399, 405, 418). In a lecture, Kant (*V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 276) says "when it is said that you ought to promote your happiness, this amounts to saying: Use your understanding to discover the means of satisfying your [individual] inclinations and taste for pleasure". In the case of happiness, reason plays a positive role of making judgements about the sort of actions that lead to happiness.<sup>121</sup> To be precise, it

---

for "happiness and single inclinations to be at variance" by showing that Kant's example of "one suffering from gout" (in his *Groundwork* at *GMS*, AA, 04: 399) depicts that immediate individual inclination "can often outweigh a fluctuating idea" of happiness.

<sup>120</sup> Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 20) defines practical rule as a "product of reason" that "prescribes action as a means to an effect". This "effect" could either be pleasure from the satisfaction of individual inclinations or happiness from attaining the ends that certain maxims suggest. In the case of individual inclinations, practical rules aim for ends that the inclinations demand, and hence, they take the form of a hypothetical imperative: "If you want pleasure from inclination A, you ought to do B". Kant calls rules (which serve as means for single inclinations) as problematic or technical imperatives of skill. They are technical in the sense that the very end that they aim for is to serve as means to a given purpose, without defining or valuing the effect as practically good (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 415; *KpV*, AA, 05: 26n)

<sup>121</sup> About this appraising role of reason, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 61) writes, "The human being is a being with needs, insofar as he belongs to the sensible world, and to this extent his reason certainly has a commission from the side of his sensibility which it cannot refuse, to attend to its interest and to form practical maxims with a view to happiness

makes such judgements in the form of maxims and these maxims which aim for happiness are called maxims of self-love.<sup>122</sup> Thus, depending on whether and how reason plays a positive role in this process, physical feeling determines the faculty of desire in the form of instincts, inclinations and happiness. Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 73) notes that these needs collectively “constitute regard for oneself (*solipsismus*)”. Since our sensible needs are forceful and our regard for oneself naturally takes priority in determining our desire to actions, we possess a tendency to elevate these sensible needs to the level of highest practical principle underlying all our actions in general. Kant calls “[t]his propensity to make oneself as having subjective determining grounds of choice into the objective determining ground of the will in general” as “*self-love*” (05: 74). In other words, self-love is our propensity to take sensible needs based on physical feeling (i.e., those needs that naturally serve as the “subjective determining grounds of choice”) as the source of the fundamental principle underlying all our actions without exceptions (i.e., as “the objective determining ground of the will”). Kant also calls such a love for oneself as “a predominant *benevolence* toward oneself (*Philautia*)” (05: 73). In addition to the tendency of forming and adopting a highest practical principle based on sensible needs, we are also likely to take such a principle as the supreme principle binding the will of all human agents to perform moral actions without exceptions. Kant calls this tendency of ours to form and adopt a supreme principle of morality on the basis of sensible needs as self-conceit. He writes, “if self-love makes itself [moral] lawgiving and the unconditional practical principle, it can be called *self-conceit*” (05: 74). He also refers to self-conceit as “*satisfaction with oneself (Arrogantia)*” (05: 73). Taken together, self-love and self-conceit are forms that the naturally forceful needs of our sensible nature take, in order to consistently affect and influence us.

As rational agents, human agents also possess an intelligible nature by virtue of which we become *a priori* conscious of the moral law as a fact of pure reason. As discussed earlier, due to its formal nature, the moral law has a “mere practical form, which consists in the fitness of maxims for giving

---

in this life and, where possible, in a future life as well”. Although its role in making moral judgements seems extensive, reason is only used as a “tool” for the satisfaction of the demands of physical feeling (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 61; *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 276).

<sup>122</sup> Practical rules under these general maxims of self-love prescribe specific actions for attaining happiness. These rules take the form of a hypothetical imperative: “If you want happiness, you ought to do A”. However, unlike the technical practical rules of inclinations, these practical rules prescribe actions as a means to a sophisticated practical end – happiness. Kant refers to them as pragmatic (Kant *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 255) or assertoric hypothetical imperatives (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 415).

universal Law” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 74). Further, as a supreme principle of moral appraisal, it “first determines what is good in itself and...grounds the maxims of a pure will, which alone is good in every respect” (05: 74). Now, for this moral law of pure reason to serve as the supreme principle of moral motivation and thereby condition the possibility of moral actions in human agents, it must restrict and combat against the influences of self-love and self-conceit upon our will. As Kant puts it, “What is essential in every determination of the will by the moral law is that...[it must] not only [occur] without the cooperation of sensible impulses but even with rejection of all of them and with infringement upon all inclinations insofar as they could be opposed to that law” (05: 72). Now, as discussed above, self-love and self-conceit are constituted collectively by sensible needs based on physical feeling. This means, the only way for the moral law to possibly thwart and reject their natural influence upon our will is by effecting a feeling against it. About this, Kant remarks, “all that is found in self-love [and self-conceit] belongs to inclination, while all inclination rests on feeling, so that what infringes upon all the inclinations in self-love [and self-conceit] has, just by this, a necessary influence on feeling” (05: 74). More specifically, Kant thinks that the representation of the moral law (as a fact of pure reason) must effect a feeling akin to that of humiliation towards our sensible nature for it to weaken and strike down influences emerging from the latter in determining our will. He argues that only a feeling of humiliation will emerge when the supremely authoritative moral law stands in comparison with and in contrast to our subjective dimension constituted by the needs of our sensible nature. In other words, “[a feeling of] humiliation takes place only relatively to the purity [and authority] of the [moral] law” (05: 79). More clearly, Kant writes, “what in our own judgment infringes upon our self-conceit humiliates. Hence the moral law unavoidably humiliates every human being when he compares with it the sensible propensity of his nature” (05: 74). Thus, a feeling of humiliation must be effected in our minds as a result of the *a priori* awareness of the moral law (as the latter, with its authority and purity, stands against the sensible influences belonging to our subjectivity). This is “how it is possible to see *a priori* that the moral law can exercise an effect on feeling, inasmuch as it excludes the inclinations and the propensity to make them the supreme practical condition, that is, self-love, from all participation in the supreme lawgiving” (05: 74).

Feeling of humiliation is only negative in so far as it merely resists and rejects the sensible tendencies of self-love and self-conceit. As Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 78) remarks, “[feeling of humiliation is] a *negative* effect which, as arising from the influence of a pure practical reason,

mainly infringes upon the activity of the subject so far as inclinations are his determining grounds and hence upon the opinion of his personal worth". In addition to it, the moral law must also effect a feeling in our minds to positively move our will to perform actions in accordance with it. Kant thinks that, as the moral law thwarts and strikes down the naturally forceful influences of self-love and self-conceit, it simultaneously generates a feeling of respect for itself in our minds in order to positively move our will to act in accordance with it. He argues, "[the moral law] is at the same time an object of *respect* inasmuch as, in opposition to its subjective antagonist, namely the inclinations in us, it *weakens* self-conceit; and inasmuch as it even *strikes down* self-conceit, that is, humiliates it, it is an object of the greatest *respect* and so too the ground of a positive feeling that...is cognized a priori" (05: 73). That is, as the moral law effects a feeling of humiliation, it arouses a feeling of respect for itself in our minds due to its capacity to resist and remove the influences from our sensible nature. Kant puts it more clearly: "If something represented *as a determining ground of our will* humiliates us in our self-consciousness, it awakens *respect* for itself insofar as it is positive and a determining ground. Therefore the moral law is even subjectively a ground of respect" (05: 74). Further, since Kant assumes that "whatever diminishes the hindrances to an activity is a furthering of this activity itself" (05: 79), it follows that the purpose of effecting this feeling of respect for the moral law is to positively move human agents to act in accordance with the moral law. This is why he argues: "[T]he lowering of pretensions to moral self-esteem - that is, humiliation on the sensible side - is an elevation of the moral - that is, practical - esteem for the law itself on the intellectual side; in a word, it is respect for the law, and so also a feeling that is positive in its intellectual cause, which is known a priori" (05: 79). Hence, emerging as an effect of the moral law in so far as the latter humiliates our subjectivity (that is based on our sensible needs), feeling of respect for the moral law positively serves as the *a priori* motivating ground of our will and thereby enables us to perform moral actions. Kant sums it up as follows:

[R]espect for the moral law must be regarded as also a positive though indirect effect of the moral law on feeling insofar as the law weakens the hindering influence of the inclinations by humiliating self-conceit, and must therefore be regarded as a subjective ground of activity- that is, as the incentive to compliance with the law - and as the ground for maxims of a course of life in conformity with it (05: 79).



Thus, for Kant, the moral law must effect a feeling of humiliation towards our subjectivity in our minds in order to negatively resist the sensible influences upon our will. Simultaneously, it must effect a feeling of respect for its own purity and authority in our minds, in order to positively serve as the motivating ground of our will. Both these feelings are connected in a way that the former organically conditions the latter. This is because, removal of hindering influences from our sensible nature (that feeling of humiliation enables) is equivalent to furtherance of the motivating influence of the moral law upon our will (something that feeling of respect makes possible).

Now, it must be recalled that Kant uncovers a feeling as an *a priori* moral incentive during his critical investigation into the influence of pure practical reason upon sensibility. In section 3.1. above, I showed that Kant specifically took this feeling as a moral feeling that is effected by the formal moral law in the minds of all the finite rational agents for conditioning the possibility of moral motivation without exceptions (see pp. 153-159). For this *a priori* moral feeling to successfully motivate all human agents with a sensible nature to perform moral actions without exceptions, it should be made up of feeling of humiliation towards sensibility and feeling of respect for the moral law. In other words, given that feelings of humiliation and respect *must* be effected by the moral law for it to move human agents to perform actions against the influences of sensible nature and in accordance with the moral law, the *a priori* moral feeling that is identified as the moral incentive (during the critical investigation into the practicality of pure reason) must be constituted of feeling of humiliation and feeling of respect. Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 75) writes the following passage confirm this reading:

The negative effect [of the moral law] upon feeling ...is *pathological*, as is every influence on feeling and every feeling in general. As the effect of consciousness of the moral law,...this feeling of a rational subject affected by inclinations is indeed called humiliation (intellectual contempt); but in relation to its positive ground, the law, it is at the same time called respect for the law;...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. Because of this, this feeling can now also be called a feeling of respect for the moral law, *while on both grounds together it can be called a moral feeling* [emphasis added].

Thus, feeling of humiliation towards our sensible nature and feeling of respect for the moral law together constitute moral feeling. To put it in other words, as an incentive of the moral law, moral feeling is identical to (i) a feeling of humiliation in so far as it negatively restricts and removes the natural force of the sensible tendencies and needs in determining our will to actions and (ii) a feeling of respect for the moral law in so far as it positively furthers our motivation to act in accordance with the moral law. The moral law, thus, effects a moral feeling – a feeling that consists of both a feeling of humiliation towards our sensible influences and a feeling of respect for the moral law – in our minds in order to condition the possibility of moral motivation in all human agents without exceptions.

Now, one objection that could be raised against the consideration of moral feeling as a negative feeling of humiliation is that it seems to reduce moral feeling to a kind of a physical feeling of displeasure. In the passage quoted above, we see Kant identifying feeling of humiliation as a “*pathological*” feeling of some sort. Kant also straightforwardly refers to the negative aspect of moral feeling as a feeling of displeasure once during his discussion about it. He writes, “[the] restriction [enabled by the moral law]...has an effect on feeling and [this] produces the feeling of displeasure [in our minds]” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 78). In addition, at one point, he also calls the feeling of humiliation towards our own sensible tendencies as a pain of some sort. He writes, “the moral law, as the determining ground of the will, must by thwarting all our inclinations produce a feeling that can be called pain” (05: 73). Further, one can also see him using the term “disagreeableness” (05: 75) once to refer to this negative aspect of the effect of the moral law on our minds. All these individual references seem to indicate that Kant thinks of feeling of humiliation (i.e., the negative aspect of the incentive of moral feeling) as a type of a physical feeling of displeasure. Such a view evidently goes against his conception of moral feeling as a feeling that is different from physical feelings of pleasure and displeasure. As discussed in section 3.1. above, Kant thinks of moral feeling as a feeling unlike physical feelings of pleasure or displeasure because taking it otherwise (i.e., as one of the kinds of physical feelings) amounts to rejection of the formal nature of the moral law (see pp. 153-159). As I showed in that section, physical feelings of pleasure or displeasure arise as a result of sensible intuitions about objects in the empirical world (received through physical senses). When these feelings serve as incentives for maxims of actions, the latter will determine the will with the condition that the actions must be performed for reproducing pleasure or avoiding displeasure. Further, in such cases, physical

feeling will serve as the antecedent ground of the highest practical principle underlying these maxims, and thereby, give material ends to it as final ends to aim for. Hence, for the moral law to retain its formality and not have material ends, Kant conceives of moral feeling as different from these empirically grounded physical feelings. Now, this view will be contradicted if moral feeling, identified as a negative feeling of humiliation, is a kind of a physical feeling of displeasure.

Although this objection seems valid, on a careful reading, it becomes clear that this objection is only an apparent one. Firstly, although it is true that feeling of humiliation is pathological, it is still not a type of a physical feeling of displeasure. As discussed above, for Kant, moral feeling is a feeling of humiliation in so far as it restricts the influences of sensible nature on our will. These sensible influences are tendencies (self-love and self-conceit) that are based on needs (instincts, inclinations and need for happiness) arising from physical feeling. This means, restrictions that feeling of humiliation imposes on these sensible influences are directed against the natural influence arising from physical feeling upon our will. To the extent that it thwarts the natural force of the tendencies of physical feeling upon our will, feeling of humiliation is *pathological*. This is why, in the passage quoted above, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 75) writes, “The negative effect upon feeling...is pathological, *as is every influence on feeling and every feeling in general* [emphasis added]”. That is, since any influence on feeling is pathological, feeling of humiliation acquires pathological nature by virtue of the direct counteracting effect that it has on physical feeling. Its pathological nature, however, does not reduce it to a feeling of displeasure because the restricting effect that it imposes applies to tendencies and needs based on physical feeling of displeasure as well. That is, as discussed above, the role of humiliation is to restrict and remove tendencies that determine the will to actions that avoid the feeling of displeasure (and attain pleasure). While physical feeling of displeasure demands for the removal of sensible representations causing it, feeling of humiliation removes tendencies based on this natural need to remove sensible representations causing displeasure. Since its restrictions apply to such tendencies based on the feeling of displeasure, humiliation cannot by itself be a feeling of displeasure. Hence, feeling of humiliation is different from physical feeling of displeasure, and yet is pathological by virtue of opposing the needs and tendencies stemming from the latter. Secondly, feeling of humiliation is certainly not a kind of a physical feeling of displeasure by virtue of its intellectual origin and *a priori* status. As discussed earlier, generally, physical feelings emerge as a response to sensible intuitions of *empirical* objects received through physical senses. Hence, they are cognized *a*

*posteriori*. In particular, physical feeling of displeasure has only an *a posteriori* status by virtue of its empirical foundation. By contrast, feeling of humiliation towards natural tendencies of our sensible nature emerges in our minds as a response to the awareness of the moral law of pure reason. Hence, by virtue of its intellectual origin, feeling of humiliation is cognized *a priori*. About its *a priori* status, Kant writes, “the effect of this [moral] law on feeling is merely humiliation, which we can...discern a priori...only [through] the resistance to incentives of sensibility” (05: 78-79). In fact, even in the passage where he calls it as “pain”, Kant writes that it is via feeling of humiliation “we can see a priori...[how] the moral law...must by thwarting all our inclinations produce a feeling [in us] [emphasis added] (05: 73). Thus, feeling of humiliation is not a physical feeling of displeasure due to its intellectual origin and *a priori* status. This is why, “[a]s an effect of consciousness of the moral law, and consequently in relation to an intelligible cause” Kant refers to feeling of humiliation as an “intellectual contempt” and not as a sort of a displeasure (05: 75). This separation between the two types of feelings clarifies that Kant’s references to feeling of humiliation as pain and disagreeableness are not meant to identify the former with a physical feeling of displeasure. Instead, these references are made only to emphasize that feeling of humiliation thwarts the sensible tendencies and needs that make up our “dear self”<sup>123</sup>. That is, by virtue of the forceful nature of our sensible tendencies, our will is naturally drawn towards satisfying the needs that they are based on. Since satisfying sensible needs (in the form of instincts, inclinations and desire for happiness) leads to pleasure and happiness, feeling of humiliation, that is meant to restrict the force of these needs in determining our will, curtails the attainment of pleasure and happiness. To the extent that it imposes restrictions to the attainment of pleasure and happiness that emerge upon satisfying instincts, inclinations and sensible desires, feeling of humiliation becomes pain and disagreeableness. In other words, feeling of humiliation is painful because it indirectly imposes curbs on our natural pursuit of pleasures and happiness. Thus, Kant’s identification of feeling of humiliation towards our sensible nature with pain and disagreeableness does not reduce it to a physical feeling of displeasure. Taking these points together, as an incentive of the moral law, moral feeling can validly serve as a feeling of humiliation to restrict the natural force of sensible tendencies and needs without violating the formality condition of the moral law.

---

<sup>123</sup> Kant uses the term “dear self” in his *Groundwork* at *GMS*, AA, 04: 407.

The objection concerning feeling of humiliation discussed above obviously does not apply to consideration of moral feeling as a feeling of respect. Firstly, the object of feeling of respect is the *a priori* moral law itself. Since it is concerned only with the condition of moving our will with maxims of actions that take the form of universal law, it lacks a direct connection with needs and tendencies of our sensible nature. Hence, evidently, it lacks pathological status. Secondly, by virtue of its intellectual origin and *a priori* status, feeling of respect too cannot be reduced to a physical feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Clubbing these two points, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 80) writes,

[F]eeling [of respect] is inseparably connected with the representation of the moral law in every finite rational being. If this feeling of respect were pathological and hence a feeling of *pleasure* based on the inner *sense*, it would be futile to [try to] discover a priori a connection of it with any idea. But it is a feeling which is directed only to the practical and which depends on the representation of a law only as to its form and not on account of any object of the law; thus it cannot be reckoned either as enjoyment or as pain, and yet it produces an *interest* in compliance with the law which we call *moral* interest just as the capacity to take such an interest in the law (or respect for the moral law itself) is *the moral feeling* properly speaking.

Thus, moral feeling serves both as feeling of humiliation and feeling of respect without violating the formality condition of the moral law. Further, by constituting these two feelings, this moral incentive conditions the possibility of moral motivation in human agents by overcoming the natural force of sensible influences upon our will and by moving our will towards the performance of moral actions respectively.

### **3.3. Moral Feeling Does Not Enable Epistemic Access into the Process of Moral Motivation**

In section 3.4.3. of the first chapter, I discussed that the problem of epistemic inaccessibility into the process of moral motivation adds to motivational skepticism about pure practical reason based on formality of the moral law and our imperfect will (see pp. 60-66). That is, from Kant's critical epistemological standpoint, it is impossible for us, with the cognitive faculties we possess, to know how the moral law moves our will towards the performance of moral actions. Coupled with formal nature of the moral law and naturally forceful demands of our sensible nature, this epistemic inaccessibility thesis of Kant strengthens his skeptical view concerning the motivational efficacy of the moral law of pure reason. In section 2, I showed that, in his critical investigation into the

founding principles of morality, Kant identifies a feeling as the correct *a priori* principle that conditions the possibility of moral motivation in finite rational agents (see pp. 132-151). In sections 3.1. and 3.2. discussed above, I showed how Kant particularly addresses skeptical challenges to the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason emerging due to formal nature of the moral law and imperfect nature of our will (see pp. 153-159, 159-169). By conceiving the *a priori* moral feeling (i) as a direct effect of the moral law and (ii) as constituting of a feeling of humiliation towards our sensible nature and a feeling of respect for the moral law, he resolves the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. Given this, our lack of epistemic access into the process of moral motivation does not pose any independent threat to the motivational efficacy of the moral law of pure reason. This is because, irrespective of whether we possess knowledge of it or not, the moral law must effect moral feeling *a priori* in our minds for making moral actions possible. In other words, Kant's identification of moral feeling as an *a priori* incentive of the moral law, constituting of feelings of humiliation and respect, is sufficient to prove pure reason as the source of supreme principle of moral motivation in human agents. Hence, our epistemic inaccessibility into how the moral law motivates us towards moral actions does not independently lead to doubts about the motivational capacity of the moral law. For more clarity, this position can be differentiated from the one that Ware (2014) takes in his paper "Kant on Moral Sensibility and Moral Motivation" (as discussed in previous chapters). As discussed in section 1.3. of the first chapter, Ware (2014, 731) claims that the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason "poses no genuine threat" because of the lack of epistemic access into the process of moral motivation (see pp. 25-26). Towards the end of section 3.4.3. of the first chapter, I took a stance contrary to Ware's by showing Kant's problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason as an independent philosophical problem in his moral theory (see pp. 65-66). I showed that lack of epistemic access into the process of moral motivation actually adds to this problem that otherwise has its primary roots in formal nature of the moral law and imperfect nature of our will. Thus, while Ware does not take the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason seriously due to our lack of access into the process of moral motivation, I take our lack of epistemic access into the process of moral motivation as contributing to skepticism about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason. Now, after showing that Kant resolves this problem using his notion of moral feeling, I argue that our epistemic inaccessibility into how the moral law motivates us does not pose any independent threat to the motivational capacity of pure

reason. In other words, our lack of direct epistemic access into the process of moral motivation, which was first read as adding to the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason, does not pose any challenge now, in the light of reading Kant's account of moral feeling as resolving the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. Since our epistemic inaccessibility into the process of moral motivation does not solely pose a skeptical challenge to the motivational efficacy of the moral law, Kant's account of moral feeling does not need to address or resolve it.

However, given that Kant's epistemic inaccessibility thesis is integral to his account of moral motivation, his account of the incentive of moral feeling must be compatible with it. In other words, the nature of moral feeling, the correct *a priori* incentive of morality, must go hand in hand with the view that we can never know how the moral law moves us towards moral actions. First, it should be recalled that our epistemic inaccessibility into how the moral law causes moral motivation has its roots in the very nature of the moral law. As I showed in section 3.4.3. of the first chapter, for Kant, it is the analytic connection that the moral law shares with the idea of freedom that limits our epistemic access into the way it binds our will (see pp. 60-66). In his *Groundwork*, he argues for the reality of categorical imperative (i.e., form of the moral law) by attributing freedom as the property of our will (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 446-447). He further backs this freedom of our will by relying on the recognition of our membership in the intelligible world (04: 453). By arguing that the will determined by the moral law is the same as a free will, Kant stands for a lack of epistemic access into how the moral law moves our will (as we can never know how free will causes actions). To quote Kant's sentence (cited in the first chapter) again, "reason would overstep all its bounds if it took it upon itself to *explain how* pure reason can be practical, which would be exactly the same task as to explain *how freedom is possible*" (04: 458-459; see also 04: 460-461).<sup>124</sup> Unlike his argument in the *Groundwork*, in the second *Critique*, Kant starts with a claim that we become aware of the moral law as an *a priori* fact of pure reason (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 31, 46-47). While awareness of the formal nature of the moral law draws our attention to

---

<sup>124</sup> Since pure reason in practical via the moral law, the phrase "*how* pure reason can be practical" in the quote mentioned refers to how the moral law of pure reason motivates the will of agents towards the performance of moral actions. This is because, as I already discussed in section 3.2. of the first chapter, the practicality of the supreme principle of morality necessarily entails moral motivation (see pp. 43-46). Hence, the epistemic inaccessibility into how pure reason can be practical refers to the epistemic inaccessibility into how the moral law causes moral motivation in human agents.

the negative notion of freedom (i.e., freedom from material incentives and ends), the idea that awareness of the moral law is possible only under the condition of freedom confirms the reality of freedom (05: 48). That way, not only is freedom an ontological condition in which we become aware of the moral law, the moral law too is an epistemic condition through which we come to know the reality of freedom (05: 29). By arguing for such a reciprocal connection between the two ideas, Kant again places limits on our knowledge about causality of the moral law (as we can never know anything about causality of freedom) (05: 72). Our lack of epistemic access into causality of the moral law refers to our lack of knowledge about how the moral law motivates our will towards the performance of moral actions.<sup>125</sup> Now, since it must be the moral law alone that must serve as the supreme principle of moral motivation, our epistemic inaccessibility into the process of moral motivation should be a part and parcel of Kant's complete account of moral motivation. Since Kant's account of moral motivation revolves around the incentive of moral feeling, Kant's discussion of how moral feeling functions as a moral motivational resource in finite rational agents must incorporate his epistemic inaccessibility thesis into it. In other words, Kant's introduction of moral feeling as an incentive of morality within our moral motivational structure cannot violate the thesis that we cannot know how the moral law causes motivation in us to perform moral actions. This violation means a violation of Kant's critical epistemological thesis concerning the limits of our reason. According to Kant's critical epistemology, our reason cannot acquire theoretical knowledge of an object unless it initially appears to us via our senses. Freedom, as a sort of causality, is not made up of empirical manifold received via our senses. Rather, it is a mere idea that our reason arrives at in its search for the unconditioned condition for the series of causes and effects in our empirical world (Kant *KrV*, AA, A409/B436).<sup>126</sup> Since there is no manifold of empirical elements about freedom to be synthesized and unified under a knowable category of understanding, we can never know anything about the causality of freedom. To quote Kant's lines (cited in the first chapter) again, "It is...absolutely impossible to give anywhere in experience an example of it [i.e., freedom], since among the causes of things as appearances no determination of causality that would be absolutely unconditioned can be found... [Thus, by freedom,] I do not

---

<sup>125</sup> Causality of the moral law refers to how, as the highest practical principle, the moral law causes moral actions by determining the will of rational agents. As I discussed in section 3.2. of the first chapter, the supreme principle of morality causes moral actions by enabling agents to get motivated to perform these actions (see pp. 43-46). Hence, causality of the moral law refers to how the moral law causes moral motivation.

<sup>126</sup> See footnote 61 at p. 62 of the first chapter for an explanation of this point.



cognize at all the object to which such causality is attributed – what the object may be...” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 48). Given Kant’s view that the moral law and freedom reciprocally imply each other, this also means that we cannot know anything about causality of the moral law. Hence, if the incentive of moral feeling enables knowledge of how the moral law causes moral motivation in us, then it violates Kant’s thesis about the limits of human reason. This is, in fact, the mistake that Grenberg (2013) makes in providing her phenomenological reading of Kant’s account of moral motivation in her book *Kant’s Defense of Common Moral Experience: A Phenomenological Account*. To quote her again (as cited at p. 84 in section 1.1.1. of the second chapter), Kant “relies upon [moral] feeling as an enabling epistemic tool to access those aspects of reason which do ground morality, but which are also beyond the usual, theoretical epistemic grasp of finite rational beings” (Grenberg 2013, 68). To be more specific, for her, the role of moral feeling in Kant’s moral motivational structure is to enable agents with epistemic access into categorical necessitation of the moral law on our will. By enabling epistemic access into the unconditionally binding nature of the moral law, moral feeling aids us to know how we get motivated to perform actions in accordance with the moral law. Such a reading of Kant’s notion of moral feeling is problematic because, as mentioned above, taking moral feeling as an enabler of epistemic access into how the moral law causes moral motivation in us means that we can have knowledge about causality of freedom. Having such a knowledge about causality of freedom is a breach of the limits of our reason as a cognitive faculty from Kant’s epistemological standpoint.<sup>127</sup>

In order to not transgress the boundaries of our possible cognition, Kant develops his account of moral feeling in alignment with the notion of freedom. Firstly, as discussed in section 3.1., he conceives of the *a priori* feeling underlying moral motivation as a moral feeling directly produced by the moral law (see pp. 153-159). Since moral feeling is an effect of the moral law, and not a feeling (of pleasure or displeasure) emerging from empirical sources, motivation caused by moral feeling is not any different from the causality of the moral law. In other words, the determination

---

<sup>127</sup> It should also be recalled that, for Grenberg (2013), it is this epistemically enabling nature of moral feeling that justifies the validity of the moral law. As discussed in sections 1.1.1 and 2.2.1 of the second chapter, she argues that, since the nature and causality of the moral law is otherwise unknown, it is the first-personal felt experience of morality, namely, moral feeling, that gives us knowledge about the practicality of the moral law (see pp. 84-85, 108). Hence, as a sole source of knowledge about how the moral law motivates our will towards moral actions, Kant’s notion of moral feeling essentially belongs to his justification of validity of the moral law. If this is so, my objection to Grenberg’s consideration of moral feeling as an epistemically enabling tool obviously challenges her reading of Kant’s argument for proving the practicality of pure reason.

of the will by the moral law is the same as the motivation of the will to perform moral actions caused by moral feeling. This is because, both the moral law and moral feeling are *a priori* products of pure reason, and, more specifically, moral feeling is produced as an *a priori* moral incentive by the moral law to serve as the supreme principle of moral motivation in finite rational agents. One may object to equating the will under the moral law and the will motivated by moral feeling on the grounds that the moral law is an objective determining ground of the will (“objective in every respect” as Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 74) puts it), whereas moral feeling, as an incentive of a specific kind, is a subjective determining ground of the will (05: 72). However, this objection is not valid as Kant himself explicitly states that it is the moral law itself that determines the will subjectively too by effecting a moral feeling in the minds of finite rational agents. As I already quoted at p. 63 in section 3.4.3 of the first chapter, he writes, “[T]he moral law[,]...the objective determining ground must always and quite alone be also the subjectively sufficient determining ground of action if this is not merely to fulfill the *letter* of the law without containing its *spirit*” (05: 72). Thus, the objective determination of the will by the moral law is also its subjective determination via motivation caused by its effect, moral feeling. Hence, motivation of our will by moral feeling is no different from determination of our will by the moral law. Now, as discussed above, for Kant, the will under the causality of the moral law is no different from the will under freedom. Since the will determined by the moral law is also no different from the will motivated by moral feeling, the motivation caused by moral feeling on finite rational will is the same as the will under freedom. As discussed above, due to our epistemic limitations, we can never know anything about the will under freedom. Since free will is also the will motivated by moral feeling, this also means that we cannot know how moral feeling causes motivation in our minds towards the performance of moral actions. As moral feeling is an incentive of the moral law, this stance implies that we cannot know how the moral law causes motivation in us towards the performance of moral actions. As I showed in section 3.2. above, Kant thinks of moral feeling as constituted of a feeling of humiliation towards our sensible nature and a feeling of respect for the moral law (see pp. 159-169). Wouldn’t such a conception of moral feeling count as having knowledge of how moral feeling causes motivation in our minds towards moral actions? It will not be so because, as I showed above, Kant thinks that, as an incentive of the moral law, moral feeling *must* be made up of feelings of humiliation and respect for it *to condition the possibility of moral motivation* in finite rational agents with a forceful sensible nature. If the feelings of humiliation and respect were empirical feelings, then they would

possess empirical qualities that would make the process of moral motivation known to us. But, I showed that these two feelings are not empirical feelings, but are feelings that are cognized *a priori* due to their intellectual origins. Hence, both these feelings, that constitute moral feeling, do not make the process of moral motivation that they condition, known to us. This point – that feeling of humiliation and feeling of respect do not provide us any epistemic access into the process of moral motivation – is more evident from the parallels that Kant draws between the two aspects of moral feeling and the two notions of freedom. In third section of his *Groundwork*, Kant distinguishes between two notions – negative and positive notions – of freedom for the first time. He defines negative notion of freedom as a causal property of the will “independently of alien causes *determining* it” (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 446). He defines positive notion of freedom as “will’s [causal] property of being a law to itself” (04: 447). In the first chapter of his second *Critique*, he again makes this distinction and defines two notions of freedom. He defines negative notion of freedom as “independence from all matter of the [moral] law (namely, from a desired object)” and positive notion of freedom as “determination of choice through the mere form of...[the] universal [moral] law” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 33). Now, in the chapter, “On the incentives of pure practical reason” of his second *Critique*, Kant writes about negative and positive aspects of moral feeling in correspondence with the two notions of freedom. First, his account of feeling of humiliation towards our sensible nature, i.e., negative aspect of moral feeling, corresponds to his negative notion of freedom. That is, just as negative freedom represents independence of our will from influences that are alien to the moral law, feeling of humiliation represents motivational independence of our will from tendencies based on needs belonging to our sensible nature.<sup>128</sup> In introducing “[the negative effect] of the moral law” in our minds (i.e., feeling of humiliation), Kant (05: 72) identifies the “rejection of all [sensible impulses]...and...[an] infringement upon all inclinations insofar as they could be opposed to that [moral] law” with “a free will”. Again, a little further in the chapter, in discussing about the “influence [of the moral law] on the sensibility of the subject”, he notes that “the incentive of the moral disposition must be *free from any sensible condition* [emphasis added]” (05: 75). He then identifies such a freedom from motivation emerging from our sensible condition as the restriction and rejection of sensible tendencies caused by feeling

---

<sup>128</sup> In the previous section 3.2., I discussed that the feeling of humiliation removes and restricts the motivational influences from needs and tendencies of our sensible nature (see pp. 163-164). Here, I refer to it as “motivational independence of our will from tendencies based on needs belonging to our sensible nature” to particularly draw attention to the parallelism it has with negative freedom.

of humiliation in our minds. Finally, and more evidently, he again writes about freedom as that which “restricts all inclinations, and consequently the esteem of the person himself”, and then immediately refers to this restriction as humiliation, the negative effect of the moral law on feeling (05: 78). Similarly, his account of feeling of respect for the moral law, i.e., positive aspect of moral feeling, corresponds to his positive notion of freedom. That is, just as positive freedom is a property of our will to be determined by its own law, feeling of respect is an incentive of our will to be motivated by its own law. In introducing this positive effect of the moral law, Kant notes that the “object of the greatest *respect* and so too the ground of a positive feeling that is...cognized a priori” is indeed “the form of an intellectual causality, that is...freedom” (05: 72). A little later in the chapter, he straightforwardly defines respect for the law as “[t]he consciousness of a *free* submission of the will to the law” (05: 80). Since “submission of the will to the law” is the definition of his positive notion of freedom, it means that feeling of respect is not different from it. He repeats this again when he identifies the elevating feeling of respect for the moral law with a consciousness “of an altogether different interest subjectively produced by the law, which is purely practical and *free*” (05: 81). Thus, quite obviously, Kant draws a distinction between the two aspects of moral feeling – a negative aspect of humiliation towards our sensible nature and a positive aspect of respect for the moral law – in alignment with the two notions – negative and positive – of freedom. On the one hand, negative feeling of humiliation towards our sensible feeling corresponds to negative notion of freedom and on the other hand, positive feeling of respect for the moral law corresponds to positive notion of freedom. This parallelism between moral feeling and freedom means that, for Kant, just as we cannot know anything about causality of freedom, we cannot know anything about motivation from moral feeling.

One main reason that Grenberg (2013) gives in arguing for an epistemically enabling role of moral feeling is its belongingness to sensibility. In fact, as she rightly points out, for Kant, all feelings belong to our sensibility (Grenberg 2013, 61). In a footnote in his *The Metaphysics of Morals*, he writes, “*feeling...is the effect of a representation (that may be either sensible or intellectual) upon a subject and belongs to sensibility, even though the representation itself may belong to the understanding or to reason [emphasis added]*” (Kant *MS*, AA, 06: 212n). In other words, irrespective of whether it is rooted in senses or in reason, all feelings belong to sensibility. Grenberg (2013, 49) reiterates this point: “[S]ome causes of feelings are merely sensible and, thus, knowable... [*C*]ertain sensible feelings *could* have not a sensible, but an intellectual cause. Such

feeling still “belongs” to sensibility; it is a sensible experience”. Such a view implies that moral feeling too belongs to sensibility. Grenberg writes, “[E]ven a feeling that is the effect of intelligible representations does, whatever its causes, “belong...to sensibility” (6:212n/12n). Moral feeling is just this kind of feeling: ...the feeling itself is sensible” (61). Since it is a feeling that belongs to sensibility, moral feeling aids in providing knowledge about how the moral law determines our will to actions. However, unlike how Grenberg views it, I discussed in section 2.3. that belongingness to sensibility indicates to us the characteristics of receptivity and subjectivity of feelings in general (see pp. 147-148). First, sensibility is a capacity to *receive representations* when objects affect us (Kant *KrV*, AA, A19/B33). Since occurrences of feelings arise *as a response to receiving representations* of objects affecting us, they belong to sensibility. Second, as a capacity to be affected by manifold representation, sensibility constitutes the subjective dimension of us (A23/B38). Since feelings represent our subjective states (i.e., the way objects affect us) rather than the state of the objects, they belong to sensibility. Hence, belongingness of any feeling to sensibility refers to its subjectivity and receptivity. Now, belongingness of moral feeling to sensibility suggests that, like any other feeling, it has the qualities of receptivity and subjectivity. First, it emerges only when the moral law affects us – i.e., upon *reception* of the presentation of the fact of reason in our minds.<sup>129</sup> To be more specific, feeling of humiliation arises only in response to the presentation of the moral law that has an unconditional worth in comparison to the tendencies of our sensible nature which have only conditional worth. Feeling of respect too arises only in response to the presentation of unconditionally valuable and authoritative moral law. Second, moral feeling represents the *subjective* mental state of an individual agent and not anything about the moral law itself. Since the needs of our sensible nature varies from individual to individual, feeling of humiliation towards tendencies arising from such needs, for restricting and rejecting their influence, would subjectively vary in its intensity. Arising as a corollary to feeling of humiliation and for taking practical interest to act from duty, feeling of respect for the moral law too would vary in its intensity across individual subjects.<sup>130</sup> Hence, moral feeling belongs to

---

<sup>129</sup> The difference between physical feeling of pleasure and moral feeling is that the former arises in response to receiving representations of objects via physical senses and the latter arises in response to receiving the representation of the moral law of pure reason. While there is a difference in the sort of objects received, the characteristic of receptivity is common to both these types of feelings.

<sup>130</sup> It is due to its varying intensity that Kant mentions about the *strength* of moral feeling at a few places in his works (Kant *V-Mo/Collins*, AA, 27: 361; *MS*, AA, 06: 400)

sensibility by virtue of its occurrence due to reception of the moral law and by virtue of its subjective character. However, to consider its belongingness to sensibility as enabling it with a capacity to make the causality of the moral law known is a mistake. To put it generally, belongingness of any feeling to sensibility does not automatically enable it with a capacity to provide epistemic access into its function as an incentive. Instead, it is the source of origination of a feeling that decides if we can know anything about the way it motivates the will towards actions. As is evident from Kant's quote above, feelings generally emerge as a response to objects affecting us and these objects can have sensible or intellectual origins. Objects having sensible origins are empirical objects whose representations are received via physical senses. Since the manifold of empirical representations received via physical senses are knowable (as intuitions, primarily), feelings which arise as a response to them can aid us to know the causality behind the actions performed. For instance, from the pleasure of eating the mango, I know why I choose to eat the mango I see. Again, from the pain of burning my finger, I know why I choose to not touch the burning candle I see. However, unlike empirical feelings of pleasure or displeasure, moral feeling has an intellectual origin as the moral law is an *a priori* fact of pure reason. Since the moral law is not made up of empirical manifold of representations received via senses, how we get motivated by it is unknowable. In fact, as I have been discussing in this chapter, for Kant, moral feeling *must* be an effect of this moral law for it to motivate us towards moral actions. In other words, feelings of humiliation and respect *must* arise *a priori* as a result of the influence of the moral law of pure reason for the latter to successfully move our will towards moral actions. Hence, despite belonging to sensibility by virtue of being a *feeling*, moral feeling does not enable epistemic access into how exactly the moral law leads us to perform moral actions.

An important detail needs to be added to the position I have taken here. Although Kant stands for a lack of epistemic access into the process of moral motivation, he does write about our *awareness* of the moral law and our *insight* into its moral feeling. In proposing his doctrine of "fact of reason" in the second *Critique*, Kant claims that we become aware of (or conscious of) the moral law, especially its unconditional authority, when reason presents it *a priori* in our minds. He writes, "It is...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" (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 29-30). He categorizes this awareness as a sort of rational cognition,

and is certainly not the same as acquiring knowledge through empirical means. He writes, “[w]e can become aware of pure practical laws [i.e., the moral law] just as we are aware of pure theoretical principles, by attending to the necessity with which reason prescribes them to us and to the setting aside of all empirical conditions to which reason directs us” (05: 30).<sup>131</sup> In a similar vein, as an effect of consciousness of the moral law, Kant also mentions about our awareness of the incentive of moral feeling a few times in his text. For instance, he writes, “this feeling [i.e., moral feeling] is the only one that we can cognize completely a priori and the *necessity of which we can have insight into* [emphasis added]” (05: 73). While this insight into the necessity of moral feeling *may be* a result of its belongingness to sensibility (although we cannot be sure of this),<sup>132</sup> Kant does not obviously take it as a valid source to argue that moral feeling is the *a priori* incentive of morality. This is because, as a feeling belonging to sensibility, moral feeling is subjective and a passing awareness of its necessity cannot guarantee its universality status.<sup>133</sup> Hence, having an insight into the necessity of moral feeling does not make it an *a priori* principle conditioning the possibility of moral motivation. This is why, as I showed in this chapter, Kant discovers this moral feeling as the *a priori* product of the influence of pure practical reason on our sensibility from within his moral metaphysics. The purpose of highlighting Kant’s positive claim about our awareness of the moral law and our insight into moral feeling here is to juxtapose it with his negative thesis that we can never acquire knowledge of how the moral law determines our will or how moral feeling motivates our will. That is, a lack of epistemic access into the *process* of moral motivation caused by the moral law through its moral feeling does not mean that we are unaware of the moral law and its incentive. We become aware of the moral law and moral feeling when we make moral judgements and get motivated to perform moral actions. However, as I showed above,

---

<sup>131</sup> In fact, it is our awareness of its unconditional authority that serves as the primary datum for Kant’s argument to justify the validity of the moral law as the supreme principle of morality. While freedom is the transcendental condition for the possibility of the moral law, we become aware of this transcendental freedom (as the property of our will) only via our awareness of the moral law.

<sup>132</sup> That is, this insight into the necessity of moral feeling *may be* a result of the reception of the representation of the moral law (as a fact of reason) in our individual minds. However, we can never be sure of this because certainty about this fact would mean that we know something about how the moral law causes an effect in our minds. In other words, one may catch a glimpse of moral feeling through an insight into its necessity as the moral law must effect a feeling in our minds to cause moral motivation. But, we can never know if this insight is caused by the moral law in the same way we get to know about the pleasure caused by the taste of a mango.

<sup>133</sup> This is the same argument I used against Grenberg’s phenomenological account of *a priori* moral feeling in section 2.3.1. of the third chapter (see pp. 113-115).

we can never know how the moral law effects moral feeling and motivates our will towards the performance of moral actions.

Thus, Kant's notion of moral feeling, that resolves the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason, is compatible with his critical epistemology because, in serving as the *a priori* moral incentive in human agents, it does not make the process of moral motivation known to us. In other words, by not enabling any epistemic access into how it moves our will to moral actions, moral feeling does not violate the limits of our reason.

To summarize section 3., I showed that, with an aim to fully resolve the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason, Kant attributes certain characteristics to the incentive of *a priori* feeling for it to overcome the motivational skeptical challenges based on formality of the moral law and imperfect nature of our will. First, I argued that Kant conceives of this feeling as a moral feeling that is produced as an *a priori* effect of the moral law in our minds. As a product of the moral law, moral feeling serves as the moral incentive without serving as an antecedent ground of the supreme practical principle underlying our actions. Such a conception of moral feeling retains the formal nature of the moral law. Second, I showed that Kant thinks of moral feeling as made up of a feeling of humiliation towards our sensible nature and a feeling of respect for the moral law. The former restricts and removes the natural force of our sensible tendencies and the latter actively moves us towards actions in accordance with commands of the moral law. Thinking of moral feeling as a combination of these two feelings makes it an ideal incentive for conditioning the possibility of moral motivation in human agents with a naturally forceful sensibility. Third, I showed that Kant conceives of moral feeling along the lines of his notion of freedom. While feeling of humiliation corresponds to negative freedom, feeling of respect corresponds to positive freedom. This way of thinking about the moral incentive is compatible with Kant's view that we can never know how the moral law motivates us towards moral actions. Thus, with these characteristics attributed, moral feeling serves as an effective motivational resource for conditioning the possibility of moral motivation in human agents.

#### **4. Proposing a Revision to Allison-Reath's Standard Transcendental Interpretation of Kant's Account of Moral Motivation**

In section 1.3. of the second chapter, I discussed the standard transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation put forward by Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) (see pp. 93-



100). I showed that, according to this interpretation, Kant's account of moral motivation is a discussion of how the moral law motivates the will of all rational agents from a practical standpoint. Further, this interpretation considers Kant's discussion of moral motivation in rational agents as a part of his argument to justify the validity of the moral law and prove the practicality of pure reason. In section 2.1 of the same chapter, I showed that empirical and phenomenological interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation emerged as critical reactions to Allison-Reath's standard transcendental interpretation (see pp. 101-104). To be more specific, as I pointed out in that section, scholars who propose the two alternative interpretations criticize the standard transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation on two counts: (i) moral feeling is not included within Kant's moral motivational structure and (ii) moral feeling is not a part of Kant's argument to justify the validity of the moral law. As I showed, in putting forward their interpretations, both Allison and Reath consider Kant's notion of respect for the moral law as having intellectual and affective aspects. Intellectual aspect of respect refers to intellectual recognition of the unconditional authority of the moral law and affective aspect of respect refers to feeling of elevation in recognizing the authority of the law. Both Allison and Reath allot an active motivational role only to the former and neglect the latter as a purposeless side-effect of the moral law. It is this dismissal of an active role to *feeling* of respect in Kant's moral motivational structure that scholars (who propose alternative interpretations) target in criticizing the standard transcendental interpretation. Further, since Allison and Reath take Kant's account of moral motivation as justifying the validity of the moral law, moral feeling is obviously excluded from Kant's main argument for the same. This is the second point of criticism laid by scholars against the standard transcendental interpretation of Allison and Reath.

While scholars are quick to point out the two obvious problems in the standard transcendental interpretation, they fail to locate the root of these problems in Allison-Reath's arguments in support of their interpretation. As I discussed in sections 1.3.1. and 1.3.2. of the second chapter, one of the main sources of defense of their interpretations is Kant's 'incorporation thesis' (see pp. 94, 98-99). It is their peculiar use of 'incorporation thesis' that leads to the exclusion of moral feeling, first from their interpretation of Kant's moral motivational structure, and then from their interpretation of Kant's argument to establish the validity of the moral law. To show how, let me first restate the way they use Kant's 'incorporation thesis' to put forward their interpretation of Kant's moral motivational structure. First, they argue, in order to understand how the moral law motivates

human agents towards moral actions, it is necessary to see how needs and tendencies stemming from our sensible nature move us towards actions. This is because, the only way for the moral law to determine the will of finite rational agents is by countervailing the naturally forceful incentives stemming from our sensible nature. They argue that incentives stemming from our sensible nature do not cause our behavior in a deterministic fashion like causes lead to effects in the natural world. To justify this point, they bring up Kant's 'incorporation thesis'. According to this thesis, sensible incentives cannot determine our will unless they are incorporated into maxims of actions. This means, instead of deterministically causing actions towards the satisfaction of their conditions, incentives of our sensible nature are elected into maxims and become justifying reasons for us to freely choose and perform actions. Reath (1989, 290) writes, "According to his [Kant's] "principle of election", an incentive never determines the will directly, but only through a choice made by the individual which can be expressed as the adoption of a maxim". Allison (1990, 06) too writes, "Incorporation Thesis...is the recognition that even heteronomous or nonmorally based actions are free for Kant in an incompatibilist sense since they are conceived...as products of the practical spontaneity of the agent". Since incentives of our sensibility determine our will only by being incorporated into maxims, the moral law can counteract their influence by providing more valuable maxims for us to choose and act on. In other words, since sensible incentives influence our will only as justifying reasons for actions, the moral law can overrule them by serving as a more worthy justifying reason for performing actions. The intellectual aspect of respect comes to aid in enabling us to recognize the unconditional authority of the moral law.

As is quite evident, the role of Kant's 'incorporation thesis' in Allison-Reath's interpretation is to rationalize feeling-based sensible incentives as justifying reasons, so that the rational moral law, along with respect for its unconditional worth, can subvert them and serve as the highest justifying reason for all our actions. That is, since the moral law is a product of reason, there is a need to take our sensible needs as having a rational component to them. Only then, by virtue of a common ground between these two determining grounds, the moral law can counteract the naturally forceful sensible influences and motivate human agents towards moral actions. Reath (1989, 296) makes this line of thought explicit in the following passage:

[I]f inclinations could determine the will solely by their affective force, it is hard to see how they could be offset by...the Moral Law, as Kant clearly wants to hold is possible.

Consider for a moment that counteracting an inclination consisted only of setting up an opposing psychological force which cancels it out. That leaves no way to explain how respect for the law limits the influence of inclinations, since it exerts no such force... There must be enough common ground between motivation by inclination and moral motivation to show how the moral incentive can limit the influence of non-moral incentives.

To draw such a common ground, Allison and Reath use Kant's 'incorporation thesis' to argue that sensible incentives do not function except by means of rational maxims in which they are incorporated. Since maxims which have incorporated sensible incentives in them can be offset by moral maxims stemming from the moral law, there is no need to look for any feeling-based moral incentive to be included in it. All that is needed is an additional awareness of the unconditional worth of the moral law and the role of intellectual aspect of respect is precisely to enable this recognition. Besides this, *feeling* of respect is not required to play any role in the process of moral motivation. Thus, Allison-Reath's use of Kant's 'incorporation thesis' is at the core of their dismissal of moral *feeling* from Kant's moral motivational structure.

Dismissal of a feeling-based incentive from Kant's moral motivational structure (with the aid of Kant's 'incorporation thesis') automatically entails a dismissal of feeling from Kant's argument to establish the validity of the moral law. This is because, both Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) take Kant's discussion of moral motivation as a part of his broader proof of practicality of pure reason. As discussed in section 1.3.1. of the second chapter, for Allison, motivation to act in accordance with the moral law (sans any feeling-based incentive) represents autonomous willing (see pp. 95-96). He then argues that autonomous willing aptly represents Kant's notion of categorical imperative, and hence, sufficiently justifies the validity of the moral law (see Allison 1990, 104, 237). As discussed in section 1.3.2. of the second chapter, Reath considers the process of rational moral motivation (sans any feeling-based incentive) as an immediate result of the presentation of the moral law in our minds (see p. 98). He argues that, since presentation of the moral law as a fact of reason is sufficient to condition the possibility of morality, Kant's discussion of reason-based moral motivation justifies the validity of the moral law as the supreme principle conditioning the possibility of morality (see Reath 1989, 285, 288). Further, as I showed in section 2.1. of the second chapter, both Allison and Reath exclude Kant's account of moral feeling from his doctrine of "fact of reason" in the second *Critique* (see p. 103). They argue that, since the doctrine of "fact of

reason” suffices to establish the moral law as the supreme principle of morality and prove the practicality of pure reason, Kant’s account of moral feeling can be read as a discussion about the effects of the moral law in our minds (see Allison 1990, 237; Reath 1989, 285). Thus, Allison-Reath’s dismissal of *feeling* from Kant’s moral motivational structure automatically leads to dismissal of *feeling* from their interpretation of Kant’s main argument to justify the validity of the moral law. Since it is at the core of the former, Kant’s ‘incorporation thesis’ indirectly paves a way for the latter as well.

Now, I argue that the way Allison and Reath use ‘incorporation thesis’ in putting forward their interpretation of Kant’s moral motivational structure is problematic. More specifically, they use Kant’s ‘incorporation thesis’ inconsistently in a way that creates an imbalance between the two conflicting determining grounds of our will – sensible tendencies and the moral law. Such an imbalance also implies that the moral law is incapable of motivating human agents towards moral actions, especially given that our feeling-based sensible tendencies are naturally forceful in influencing our will. To show this, let me bring up Kant’s passage, popularly referred to as ‘incorporation thesis’, from his *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*:

...freedom of the power of choice has the characteristic, entirely peculiar to it, that it cannot be determined to action through any incentive *except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim* (has made it into a universal rule for himself, according to which he wills to conduct himself) (Kant, *RGV*, AA, 06: 23-24).

Through this passage, Kant aims to offer a way in which “an incentive, whatever it may be, [can] coexist with the absolute spontaneity of the power of choice (of freedom)” to enable the performance of actions (06: 24). In the passage, he claims that this coexistence is possible by incorporation of an incentive into a maxim of action. He does not mention anywhere that the application of this ‘incorporation thesis’ is restricted only to the way incentives of our sensible nature function. By contrast, he mentions that it applies to “an incentive, *whatever it may be* [emphasis added]”. That is, irrespective of whether it is “summoned from the empirical field” or “of rational concepts”,<sup>134</sup> an incentive serves as a motivational resource for actions “except [in] so

---

<sup>134</sup> Kant makes a mention of this distinction between sensible incentives and moral incentives in his *Groundwork* (Kant *GMS*, AA, 04: 411). In one his lectures on metaphysics, he calls incentives as impelling causes for actions and similarly divides them into sensible and intellectual types. He calls the former as stimuli and the latter as a motive. He

far as” it is incorporated into the maxims underlying these actions. This means, according to Kant’s ‘incorporation thesis’, our will is determined to actions only when both free choice of maxims and motivating role of incentives combine and coexist. Now, what causes one-sidedness in Allison-Reath’s use of ‘incorporation thesis’ is that they apply it *only* to the way sensible incentives determine our will to actions. In fact, as mentioned above, they do so only because maxims of morality are already rational (by virtue of their origination from the moral law of reason) and sensible incentives too must be in the form of rational maxims for the former to counteract the latter. While they consider sensible incentives as incorporated into maxims for this reason, Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) do not take moral maxims as having any incentives incorporated into them. This results in a lack of balance between the two conflicting determining grounds of the will – while the one stemming from our sensible nature is a combination of incentives and maxims, the other stemming from our reason is made up of only maxims. This imbalance, created by a lack of incentive in support of the moral law, indicates that moral maxims would be incapable of moving finite rational agents towards moral actions. By virtue of an extra motivational component incorporated into them, maxims of self-love would mostly overrule moral maxims in influencing our will towards performance of actions. Thus, a lack of incentive in support of the moral law (a result of Allison-Reath’s inconsistent use of ‘incorporation thesis’) leads to the question of how the moral law could possibly determine the will of all rational agents towards moral actions.

First, Allison and Reath could respond to this objection by arguing that, for Kant, the moral law is itself an incentive. For instance, immediately after stating the ‘incorporation thesis’, Kant (*RGV*, AA, 06: 24) writes, “[T]he moral law is itself an incentive in the judgement of reason, and whosoever makes it his maxim is *morally* good”. In fact, Reath’s use of Kant’s quote (at *KpV*, AA, 05: 76) where he says “respect for the moral law is not the incentive to morality; instead it is morality itself [(i.e., the moral law itself) that is to be] subjectively considered as an incentive” fits this view that the moral law does not require an incentive other than itself (Reath 1989, 288). If the moral law is itself an incentive, then there is no imbalance between the determining ground stemming from sensible tendencies and the determining ground stemming from pure reason in Allison-Reath’s account. However, such a response arises due to a misunderstanding of what Kant

---

says, “Every act of choice...has an impelling cause...The impelling causes...are either sensitive or intellectual. The sensitive are stimuli...The intellectual are motives or motive grounds”. (Kant *V-Met-L1/Pölitz*, AA, 28: 254).

means when he mentions that the moral law is itself an incentive. As discussed in sections 3.2. and 3.4. of the first chapter, as the supreme principle of morality, the moral law of pure reason must solely serve as the highest motivating ground of the performance of moral actions in all human agents without exceptions (see pp. 45-46, 50-51). As I mentioned in section 1 of this chapter, for Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 71), if the moral law motivates agents to perform actions by means of any feeling, then the resulting actions will lack moral worth (see p. 128). Now, in the light of this requirement of the moral law to solely serve as the highest incentive underlying the performance of our moral actions, Kant encounters motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. That is, as discussed in sections 3.4.1, 3.4.2. and 3.4.3. of the first chapter, Kant expresses skeptical concerns about how the moral law could possibly serve as the source of the incentive of our moral actions (i) if the moral law is formal and has no material incentives, (ii) if we possess a will that is naturally vulnerable to be motivated by sensible incentives and (iii) if we can never know how the moral law functions as an incentive (see pp. 52-55, 55-60, 60-66). As a response to this problem, I showed in section 3.1. of this chapter that Kant develops the notion of moral feeling and argues that this feeling-based incentive is a direct product of the moral law (see p. 158). That is, the moral law serves as the highest motivating ground of all of our moral actions by effecting a moral feeling *a priori* in our minds. Only by effecting this moral feeling can the moral law be both the objective determining ground and the subjective determining ground of our will. Only by effecting a feeling that is “inseparably connected” with it (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 80), the moral law can condition the possibility of moral motivation in all human agents. Without moral feeling, it is doubtful how the moral law could possibly serve as the incentive (i.e., the subjective determining ground of our will) of moral actions in human agents all by itself.<sup>135</sup> Hence, Kant’s reference to the moral law itself as an incentive is inclusive of its inseparably connected moral feeling. This is also evident from the few lines before Reath’s quote of Kant mentioned above. Before claiming that “it is morality itself [(i.e., the moral law itself) that is to be] subjectively considered as an incentive”, Kant (*KpV*, AA, 05: 75) writes, “[T]he moral law, since it is a formal determining ground of action through practical pure reason...is also a subjective determining ground - that is, an incentive - to this action *inasmuch as it has influence on the sensibility of the subject and effects a feeling conducive to the*

---

<sup>135</sup> Given that, by definition, an incentive is “understood [as] the subjective determining ground of the will” (Kant *KpV*, AA, 05: 72) as opposed to the objective moral law, it will be oxymoronic to refer to the moral law as the incentive all by itself.

*influence of the law upon the will* [emphasis added]”. That is, the moral law is an incentive only in so far as it effects a moral feeling in our minds for conditioning the possibility of moral motivation. This means, it would be a mistake to consider the moral law as an incentive all by itself. Hence, Allison-Reath’s possible response to the objection I raised above lacks an adequate understanding of what Kant means when he says that the moral law is itself an incentive of morality. Second, Allison and Reath could also respond to this objection by pointing at their consideration of intellectual aspect of respect as the missing moral incentive in their interpretation. However, that would still not bring in the balance among the two conflicting determining grounds of will because the intellectual aspect of respect is not a *feeling* that can oppose the feeling-based incentives of our sensible nature. That is, according to their interpretation, on one side of the conflict between the determining grounds is a combination of sensible incentives and their corresponding maxims, and on the other side is a combination of moral maxims and intellectual aspect of respect for the moral law. Since it is only an intellectual acknowledgement of the unconditional worth of the moral law, intellectual aspect of respect for the moral law is not an ideal candidate to resist and oppose affective forces of our sensibility motivating us to perform actions for attaining pleasure and happiness. This is especially true because, for Kant, feeling-based incentives of our sensible nature are naturally forceful in motivating us to choose maxims of actions they are incorporated into. Against these forceful affective forces of our sensible nature, the moral law, along with an intellectual recognition of its unconditional worth, would be incapable of moving our will towards moral actions. Such a doubt about the motivational efficacy of the moral law, emerging as a result of partial application of ‘incorporation thesis’ only to sensible incentives and not to moral maxims, poses a threat to Kant’s main thesis that the moral law of pure reason is the correct supreme principle of morality. Hence, Allison-Reath’s use of ‘incorporation thesis’ is inconsistent and this inconsistency results in gross interpretative issues that Allison and Reath would not have intended.

The only way to bring consistency to Allison-Reath’s application of ‘incorporation thesis’ to Kant’s moral motivational structure is by adding the missing element of feeling-based incentive into moral maxims. For moral maxims to successfully oppose the affective forces of our sensible nature, the incentive incorporated into moral maxims must be a feeling. In order to bring in a feeling-based incentive into Kant’s moral motivational structure, I begin by looking for the basis of such a need in Kant’s moral philosophy. As I showed in the second chapter, Kant’s main aim

in his moral philosophy is to uncover a founding principle underlying our moral judgements and moral actions. In considering pure reason as a possible source of this supreme principle of morality, he encountered the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. That is, in his attempt to establish the moral law of pure reason as the supreme principle of morality, he found it difficult to prove that this moral law has the capacity to motivate all the rational agents towards moral actions. First, given that the *a priori* moral law is formal, it is difficult to see how it can move all the rational agents towards the performance of moral actions. Second, it is more difficult to see how the formal moral law can motivate finite rational agents (such as human beings) with a forcefully determining sensible nature. Finally, our lack of epistemic access into how the moral law can move us towards moral actions adds to these two skeptical challenges and makes motivational skepticism about pure practical reason as an unavoidable problem in Kant's moral theory. It is this problem, which Kant expresses at various points in his works, that is at the basis of a need for a feeling-based incentive into Kant's moral motivational structure. Now, as I showed in this chapter, since this problem is connected to Kant's search for the fundamental principle of morality, motivational skepticism about pure practical reason is a problem from within his metaphysics of morals. This means, Kant must engage in a critical investigation into the practical use of pure reason to resolve this problem of how pure reason can serve as the source of moral motivation. In this critical investigation, Kant first arrives at a feeling-based incentive as the correct *a priori* candidate for conditioning the possibility of moral motivation in rational agents with sensibility. Then, since this feeling-based incentive must appropriately resolve the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason, he attributes certain characteristics to it and considers it as having a nature that would enable it to resolve the problem. First, this feeling-based incentive must be a moral feeling produced by the moral law. Only then can the moral law retain its formal nature, and yet, have a feeling-based incentive for it to cause moral motivation in finite rational agents. Second, this moral feeling must be constituted of a feeling of humiliation towards our sensible nature and a feeling of respect for the moral law. Only then can the moral law successfully resist and remove the needs and tendencies of sensible nature and positively motivate all human agents towards moral actions. Third, motivation from moral feeling must be akin to causality of freedom. Only then can the process of determination of our will by the moral law remain unknown to us. Thus, for Kant, moral feeling, an effect of the moral law made up of feelings of humiliation and respect, successfully motivates human agents towards moral actions, without



making the process of moral motivation known to us. In short, moral feeling, with its peculiar characteristics, is the incentive of morality. This feeling-based incentive can now be added as an essential part of moral motivational structure for a balanced application of ‘incorporation thesis’ to Kant’s account of moral motivation. That is, on the one hand, application of ‘incorporation thesis’ to the process of determination of our will by sensible tendencies means that feeling-based sensible incentives are incorporated into rational maxims, and this combined unity of sensible-incentive|maxim-of-self-love serves as the motivating|determining ground of our will. On the other hand, application of ‘incorporation thesis’ to the process of determination of our will by the moral law means that moral feeling is incorporated into moral maxims, and this combined unity of moral-incentive|moral-maxim serves as the motivating|determining ground of our will. The common ground between the two conflicting determining grounds of our will – the one stemming from our sensible nature and the other stemming from our rationality – is the combined unity of incentive|maxim (or incentive|incorporated maxims). While the maxim-component of this unity represents the justifying reason, incentive-component of it represents the motivational resource. Since both these components are present on each of these determining grounds of our will, the conflict between them is balanced and impartial. In addition to establishing the needed balance between these two conflicting determining grounds, the moral law can now easily be thought of as having an upper hand in motivating our will towards moral actions. This is because, as an incentive of the moral law, moral feeling, made of feeling of humiliation and feeling of respect, can sufficiently motivate human agents against affective forces of our sensibility and towards moral actions.<sup>136</sup> Feeling of humiliation towards our sensibility first restricts and removes the affective forces based on needs and tendencies of our sensible nature. Such a resistance organically conditions a furtherance of motivation towards performing moral actions in the form of a feeling of respect for the moral law. Thus, made up of these two feelings, moral feeling is capable of successfully countering incentives emerging from our sensible nature in the light of conflict between the two sets of determining grounds of the will.

---

<sup>136</sup> By taking moral feeling as the feeling-based incentive made up of humiliation and respect, I do not subscribe to Allison-Reath’s division of respect for the moral law into intellectual and affective aspects. Such a division of moral incentive is not necessary because a consistent application of ‘incorporation thesis’ to the process of moral motivation requires, not an exclusion of feeling, but an inclusion of it into moral motivational structure.

One problem that, both Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) think, would emerge in allowing a feeling-based incentive into Kant's moral motivational structure is that the resultant account of moral motivation will be a battle of forces model of moral motivation (see Allison 1990, 126; Reath 1989, 296). According to this view of theirs, taking the process of moral motivation as a result of a battle between an affective force of our rationality and affective forces of our sensibility would preclude our freedom of choice in our course of actions. However, this problem is obviously avoided in my interpretation with a consistent application of 'incorporation thesis' on Kant's moral motivational structure. That is, in this revised version, there is no battle between moral feeling (i.e., incentive of morality) and sensible incentives independently of rational maxims into which they are incorporated. In other words, since the conflict is actually between two sets of incentive|maxim unity (and not between two sets of feeling-based incentives), the process of moral motivation is not a causal battle of affective forces, but a motivational conflict between two feeling-based justifying reasons for actions. First, sensible incentives naturally move our will in the direction of *freely* choosing maxims for satisfying the needs of our sensible nature. Then, in enabling resistance towards these sensible incentives, moral feeling (in the form of humiliation) moves our will away from *freely* adopting maxims of self-love for performing actions. Finally, as a feeling without material ends (due to its intellectual origination from the moral law), moral feeling (in the form of respect) moves our will towards *freely* adopting moral maxims for performing moral actions. Thus, the element of free choice is not precluded from the process of moral motivation even if a feeling-based incentive is an essential part of it. Now, another question that Allison and Reath may pose regarding this revised interpretation is: if freedom is involved in both moral motivation and non-moral motivation, then what makes these two processes different? One can also take this question as a question about the difference between Kant's notions of heteronomy and autonomy. In my revised interpretation: on the one hand, the will determined by a combination of motivation from sensible incentives and a free choice of maxims of self-love is the heteronomous will; on the other hand, the will determined by a combination of motivation from moral feeling and a free choice of moral maxims is the autonomous will. Now, the question is: if both heteronomy and autonomy involve free choice of maxims, then what makes them different? Such a question is easily answerable in Allison-Reath's interpretation because, in their standard interpretation, (i) the process of non-moral motivation involves a free choice of maxims as motivated by feeling-based incentives and (ii) the process of moral motivation involves a free

choice of maxims in the form of independence from motivation based on feeling-based incentives. This is why, Allison (1990, 97) specifically calls autonomy as “motivational independence” as opposed to motivationally dependent heteronomy. However, in my interpretation, a combination of maxims and feeling-based incentives is involved in both non-moral and moral motivation, and hence, freedom of choice is equivalent to motivation from feeling-based incentives in both heteronomy and autonomy. Hence, this question of how freedom can be different in these two kinds of motivation poses a serious challenge. I evoke the peculiar nature of moral feeling that distinguishes it from sensible incentives to resolve this challenge. As I discussed earlier, unlike physical feelings of pleasure and displeasure whose origination precedes the formation of the highest practical principle of self-love, moral feeling succeeds the moral law as an effect of it (see pp. 157-159). In other words, physical feelings emerge empirically as a result of representations from objects, while moral feeling emerges *a priori* as a result of presentation of the moral law. During the process of non-moral motivation, physical feelings are incorporated into maxims as incentives and freedom is involved in the choice of these maxims for performing actions. Despite this freedom of choice, by virtue of their empirical origins, these feeling-based incentives enable us with an epistemic access into this process of motivation. For example, when I overeat mangoes, I know that it is the pleasure of eating a mango that motivated me to choose the maxim of satisfying my craving for mangoes without any restraint. However, this is not the case with motivation from moral feeling. It is true that during the process of moral motivation freedom is involved in the choice of moral maxims for performing moral actions. But, by virtue of its *a priori* origination from the moral law, moral feeling cannot enable us to know anything about the process of moral motivation. As I discussed earlier, not only is determination of the will by the moral law equivalent to a free will, but Kant also discusses feeling of humiliation and feeling of respect (i.e., two constituents of moral feeling) along the lines of negative freedom and positive freedom respectively (see pp. 173-176). Since motivation from moral feeling corresponds to the causality of freedom, it is impossible for us to know anything about the process of moral motivation. For instance, when I refuse to lie at a gunpoint, I cannot know how moral feeling motivated me to choose to act on the maxim of not lying even in desperate circumstances. Thus, epistemic access (or a lack thereof) into the process of motivation towards free choice of maxims is the basis of the difference between non-moral motivation and moral motivation. While feeling-based sensible incentives aid us to know how we are motivated to freely choose maxims of self-love, feeling-

based moral incentive (moral feeling) does not enable us to know how we are motivated to freely choose moral maxims. Hence, although both heteronomy and autonomy involve freedom of choice, how the former becomes the property of our will is knowable and how the latter becomes the property of our will is unknowable. That is, in my interpretation, both heteronomous and autonomous will are motivationally dependent on feeling-based incentives for choosing maxims of actions. Yet, while we can know how the will is motivated by sensible incentives (i.e., heteronomous will), we cannot know how the will is motivated by moral feeling (i.e., autonomous will).

Thus, with a consistent use of ‘incorporation thesis’, I successfully restored the element of feeling (i.e., the incentive of moral feeling) into Kant’s moral motivational structure without any serious issues. Hence, I take Kant’s account of moral motivation as a discussion about how human agents are motivated by moral feeling towards moral actions from a practical point of view. Further, since the roots of identifying moral feeling as the moral incentive lie in the philosophical problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason, Kant’s discussion on how human agents get motivated by moral feeling is a part and parcel of Kant’s main argument for justifying the validity of the moral law. This means, not only does moral feeling motivate human agents from a practical standpoint, but it also conditions the possibility of moral motivation in all human agents without exceptions. Since my interpretation, unlike the standard transcendental interpretation of Allison (1990) and Reath (1989), includes moral feeling both within Kant’s moral motivational structure and within Kant’s proof of practicality of pure reason, it is a *revised* transcendental interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation.

## **5. Conclusion**

The purpose of this final chapter of my thesis is to study how Kant resolves the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. In the previous chapter, I discussed the three kinds of interpretations of Kant’s account of moral motivation: phenomenological, empirical and transcendental interpretations. With an objective of proposing a revision to the standard transcendental interpretation, I read Kant’s discussion of moral motivation (especially, his account of moral feeling) as a solution to the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason that occurs in his texts. In section 1, I situated the problem of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason within Kant’s metaphysics of morals and showed that Kant’s notion of moral

feeling resolves it. I argued that this problem belongs to metaphysics of morals because it occurs as a part of proving the moral law of pure reason as the supreme principle of morality. Belongingness of motivational skepticism about pure practical reason to Kant's moral metaphysics implies that a critical investigation into pure practical reason is required to resolve it. In his critical investigation into pure practical reason, Kant identifies moral feeling, an effect of the moral law, as the solution to this problem. In section 2, my aim was to show how Kant uncovers a *feeling* as the correct candidate for serving as the *a priori* principle underlying the possibility of moral motivation in human agents. I argued that due to the unity of pure reason and the harmony amongst its *a priori* principles, there must be an analogy between the specific principles of pure theoretical reason and pure practical reason. Since feeling shares an analogical connection with *a priori* forms of sensible intuition, one of its kinds must be the appropriate candidate for serving as the *a priori* principle underlying moral motivation in finite rational beings. I then argued in section 3 that, once Kant identifies a feeling as the *a priori* candidate for serving as the moral incentive, he attributes a peculiar nature to it in a way that it successfully resolves the specific skeptical challenges that cause motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. I showed that Kant conceives of moral feeling as an effect of the moral law and as constituting of feelings of humiliation and respect to restore formality of the moral law and to regard moral feeling as having the capacity to move our imperfect will. In addition, Kant conceives of motivation from moral feeling in alignment with his conception of the will under freedom in order to limit our epistemic access into the process of moral motivation. Finally, in section 4, I showed how my interpretation is a revision to Allison-Reath's standard transcendental interpretation in a way that moral feeling is included both in Kant's moral motivational structure and in Kant's main argument to justify the validity of the moral law. According to my revised transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation, moral feeling (i) motivates human agents towards the performance of moral actions from a practical standpoint, and (ii) conditions the possibility of moral motivation in all human agents without exceptions.

## CONCLUSION

The main objective of my thesis was to study Kant's theory of moral motivation. Over the course of three chapters, I examined (i) how the problem of moral motivation occurs in Kant's moral theory and (ii) how Kant resolves it using his account of moral motivation. First, I argued that the problem of moral motivation in Kant is a skeptical problem about the motivational efficacy of practical reason (chapter 1). I showed that this problem occurs throughout Kant's writings as an integral part of his philosophical project of finding the correct supreme principle of morality. In his works in the pre-Critical era of his philosophical development, Kant expresses this problem in the form of doubts about how reason can be the source of moral motivation in human agents. He asks: if the moral rules of reason are formal and if human agents often fail to act rationally, how do we vindicate that reason is the source of the fundamental principle underlying our performance of moral actions? (section 2, chapter 1). I then showed that, in the Critical era too, he poses a similar question for doubting the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason. That is: how can pure reason be the source of moral motivation in human agents, if the moral law is formal, if human agents have an imperfect will and if we can never know anything about the motivation caused by the moral law? (section 3, chapter 1). Thus, skeptical worries about the motivational capacity of practical reason are integrally connected to his main project of identifying and establishing reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality in both pre-Critical and Critical periods.

Second, I argued that Kant's notion of the incentive of moral feeling appropriately resolves this skepticism about the possibility of moral motivation in human agents (chapter 3). As I showed, in order to resolve the motivational problem from within his moral metaphysics, Kant undertakes a critical investigation into the possible influence of pure practical reason on the sensibility of finite rational agents (section 1, chapter 3). In the process, he identifies a *feeling* as that which can appropriately be an *a priori* principle underlying moral motivation within the larger system of pure reason (section 2, chapter 3). I specifically showed that, since feeling is analogous to *a priori* forms of sensible intuition, it becomes the appropriate *a priori* candidate in the aesthetic section of the analytic of pure practical reason, and thereby, maintains the broader harmony amongst the principles of pure reason. Kant attributes specific features to this feeling-based incentive in a way that the problem of moral motivation he encountered is fully resolved (section 3, chapter 3). He first considers this feeling-based incentive as an effect of the moral law – this makes the moral law

as a source of moral motivation without requiring to lose its formality. He then develops this notion of moral feeling as constituted by a feeling of humiliation and a feeling of respect – this makes it capable of successfully combating the forceful tendencies of our sensibility to act against morality. He also treats motivation from moral feeling along similar lines as his notion of free will – this retains Kant’s thesis that we cannot know anything about the way the moral law causes moral actions. Thus, Kant’s account of moral feeling, the *a priori* incentive of morality, resolves his skepticism about the motivational efficacy of pure practical reason.

I also situated my understanding of Kant’s theory of moral motivation within the relevant scholarly literature produced in the recent years. First, my take on the nature and significance of the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant’s moral theory is different from Korsgaard’s (1996) views on it. To show this, I first discussed Korsgaard’s arguments for dismissing the independent philosophical validity of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant’s moral theory (section 1, chapter 1). As I showed, she argues that skeptical concerns about the motivational efficacy of practical reason arises in Kant only because of a misunderstanding about what is required of the categorical imperative in the process of moral motivation. For her, Kant’s problem of moral motivation is therefore a psychological problem of how human agents can possibly fall in line with rational commands of the moral law. Against this view, I argued that motivational skepticism about practical reason occurs within Kant’s project of establishing pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality. Hence, for the pure reason to be fully practical and for its categorical imperative to be unconditionally binding, it must be shown that pure reason has an incentive to move finite rational agents (such as human agents) towards moral actions (section 4, chapter 1).

Second, my reading of Kant’s account of moral motivation is a revised version of the standard transcendental interpretation of it in the secondary literature. To show this, I first discussed the three strands of interpretations of Kant’s account of moral motivation in the secondary literature: transcendental, empirical and phenomenological interpretations (chapter 2). I showed that, historically, empirical and phenomenological interpretations emerged as critical reactions to the standard transcendental interpretations proposed by Allison (1990) and Reath (1989). Scholars who propose these alternative interpretations criticize Allison-Reath’s failure to include the notion of moral feeling within both Kant’s moral motivational structure and Kant’s justification of the

validity of the moral law. I also showed that these alternative interpretations which aim to fix the gaps in the transcendental interpretation succumb to problems of their own. In response to the scholarly debates and disagreements, I provided a revised version of Allison-Reath's standard transcendental interpretation by reading Kant's account of moral feeling as the solution to his problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason (chapter 3). I particularly pointed out that it is Allison-Reath's one-sided use of Kant's 'incorporation thesis' that leads to their failure in including moral feeling into their reading of Kant's moral motivational structure (section 4, chapter 3). Fixing this problem, my revised transcendental interpretation, not only includes moral feeling into Kant's moral motivational structure, but also includes it as an essential component of Kant's argument to justify the validity of the moral law. Hence, in my reading of Kant, moral feeling not only motivates human agents to perform moral actions in the practical realm, but also conditions the possibility of moral motivation *a priori*.

Overall, I hope I have succeeded in doing what I set out to do – study Kant's theory of moral motivation and position my understanding of it appropriately within the growing body of relevant literature on the issue. I hope I have successfully reinstated the philosophical significance of the problem of motivational skepticism about practical reason in Kant's moral theory against a scholarly trend that reduces it to psychology. I hope to have shown that my reading of Kant's notion of moral feeling as a solution to this problem of moral motivation is consistent with Kant's texts and is also a better alternative to existing interpretations in the secondary literature.

I acknowledge that this thesis is not without limitations. I look at the limitations of my current research as opening up new directions for future research. One shortcoming of the thesis is my failure to situate my reading of Kant's account of moral motivation within the ongoing scholarly debates between intellectualists/affectivists and internalists/externalists. As I briefly discussed in footnote 20 at pp. 24-25 of the first chapter, the debate between intellectualists and affectivists is regarding the role of moral feeling of respect in the process of moral motivation in human agents. On the one hand, intellectualists cite some Kant's passages to argue that feeling of respect does not play any positive role in motivating human agents to perform moral actions (Allison 1990; MacBeath 1973; Reath 1989; Sytsma 1993; Timmons 1985; Wolff 1974). On the other hand, affectivists cite some other passages from Kant's texts to argue that feeling of respect *does* play a positive role in motivating human agents to perform moral actions (Broadie and Pybus 1975;



Herrera 2000; McCarty 1993; Nauckhoff 2003; Ware 2014). I also briefly introduced the other ongoing debate between internalists and externalists within Kant scholarship in footnote 18 at p. 22 of the first chapter. This debate is about the nature of the relationship between moral incentive and the moral law in Kant's account of moral motivation. Internalists claim that moral motivation is solely caused by the moral law itself and no other incentive external to the moral law is involved in the process of moral motivation in Kant (Allison 1990: 238; Guyer 2000: 136). Externalists argue that, for Kant, an external incentive like moral feeling is necessary for the moral law to move human agents towards moral actions (Ameriks 2006: 89-107; Frankena 1976; Sargentis 2012). While I introduced both these debates in footnotes, I did not eventually situate my interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation amidst them. Working on these two sets of debates certainly requires a comprehensive account of these different camps of interpretations and then a careful placement of one's own interpretation amongst them. The main reason why I did not deal with these two sets of debates in the main body of this thesis is that my focus here was on concerns that are more fundamental than the subject matter of these two debates. While the subject matter of these two debates revolves around the nature and role of moral incentive in Kant's moral motivational structure, my main focus was to explore the nature of the need for a moral incentive within Kant's moral motivational structure. Since I was primarily concerned with the problem that Kant's account of moral feeling serves as the solution to, debates on whether or not moral feeling plays a motivational role (intellectualism/affectivism) and whether moral feeling is internal or external to the moral law (internalism/externalism) becomes secondary to this thesis.

Despite this, taking a position on the sort of a need for a moral incentive (via understanding Kant's problem of moral motivation) is a precursor to exploring the nature and role of the moral incentive. That is, my stance on the nature of the problem of moral motivation and how moral feeling serves as a solution to it sets the stage for me to take a stance on the subject-matter of these debates. From the stance I have taken in the third chapter, it appears that my interpretation would be an affectivist-internalist view of Kant's account of moral motivation. Firstly, I argued that, for Kant, it is not just feeling of respect, but a moral feeling consisting of both feeling of humiliation and feeling of respect that plays a positive role in moral motivation in human agents (see pp. 162-166). This inclusion of a feeling into Kant's moral motivational structure makes my interpretation an affectivist interpretation. Further, what would make my affectivist stance unique is that I arrived at it by providing a transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation. In

discussing this debate, Frierson (2014, 120) pairs anti-empiricist and intellectualist readings and empiricist and affectivist readings of Kant's account of moral motivation. That is, a standard transcendental interpretation, that takes Kant's account of moral motivation as a proof of how the moral law solely motivates all the rational agents, is compatible with the intellectualist exclusion of feeling from Kant's moral motivational structure. Empirical and phenomenological interpretations, that takes Kant's account of moral motivation as describing or explaining how human agents are motivated by the moral law, go hand in hand with the affectivist inclusion of feeling into Kant's moral motivational structure. Against such a connection between positions, I argued for an affectivist inclusion of moral feeling into Kant's moral motivational structure after reading Kant's account of moral motivation as a proof of how the moral law motivates all finite rational agents towards moral actions (i.e., a revised transcendental reading). Situating my affectivist reading of Kant's account of moral motivation in Kant's scholarship will therefore add more support to the affectivism side of the debate between intellectualism and affectivism. Secondly, I argued that, for Kant, the moral law cannot solely take the role of an incentive, but must effect a moral feeling in our minds for it to move us towards moral actions. This means, despite relying on something *external* to the moral law, I read moral feeling as that which is produced by the moral law itself for moral motivation to occur in human agents. This would make my reading a unique version of internalist reading of Kant's account of moral motivation.

Another evident limitation of my thesis is a lack of an adequate discussion about the development of the notion of moral feeling in Kant's moral theory. In the first chapter of my thesis, I discussed how Kant's problem of moral motivation develops from being motivational skepticism about practical reason during the pre-Critical period to a more nuanced motivational skepticism about *pure* practical reason during the Critical period. During the pre-Critical period, Kant was confused about whether it is feeling or reason that serves as the source of the supreme principle of morality. It was in considering reason as the possible source of the fundamental principle of morality that he encountered doubts about the motivational efficacy of practical reason. During the Critical period, Kant's main project changed from a search for the right source of the supreme principle of morality to establishing pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality. I showed in sections 3.2. and 3.3. of the first chapter that this shift is due to Kant's attribution of *a priori* status to the practicality of the supreme principle of morality and to his critical assessment of moral theories that derived the supreme principle of morality from *a posteriori* sources (see pp. 42-43,

48-50). In short, since Kant was aware that only pure reason, and not any other source, is capable of giving a supreme principle of morality that is practical *a priori*, his main project shifted from searching for the correct source of the supreme principle of morality to proving pure reason as the correct source of the supreme principle of morality. It is this shift that explains the development of the problem of moral motivation from being motivational skepticism about practical reason to motivational skepticism about pure practical reason. Although I discussed how Kant's notion of moral feeling resolves the latter in the third chapter, a discussion of how this notion evolves parallelly with the problem of moral motivation in Kant would have been a better way of going about studying it. Given that moral feeling is the correct moral incentive, overlooking the question of how this notion developed to become the right solution to Kant's problem of moral motivation makes this thesis unfinished.

Answering this question fully will involve: (i) an examination into the way the notion of moral feeling develops in Kant's texts over the course of his philosophical career and (ii) an inquiry into the way Kant's predecessors and contemporaries influenced the development of the notion of moral feeling in Kant's moral theory. During the pre-Critical era, Kant took moral feeling to be one of the two main candidates to serve as the solution to the question about the source of the supreme principle of morality. For this moral feeling to be the source of the supreme principle of morality, it should serve as the source of the fundamental principle underlying our moral appraisal and moral motivation. Given this, one of the questions that would need addressing in detail is the way he considered this possibility in his early works. As I mentioned in footnote 25 at pp. 32 of the first chapter, Kant did have doubts about how a moral feeling with universal validity could possibly move individual human agents to perform moral actions (Kant *GSE*, AA, 02: 216). It will be interesting to see how Kant's critical notion of moral feeling responds to this motivational skepticism about moral feeling that occurs in his works in the pre-Critical era. Furthermore, as I mentioned in section 2.2. of the first chapter, the influence of moral sentimentalists in Kant's consideration of moral feeling as foundational to morality cannot be understated (see p. 31). The translated works of Hutcheson, Hume, Shaftesbury and Smith were evidently available to Kant (Frazer 2010, 201). The extent to which Kant was influenced by these thinkers has been a subject matter of debate in the secondary literature. Some scholars consider their influence to be so strong that they take Kant as belonging to moral sentimentalist camp during his formative years in the pre-Critical period (see Macbeath 1973, 283; Frazer 2010, 112). Others claim that Kant

acknowledged the contribution of these sentimental theories, and yet maintained his rationalist stance mostly (see Schilpp 1938, 38-39). Some others argue that Kant engaged with moral sentimentalists only to bring their problems to light and resolve them (see Kuehn 2001, 183-184). To take an appropriate position on the influence of moral sentimentalism on Kant's ethics, there is a need to explore full-fledged studies on the development of Kant's moral theory. This will certainly include the two most important studies done on this topic in the current literature: Paul Arthur Schilpp's book *Kant's Pre-Critical Ethics* published in 1938 and Keith Ward's book *The Development of Kant's View of Ethics* published in 1972. More recently, Walschots' doctoral dissertation titled "Moral Sense Theory and the Development of Kant's Ethics" written in 2015 too closely examines how moral sentimentalism influenced the development of Kant's moral theory. The extent of the influence of moral sentimentalist positions in the development of Kant's account of moral feeling is crucial to see the shift in his view from taking moral feeling as the possible candidate for the supreme principle of morality to taking it as the source of moral motivation in human agents in the Critical period.

I have mentioned only a few possible directions of research that this thesis can lead one to. There are certainly many more ways to take this project forward.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allison, Henry E. *Kant's Theory of Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Ameriks, Karl. "Kant, Hume, and the Problem of Moral Motivation." Chap. 4 in *Kant and the Historical Turn: Philosophy as Critical Interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006.
- . "Kant's Deduction of Freedom and Morality." Chap. 6 in *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Beck, Lewis White. *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960.
- Brink, David O. *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Broadie, Alexander and Elizabeth M. Pybus. "Kant's Concept of 'Respect'." *Kant-Studien* 66, no. 1-4 (1975): 58-64.
- Frankena, W. K. "Obligation and Motivation in Recent Moral Philosophy (1958)." In *Perspectives on Morality: Essays by William K. Frankena*, edited by K. E. Goodpaster, 49-73. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976.
- Frazer, Michael L. "Kant's Abandonment of Sentimentalism." Chap 5. in *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Frierson, Patrick. "Herder: Religion and Moral Motivation." In *Kant's Lectures on Ethics: A Critical Guide*, edited by Lara Denis and Oliver Sensen, 34-50. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- . "Kantian Feeling: Empirical Psychology, Transcendental Critique, and Phenomenology." *Con-Textos Kantianos: International Journal of Philosophy* no. 3 (2016a): 353-371.
- . "Towards a Transcendental Critique of Feeling (A Response to Grenberg)." *Con-Textos Kantianos: International Journal of Philosophy* no. 3 (2016b): 381-390.
- . *Kant's Empirical Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Garve, Christian. *Uebersicht der vornehmsten Principien der Sittenlehre, vndem Zeitalter des Aristoteles an bis auf unsre Zeiten*. Breslau: ben Wilhelm Gottlieb Korn, 1798.
- Gregor, Mary. Introduction to *On the Common Saying: That May be Correct in Theory, but It is of No Use in Practice*, by Immanuel Kant in *Practical Philosophy*. Translated and Edited by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

- Grenberg, Jeanine. "Response to Frierson's "Kantian Feeling: Empirical Psychology, Transcendental Critique and Phenomenology." *Con-Textos Kantianos: International Journal of Philosophy* no. 3 (2016): 372-380.
- . *Kant's Defense of Common Experience: A Phenomenological Account*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Guyer, Paul. *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Herrera, Larry. "Kant on the Moral *Triebfeder*." *Kant-Studien* 91, no. 4 (2000): 395-410.
- Hutcheson, Francis. *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London, 1756.
- Kahn, Samuel. "Kant and the Duty to Promote One's Own Happiness." *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* no. 6 (2018): 1-12.
- Kant, Immanuel. "First Introduction to the Critique of the Power of Judgment." In *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Translated and Edited by Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- . *Anthropology from A Pragmatic Point of View*, in *Anthropology, History, and Education*. Translated and Edited by Günter Zöllner and Robert Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy*, in *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770*. Translated and Edited by David Walford. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . *Correspondence*. Translated and Edited by Arnulf Zweig. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- . *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*. Translated and Edited by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, in *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*. Translated and Edited by Henry Allison and Peter Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- . *Lectures on Logic*. Translated and Edited by J. Michael Young. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated and Edited by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- . *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Translated and Edited by Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

- . *Gesammelte Schriften*, Akademie Ausgabe. Edited by Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences. 29 Vols. Berlin: Georg Reimer/de Gruyter, 1900-.
- . *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*. Translated and Edited by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality*, in *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770*. Translated and Edited by David Walford. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- . *Lectures on Anthropology*. Translated and Edited by Allen Wood and Robert Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- . *Lectures on Ethics*. Translated and Edited by Peter Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- . *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Translated and Edited by Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- . *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*. Translated and Edited by Allen Wood and George Di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . *Notes and Fragments*. Translated and Edited by Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- . *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, in *Anthropology, History, and Education*. Translated and Edited by Günter Zöllner and Robert Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, But It Is of No Use in Practice*, in *Practical Philosophy*. Translated and Edited by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*. Translated and Edited by Allen Wood and George Di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. Edited by Allen Wood and Paul Guyer. 16 Vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992-2020.
- . *The Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*. Translated and Edited by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Kisner, Manja. "Kant's Analogy between the Moral Law and the Law of Nature." *Con-Textos Kantianos: International Journal of Philosophy* no. 9 (2019): 137-153.

- Korsgaard, Christine M. "Skepticism about Practical Reason." Chap. 11 in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Kuehn, Manfred. *Kant: A Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Ludwig, Bernd. "Kant, Garve, and the Motives of Moral Action." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 4, no. 2 (2007): 183-193.
- MacBeath, A. Murray. "Kant on Moral Feeling." *Kant-Studien* 64, no. 1-4 (1973): 283-314.
- McCarty, Richard. "Kantian Moral Motivation and the Feeling of Respect." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31, no. 3 (1993): 421-435.
- Nagel, Thomas. *The Possibility of Altruism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- Nauckhoff, Josefine. "Incentives and Interests in Kant's Moral Psychology." *History of Philosophical Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (2003): 41-60.
- Paton, H. J. *The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Imperative*. New York: Hutchinson's University Library, 1946.
- Reath, Andrews. "Kant's Theory of Moral Sensibility: Respect for the Moral Law and the Influence of Inclination." *Kant-Studien* 80, no. 1-4 (1989): 284-302.
- Sargentis, Konstantinos. "Moral Motivation in Kant." *Kant Studies Online* (2012): 93-121.
- Schilpp, Paul Arthur. *Kant's Pre-Critical Ethics*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1938.
- Schneewind, J. B. Introduction to *Lectures on Ethics*, by Immanuel Kant. Translated and Edited by Peter Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The Basis of Morality*. Translated by Arthur Brodrick Bullock. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Limited, 1903.
- . *The World as Will and Representation*. Translated by E. F. J. Payne. 02 Vols. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969.
- Singleton, Jane. "Kant's Account of Respect: A Bridge Between Rationality and Anthropology." *Kantian Review* 12, no. 1 (2007): 40-60.
- Smith, Michael. *The Moral Problem*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1994.
- Sytsma, Sharon E. "The Role of *Achtung* in Kant's Moral Theory." *Auslegung: A Journal of Philosophy* 19, no. 2 (1993): 117-122.
- Timmermann, Jens. *Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: A Commentary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.



- Timmons, Mark. "Kant and the Possibility of Moral Motivation." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23, no. 3 (1985): 377-398.
- Walschots, Michael H. "Moral Sense Theory and the Development of Kant's Ethics." PhD diss., The University of Western Ontario, 2015. Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository (3383).
- Ward, Keith. *The Development of Kant's View of Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Ware, Owen. "Accessing the Moral Law through Feeling." *Kantian Review* 20, no. 2 (2015): 301-311.
- . "Kant on Moral Sensibility and Moral Motivation." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52, no. 4 (2014): 727-746.
- . *Kant's Justification of Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Williams, Bernard. "Internal and External Reasons." Chap. 8 in *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Wolff, Robert Paul. *The Autonomy of Reason: A Commentary on Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
- Wood, Allen. "Kant's History of Ethics." In *Kant's Lectures on Ethics: A Critical Guide*, edited by Lara Denis and Oliver Sensen, 120-137. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.