

THE IDEA OF PERSONALITY IN KANT'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

A Thesis

by

MICHAEL JOSEPH DEEM, JR.

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2009

Major Subject: Philosophy

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Chair of Committee,	Stephen H. Daniel
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ABSTRACT

The Idea of Personality in Kant's Moral Philosophy. (August 2009)

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Kant's idea of the person and its place within his so-called "Formula of Humanity" has taken on an important role in contemporary discussions of normative ethics. Yet, despite its popularity, confusion remains as to what Kant really means by *person* and *personality* in his exposition of the moral imperative. This confusion has led to the attribution of positions to Kant that he clearly does not hold. My concern in this thesis is to engage the texts of Kant's moral philosophy in an effort to clarify his idea of person/personality. Accordingly, my concerns are primarily exegetical, though I do engage some contemporary trends in Kant scholarship and Kantian ethics.

I have divided the thesis into three main sections, which comprise Sections II, III, IV. In Section II, I look to Kant's precritical ethics, examining his initial discovery of the formal and material principles of morality and his interest in the role feeling plays in the moral life. Of particular interest is Kant's first introduction of a connection between the feeling of respect for persons and moral duties. In Section III, I suggest that reading Kant's critical moral philosophy in continuity with the precritical ethics brings into relief Kant's move from popular morality to an analytic demonstration of the connection of the

moral imperative to the will of a rational being. I argue that respecting Kant's analytic move helps to prevent us from (i) conflating the idea of humanity and personality, which is commonly done in contemporary Kant scholarship and (ii) attributing a strict "two-world" ontology to Kant's moral philosophy. Finally, in Section IV, I return to Kant's conception of moral feeling as respect for persons, and I briefly discuss its motivating force in the fulfillment of the demands of morality. Together, these three sections display the importance of understanding Kant's idea of personality for any project aiming to faithfully interpret his moral thought.

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I am especially grateful to Dr. Stephen Daniel. Never parsimonious with respect to his time and never one to pull any punches with respect to my work, Dr. Daniel has been an outstanding mentor. Any success I have had at Texas A&M is due largely to his tireless efforts to make me into a better a student, colleague, and philosopher. He knew when and how to praise without being disingenuous, and when and how to correct and criticize without being paternalistic. From the start to the finish of my time at Texas A&M, Dr. Daniel was always willing to provide advice and assistance to me in professional and personal matters.

Finally, the largest debt to record is one I owe to my wife, Katerina. Her understanding and support during my studies and the writing of this thesis kept me moving forward to completion. She has shown more patience and given more love than I have ever deserved. Truly, this project would have been impossible without her.

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Citations of Kant's works are from the English translations prepared for the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, using the following abbreviations followed by standard pagination of *Kant's gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1902–). The sole exception to this practice will be references to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which case I cite the standard pagination of the A and B editions.

- | | |
|------|---|
| APL | “M. Immanuel Kant’s Announcement of the Programme of his Lectures for the Winter Semester 1765-1766,” in Immanuel Kant, <i>Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770</i> , trans. and ed. David Walford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) |
| CBHH | “Conjectural Beginning of Human History,” trans. Allen W. Wood in Immanuel Kant, <i>Anthropology, History, and Education</i> , ed. Günter Zöllner and Robert B. Loudon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) |
| CPR | <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) |
| CPrR | <i>Critique of Practical Reason</i> in Immanuel Kant, <i>Practical Philosophy</i> , trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) |
| G | <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , in Immanuel Kant, <i>Practical Philosophy</i> , trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) |
| I | <i>Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality</i> , in Immanuel Kant, <i>Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770</i> , trans. and ed. David Walford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) |

- HNPP “Kant’s Practical Philosophy: Herder’s Lecture Notes,” in Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, eds. Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind, trans. Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- LP *Lectures on Pedagogy*, trans. Robert B. Louden, in Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöllner and Robert B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)
- MM *The Metaphysics of Morals*, in Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- O *Observations Concerning the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, trans. Paul Guyer, in Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöllner and Robert B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)
- OP *Opus Postumum*, ed. Eckhar Förster, trans. Eckhar Förster and Michael Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- R *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, trans. George di Giovanni, in Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

I. INTRODUCTION

In a concisely stated argument proceeding from a series of refined definitions, Immanuel Kant captures the fundamental insight of the totality of his project of moral philosophy:

An action is called a *deed* insofar as it comes under obligatory laws and hence insofar as the subject, in doing it, is considered in terms of the freedom of his choice. By such an action the agent is regarded as the *author* of its effect, and this, together with the action itself, can be *imputed* to him, if one is previously acquainted with the law by virtue of which an obligation rests on these.

A person is a subject whose actions can be *imputed* to him. *Moral* personality [*moralische Persönlichkeit*] is therefore nothing other than the freedom of a rational being under moral laws (whereas psychological personality is merely the ability to be conscious of one's identity in different conditions of one's existence). From this it follows that a person is subject to no other laws than those he gives to himself (either alone or at least along with others). (MM 6:223).

This passage, taken from Kant's last major work in moral philosophy, the *Metaphysics of Morals*, encapsulates his unique contribution to modern ethics. This simple argument itself can be eloquently summarized in a single phrase: "Morality, that is, freedom under laws, is the characteristic of the person" (OP 22:60).

In a certain respect, Kant's interest in the person is unsurprising when one considers that he is at the receiving end of three antecedent traditions that bequeathed to him a sense of the nobility of the person. First, there was Kant's Pietist upbringing, which would have imbued him with a robust sense of the dignity of the human person. Second, in his early career as a philosopher, Kant fell under the spell of Jean-Jacques

This thesis uses the *Chicago Manual of Style* format.

Rousseau's majestic view of the nature of humanity.¹ Third, when Kant first arrived at the University of Königsberg, he was exposed to the theology of Protestant Scholasticism and Aristotelian philosophy through Johan Adam Gregorovious, Johan David Kypke, and Franz Albert Shultz.² We perhaps see the influence of the traditional Scholastic definition of the person as an individual substance of a rational nature (*naturae rationabilis individua substantia*) in Kant's practical idea of the person as a rational being.³

At the same time we find a profound originality in Kant's idea of the person, which contains the notion of self-legislating capacity in moral action. Kant sees the moral law rooted in the person's rationality, which not only lends the person to self-determination but also marks a person as an end-in-itself. However, despite the novelty and importance of Kant's idea of person in his practical philosophy, the idea rarely has been made the central theme of contemporary studies on Kant. Often it is conflated with or altogether substituted out for Kant's concept of humanity, which is related to but certainly not equivalent to personhood. My intention in this study is to examine the main features of Kant's idea of person in his moral philosophy as a first step toward its appreciation and clarification. Thus, what follows is primarily an exposition, albeit a brief and general one that strives only to sketch what Kant means by personhood and

¹ On the relation of Rousseau's views of human nature and the self to Kant's insights into the rationality and dignity of human persons, see Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 157-58; Robert C. Solomon, *Continental Philosophy since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 16-29; and Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and the Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 295-325.

² See Kuehn, *Kant*, 67-84.

³ This definition is originally from Boethius, *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium*, III.4-5.

what role that idea plays in his thought. Where pertinent, I evaluate contemporary discussions and debates over themes and issues in Kant's moral philosophy that affect how we interpret Kantian persons.

I have divided this study into three main sections. In the first section, I look at the germ of Kant's idea of person in his precritical moral philosophy, which begins its inquiry with basic, common concepts of obligation and moral feeling. In the second section, which constitutes the heart of my study, I look to Kant's critical philosophy in which the idea of person takes shape. In the third and final section, I return to the concept of moral feeling, which Kant first touched upon in his precritical writings, and show that the idea of person has an affective effect in human persons, which Kant calls respect. In so structuring my study, I follow Kant's own approach to practical philosophy in which he begins with common, popular ideas of morality and only then moves into a metaphysics of morals. Then, having clarified and rendered distinct moral concepts, morality "descends" back to popular concepts, providing "access" to common understanding (see G 4:389, 409). I will show that the idea of the dignity of the person is at the very center of Kant's moral philosophy, serving as the link between his precritical ethics and doctrine of morals.

II. DIGNITY, FEELING, AND OBLIGATION IN KANT'S PRECRITICAL ETHICS

II.1 Prefatory Remarks

In this section, I shall outline the major themes of Kant's precritical ethics, paying specific attention to how these themes relate to the idea of person developed in his critical project.⁴ Ostensibly, Kant's precritical ethics, which draws liberally from the ideas of the British moralists and Rousseau, may seem to deliver little by way of aid in understanding Kant's ideas of person and personality in his mature theoretical and practical philosophy. However, a closer look reveals that Kant's precritical ethics is occupied by many of the same central concerns as his later writings, and the continuity between the former and latter is, I argue, indisputable. For example, despite the advance made by the British moralists in explaining the genesis of the ideas of moral virtue and

⁴ By "precritical" I refer to those writings that chronologically precede the A edition of the first *Critique* (1781). Gary Banham has suggested that precritical be taken also in a "conceptual" sense, referring to those writings in which Kant did not assume a critical stance [Gary Banham, *Kant's Practical Philosophy: From Critique to Doctrine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 8]. To avoid unnecessary confusion, I opt not to employ this conceptual sense to refer to those non-critical works subsequent to the first *Critique*.

Briefly, I wish to take note of Alfred Denker's preference for describing Kant's work on ethics from 1747-1765 as "early" rather than "precritical." He claims that using the latter term "makes no sense" because "Kant had already developed the basic doctrines of his mature practical philosophy before his so-called Copernican revolution took place" [Alfred Denker, "The Vocation of Being Human: Kant's Early Practical Philosophy, 1747-1765" in *New Essays on the Precritical Kant*, ed. Tom Rockmore (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2001), 129]. While I agree that there is veritable continuity between Kant's early moral writings and his later critical project, I think one ought to be a bit more guarded in how their relation is described. If by "basic doctrines" Denker means Kant's basic concern to put morality on solid rational grounds, then I can adopt his characterization. But if by "doctrine" Denker means the strategy and deduction for achieving that grounding, then I most certainly object. Not only does Kant's critical ethics pursue an altogether different strategy, substituting an analytic method and critique of practical reason for a descriptive approach, but his fundamental discoveries reflect a different understanding of the form and content of the supreme rule of morality. For this very reason, I find "precritical" to aptly qualify the moral philosophy Kant produced before his critical turn.

vice, Kant remains unconvinced that moral philosophy has discovered its fundamental principle on which to ground moral obligation. Consider the lofty goal Kant sets before himself (and his students!) in the announcement of his Winter 1765-1766 lectures at the University of Königsberg: “The attempts of *Shaftesbury*, *Hutcheson*, and *Hume*, although incomplete and defective, have nonetheless penetrated furthest in the search for the fundamental principles of all morality. Their efforts will be given the precision and the completeness which they lack” (APL 2:311). The attempt to discover the ground and locus of obligation as supreme principle of morality occupies some of Kant’s effort in the precritical ethics before later directing his entire critical project in morality.

Additionally, Kant’s precritical ethics is characteristically marked by a deep concern with underlining the inherent dignity of human beings and the exigent respect it demands in moral action. These two elements of Kant’s ethics (i.e., the supreme rule of morality and respect for human dignity) establish the continuity between the precritical and critical projects. However, as I will make clear, Kant’s work to establish “the rule of man’s behavior...to attain the highest level of physical or moral excellence” (APL 2:312) and the corresponding ground of human dignity in his descriptive inquiries and empirical generalizations throughout the 1760’s is curtailed as it encounters the inauspicious demands of theoretical reason. From 1765 until the 1780’s, Kant takes a hiatus from publishing in moral philosophy (though he continued to lecture in ethics and anthropology) in order to devote himself to the pressing theoretical problems that, among other things, stymies his moral inquiry. It is not until after the first *Critique* that

Kant returns to morality, this time with a concern to discover the supreme rule of morality within the space the first *Critique* clears for the possibility of freedom.

So as not to mislead, it should be noted from the outset that the precritical ethics is not composed of ethical treatises or free-standing pieces in moral philosophy. Quite to the contrary, when we speak of Kant's precritical ethics, at least in its officially published form, we have what may be best described as moral fragments that are contained as small sections or divisions within theoretical works preoccupied by philosophical methodology and scientific progress. The one exception is Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764) which consists of an empirical description of moral virtue in terms of feeling, gender, and the four temperaments. Other sources of Kant's precritical ethics such as the *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality* (1762; published 1764) and *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy* (1763) are preoccupied with theoretical questions, the answers to which are applied to, among other issues, morality. Consequently, any study of Kant's precritical ethics ends up as a synthesis of fragments in moral philosophy, forced to trade on Kant's incomplete ethical thought. Despite this limitation, however, the precritical ethics reveal Kant's shifting away from self-contained scientific and mathematical concerns and toward the application of theoretical philosophy to practical matters.

II.2 Moral Obligation in the *Inquiry*

The *Inquiry* is arguably the best place to begin any examination of Kant's precritical ethics. I suggest this for three reasons. First, it is the first of Kant's writings to

devote a section to ethical matters. Second, it was completed by the end of 1762, predating his first extended ethical treatment in the pages of the *Observations*.⁵ Third, it sets the agenda for any future consideration of morality through the identification of its two fundamental, though commonly known, concepts, namely, obligation and moral feeling. While the content of the *Inquiry* serves mainly as a propaedeutic, it nevertheless orients the investigation into the grounds of moral principles. In this way, it is an anticipation of the Kant's later inquiries into the metaphysics of morals and pure practical reason.

The primary concern of the *Inquiry* is epistemological and methodological, namely the different avenues for arriving at certainty in mathematical and philosophical concepts. The former, Kant claims, are rendered "by means of analysis," meaning they come about by means of a definition or "arbitrary combination of concepts," whereas the latter come by means of "separating out" cognition to its constitutive elements (I 2:276). The first three sections or "reflections" are occupied with the problem of certainty in metaphysics. It is not until the second part of the fourth and final section, which spans a mere three pages in the critical edition, that Kant turns his attention toward moral philosophy, inquiring as to whether it is capable of the same degree of certainty enjoyed

⁵ The *Inquiry*, sometimes dubbed the "Prize Essay," was written on the occasion of a competition held by the Berlin Academy of Sciences. Submissions were invited by the Academy addressing the question of whether doctrines of theology and morality were capable of the same degree of certainty enjoyed by mathematical truths. The submission deadline was January 1, 1763, and Kuehn informs us that Kant submitted his essay on December 31, 1762 [Kuehn, *Kant*, 136]. Kant's *Inquiry*, which won first prize, was published by the Academy along with Moses Mendelssohn's prize-winning essay, *Über die Evidenz in den metaphysischen Wissenschaften*, in 1764. The importance of looking to the completion date of the *Inquiry* rather than to its publication date is obvious. The ethical conclusions of the *Observations*, though published first, are to be read in light of the questions with which Kant wrestled previously during the writing of the *Inquiry*.

by the fundamental concepts and principles of mathematics and metaphysical cognition. The specific question to which Kant attends in this section is the epistemic status of the concept of moral obligation. Have the moral inquiries of the past been successful in securing the same prized certainty sought after in mathematics, science, and metaphysics? Bringing to bear the theoretical elucidations of the earlier sections of the *Inquiry* on ethical matters, Kant claims that, hitherto, morality has not shown itself capable of producing for its fundamental principles the requisite certainty for genuine conviction. He opens with the following declaration:

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. (I 2:298)

Setting aside for a moment Kant's intention to expose the epistemic insufficiency of the moral systems hitherto developed, it is important to recognize that from the outset Kant identifies moral obligation as the fixed point of all moral philosophy. If obligation is or contains the fundamental principle of morality, and if obligation does not enjoy the epistemic status of certainty, then it follows that all morality insofar as it is derived from that principle will fail to obtain the certainty demanded by speculative reason.⁶ In his initial foray into ethics in the *Inquiry*, Kant limits his concerns to theoretical questions of certainty. Thus, it is not accurate to assert, as Keith Ward does, that Kant's earliest account of morality was modeled after those of the British moralists and that he only

⁶ Denker expresses this implication positively as opposed to negatively, as Kant does: "As the first concept of Kant's practical philosophy, obligation determines the distinctness and certainty of all other moral concepts and principles" [Denker, "The Vocation of Being Human," 137].

later annexes “something distinctly rationalistic” and formal to that account.⁷ Indeed, Kant’s interest in obligation is the common thread sewn through the *Inquiry* and the later critical treatments of freedom and morality. In both the first *Critique*’s resolution of the Third Antimony and the *Groundwork*’s transition from a popular moral view of duty to philosophical morality, the notion of obligation is the fixed point from which Kant thinks the possibility of human freedom and the necessitation of duty.

Since obligation is the starting point of Kant’s precritical (and critical) ethics, he attends to the question of what veritable obligation looks like when the criteria of certainty are applied to morals. He opts for a common, popular expression of obligation for his analysis, that is, the formula that states what one *ought to do* and what *one ought not to do*. In what is an unmistakable foreshadowing of the *Groundwork*’s distinction between hypothetical imperatives and the categorical imperative, he delineates two expressions of the necessity that seems to be captured by the idea of obligatory action:

The formula by means of which every obligation is expressed is this: one ought to do this or that and abstain from doing the other. Now every ought expresses a necessity of the action and is capable of two meanings: To be specific: either I ought to do something (as a *means*) if I want something else (as an end), or I ought immediately to do something else (an *end*) and make it actual. The former may be called the necessity of the means (*necessitas problematica*), and the latter the necessity of ends (*necessitas legalis*)” (I 2:298).

Kant cites two reasons for thinking that a *necessitas problematica* is devoid of obligatory character. On the one hand, the imperative is merely a prescription that aims to solve the

⁷ Keith Ward, *The Development of Kant’s View of Ethics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 26-27. Ward dates the penning of the *Inquiry* according to its official publication in 1764, taking the *Observations* as the earliest work of Kant that treats specifically morality. As I noted above, the writing of the *Inquiry* was complete before 1763, which shows that Kant was concerned with the fundamental principles of morality from the very beginning of his work in ethics.

problem one faces in determining the means one should employ in order to attain some intended or expected end, whatever it may be; on the other, the actions that follow this imperative are conditioned by the intended end rather than subordinated to a necessary end. They are, at best, suitable recommendations fit for setting and attaining desired ends. Necessity, therefore, does not attach absolutely to the recommended action insofar as its purpose, which itself is conditional, gives the action its worth. Accordingly, Kant concludes that any *necessitas problematica* is not a ground of true and absolute obligation for all moral agents because it is determined arbitrarily or skillfully as a means which lacks universality.⁸

In contrast to the *necessitas problematica*, the concept of *necessitas legalis* includes the essential feature of being “immediately necessary and not conditional upon some end” (I 2:298-99). In branding this sort of obligation as immediately necessary, Kant is claiming that the ground of obligation must be self-evident and indemonstrable if

⁸ In the *Groundwork* Kant describes a threefold division of ethical imperatives. There Kant describes the fundamental difference between imperatives that are hypothetical (i.e., commands for action that is a means for some possible or actual purpose) and those that are categorical (i.e., commands that issue from reason and are absolutely necessary irrespective of purpose). Of hypothetical imperatives, there are two. On the one hand there are those which Kant calls “imperatives of skill,” which command certain actions that are necessary to bring about some possible purpose (G 4:415). Kant ties this sort of hypothetical imperative (also known as a “problematic practical principle”) especially to the raising of children. Parents (and presumably instructors) teach children a wide range of subjects in the hope that the child will acquire the skill to execute and realize possible ends. These ends are viewed merely as possible insofar as parents and instructors are unable to know with certainty whether certain ends will become the child’s purpose. The other sort of hypothetical imperative Kant dubs “*counsels of prudence*” (G 4:416). This imperative commands certain actions that serve as a means to promote happiness, which is an actual purpose of humanity. Distinct from hypothetical imperatives is the categorical or moral imperative, which delivers unconditional, objective, and universally necessary laws. The *necessitas legalis* of the *Inquiry* finds its full exposition in *Groundwork* II. It seems that Kant has in mind these three types of imperatives when he divides moral education into its three spheres in the *Lectures on Pedagogy* with each sphere respectively relating to the three types of imperatives (see LP 9:486).

it is to be universally binding. That ground, which is constituted by formal and material principles, is only asserted in the *Inquiry*. The formal ground of obligation is twofold, involving action and abstinence: “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 realization of the greatest possible perfection, is the first *formal ground* of the duty to *abstain from acting*” (I 2:299).

Commenting on this passage, Phillip Arthur Schilpp claims that Kant exhibits and moves beyond the influence of Christian Wolff’s ethical thought:

Here we have evidence not only of Christian Wolff’s tutelage but also of Kant’s own originality of thought. On the one hand, Kant, so far from having freed himself from the sway of Wolff’s concept of the ethical *summum bonum*, that of perfection, is convinced that it is necessary in any formal statement of the moral law. On the other hand, Kant’s statement goes definitely beyond Wolff, for Wolff had aimed at the completeness or perfection of the “agent,” whereas Kant is clearly talking about the perfection of the “act.”⁹

Be that as it may, one must be cautious to avoid the misunderstanding that Kant has moved altogether away from the agent in his analysis. Kant should not be read as focusing strictly on moral actions, but as shifting the emphasis in morality from the agent’s perfection and attainment of happiness by means of hypothetical imperatives to the agent’s capacity to legislate a *necessitas legalis* that is not determined by an antecedently desired end. Indeed, the very concept of the unconditionally good, toward which he turns his attention in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*, applies not only

⁹ Paul Arthur Schilpp, *Kant’s Pre-Critical Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1960), 28. On Wolff’s ethics and its influence on Kant, see J.B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 432-42, 484-87; and Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 256-275 (especially 272-75).

to actions themselves, as Schilpp seems to suggest, but also to the agent who performs said actions. For instance, the following passage from the second *Critique* highlights the inseparability of good as an object of the will and the will itself:

[G]ood or evil is, strictly speaking, referred to actions, not to the person's state of feeling, and if anything is to be good or evil absolutely (and in every respect and without any further condition), or is to be held to be such, it would be only the way of acting, the maxim of the will, and consequently the acting person himself [*handelnde Person selbst*] as a good or evil human being, that could be so called, but not a thing. (CPrR 5:60)

To this point in the *Inquiry*, Kant has provided a simple, analytic analysis of what an obligation would be without determining whether or not moral agents actually are bound by obligation. Having teased out the formal principle of obligation, Kant tells us that obligation includes a second necessary element:

And just as, in the absence of any material first principles, nothing flowed from the first formal principles of our judgments of truth, so no specifically determinate obligation flows from these two rules of the good, unless they are combined with indemonstrable material principles of practical cognition. (I 2:299)

Kant relates us back to conclusions previously arrived at in the theoretical sections of the *Inquiry*:

Now, in philosophy there are, as we have said above, many indemonstrable propositions. All these indemonstrable propositions are subsumed under the formal first principles, albeit immediately. However, insofar as they also contain the grounds of other cognitions, they are also the first material principles of human reason. For example: a body is a compound is an indemonstrable proposition, for the predicate can only be thought as an intermediate and primary characteristic mark in the concept of a body. Such material principles constitute...the foundation of human reason and the guarantor of its stability. (I 2:295)

In order to grant to morality the same certainty enjoyed by metaphysics, we must discover more than the indemonstrable formal grounds of any obligation. We must also

identify indemonstrable material principles of obligation, which have eluded previous investigations into the grounds of morality. In the absence of these material principles of practical cognition, there can be no real, binding obligation for moral agents. Now, just what these material principles are, Kant does not say. He only later devotes himself to the problem of uniting the formal and material grounds of obligation in his mature ethics. But with respect to the *Inquiry's* summary analysis of the two grounds, we may at least be able to determine from various clues in the work what *does not* constitute the these material grounds.

Now, Schilpp suggests that the material concepts of obligation are feelings, which he says form the “substance of our chosen goods,”¹⁰ and he is seconded by Gary Banham.¹¹ Indeed, it is tempting to affirm this conclusion, for a long paragraph on moral feeling immediately follows Kant’s brief mention of the need for discovering material principles of morality. However, upon close inspection, Schilpp’s claim does not stick. Kant does say that feeling is the faculty by which an agent experiences what is good and that the judgment that any object is good would be “an immediate effect of the consciousness of the feeling of pleasure combined with the representation of the object.” (I 2:299). Just what are these objects whose representations are accompanied by a feeling of the good? Kant clarifies a few sentences later that the objects of the faculty of feeling are actions and that these are represented as good. The feeling of the good is combined with the good action, but Kant does not indicate that the *feeling* is the material

¹⁰ Schilpp, *Kant's Pre-Critical Ethics*, 39.

¹¹ See Banham, *Kant's Practical Philosophy*, 11-12.

grounds of obligation. Instead, the necessity to act, which has an affective effect on the agent, is the material ground:

Accordingly, if 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. (I 2:299-300)

While Kant is clear that feeling plays an important and indispensable role in morals, he is also clear that the indemonstrable material principles of obligation are not feelings but the attendant necessity of certain moral actions.¹² In sum, the task to which Kant sets moral philosophy is the determination of the fundamental concept of obligation, constituted by (i) its formal grounds in action and abstention and (ii) its material principles of the necessity of certain actions and abstentions, which Kant will later call *duties*. In choosing to analyze the popular notion of obligation according to the analytic method he used for metaphysics throughout the *Inquiry*, Kant aims to render distinct the fundamental principles of morality and to deduce from them further moral concepts. Feeling is no mere afterthought for Kant, however. The importance which Kant attributes to it explains his praise of Francis Hutcheson and the ethics of moral sentiment

¹² Kant begins the *Groundwork* by drawing a distinction between two types of “rational cognition,” namely, *material* or *formal*, and this distinction is helpful when read back into the *Inquiry*’s compressed pronouncement on the need for material principles in moral philosophy. For Kant, formal philosophy is concerned “only with the form of the understanding and of reason itself and with the universal rules of thinking in general, without distinction of their objects” (G 4:387). What Kant has in mind when he speaks of “formal philosophy,” he tells us, is logic. Logic is formal because it concerns itself solely with the rules which bind the understanding in its acts without respect to application to a specified object. What Kant intends by invoking the distinction between formal and material philosophy is to indicate that any consideration of metaphysics and ethics belongs within the domain of material philosophy. Logic is called “formal” simply because it is concerned with the “form” of the understanding without respect to an object or intuition (cf. CPR B8). Pertinent to the task of the *Groundwork* and relevant to our study, the doctrine of morals proceeds as type of material philosophy concerned with the laws of freedom and their ensuing duties as its definite objects of inquiry.

(I 2:300), and in his only extended treatment of morality among his pre-critical works, the *Observations*, he turns his attention to elucidating the relation of feeling to morality from a popular and empirical standpoint.

II.3 Moral Feeling in the *Inquiry* and the *Observations*

In his *Observations*, written in 1763 and published in 1764, Kant again takes up the matter of moral feeling which he left undeveloped in the *Inquiry*. However, instead of looking into the grounds of morality from a strictly analytic, philosophical standpoint, he adopts for the *Observations*, in the words of John Zammito, “a style of reflecting or judging (*beurteilen*) grounded in close, particular observation (*beobachten*).”¹³ Or, as Susan Meld Shell puts it, Kant takes up the role of “spectator” in his observations of human feelings.¹⁴ As a consequence of this empirical approach, no advance is made in the *Observations* on the question of moral obligation and its principles. But despite the different approaches taken in these two works, we can better understand why Kant mentions the role of feeling in morality within the context of his discussion of obligation in the *Inquiry* when it is read in conjunction with the *Observations*.

It has been suggested, for example by Randy Cagle, that the *Inquiry* portrays feeling as “capacity of a finite embodied being to be sensuously affected in some way.”¹⁵ Cagle is right to point out that the brief analysis of obligation in the *Inquiry* applies to the actions of a being that is affected sensuously. Indeed, Kant does tell us that the

¹³ John H. Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 106.

¹⁴ See Susan Meld Shell, “Kant as Spectator: Notes on *Observation on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*,” in *New Essays on the Precritical Kant*, 66-85.

¹⁵ Randy Cagle, “Becoming a Virtuous Agent: Kant and the Cultivation of Feelings and Emotions,” *Kant-Studien* 96 (2005): 454.

feeling of the good is “never encountered in a thing absolutely but only relatively to a being endowed with sensibility” (I 2:299). But nowhere does he align the feeling with sensibility itself; that is, nowhere does he claim that the feeling which is associated with moral obligation is the product or effect of sensibility. If moral feeling were the result of some sensuous experience, then why does Kant bring it up within the initial framework for the study of obligation? What’s more, Cagle actually begins his article on the right track by pointing toward the “cognitive character” and “cognitive components” of the feelings that Kant describes in his moral works, including the feeling of respect, yet he still counts the feeling described in the *Inquiry* as a capacity to be affected through sensibility.¹⁶ Aside from the lack of evidence internal to the *Inquiry* for placing feeling within the domain of the sensible, the description of feeling in both the *Observations* and Herder’s notes on Kant’s lectures on ethics, which were transcribed between 1762-1764, tell against such a reading. And we have good reason to read these latter two pieces in continuity with the *Inquiry* as they appeared just after it was written and before it was published.¹⁷

For the remainder of this section, I will argue for an alternative reading of moral feeling in Kant’s precritical works to that of Cagle and Banham. In section three of my study, I will link the concept of moral feeling in these precritical works with Kant’s

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 453, 455, 457.

¹⁷ According to Schneewind, Herder was a student at the University of Königsberg from 1762 to 1764 and attended several of Kant’s lectures. Herder’s notes on Kant’s lectures on ethics, therefore, would have been taken from a course or courses during this time. See Schneewind, “Introduction,” in Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Peter Heath, eds. Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xiii-xv.

fuller treatment of moral feeling as respect in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*, which Kant says is an effect not of sensibility but of cognition of the moral law.

Among the various modes of pleasure and displeasure Kant considers from an empirical standpoint in the *Observations*, two intuitively “finer feelings” stand apart from the rest, namely, the feeling of the sublime and the beautiful (O 2:208). Both feelings are agreeable, says Kant, though in different ways. The sublime is associated with the terror, the nobility, and the magnificence in objects, and only by means of this feeling can an object “make its impression on us in its proper strength” (O 2:208-09). In contrast, beauty is associated with enjoyment of objects. Though considered “finer” than other sentiments and feelings, the feeling of the sublime and beautiful do not in their own right mark objects as good or evil, particularly with respect to moral quality. In the second section of the *Observations*, Kant turns to this question of moral quality where he highlights the blindness of these feelings: “Even the vices and moral failings often carry with them some of the traits of the sublime or the beautiful, at least as they appear to our sensory feeling, without having been examined by reason” (O 2:212). And again: “In human nature there are never to be found praiseworthy qualities that do not at the same time degenerate through endless gradations into the most extreme imperfection” (O 2:213). However, Kant qualifies this by indicating that things that may possess certain qualities that are sublime, yet are actually imperfect and unworthy of praise, are of the terrible sort: “The quality of the terrifying sublime, if it becomes entirely unnatural, is *adventurous*. Unnatural things, in so far as the sublime is thereby intended, even if little or none of it is actually found, are *grotesqueries*” (O 2:213-14). In so doing, Kant seeks

to bring out the distinctively higher quality of the noble sublime, which is associated not with moral qualities that are beautiful, such as sympathy and complaisance, but with “true virtue” (O 2:215).

The difference between a moral quality that is beautiful (e.g., sympathy or complaisance) and that which is sublime (virtue) is that the former are “weak and blind” and may induce one to fail in fulfilling one’s duties. Kant offers an example of this failure for each beautiful quality. In the case of sympathy, one may be so moved by affection for another in need that one may use the money owed to a third party to alleviate that need, thereby “sacrificing a higher obligation to this blind enchantment” (O 2:215-16). In the case of complaisance, one may be so inclined to please others that one becomes “a liar, an idler, a drunkard, etc., for he does not act in accordance with the rules of good conduct in general but rather in accordance with an inclination that is beautiful in itself but which insofar as it is without self-control and without principles becomes ridiculous” (O 2:217). Kant contends that these moral qualities must be raised to universal affection toward humankind in order to be worthy of the appellation “true virtue,” which is colder and more sublime. That is, they must be subordinated to a general principle which extends further than the localized and particularized instances of sympathy and complaisance:

Thus true virtue can only be grafted upon principles, and it will become the more sublime and noble the more general they are. These principles are not speculative rules, but the consciousness of a feeling that lives in every human breast and that extends much further than to the special grounds of sympathy and complaisance. I believe that I can bring all this together if I say that it is the *feeling of the beauty and the dignity of human nature*.

Only when one subordinates one's own particular inclination to such an enlarged one can our kindly drives be proportionately applied and bring about the noble attitude that is the beauty of virtue. (O 2:217)

Kant sets this one particular feeling in humans apart, one which endows virtue with the quality of the cool sublimity that tends to be lost among the more quickening experiences of the beautiful. The beauty of human nature, Kant asserts, is the ground of affection. But to prevent affection from moving one to prioritize incorrectly one's duties as sympathy is want to do, the feeling of beauty is balanced by its second characteristic, which is the sublimity of human dignity. The latter is the ground of respect for human persons, which constrains the force of affection that freely arises from the impulses of nature. Kant's sudden introduction of respect at this juncture of the *Observation* is a clue that he is no longer speaking of sympathy and complaisance, even in universalized form, but of an altogether different type of feeling that infringes upon and incorporates them.¹⁸ Rather short shrift is given to the feeling of respect in the *Observations*, which should come as no surprise insofar as Kant later treats respect as a feeling that is cognized a priori. The empirical approach of the *Observations*, it may be argued, precludes any investigation into its rational grounds. Instead, the work describes the ordinary

¹⁸ Rudolf Makkreel insists on the inseparability of universal affection and respect in one, single feeling [see Rudolf A. Makkreel, "The Beautiful and the Sublime as Guideposts to the Human Virtues in the Early Kant," *New Essays on the Precritical Kant*, 55-57]. I think Makkreel is right to do so, and I believe this suggests that sympathetic affection, because it can occur in humans quite apart from the coolness of respect, and the feeling of the beauty and dignity of human nature are, in fact, two different feelings altogether. This would lend support to my claim that the latter is not a sensuous feeling and cannot be studied empirically like other feelings and sentiments.

experience of fellow-feeling, stopping at the point at which those feelings may be grafted onto what Zammito calls a “deeper stratum of anthropological character.”¹⁹

The discussion of general principles in the *Observations* has led some commentators to think that Kant is positing feeling as the foundation of morality. For example, Ward submits that Kant is following the British moralists in the *Observations* by grounding morality on feeling and he contrasts this approach with that of the *Inquiry* in which obligation is the ground of morality.²⁰ Ward is correct in identifying a different method employed in the *Inquiry*, but had he recognized that the *Inquiry* was written prior to the *Observations* he would not have to attribute a radical shift in Kant’s moral thought from feeling to obligation. As I attempted to argue above, if we begin with a careful consideration of the *Inquiry*, we see that feeling neither constitutes the material principles of morality nor grounds morality itself. Attentive to what Kant is and is not saying about feeling in the *Inquiry*, we likewise find in the *Observations* no attempt to ground morality on feeling. In fact, we find no attempt to ground morality whatsoever. Indeed, in his spectating role Kant is seeking to elucidate the ordinary intuitions about feeling of pleasure and displeasure that arise in common human experience. If moral obligation is the ground of morality, and moral obligation is constituted by indemonstrable formal and material principles and necessary ends, then empirical observations on contingent feelings will not yield the ground of morality. What we find in the *Inquiry* and the *Observations* taken in tandem is the anticipation of Kant’s distinction in the *Groundwork* between pure moral philosophy and practical

¹⁹ Zammito, *Birth of Anthropology*, 111.

²⁰ Ward, *Kant’s View of Ethics*, 24-26.

anthropology, both of which are constitutive elements of a complete ethics (see G 4:388-89, 411-12). The meeting point of the two works is moral feeling, that is, the feeling of respect. However, in both works Kant leaves us without an account of the nature of this feeling and the specific role it plays in morality, holding it in philosophical abeyance until his critical project in practical cognition commences two decades later.

That Kant is speaking of the same moral feeling in the *Inquiry* and the *Observations* seems to be confirmed by Herder's notes on Kant's lectures in ethics, which, as I mentioned above, the young student heard in the intervening years of the writing and publication of both works. Assuming that Herder transcribed the lectures with a suitable degree of accuracy, we get the following from Professor Kant: "Pleasure in free actions directly is called moral feeling. We have a moral feeling, which is (1) universal (2) unequivocal;" and: "The moral feeling is unanalysable, basic, the ground of conscious. . ." (HNPP 27:5). The notes make clear that this feeling is "inspired by morality" and contributes to genuine moral action: "Conscious is *logica*, in that I am aware of some property; and *moralis*, in that I couple this with my moral feeling. Defects are therefore *logical*, in the want of consciousness concerning one's actions...and *moral*, in the want of moral feeling concerning one's actions. . ." (HNPP 27:5, 42). There is no question that moral feeling plays an important role for human beings in the fulfillment of moral obligation. However, Kant is consistent in his precritical works that moral feeling is not itself the grounds for morality. Furthermore, no sensuous feeling seems to be an eligible candidate for a universal, unanalyzable, and basic moral feeling since sensuous feelings are contingent, particular, and analyzable (consider the subject matter of the

Observations). Only respect for the dignity of human nature, which Kant leaves unanalyzed and passed-over in his empirical observations, seems to possess the requisite marks of moral feeling.

II.4 Following Considerations

In these considerations of Kant's precritical ethics, we have seen Kant's continuing preoccupation with the grounds of morality. Specifically, I have drawn attention to two concepts contained in these early works in order to set the stage for the following two sections of my study. On the one hand, Kant identifies moral obligation as the fundamental concept of morality and prescribes the analysis of its formal grounds and material principles in order to gain certainty in its matters. On the other hand, Kant insists that there is an unanalyzable feeling of the good, namely respect, that serves in an ancillary role in the fulfillment of obligation. The precritical works in many ways set the agenda for Kant's subsequent metaphysics of morals and critique of pure practical reason. In the following section, I will discuss the connection between the formal grounds of obligation and the will of a rational being or *person* and how Kant's analytic study of the concept of obligation, which he outlined in the *Inquiry*, leads to the idea of personality. In Section III, I return to the moral feeling of respect that first appeared in the *Inquiry* and *Observations* tied to the dignity of human nature, and I provide an exposition of respect for moral law as an effect of the representation of moral law by human beings and as a motivation for the fulfillment of duties toward persons.

III. FROM THE CONCEPT OF OBLIGATION TO THE IDEA OF PERSONALITY

III.1 The Analytic Connection between the Concepts of Obligation and the Will

In this section I will sketch the concept of duty from *Groundwork* I and II before looking carefully at the connection Kant makes between it and the concept of the will of a rational being, which yields the second formulation of the categorical imperative. This so-called “Formula of Humanity” will be the basis of my consideration of persons as ends-in-themselves and the idea of personality.

In the *Groundwork*, Kant takes up the task to which he had set himself originally in the *Inquiry*, namely the analysis of the formal and material principles of obligation. In order to achieve certainty with respect to these principles, “the ultimate fundamental concepts of obligation need first of all be determined more reliably” (I 2:300). The concept of moral obligation takes center stage in the *Groundwork*. Kant is concerned to examine and establish a metaphysics of morals apart from experience so that “we may know how much pure reason can accomplish in both cases and from what sources it draws its a priori teaching. . .” (4: 388-89). It is clear from the outset that Kant seeks to inquire into the grounds of a pure moral philosophy, but how can such a metaphysics of morals proceed unless it is possible to conduct a non-empirical inquiry? As he did in the *Inquiry*, he marshals the “common idea of duty and of moral laws” found among all human persons as evidence for the possibility of conducting such an inquiry. Contained in this common, popular idea of duty is its quality of being absolute, universal, and necessary (4:389). The purpose, then, of the *Groundwork* is plain: “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 to be kept apart from every other moral investigation” (4:392). The concept of duty is to be brought to purity and clarity by means of an analytic study of its principles.

If the moral law, which would ground duty, is derived from some aspect of human nature or from some experience in the world, then the moral law would be particular and conditional to human experience. Moreover, that law could not ground obligation. Kant declares that the formal principle of duty must be found a priori in the concepts of reason if it is to hold for all rational beings universally:

If we add further that, unless we want to deny to the concept of morality any truth and any relation to some possible object, we cannot dispute that its law is so extensive in its import that it must hold not only for human beings but for all rational beings as such, not merely under contingent conditions and with exceptions but with absolute necessity, then it is clear that no experience could give occasion to infer even the possibility of such apodictic laws. (G:408; cf. CPrR 5:24)

So the validity of moral law would apply to human beings *precisely* because it would hold for all rational beings.

While the grounds of duty can only be sought in reason, Kant tells us that the concept of duty contains within itself the idea of a will that is affected by subjective conditions quite different from reason that make up a burdensome counterweight to the commands of duty. Now, Kant defines the will as “the capacity to act *in accordance with the representation of laws*” (G 4:412), and a will that is determined purely by the laws of practical reason only acts according to those laws, that is, it always chooses that which is good. The will of the human being, Kant tells us, is at a “crossroads” at which the a

priori law of duty and a posteriori incentives meet, precluding the possibility of a pure determination to act on the moral law. The human will's exposure to the impulses and inclinations of nature makes for a tension between the formal law and subjection conditions (G 4:400, 412-13). Accordingly, the human will does not *by nature* fulfill the moral law, but instead must bring its maxim, that is, its subjective principle of volition, into conformity with the objective law of morality, "*I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law*" (G 4:402). For a being whose will is affected by subjective conditions and natural inclinations, the moral law takes on the character of a necessitation, that is, a command to subordinate its maxims to the universal law. This necessitation, grounded in the universal law of practical reason, is formulated as an imperative, as an *ought*. Kant's attention to obligation accommodates the condition of the human will: "[I]mperatives are only formulae expressing the relation of objective laws of volition in general to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being, for example, of the human will" (G 4:414). Strictly speaking, a rational being whose will is not subjected to sensibility or natural inclinations has no actual duty to fulfill the moral law insofar as its will is purely determined by the law, in which case it is called by Kant a "holy will" (CPrR 5:32).²¹

Kant spells this out a bit more clearly in the *Metaphysics of Morals*:

The moral *imperative* makes this constraint known through the categorical nature

²¹ With respect to the idea of the holy will, Kant writes in the second *Critique*: "This holiness of will is nevertheless a practical *idea*, which must necessarily serve as a *model* to which all finite rational beings can only approximate without end and which the pure moral law, itself called a holy because of this, constantly and rightly holds before their eyes; the utmost that finite practical reason can effect is to make sure of this unending progress of one's maxims toward this model and of their constancy in continual progress, that is, virtue." (CPrR 5:32-33).

of its pronouncement (the unconditional ought). Such constraint, therefore, does not apply to rational beings as such (there could also be *holy* ones) but rather to *human beings*, rational *natural* beings, who are unholy enough that pleasure can induce them to break the moral law, even though they recognize its authority; even when they do obey the law, they do it *reluctantly* (in the face of opposition from their inclinations), and it is in this that such *constraint* properly consists. (MM 6:379)

As I will show in the next subsection, this subtle shift toward obligation, which centers the remaining pages of the *Groundwork* specifically on human beings, is crucial for understanding Kant's peculiar use of the term of "humanity" in the categorical imperative and can help avoid much of the confusion that marks several contemporary interpretations of the Formula of Humanity.

Just as he did in the *Inquiry*, Kant identifies two types of imperatives, though in the *Groundwork* he describes them as being either hypothetical or categorical. The former entails the "practical necessity of a possible action as a means to achieving something else that one wills (or that it is at least possible for one to will)," while the latter entails an action that is "objectively necessary of itself, without reference to another end" (G 4:414). A hypothetical imperative is derived from an antecedently expected end and so it serves to commend an action as a means to that end. In this case, the will is determined to act not by moral law, but by an end, real or possible, extraneous to it. The categorical imperative, in contrast, is derived from practical reason alone and commands an action immediately. It alone is worthy of the appellation "imperative of morality" (4:416). Taking the universal law of morality for rational beings and adapting it to a command of the sensuously-affected human will, Kant is able to formulate the categorical imperative: "*act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can*

at the same time will that it become a universal law” (4:421). By the categorical imperative, the human will is “objectively determined absolutely and immediately” (CPrR 5:31), that is to say, the will is thought of as pure and not determined by anything other than the form of the moral law. Having arrived conceptually at the form of the moral law and its status as the formal principle of obligation, the categorical imperative, Kant asserts that the law must somehow be connected a priori to the will of a rational being. Only at this juncture in the *Groundwork* does Kant venture into the metaphysics of morals for the first time in order to discover that connection (G 4:426-27).

Kant submits that if the will is thought of as a capacity to act in accordance with law through self-determination, then it must also be thought of as governed by rules. Accordingly, there must be some end that can serve as an objective ground of the will’s self-determination which Kant says provides the motive for volition. On Kant’s view, every volition must have an object or end that determines it (MM 5:34), and this end may be either an incentive (*Triebfeder*), which is purely subjective, or an objective ground of motivation (*Bewegungsgrund*).²² An end that is to determine the will of rational beings and is to be suitable for a categorical imperative cannot be a means to some other expected end nor can it be a subjective ground of desire. Ends that are selected subjectively are relative and provide the grounds only of hypothetical imperatives, which means they cannot be the grounds of a universal command. Kant asks us to consider an end that is not relative, existing objectively: “But suppose there

²² Jens Timmerman notes that the German word that Kant uses to denote an end of volition, *Zweck*, traditionally signifies a target an archer intends to hit. See Jens Timmerman, *Kant’s Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: A Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 91.

were something the existence of which in itself has an absolute worth, something which as an end in itself could be a ground of determinate laws; then in it, and in it alone, would lie the ground of a possible categorical imperative, that is, of a practical law” (G 4:427). In giving itself the moral law, reason will “presuppose only *itself*, because a rule is objectively and universally valid only when it holds without the contingent, subjective conditions that distinguish one rational being from another” (CPrR 5:21). Practical laws, therefore, are referred only to the will and not to some antecedently selected end.

Kant can now assert the analytic connection between the moral law and the will of the rational being and, with respect to human beings, the connection between obligation and the human will:

Now I say that the human being and in general every rational being exists as an end in itself, *not merely as a means* to be used by this or that will at its discretion; instead he must in all his actions, whether directed to himself or also to other rational beings, always be regarded *at the same time as an end*. (G 4:428)

Notice that Kant is asserting, not proving, that human beings are counted among rational beings. This assertion amounts to claiming that there is need of no additional empirical incentive in the application of the moral law as a command to the human will. Banham sums up nicely the implication: “In other words, if I am an end-in-itself then I must myself formulate from my own rational nature the law of rational action and hence be entirely self-directed when acting rationally.”²³ That the formal principle of the law directs willing toward a purely rational, objective, and universal end is true in the case of all rational beings by definition. In the peculiar case of human beings, though, the law must assume the form of a command that refers the human will to the objective end, in

²³ Banham, *Kant’s Practical Philosophy*, 72.

which case the initial formulation of the categorical imperative as a formal principle of obligation is complemented by another formulation that serves as a material principle.

III.2 Personhood and the Value of Humanity

The second formulation of the categorical imperative or “Formula of Humanity” runs thusly: “*So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means*” (G 4:429). Kant’s introduction of the concept of *person* is a pivotal move in his morality, and this concept is brought into relief through its contrast with the concept of *thing*. By Kant’s lights, a person is a thing (*Ding*) that cannot be used as an instrumental means for some other end and is contrasted from what we may call a “mere thing” (*Sache*), which has only “relative worth, as means” (G 4:428). Kant hereby provides a fuller notion of what constitutes an objective end for the will. Persons are ends in themselves because by their nature they possess the capacity to determine themselves to act from moral law *and* these moral actions are directed toward them. As ends-in-themselves, persons ought never to be used instrumentally as means to some other end that is to be effected by an action (G 4:437). And insofar as they are objective ends, they have an absolute worth and dignity for all rational beings. In contrast, any end that is purely subjective has only relative, conditional worth for whoever sets it.

Now, Kant is explicit that all rational beings are persons on account of (i) their capacity to act in accordance with the representation of moral law (G 4:412, 4:27) and (ii) their nature as an end in itself (G 4:428). As Hardy Jones observes, persons as ends

have a negative and positive aspect with respect to obligation.²⁴ In the negative sense, they serve as the “supreme limiting condition of all subjective ends” (G 4:431). In this way, the imperative commands that I do not act against the dignity and worth of rational beings. I am called to adapt my maxims to the universal form of moral law and to subordinate my subjective ends to the objective end. In the positive sense, persons are ends that ought to be the aim of my action. Thus, I can deduce duties toward persons that are ends, namely my own perfection and the happiness of others (see MM 6:382- 88).

The Formula of Humanity has been the subject of numerous studies, many of which in aiming to clarify have led to considerable confusion as to what Kant means by humanity and its relation to personhood. The problems tend to stem from the question as to what the defining characteristics of humanity are. Let us consider the interpretations found in the contemporary discussions of Kant’s practical philosophy.

Citing the *Groundwork* (at G 4:437) and the *Metaphysics of Morals* (at MM 6:392), Christine Korsgaard claims that “Kant takes the characteristic feature of humanity, or rational nature, to be the capacity for setting an end,”²⁵ and this capacity is what the Formula of Humanity commands us to “cherish unconditionally.”²⁶ She modifies this claim somewhat in the same essay when she writes:

But the distinctive feature of humanity, *as such*, is simply the capacity to take a rational interest in something: to decide, under the influence of reason, that something is desirable, that it is worthy of pursuit or realization, that it is to be

²⁴ See Hardy E. Jones, *Kant’s Principle of Personality* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971), 12-15.

²⁵ Christine M. Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 110.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

deemed important or valuable, not because it contributes to survival or instinctual satisfaction, but as an end—for its own sake.²⁷

In a more recent work, Korsgaard reiterates her original claim that the value of the human being consists in the capacity to confer value on objects:

As a Kantian I believe that it is our own choices that ultimately confer value on objects, even though our choices are responsive to certain features of those objects. In choosing objects, in conferring value on things that answer to our nature in welcome ways, an agent is affirming her own value. She takes what matters to her to matter absolutely and so to be worthy of her choice. But even if the agent herself believes this Kantian theory, it doesn't follow that she must think of herself as choosing objects simply because she wants or likes them. She can still talk to herself, and to others, about what she likes about them, and why.²⁸

This interpretation of Kant's idea of humanity as the capacity to set ends and to confer value on things has gained quite a bit of traction. For example, along the same lines as Korsgaard, Allen Wood equates humanity with rational nature: "What does Kant mean by 'humanity' when he says it is an end in itself? The term refers to the capacity to set ends and choose means to them (G, 437). It is being used interchangeably with 'rational nature.'" ²⁹ William Nelson likewise takes humanity in the categorical imperative to be the capacity to set ends. However, he presses this interpretation further than both Korsgaard and Wood in claiming that the autonomy of persons consists in their being "planning creatures," and that "treating persons as ends is a matter of treating the choices

²⁷ Ibid., 114. For a critique of Korsgaard's presentation of Kant's argument for the value of humanity, see Samuel J. Kerstein, "Korsgaard's Kantian Arguments for the Value of Humanity," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* (2001), 23-52; and Adrienne M. Martin, "How to Argue for the Value of Humanity," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87 (2006), 96-125.

²⁸ Christine M. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution: Action, Identity, and Integrity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 123.

²⁹ Allen Wood, "Humanity as End in Itself," in *Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: Critical Essays*, ed. Paul Guyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 171.

and plans they adopt freely from these kinds of manipulation [trickery, deception, or illegitimate threats]—their *values*, if you will—as at least *ceteris paribus* worthy of pursuit, the ends they set as worth attaining.”³⁰

I suggest that Korsgaard, Wood, and Nelson are conflating two senses of humanity found in Kant’s writings with their interpretation of the Formula of Humanity. It seems to me that Kant’s consideration of humanity as a predisposition, which takes place outside the *Groundwork*, is being read into the *Groundwork*’s formulation of the categorical imperative. By the same token, I do not think that Kant is using the term humanity for the categorical imperative in the sense of a predisposition. But before I make that case, let us look more closely at how the aforementioned commentators come to their understanding.

Korsgaard extrapolates her notion of humanity from Kant’s short essay, “Conjectural Beginning of Human History,” in which he allegorically describes the progression from instinct to the first stirrings of reason in human history (CBHH 112-115). Korsgaard points specifically to Kant’s description of the extension of reason in human beings toward objects that are not desired by mere inclination. Korsgaard writes: “They may be objects of desire or inclination, but it is reason that is responsible for the unique human characteristic of having non-instinctual desires.”³¹ She also points to Kant’s brief analysis of the three human predispositions to the good in his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, as does Wood.³² These three dispositions—

³⁰ William Nelson, “Kant’s Formula of Humanity,” *Mind* 117 (2008), 96-97.

³¹ Korsgaard, *Kingdom of Ends*, 113.

³² See Wood, “Humanity as End in Itself,” 173.

namely, animality, humanity, and personality—are the “elements of the determination of the human being” (R 6:26). Just as he did in the “Conjectural Beginning,” Kant associates humanity with certain rational processes such as choosing objects of desire and comparing one’s happiness with that of others. These processes include deliberation over possible ends that might be effected instrumentally by some action. Nevertheless, Kant is clear that these rational capabilities in humanity remain “practical, but only as subservient to other incentives” (R 6:28), ultimately directed toward happiness. So at first blush, it appears that both Korsgaard and Wood are correct in how they characterize humanity as a predisposition. The difficulties emerge, however, when they (along with Nelson) attempt to read this notion of humanity into the Formula of Humanity.

Korsgaard, Wood, and Nelson seem to understand the *Groundwork*’s concept of an objective end to be the sense of humanity in the “Conjectural Beginning” and the *Religion*.³³ Recall that it is Korsgaard who tells us that the Formula of Humanity orders us to cherish the capacity in humans for setting ends. Wood even tells us that it is humanity, not personhood, that is to be regarded as an end-in-itself.³⁴ But does Kant’s theory actually cohere with such an interpretation? Throughout the *Groundwork*, Kant makes reference to the inner worth and dignity of rational beings *as such* (G 4:428, 430, 438), and it is clear that this worth and dignity extends to human beings only insofar as they are rational beings. For Kant, rational beings or *persons* have the capacity for self-

³³ This tendency to view humanity rather than the person as an end in itself is exhibited even standardized in some quarters. For example, in his entry on “Person,” Howard Caygill makes no reference to persons as ends, but he does in his entry on “Humanity.” See Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 230, 315-16.

³⁴ Wood, “Humanity as End in Itself,” 173.

determination according to an objective moral law that issues from their will apart from any natural or subjective conditions. At the same time, that law is self-referential, meaning that it refers only to reason as an objective end. Quite unlike the “Conjectural Beginning” and the *Religion*, the *Groundwork* analyzes the formal and material principles of obligation with specific reference to the concept of a rational will in human beings. Thus, when Kant is expressing the formulae of the categorical imperative, he is presupposing the existence of a moral law in a rational being whose will is not naturally determined by reason; hence the moral law assumes the role of a command or an imperative for such a rational being. Assuming in *Groundwork* II that human beings are rational beings (cf. 4:428), Kant formulates the moral law as the categorical imperative so that it may apply to humans. Thus, Kant’s sense of humanity in the Formula of Humanity is such that it captures the obligatory form of the moral law for a being affected by subjective conditions. If Kant were using humanity in the *Groundwork* merely as the capacity to choose or set ends, to confer value upon objects, or to make plans, then his discussion of practical rationality would have terminated at the hypothetical imperative. But because the Formula of Humanity is a *categorical* imperative whose formal principle is the universal moral law for all rational beings, it presupposes humanity not only as instrumental reason, but also as personality. Accordingly, the Formula of Humanity as the material principle of obligation orders the submission of humanity’s instrumental reason to the dictates of pure practical reason, and it is this submission to moral law that constitutes the dignity of humanity. Matthew

Caswell is, then, quite right to suggest that Kant is not distinguishing between humanity and personality in the formulations of the categorical imperative:

Even in the *Groundwork*, Kant appears to be aware that the capacity for mere rational agency—what he will later define as “humanity”—does not itself amount either to freedom or to moral status, since he is usually careful to attach the qualifications of autonomy or personhood to his references to humanity. That is, in the *Groundwork*, the concept of humanity is already moralized; when Kant writes of the “idea of humanity as an end in itself,” this should be taken as already the idea of human personhood.³⁵

What Caswell cautiously claims is apparent, I declare is explicit. The concept of duty or obligation contains within itself concept of “a good will though under certain subjective limitations and hindrances” (G 4:397). The human will is thought of in this way.

Therefore, the human will *qua* practical reason is good and self-determining (personality)—an end-in-itself—and the human will *qua* faculty of desire follows subjective inclinations in deliberating on means to desired ends (humanity). Hence, Kant asserts in the *Groundwork* that violating the dignity of humanity is as much a transgression of the moral law as violating the dignity of any rational being. In the “Conjectural Beginning” and the *Religion*, when Kant discusses in the abstract the predispositions of human beings toward the good, he is not considering humanity from the standpoint of moral obligation. We must be careful not to import the sense of humanity in these works into the *Groundwork*. The sense of humanity in the *Groundwork* and Kant’s critical philosophy is conditioned by, in the words of Claudia Schmidt, a consideration of “the general empirical characteristics of the type of rational

³⁵ Matthew Caswell, “The Value of Humanity and Kant’s Conception of Evil,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2006), 648. Also see Arthur Melnick, “Kant’s Formulations of the Categorical Imperative,” *Kant-Studien* 93 (2002), 291-308 (especially 291-98).

agent whose volition is to be determined by these *a priori* principles.”³⁶ Therefore, the categorical imperative can only be read as commanding respect for pure practical rationality in human beings in addition to their capacity to set their own ends.

III.3 The World of Personality

Drawing from his analytical connection between the principle of morality and the concept of the will of a rational being, Kant defines personality as “freedom and independence from the mechanism of the whole of nature, regarded nevertheless as also a capacity of a being subject to special laws—namely pure practical laws given by his own reason.” (CPrR 5:86-87). I wish to close this section by considering the “two-world/two-aspect” debate in Kant scholarship, which centers on his claim that things are knowable only insofar as they are represented under the forms of sensibility through experience, in light of the idea of personality.

The careful inquiry of the first *Critique* yielded the insight that objects are cognized only as appearances (phenomena), leaving us without knowledge of them as things-in-themselves (noumena). Kant’s distinction between things as phenomena and noumena has given rise to conflicting opinions on what this distinction really amounts to. Generally speaking, two main camps have rallied around divergent interpretations, enlisting some of the most revered contemporary Kant scholars. On the one hand, there is the “two-world” model, whose chief representatives are Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. On the other hand, there is the “two-aspect” model, championed by Henry Allison. While the debate turns primarily on a tenet of Kant’s theoretical philosophy in the first

³⁶ Claudia M. Schmidt, “The Anthropological Dimension of Kant’s Metaphysics of Morals,” *Kant-Studien* 96 (2005), 70.

Critique, it has serious implications for how we are to understand his practical philosophy. For the moment, I want only to sketch these two rival conceptions of Kant's phenomena/noumena distinction before looking for clues for a possible resolution in Kant's idea of personality.

Allen Wood asserts that Kant forges an "aggressively metaphysical distinction between phenomena and noumena," which situates things as they are in themselves in "in a different world" than things as they appear.³⁷ Wood contends: "The phenomenal world includes everything as it is subject to our conditions of sense perception and ordered experience. These conditions include space, time, and strict causal connectedness according to necessary laws."³⁸ Since we do not have epistemic access to the noumenal world, on Wood's view all that can be known of this world is that it must be free of the conditions of the phenomenal world.

In his most recent restatement of the "two-world" view, Paul Guyer argues that Kant assumes, like his modern predecessors, that there are two things when we talk about our perception of a given object. On the one hand, there is the object itself and, on the other, the mental object or representation. Guyer claims that Kant merely radicalizes this sort of representationalism by transferring the properties of space and time, typically ascribed to the external object, to our representations alone:

But, for Kant, as for virtually every philosopher in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there *already were* two sorts of objects to hand, namely, ordinary objects and our mental representations of them, and all that Kant was doing, as he saw it, was *relocating* spatial and temporal properties from one kind

³⁷ Allen W. Wood, "Kant's Compatibilism," in *Self and Nature in Kant's Philosophy*, ed. Allen W. Wood (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 75.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

of object that everybody recognized—non-representations—to the other kind of object that everybody recognized—representations. So of course he held a “two-object” view: everyone (except Berkeley) did, though few would have agreed with Kant’s reassignment of spatio-temporal properties from ordinary objects to representations.³⁹

According to Guyer, because Kant relocated space and time, things in themselves lack entirely spatial and temporal properties. This not merely an epistemic shift, but a metaphysical one. By Guyer’s lights, the noumenal realm, precisely because it is devoid of spatial and temporal dimensions, “has to be numerically distinct” from a realm of objects of experience.⁴⁰

On Henry Allison’s “two-aspect” view, the phenomena/noumena distinction amounts to no more than “epistemic conditions” that hold “not between two ontologically distinct entities but between two perspectives from which ordinary empirical objects may be considered.”⁴¹ According to Allison, Kant posits noumena as the necessary, logical grounds of phenomena. We think of things-in-themselves as the grounds of thing-as-appearances by a shift in thought.

What have these two views to do with Kant’s idea of personality? I want to suggest that this idea may contribute to a resolution to the phenomena/noumena debate. With respect to the representation of the moral law, says Kant, we do not concern ourselves with anything that we experience in sensibility, be it an object or a natural inclination:

³⁹ Paul Guyer, *Kant* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 69.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁴¹ Henry E. Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, rev. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 35-38, 62.

For, the moral law is not concerned with cognition of the constitution of objects that may be given to reason from elsewhere but rather with a cognition insofar as it can itself become the ground of the existence of objects and insofar as reason, by this cognition, has causality in a rational being, that is, pure reason, which can be regarded as a faculty immediately determining the will. (CPrR 5:46)

Because the moral law is not cognized as part of our experience, it is not subject to the same conditions of possible experience that appearances are. The only source of this cognition is reason itself. Hence, Kant thinks we can do no more than to assert the moral law as a “fact of pure reason of which we are a priori conscious and which is apodictically certain” (CPrR 5.47) through our practical cognition (as opposed to theoretical cognition). Kant claims that cognition of this law does not appear to us in the manifold of experience, so it is not determined by the mechanism of nature. Cognized apart from the determination of causes and effects in nature, the moral law forces us to think of ourselves as free (CPrR 5:30). Henry Allison has called Kant’s assertion that the moral law implies a positive form of freedom and the presupposition of freedom implies the moral law the “Reciprocity Thesis”⁴² Allison breaks down the argument into the following four points:

- 1) As a “kind of causality” the will must, in some sense be law-governed or, in the language of the Second Critique, “determinable” according to some law (a lawless will is an absurdity).
- 2) As free, it cannot be governed by laws of nature.
- 3) It must, therefore, be governed by laws of a different sort; that is, self-imposed ones.
- 4) The moral law is the required self-imposed law.⁴³

What interests me most is the claim Kant makes about the way in which the moral law is thought. In theoretical reason, the concept of causality can only be applied to objects of

⁴² See Allison, “Morality and Freedom: Kant’s Reciprocity Thesis,” *Philosophical Review* 95 (1986): 393-425.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 398.

possible experience, phenomena. But in practical reason, in which I think the unconditioned moral law, I think of my will as possessing a causality of its own—the capacity for self-determination according to that law. In so doing, I conceive of myself as a *causa noumena*, that is, a being that has the freedom to determine itself (CPrR 5:55-57). In the Third Antinomy of the first *Critique*, Kant indicates that freedom as independence from the mechanism of nature at least could be thought to be possible, though this concept is empty to theoretical reason on account of its not being found in intuition. I can think of the will of a rational being as independent of sensibility in theoretical reason (negative freedom), and yet when I consider the presence of the moral law in that same being according to practical reason, I arrive at the condition of the possibility of that law, namely the positive conception of freedom as lawgiving. I think of the rational being as a being in itself beyond the limits of sensibility:

[M]oral law...provides a fact absolutely inexplicable from any data of the sensible world [*Sinnenwelt*] and from the whole compass of our theoretical use of reason, a fact that points to a pure world of the understanding [*Verstandeswelt*] and, indeed, even *determines* it *positively* and lets us cognize something of it, namely a law. (CPrR 5:43).

Kant's use of the term *Welt* in the context of the discussion of the noumenal and sensible states of the rational being seems to lend a bit of credence to the “two-world” view of Wood and Guyer. Indeed, Kant also uses the term *Welt* in the *Groundwork* to designate the same idea within the context of his proof for the possibility of the categorical imperative:

This must yield a distinction, although a crude one, between the world of sense [*Sinnenwelt*] and the world of understanding [*Verstandeswelt*], the first of which can be very different according to the difference of sensibility in various

observers of the world while the second, which is its basis, always remains the same. (G 4:451)

Kant also dubs the world of understanding the “intellectual world [*intellektuelle Welt*]” (G 4:451) or the “intelligible world [*intelligibele Welt*]” (CPrR 5:49).

Does Kant’s consistent use of *Welt* to describe the two domains of the rational being support the “two-world” interpretation? I suggest there are two reasons for answering in the negative. First, Kant qualifies his notion of *Welt* in both the *Groundwork* and in the second *Critique*, which suggests that he may not intend to convey an aggressive metaphysical distinction. Kant maintains that the idea of a *Verstandeswelt* or *intellektuellen Welt* provides an additional standpoint for viewing the same rational being:

Because of this a rational being must regard himself *as intelligence* [*Intelligenz*] (hence not from the side of his lower powers) as belonging not to the world of sense but to the world of understanding; hence he has two standpoints [*zwei Standpunkte*] from which he can regard himself and cognized laws for the use of his powers and consequently for all his actions; *first*, insofar as he belongs to the world of sense, under laws of nature (heteronomy); *second*, as belonging to the intelligible world, under laws which, being independent of nature, are not empirical but grounded merely in reason. (G 4:452)

And again:

The concept of a world of understanding is thus only a standpoint [*ist also nur ein Standpunkte*] that reason sees itself constrained to take outside appearances in order to think of itself as practical, as would not be possible if the influences of sensibility were determining for the human being but is nevertheless necessary insofar as he is not to be denied consciousness of himself as an intelligence and consequently as a rational cause active by means of reason, that is, operating freely. (G 4:458)

In these passages, it seems that *Welt* is not a metaphysical reality but only a concept that serves as a sort of intellectual vista, as it were. But Kant weakens the force of *Welt* even

further: “[W]ith a will free from impulses of sensibility he [the human being] transfers himself in thought into an order of things [*sich in Gedanken in eine ganz andere Ordnung der Dinge versetze*] altogether different from that of his desires in the field of sensibility.” (G 4:455; cf. CPrR 5:86). Characterizing the world of understanding as a destination in thought seems to show conclusively that Kant understands the noumenal world of the rational being to be epistemically, not metaphysically, distinct from its phenomenal world. Moreover, the *causa noumenon* is considered by Kant to be just “the other side [*andererseits*]” of a rational being in the sensible world (CPrR 5:48). At the very most, it seems that we can only say that if a world of noumena possesses any reality, then it is in virtue of being a *ens rationis*. This suggestion comports well with Guyer’s claim that Kant was merely following the tradition of modern philosophy’s representationalism. However, if this is indeed the case, then Kant still only provides us with an epistemic distinction.

A second reason to reject a “two-worlds” view of the rational being has been offered by both Terrence Irwin⁴⁴ and Hud Hudson.⁴⁵ We may describe this objection as the problem of correlation between the conception of two numerically distinct worlds that do not share the same temporal, spatial, or casual properties, where one of these worlds (the noumenal) is taken to be the cause of other (the phenomenal). Both Irwin and Hudson argue that the only way to render compatible these two “worlds” is to consider them in a logical, not causal relationship with the noumenal world of thing-in-

⁴⁴ See Terrence Irwin, “Morality and Personality: Kant and Green,” in *Self and Nature in Kant’s Philosophy*: 31-56.

⁴⁵ Hud Hudson, *Kant’s Compatibilism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), especially 25-26.

themselves as the necessary ground of the phenomenal world of appearances. This relation between the two worlds, as Ralf Merrbote notes, is one of numerical identity.⁴⁶ With respect to the rational being, Merrbote contends that “it is mistaken to say that according to Kant there is a sensuous will and a different rational will.”⁴⁷ If Meerbote is correct, and I believe he is, then what practical reason gains for us is a way of thinking of unified personal agency, which marks an advance over theoretical reason’s failure to acquire for us knowledge of personal identity in the Third Paralogism of the first *Critique*.⁴⁸

If we adopt the concept of the rational being as it is developed in Kant’s *practical philosophy*, as opposed to forcing that concept to comport with the limits of knowledge in the first *Critique*, then perhaps the debate over the distinction of noumena from phenomena can move a stop closer to resolution.

⁴⁶ Ralf Meerbote, “Kant on Freedom and the Rational and Morally Good Will,” in *Self and Nature in Kant’s Philosophy*, 61.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁸ On the indeterminacy of the theoretical concept of personal identity in the Third Paralogism, see Karl Ameriks, *Kant’s Theory of Mind: An Analysis of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 128-76; P. F. Stawson, “Kant’s Paralogisms: Self-Consciousness and the ‘Outside Observer,’” in *Theorie der Subjektivität*, eds. K. Cramer, H. Fulda, R.-P. Horstman, and U. Pothast (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987), 203-19; Patricia Kitcher, *Kant’s Transcendental Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 195-98; Thomas C. Powell, *Kant’s Theory of Self-Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 130-73; and Arthur Melnick, *Kant’s Theory of the Self* (New York/London: Routledge, 2009), 111-48.

IV. FEELING OF RESPECT AS MORAL INCENTIVE

IV.1 The Human Will's Need for Moral Incentive

Recall that Kant closed the *Inquiry* without developing the role moral feeling is to play in the fulfillment of moral obligation. As I mention above, this has led to not a few misunderstandings as to what that role is and what it means for Kant's complete moral theory. I have argued that we can read both the *Inquiry* and the *Observations* in veritable continuity with the critical ethics of the *Groundwork* and second *Critique*, which, I think, wins us some clarity in terms of where Kant was initially going with respect to moral feeling in the precritical ethics.

From the outset of the *Groundwork*, Kant is clear that his analytic demonstration of the principle of morality will not itself exhaust moral truth with respect to human action. For humans, it is not enough merely to represent objective laws. They also are in need of "judgment sharpened by experience, partly to distinguish in what cases they are applicable and partly to provide them with access to the will of the human being and efficacy for this fulfillment" (G 4:389). In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant reiterates this necessity in terms of duty: "At the same time this duty includes the cultivation of one's will (moral cast of mind), so as to satisfy all the requirements of duty" (MM 6:387). Something more than the discovery and cognition of the moral law is needed for human moral excellence, namely a sharpening or cultivation of the human person's moral sense. What distinguishes human beings from other rational beings is the exposure of their wills to subjective conditions such as sentiments and inclinations that prevent it from naturally being determined by pure reason. Kant is clear that the representation of

the supreme rule of morality alone will not provide a substantive reason for action in the case of human beings, even if they are successful in overcoming the influence of inclination. He attempts to account for the need of an incentive or motivation to act by carefully describing it in terms of practical rationality rather than in terms of nature or inclination. The cognition of the rule of morality is accompanied by a particular *feeling* that moves the human being to act in accordance with that rule.

But are not feelings tied to sensibility? The experience of pleasure and displeasure, which encompasses for Kant the totality of sensuous affection for practical philosophy, is “at bottom a pleasure in the existence of the object of a representation” (MM 6:212) that is, they are the product of sensibility.⁴⁹ Kant argues that feelings of pleasure and displeasure, which arise from objects in sensibility or from the anticipation of some object to be effected through action, cannot be cognized a priori because (i) “it is impossible to see a priori which representation will be accompanied by *pleasure* and *displeasure*” (CPrR 5:58) and (ii) these feelings are “restricted to individual subjects and their receptivity” (CPrR 5:59). If there is a moral feeling that can be cognized a priori and is to play some role in the fulfillment of duty, then it clearly is not a feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Moreover, an action from duty must “put aside entirely” any influence from sensibility (G 4:400).

In practical deliberation, human agents often find the supreme rule of morality infringing upon their natural inclinations toward self-satisfaction, self-love, and self-conceit. So what can possibly serve as an overriding motivating force against the pull of

⁴⁹ On the relation of feeling to representation, see Jeanine M. Grenberg, “Feeling, Desire and Interest in Kant’s Theory of Action,” *Kant-Studien* 92 (2001): 153-79.

natural inclinations? Kant explains that a particular feeling is necessary to prompt an agent to act from duty, but this feeling certainly cannot be pleasure or displeasure since these feelings are effected only after experience, that is, a posteriori. For Kant, only respect for the moral law fits the bill:

But since this [moral] law is still something in itself positive—namely the form of an intellectual causality, that is, of freedom—it 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 not of empirical origin and is cognized a priori. (CPrR 5:73)

[N]either fear nor inclination but simply respect for the law is that incentive which can give actions a moral worth. (G 4:400)

As necessitation, the moral law infringes upon the natural constitution and inclinations of the human being. Kant connects this infringement with feeling:

Hence the moral law unavoidably humiliates every human being when he compares with it the sensible propensity of his nature. 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. (CPrR 5:74)

The moral law has two effects on the sensible nature of the human being, one negative and one positive. On the one hand, the moral law effects the negative feeling of humiliation in the human being by exhibiting the conflict of his/her faculties of reason and sensibility; on the other hand, the moral law effects a positive feeling of respect insofar as it contributes to a “positive furthering of its causality.” (CPrR 5:75). On account of the connection between moral law and rational beings, respect for law is also respect for persons. In fulfilling the precepts of the moral law as they are commanded

through the categorical imperative, I am respecting my capacity of self-legislating. And because the moral law is universal and its end objectively holds for the will of every rational being, in respecting my own capacity to give myself the moral law, I respect the law-giving capacity of every rational being. Accordingly, Kant can state: “*Respect* is always directed only to persons, never to things” (CPrR 5:76; cf. G 4:40).

So while many critics of Kant are correct in assuming that a formal, supreme rule of morality is not in itself capable of motivating an agent, that is, of giving an agent a substantive reason for acting in accordance with the law, it is not correct to hold that Kant fails to take account of motivating factors in moral behavior. Respect for moral law and the persons toward which it is directed is “the sole and also the undoubted moral incentive” to fulfill the dictates of practical reason (CPrR 5:78).

IV.2 Education as Access to Moral Law

Before concluding my study, I wish to highlight the “descending” of the metaphysics of morals to the common, “popular concepts” found among all human beings (G 4:409), which Kant speaks of throughout his critical ethics. Kant does not chart the cognition of the supreme rule of morality and its corresponding concepts as the exclusive terrain of the philosopher. While Kant’s moral philosophy begins with common understanding of the concepts of obligation and moral feeling in order to ascend to the clarity and purity of the moral law in a metaphysics of morals, he wishes to bring his doctrine of morals to bear on popular morality. By means of education, Kant believes access to moral law can be granted to all human beings.

The idea of education proceeds from two sources, namely the rational concept of the moral perfection of humanity, which is found in reason, and the empirical observation that this concept has not yet been realized in humanity concretely and historically. A pedagogy must be developed, Kant contends, that has as its goal the attainment of human perfection, which is the moralization of humanity. Moral education raises the human being to the level of reason while forming and refining the power of judgment. Once at the level of reason, the human being is able to represent to himself/herself the objective moral law, no longer needing proposals or coercion by other persons. Moral education, then, does not serve as a means for legislating moral law or for coercing moral behavior. Indeed, only one's reason can legislate the moral law and determine the will purely to duty. Kant's pedagogical vision casts the educated human being not only as one who is capable of representing the moral law, but also as one capable of carrying out that law in practice. Through cultivation, the individual grows accustomed to choosing ends that are not merely instrumental while developing a profound reverence for moral law—a *moral feeling*:

A human being has a duty to carry the cultivation of his *will* up to the purest virtuous disposition, in which the *law* becomes also the incentive to his actions that conform with duty and he obeys the law from duty. This disposition is inner morally practical perfection. Since it is a feeling of the effect that the lawgiving will within the human being exercises on his capacity to act in accordance with his will, it is called moral feeling, a special sense (*sensus moralis*), as it were. (MM 6:87)

The goal of moral education, therefore, is to sow respect for one's moral capacity to legislate. While education initially aims to develop the skills and prudence for living in society and to refine instrumental reason, its penultimate goal is to bring about freely

acting moral beings who choose nothing but good ends for themselves from their freedom (LP 9:444, 455). The pupil in moral formation learns to act from his/her own maxims that are not arbitrary or instrumental, but universalizable according to the moral law. The cultivated person chooses nothing but good ends, that is, ends that are universal and approved by all (LP 9:450).

The analytic of practical reason moved from moral principles (law), to concepts of objects of practical reason (duties), to moral feeling (respect) (see CPrR 5:89-90). Moral education works in the opposite direction: “In education, we have first to awaken the moral feeling” (HNPP 27:10). The cultivation of respect for duties and persons leads to the recognition of the supreme law of morality. We can see, then, the reason behind Kant’s use of the four examples of testing maxims in the *Groundwork* for illustrating the application of the categorical imperative. They are not for the derivation of moral law, for Kant tells us as much: “Nor could one give worse advice to morality than by wanting to derive it from examples” (G 4:408). Rather, the examples serve a strict pedagogical purpose, relating the analytic demonstrations of moral concepts back to hypothetical scenarios easily grasped by the attentive reader. Through these examples—suicide, lying, cultivation of talents, sympathy for others—Kant works to awaken within us the respect for persons that is familiar to us all and is the center of all morally worthy choices. This, Kant thinks, can make accessible to common understanding the advances he makes in his pure moral philosophy.

V. CONCLUSION

To close, I draw attention back to the point Kant makes in the *Observations* that every human being feels a certain respect for the dignity of human persons. Through the analysis of moral concepts in the doctrine of morals, Kant claims that we can cognize this respect for persons a priori as a subjective effect within us and that it helps facilitate the fulfillment of duty. Nevertheless, respect for persons is still a basic feeling, observed in our ordinary day to day affairs. It is little wonder, then, that Kant first discusses this feeling within the context of an empirical, popular work like the *Observations*.

Kant was once asked by Johan Georg Sulzer the reason why a rational doctrine of morals accomplishes so little by way of motivating people to behave morally. Kant's reply, while presupposing the rigorous analytic demonstrations of his critical morality, was not a further lesson in the analytic metaphysics of morals. Rather, Kant pointed to something remarkable, yet pedestrian about our common experience:

For the most ordinary observation shows that if we represent, on the one hand, an action of integrity done with steadfast soul, apart from every view to advantage of any kind in this world or another and even under the greatest temptations of need or allurements, it leaves far behind and eclipses any similar act that was affected in the least by an extraneous incentive; it elevates the soul and awakens a wish to be able to act in like manner oneself. Even children of a moderate age feel this impression, and one should never represent duties to them in any other way. (G 4:412)

True to his initial insight in the *Observations*, arrived at two decades before the *Groundwork*, Kant takes the dignity of the human person to be evident to any spectator of moral excellence, be it the professor who first looks for the cause of that feeling in the moral law or the child who is roused to recognize the inherent dignity in every human being.

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