

IMMANUEL KANT AND T.H. GREEN ON EMOTIONS,
SYMPATHY, AND MORALITY

A Thesis

by

WAYNE JUSTIN DOWNS

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

December 2009

Major Subject: Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Immanuel Kant and T.H. Green on Emotions,
Sympathy, and Morality. (December 2009)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Michael LeBuffe

In this work I investigate the role of emotion in the moral philosophies of Immanuel Kant and T.H. Green. Noting Kant's reputation as a rationalist holding a predominately negative view toward emotions, I studied the works of Kant with this two-fold question in mind: Why did Kant allegedly find emotions as hindrances to moral actions, and what exactly would such a view entail if it were indeed his perspective? Based on Kant's writings regarding duties to others in *Doctrine of Virtues*, I show that in his discussion on sympathetic actions there appears to be a reliance on emotions in the construction of a moral response to another's fate.

I place Kant's theory in juxtaposition with T.H. Green's moral philosophy because Green, a lesser-known British Idealist, is commonly presented as a theorist within the Kantian tradition. However, working exclusively with Green's major work, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, there are notable differences between Kant and Green. Green does not hold a negative view of emotions as Kant did, and more fundamentally, the distinction between Kant and Green stems from their differing perspectives of human nature. Whereas Kant presented human nature as comprised of two coexisting, and

conflicting, natures – the animal nature and the moral nature – Green dissolved this dualism by making reason that which unifies the human being’s animal nature and moral nature.

Hence, it is my purpose to study Green’s moral philosophy against the backdrop of Kant’s moral theory, with particular focus on the role of emotions and sympathy in human behavior. In this comparative analysis, I show how Green’s theory, although heavily indebted to Kant, works to correct some problematic issues that arise from Kant’s denigration of emotions inherent in his dualism. Furthermore, in this discussion that begins as an examination of two views on the relationship between emotions and morality, one is pressed to entertain a deeper question concerning how these thinkers arrived at their views of human nature. This progression is indeed appropriate, at least when considering Kant and Green, because their regard for emotions is directly dependent upon their views of human nature as distinct from animal nature. In the end, it is suggested that Green’s theory not only serves to correct Kant’s work, but by rectifying Kant’s problematic dualistic view of human nature, Green created a philosophy all his own that may more accurately represent the true nature of humankind.

DEDICATION

To Amy, Maxwell, Belle, and Mollie

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Attention to the role of emotions in human behavior is an important but often neglected aspect of moral philosophy. It is arguable that such neglect could be attributed to the prevalence in moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant's dualistic perspective of human nature, in which Kant theorized that animal impulses conflict with reason in situations that elicit a sense of obligation. Noting Kant's reputation as a rationalist holding a predominately negative view toward emotions, I studied the works of Kant with this two-fold question in mind: Why did Kant allegedly find emotions as hindrances to moral actions, and what exactly would such a view entail if it were indeed his perspective? Although Kant is commonly portrayed as having only a negative opinion toward the role of emotions in moral behavior, in his discussion on sympathetic actions Kant does after all rely on emotions in the construction of a moral response to another's fate.

T.H. (Thomas Hill) Green, a lesser-known British Idealist, perhaps needs a more thorough introduction. However, rather than providing encyclopedic biographical information, I wish to discuss briefly a few major influences on his philosophy. Green's moral philosophy is heavily indebted to the works of Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Mill and Darwin. While the moral theories of Hume, Kant and Mill are often handled as paradigmatically incompatible, in his major philosophical work *Prolegomena to Ethics (PE)*,¹

This thesis follows the style of *The Journal of Philosophy*.

¹T.H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, edited by David O. Brink (New York: Clarendon/Oxford Press, 2003). Green's *PE* was originally published posthumously in 1883 by Oxford Press, edited by A.C. Bradley. My analysis of Green's philosophy is restricted exclusively to what is found in his *PE*.

Green attempted to bridge some of the large gaps between the philosophies of these thinkers. Green's end product in his attempt to respect the philosophies of the great thinkers ultimately contains a Kantian familiarity, but, in a compelling way, Green managed to consider and utilize the thoughts of Aristotle, Hume, Mill and Darwin in the construction of his moral philosophy.

Green's approach to all the figures listed above was predominately with a posture of critique, yet in his critiques of each individual he did not find it necessary to discard any one thinker's insight in its entirety simply because he disagreed with certain premises or conclusions found therein. Rather, Green salvaged those parts he found truthful, producing a philosophy that seems a consistent and valuable account of human morality. Green's theory resonates most closely to that of Kant, although, as we will see, Green's concept of the good depends greatly on Aristotle.

It will be my purpose here to study Green's moral philosophy against the backdrop of Kant's moral theory, with particular focus on the role of emotions and sympathy in human behavior. Ultimately, in this comparative analysis, I wish to show how Green's theory, although heavily indebted to Kant, works to correct some problematic issues that arise from Kant's denigration of the role of emotions inherent in Kant's dualism.

Chapter I

In Chapter I, I will work to show that Kant did value, to a certain extent, the role of emotions in moral behavior. For those familiar with Kantian studies, it is well known that Kant proposed a dualistic view of human nature in which one's animal inclinations

are distinguished from one's moral capacity. Therefore, I begin by investigating why Kant took such a position. For Kant, there was a stark contrast between desire-based determinants and reason-based determinants. The desire-based determinants are those produced by one's animal impulses, with no regard for reason. On the other hand, the reason-based determinants are those produced by reason, as reason conquers the animal impulses elicited in certain, moral, situations.

While these two types of determinants were often thought of as faculties in tension with each other according to Kant, in the event of sympathetic duty, Kant maintained a degree of reliance upon the animal feelings, for they are responsible for creating in the observer an awareness of the other's circumstances. That is to say, that in an occasion of sympathetic feeling, our attention to our animal feelings provides for us a preliminary emotional awareness to another's pleasure or pain. Given this awareness, we are morally responsible for presenting to ourselves a situation of duty – that is, a situation demanding a response guided by reason. Thus, in Kant's view of moral sympathetic action, the animal feelings and moral feelings converge to form a call of duty and to appropriately respond to that call.

However, while Kant's writings on sympathy will be used in the first chapter to illustrate the purposive role of emotions in dutiful action, it remains true that for Kant, it was reason, detached from sensible, animal feelings that interprets emotions and prescribes the appropriate responses. Thus, while we can see that Kant's theory may consist of an account of the purposiveness of emotions, in the end, reason must conquer the sensible feelings in order for the sympathetic action, or any action, to be a moral action.

Chapter II

The concept at the heart of T.H. Green's moral philosophy is his theory of the common good, which, tersely stated, consists of the idea that individuals are mutually dependent upon each other; thus one's well-being is contingent upon the well-being of others. Accordingly, sympathy has much to do with Green's concept of common good. In efforts to undergird his theory on the common good, Green had to meticulously redefine several terms that had been strongly influenced by Kant's usage of them. By redefining terms, Green, obviously, changed their meanings, which in turn means that Green was effectively creating a philosophy all his own.

The term "desire" is just one example of a term redefined by Green, but it is foretelling of a key distinction between Kant and Green. Green believed that the difference between an animal desire and a human desire is based in the concept that human beings have the rational capacity to present their animal desires to themselves and create ideal objects they wish to obtain. Thus, a human desire has not only the endorsement of reason, but it is produced by the person's capacity to reason. However, unlike Kant's theory that claims a convergence of two mutually exclusive feelings – the animal feeling and the moral feeling – Green proposed continuity between the animal desire and the rational desire, claiming that it is the animal feeling that is processed via self-consciousness, becoming a rationalized, or moralized, desire.

Sympathetic actions, for Green, are produced in much the same way as human desires are formed. That is to say that the animal feeling of sympathy is processed by a self-conscious, moral being who holds conceptions of what is good and what will lead to

a state of betterment. As the self-conscious being presents her animal feelings to herself, the animal feelings are moralized in the sense that they become feelings with which a moral agent identifies herself. Noting, however, that Green believed that human beings are inherently social creatures, it followed, for Green, that as one formulates her own concept of the good, she necessarily includes what is good for others. Thus, just as animal desires become moralized, or rationalized, desires when they are desires with which one identifies herself and her good, animal feelings of sympathy become moral feelings of sympathy when one identifies her well-being as affecting, and effected by, the pleasures and pains of others.

Chapter III

Kant and Green agreed in distinguishing animal actions from moral actions, upholding a high regard for the role of reason in moral action, and also in emphasizing the concept of a community of ends. Although Green's moral philosophy was greatly influenced by Kant's philosophy on these points, there is a considerable difference between the two thinkers that hinges on their differing perspectives of human nature. Green opposed Kant's dualistic view of human nature, which consisted of the coexisting animality and rationality within human beings. For Kant, these two natures in humankind could, and would, conflict when one is presented with a situation in which she must determine whether she will act as directed by her animal inclinations, or act as guided by reason. According to Kant, if the agent's action is led by her animal impulses, the action is selfish and immoral. Conversely, if her actions are guided by reason, then the actions are in harmony with the moral law, and therefore morally good.

Green distinguished the animal nature from the rational nature in human beings without viewing these natures as conflictual. Essentially, Green thought of human beings as self-conscious animals. In other words, we could think of a human being, according to Green's account, as an animal that possesses the capacity to reflect on concepts of herself and who conceptualizes her experiences in such a way that she is motivated by and toward ideas rather than given stimuli. However, without the given stimuli, the agent would have no content on which to reflect. Of course, Kant would agree with that much, but Green applied this reasoning to feelings and desire. As a result, Green proposed that human beings, given their self-consciousness and faculty of reason, present their animal feelings and desires to themselves and transform those very feelings into moral feelings. Thus, rather than seeing the animal nature and moral nature as presenting opposing desires to an individual, which creates grounds for conflict according to Kant, Green viewed the animal feeling as the content for deliberation that is rationalized through the process of self-conscious awareness.

Chapter IV

Interestingly, we find that in this discussion that began as an examination of two views on the relationship between emotions and morality, we are pressed to entertain a deeper question concerning the how the thinkers being considered viewed human nature. This progression indeed seems appropriate, at least when considering Kant and Green, because we find that their regard for emotions is directly dependent upon their views of how human nature is distinct from animal nature.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN KANT'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Kant is often portrayed as having predominately a negative perspective on how emotions influence morality. Consequently, it is often assumed that an examination of the role of emotions in Kant's ethics will not yield a rich theory of the place of emotions in morality. Such a misperception of Kant is unfortunate, I believe, and reflects a superficial or incomplete understanding of Kant's collective work. It may surprise readers who have characterized Kant as a cold intellectualist to find that the dynamics of emotions and feelings are very much at the heart of what separates rational, moral beings from animals. Kant recognized that the complex nature of human beings is one in which both animality and rationality reside, and it is this dual nature that is responsible for the internal conflict we feel in deliberation. Kant made a profound distinction, however, between pathological, natural or sensible feelings such as pleasure and pain, and moral feelings, which he defined as those derived from "the capacity to be affected by a moral judgment."¹

This chapter provides reasons for reconsidering Kant's position on the role of emotions in his moral theory. In the section "The Problem with Emotions," I undertake an investigation into how and why Kant distinguished pathological feelings from moral feelings. This is one reason for thinking that Kant should not be accused of a negative or devalued appreciation of emotionality, for the problem in wrong action, really, is not the

¹Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, transl. by Louis Infield (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 44 – 45

occurrence of emotion in deliberation but the disregard to reason. Then, in “Purposive Emotions,” I argue that Kant’s discussion of sympathy shows a more favorable account of the role of emotions in morality. I focus on the topic of Kant’s perspective on sympathy, for in his writings sympathy is presented as a peculiar human experience that involves both pathological, animalistic feelings and moral feelings determined by reason. Thus, based upon Kant’s theory regarding sympathy, I will attempt to show that Kant did not always view emotion as an obstruction to one’s fulfillment of moral obligations.

The Problem with Emotions

Kant was interested in distinguishing two motivational aspects found within human nature. Human beings experience both sensible, pathological feelings and moral feelings, and it is the unique struggle of a human being to have her will determined by reason rather than sensible inclinations. Referencing section XV of Kant’s *Introduction to the Doctrine of Virtue*, Roger J. Sullivan states, “If we do not deliberately adopt the motive of duty, we inevitably end up acting only on maxims of self-love, that is, on prudential motives.”² Sullivan’s interpretation is, I believe, in sound accordance with Kant on this matter, and highlights the concept that emotional situations present an opportunity for rational appraisal.

Given the opportunity to deliberately choose whether to adopt the motive of duty or act on maxims of self-love, Susan Purviance argues that the sensed conformity with

²Roger J. Sullivan, *Immanuel Kant’s Moral Theory* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989),127.

the moral law, even if the conformity causes some pain, ultimately leads to an “exultant feeling of pleasure in freedom,” for as “the moral law frees us from conceptions of ourselves as wholly subject to laws of nature, we experience it as liberating, and therefore pleasant.”³ The moral law is liberating, but it also seems to suggest some form of restriction, just as the nature of any other law. Nonetheless, the law is liberating because the free moral being restricts herself by the guidance of her own autonomous faculty of reason. It is one’s own reasoning that recognizes the moral law and provides the agent the ability to determine what actions are in harmony with the law. Thus, the law is restrictive, yet freeing, simultaneously because the law is essentially self-determined by one’s reason.

The obstacle that exists between a person and her possible attainment of freedom is one’s enslavement to animalistic impulse. This enslavement to desires, emotions, or animalistic inclinations, however, is self-subjugated, and therefore one can emancipate oneself by following the guidance of reason. Affirming Kant’s concept that emotions can and should be cultivate, Maria Borges points out, “Emotions have cognitive and evaluative content; however, they are not trustworthy in showing us what to do. ...emotions should be scrutinized by reason.”⁴ It is not the case that emotions are intrinsically bad, but if they are what determine the will with no regard to reason, then they are effectively detaining one from her capacity to act rationally, thus thwarting freedom. To better

³Susan M. Purviance, “The Apriority of Moral Feeling,” *Idealistic Studies* 29 (1999), 85.

⁴Maria Borges, “What Can Kant Teach Us About Emotions,” *Journal of Philosophy* 101:3 (2004), 153.

understand Kant's logical progression on the matter of why inclinations can hinder achieving freedom, we will turn here to Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*.⁵

Desire-based Determinants Versus Reason-based Determinants

In Book One of *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant began his argument for why pure practical reason is not only capable of grounding behavior, but why it is superior to any "reasoning" that is based on desires of the will. Battling the philosophy of the empiricists, Kant began Book One with focused attacks on the faulty ideology that claimed that wills determined by desires can ever lead to sound moral laws. It often appears, however, when looking at one's own actions or those of another that the motives driving a person's actions are rooted in desires. Humans, as rational beings are periodically driven by their desires, yet they remain rational beings. Kant did not dispute that fact. What Kant said is that a person's will is either determined by desire or by reason. Why must there be, for Kant, such a hard distinction between desire-based determinants of the will and reason-based determinants of the will?

At the outset of Book One, Kant provided the definition that "practical principles are propositions that contain a general determination of the will."⁶ He immediately distinguished subjective personal principles called *maxims* from objective *laws*, which are principles that hold for all rational beings. This first step Kant took is crucial in his moral philosophy. In this, Kant acknowledged the abilities of people to create their

⁵Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. and transl. by Mary J. Gregor (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 135 – 271.

⁶Kant, *CPrR*, 153.

individual systems for governing their own behavior, and yet there are principles that hold true on their own, not contingent upon an individual's subjectivity. It is by the vehicle of pure reason that rational beings have an awareness of the objective laws. Although pure reason does contain within itself a practical ground sufficient to determine the will, Richard McCarty notes Kant's remarks from *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, that one's subjective interests guided by desire can overrule a cognized law.⁷ It is natural for a person's will to be determined by his or her own maxims, but it is moral only if one would live as the laws determine.

Kant stated, "A practical rule is always a product of reason because it prescribes action as a means to an effect, which is its purpose."⁸ The rules produced by reason are called *imperatives* by Kant for they express what one "ought" to do. It is important to note here that reason produces the imperatives, which signifies that although the imperatives are objective, they come from one's own being (unlike the external objective reality of Plato's Forms). The imperatives, however, may be themselves conditioned by desire. In such cases, the imperatives are hypothetical and subjective, making them maxims – rules one gives oneself though be it the individual cannot universalize these rules. It is only when reason alone, with no influence from desire, determines the will that an imperative is an objective categorical law. The slightest inception of desire factoring into the determination of one's will renders the subsequent action as one based on subjective maxims.

⁷Richard McCarty references *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, §24-25/29-30. McCarty, "Motivation and Moral Choice in Kant's Theory of Rational Agency," *Kant-Studien* 85 (1994), 426-7.

⁸Kant, *CPrR*, 154.

When a person incorporates desire in determining the person's will, reason is undercut. The presence of desire shifts reasoning from aptly directing one's will by its own competency that is not dependent upon experience to becoming a tool capable of helping one get what he or she wants. Kant argued that a shift from pure reason to desire-based reasoning inevitably entails that one will act in a self-interested way based on personal experiences of what has caused, or is expected to cause pleasure or pain for the individual. The important factor Kant pointed out is that desire cannot be cognized a priori, nor can personal desire furnish a law that would hold its validity for every rational being. Desires are always empirical and they are unable to render any laws because, simply put, different people find pleasure and displeasure in different things. One argument of the empiricists – that all rational beings are effectively seeking happiness – seems plausible on the surface. It may be the case that all human beings seek happiness, but if happiness is positioned as the supreme determining ground in choice, then one is enslaved to self-love.

Kant responded to the suggestion made by empiricists of his time that perhaps there can be found a distinction between the “lower” and “higher” faculties of desire.⁹ Kant argued that anytime pleasure is the determining ground of the will it is of one and the same kind of desire. The only thing that differs in pleasure is the degree to which it is felt. Kant stated:

If the determination of his will rests on the feeling of agreeableness or disagreeableness that he expects from some cause, it is all the same to him by what kind of representation he is affected. The only thing that concerns him, in

⁹Kant, *CPrR*, 156.

order to decide upon a choice, is how intense, how long, how easily acquired, and how often repeated this agreeableness is. ...no one asks, when he is concerned only with the agreeableness of life, whether representations belong to the understanding or to the senses but only *how much* and *how great* satisfaction they will furnish him for the longest time.¹⁰

The principle of happiness, Kant concluded, no matter how influenced by reason, belongs to the “lower” faculty of desire. Pure reason is the only true “higher” faculty, and it must be completely detached from desire.¹¹

There is no doubt that the desire for happiness is felt by every natural being. The universal condition among humans, however, does not suggest a respective universality of means resulting in happiness. Happiness, or satisfaction, according to Kant, is a problem imposed upon humankind due to its needy, finite nature. All humans are needy and seek satisfaction, but what one deems satisfactory or dissatisfying is clearly a matter of subjective taste equivalent to what one finds pleasing or displeasing. There is no specific thing that makes humankind happy, thus there is no law that can suggest how *all* rational beings should go about becoming happy. Kant claimed that even if all human beings could agree on what produces pleasure and pain, the determining factor for their actions would still be affixed to an empirical grounding rather than originating in reason.

Readers can get confused about what Kant said regarding happiness and empirical determinants of the will. It is possible to read these initial sections in Book One and conclude that Kant did not take feelings or experiences seriously, or that Kant did not value happiness. Many inappropriately depict Kant as a depressing, cold

¹⁰Kant, *CPrR*, 157.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 158.

character with a moral philosophy too aloof to ever be plausible. The sections discussed above could be cited as proof for such claims. A careful analysis, however, paints a different picture.

It is not that Kant belittled sentiments, but he argued persuasively that they should not be seen as legitimate groundings for moral laws. Pleasure and pain cannot lead one to universal laws because they are rooted in subjectivity. Likewise, happiness is thoroughly subjective, even though all human beings long for it. Kant does not deny the authenticity of feelings, but he refutes their soundness when they are inappropriately placed as motives that might lead to a proper understanding of human morality. Kant argued later, in Book Two, that happiness conditioned by virtue is an acceptable end. Everyone wants to be happy. The empiricists said that one should do things that make one happy in order to be happy. While that sounds commonsensical, Kant reordered the situation and claimed that people should do that which is determined by reason to be objectively right, and those actions will hopefully lead one to happiness.

Perhaps another way to look at the difference between empiricists and Kant is to ask what they viewed the bonding agent among humanity to be. It appears that empiricists would claim that all rational beings have a common repertoire of sentiments, and therefore, based on those sentiments, one can build not only an explanation of morality, but a prescription for moral behavior as well. Although all humans might have such a shared repertoire of sentiments, these do not lead a collective body of individuals in any particular direction. Kant, therefore, declared reason to be the common possession

of rational beings that springs forth from within the individual, giving her autonomy, and yet solely capable of leading individuals in one and the same direction.

Recalling Kant's discussion of "objective" and "subjective" determinants of the will as presented in Kant's *Groundwork*, Jeanine M. Greenberg points out, "When Kant speaks of an 'objective determination' of the will, he is concerned with how it is that the will of a being is connected essentially – i.e., objectively – with universal rational principles."¹² If Greenberg is correct in her analysis, then it can be said that Kant found the objective law to be a bonding agent that connects rational beings while it remains autonomously recognized. It follows then, that actions based on desires attenuate one's relational standing with other rational beings because differing desires lead people in different directions. According to Kant, one's freedom is declared to be compromised if one is "enslaved" to self-love, but moreover, desire-based actions that result in self-love dissolve community. Thus, Kant claimed that the distinction between desire-based determinants and reason-based determinants is "the most important distinction that can ever be considered in practical investigation."¹³

Purposive Emotions

To this point, Kant has been shown to have seemingly denigrated desires and animalistic, natural inclinations in such a way that it might prove difficult to recapture the value of emotions and feelings altogether. Nevertheless, it is clear that emotions,

¹²Jeanine M. Greenberg, "Anthropology from a Metaphysical Point of View," *Journal of History of Philosophy* 37:1 (1999), 108. Greenberg references passages 412 – 413 in Kant's, *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. and transl. by Mary J. Gregor (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 65 – 67.

¹³Kant, *CPrR*, 160.

inclinations, or feelings are certainly a major component of the human condition. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, specifically in *Duties of Virtues to Others*¹⁴, Kant had a much friendlier perspective on feelings, and in fact, it is evident in Kant's writings that there is a specific role for emotions and feelings within the schema of adherence to the moral law.

In his *Doctrine of the Element of Ethics*, Kant paid careful attention to the duties one has to herself (Part I) and to the duties one has to others (Part II). In both parts of the *Doctrine of the Elements of Ethics*, Kant confronted the division that resides among all human individuals – that human beings must view themselves as both animal (natural) beings, and as moral beings guided by reason. This distinction is integral in Kant's duties of virtue, for it serves to capture the full spectrum of human nature. Humankind's animality consists of a person's natural aims to self-preservation, preservation of the species, and preservation of the capacity to enjoy life. As a moral being, on the other hand, one considers the consistency of the maxims of his or her will with the dignity of humanity in his person, without taking his impulsive nature into consideration.¹⁵ At all times, both components – one's animality and one's moral faculty – coexist, but in so far as one is a moral being, one assumes self-prohibitive measures and effectively deafens her ears to the natural, animalistic impulses. The case of sympathetic feeling as a general duty, however, is a peculiar situation. Not only should one listen to his or her sensible impulses, but one relies upon these impulses to alert oneself to the call for response.

¹⁴Immanuel Kant, *Doctrine of Virtue*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, edited and translated by Mary J. Gregor (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 541 – 588.

¹⁵Kant, *DV*, §4, 545.

Sympathy – The Convergence of Emotion and Reason

The duty to sympathetic feeling would appear to be a self-contradictory concept in Kant's philosophy at first glance. The question of how one could instate a feeling as a duty seems mysterious given that duties are not to be influenced by feelings by Kant's definition of what a duty is and what it means to act in a purely rational, moral way. As the reader might expect, however, Kant is far too exacting to commit such a clumsy error as a blatant self-contradiction. Kant's explanation of how a sympathetic feeling can be a general duty is in §34 and §35 of his discussion on duties of virtues to others. In these subsections, Kant addressed the rare occurrence in which sensible feelings and moral feelings work together to constitute a moral response to another's needs. In order to contextualize these sections, it is necessary to point out some key issues raised in preceding sections of *The Doctrine of Virtue*.

Kant began *Duties of Virtues to Others* with a discourse on the duty of love and respect to other human beings. Kant stated, "Love and respect are the feelings that accompany the carrying out of these duties [to others]."¹⁶ Initially, it might sound as though Kant is allowing emotion an instrumental role in dutiful action. Kant, shortly thereafter, cleared himself of self-contradiction by defining love and respect not as "mere feelings," but in terms of maxims. The feeling of love is in actuality a result of acting in accordance to the maxim of benevolence, which results in beneficence,¹⁷ and

¹⁶Kant, *DV*, §23, 568.

¹⁷Kant distinguished benevolence from beneficence with the following definitions: "Benevolence is satisfaction in the happiness (well-being) of others; but beneficence is the maxim of making other's happiness one's end, and the duty to it consists in the subject's being constrained by his reason to adopt this maxim as a universal law." Kant, *DV*, §29, 571.

the feeling of respect is a product of following the maxim of limiting one's own self-esteem by acknowledging the dignity of another person.¹⁸ The reader can see from this alone that Kant must have a precise definition for the word "feeling" in mind, but is Kant simply playing games with lexical semantics? Is Kant's usage of "feeling" not that which is commonly thought of when we refer to our feelings?

Kant indeed had a carefully articulated definition of "feeling," but that is not to say that he was guilty of syntactical mischief. Kant distinguished *pathological* feelings from *moral* feelings early on in his *Introduction to the Duties of Virtue*.¹⁹ In section XII of the *Introduction*, Kant explicitly stated that *moral feeling*, along with consciousness, love, and respect are all natural moral endowments that every human being has, and one's consciousness of them follows as a result of the existence of the moral law.²⁰ Thus, Kant's usage of "feeling" in regards to love and respect is to be understood as the state of being subjectively moved by pure practical reason, as opposed to being moved emotively by pathological stimuli. If one were entirely deficient of the former feeling, then one would be "morally dead," and his or her humanity would "dissolve into mere animality and be mixed irretrievably with the mass of other natural beings."²¹ Moral feelings, then, are not simply cultivated pathological feelings. Taking into account several passages of Kant's works, Roger J. Sullivan explains:

¹⁸Kant, *DV*, §25, 569.

¹⁹Kant, *Introduction to the Doctrine of Virtue*, 512 – 540.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 528.

²¹*Ibid.*, 529.

As feelings, moral sentiments are both pathological and subjective.... They are pathological in the sense that they all are felt as somatic or bodily occurrences, affecting us in various ways and degrees as sensuous beings. They are subjective because they are conditions necessary for agents like us, who need sensuous moral incentives to feel morally obligated.... However similar they may be to *merely* pathological feelings and desires in other respects, moral sentiments are radically different in one critical respect: They do not have their origin in empirical sources outside our own reason so that we only passively feel them.... Kant makes the contrast between the two this way: Our desires are *merely* pathological when we “represent something to ourselves as good, if and because we desire (will) it,” whereas when we experience moral desires, “we desire something because we represent it to ourselves as good” on the basis of a prior judgment of the moral law within us.²²

According to Sullivan’s explanation, Kant claimed that reason *produces* moral feeling.

This moral feeling, then, is an effect of the recognized moral law.

The case of sympathy is to be understood in a similar fashion as love and respect, although there is a difference. Kant temporarily blurred the line of distinctions between pathological feeling and moral feeling in his introductory sentences to §34, which reads:

Sympathetic joy and sadness (sympathia moralis) are sensible feelings of pleasure or displeasure (which are therefore called “aesthetic”) at another’s state of joy or pain (shared feelings, sympathetic feeling). Nature has already implanted in human beings receptivity to these feelings.... It is called the duty of *humanity (humanitas)* because a human being is regarded here not merely as a rational being but also as an animal endowed with reason.²³

In titling sympathetic joy and sadness as “sensible feelings,” one might think that sympathy is going to belong solely to the repertoire of natural emotive feelings and hence lack moral value. If our receptivity to sympathetic feeling is implanted in us by

²²Sullivan references *Critique of Pure Reason* §59; *Groundwork* §413, §460; *Metaphysics of Morals* §378, §399. Sullivan, 132.

²³Kant, *DV*, §34, 574 – 575.

nature, then how can the responsiveness to another's state of joy or pain be a "duty of *humanity*"?

Rather than assigning a specific maxim to sympathy and arguing that sympathy is entirely a product of reason, Kant refers back to his distinction of a human being's constant possession of animality and rationality. Kant granted the fact that sympathetic feeling is natural and receptive. Human beings naturally share in the joy and pain of others. In fact, Kant granted that the receptivity to these feelings does not even require a choice to do so, but therein lies the problem for Kant. Human beings are bound to sensible sympathetic feeling, thus they are no freer to choose to share another's joy or pain than they are to share a contagion. The lack of choice clearly underscores the fact that the sensible feeling of sympathy is void of reason, and therefore, although natural occurrences of sympathy may provoke responses beneficial to an animal, individual, or a species, it does not constitute a moral response.

To this point, however, we have only discussed the animalistic side of sympathy. Therefore, in order to ensure that sympathetic feeling can have moral worth, Kant stated that one's *humanity*, in an occasion of sympathetic feeling shows itself in one's *capacity* and *will* to share in others' feelings.²⁴ As moral agents, human beings have the freedom to willingly share in others' conditions as guided by practical reason. By the guidance of reason, it is indeed a duty to share in others' conditions. But how does this differ from the sharing of feelings that derives from sensible sympathetic feelings?

²⁴Kant, *DV*, §34, 575.

Kant stated, “When another suffers and although I cannot help him, I let myself be infected by his pain (through my imagination), then two of us suffer, though the trouble really (in nature) affects only *one*.”²⁵ Kant stated that he “let” himself be infected “through his imagination,” but that is not to suggest that the pain is any less real for the sympathizer. The pain and suffering shared between the troubled person and the sympathizer is genuine pain and suffering for each person. By “imagination,” he illustrated that there was no direct cause for his pain other than his recognition of the other person’s dignity being compromised by suffering. Hence, “imagination” conveys that moral sympathy is an event of contemplation. Borges explains the role of imagination in conjunction with feelings by presenting how some affects involve a moral assessment that is connected with one’s beliefs regarding another’s situation.²⁶ If we are to agree with Borges, then the reaction to what is comprehended via imagination is emotive, but the call to respond and course of action to be taken are dictated by reason.

By “letting” himself be infected, Kant expressed the component of freedom in dutiful action. Using the example of the Stoic, Kant illustrated that one places him or her self into the situation to help a person, yet the sympathizer guided by reason is self-constrained from misunderstanding what is and what is not within his or her ability in given circumstances. Kant stated, “But the same wise man [the Stoic], when he could not rescue his friend, said to himself ‘what is it to me?’”²⁷ The passage suggests, according to Marcia Baron, not “I’ll worry about my own problems; to hell with hers,” but rather

²⁵Kant, *DV*, 575.

²⁶Borges, 152

²⁷Kant, *DV*, §34, 575.

“Kant values a sort of disengagement from affect. We are to cultivate our sympathetic impulses, but we cultivate them in such a way that they are completely under our control.”²⁸ Thus, the rational agent is to “let” him or her self be taken by another’s joys and pains, but not *overtaken*.

In §35, Kant wrote that it is not a duty to share in the sufferings of others, but it is “a duty to sympathize actively in their fate; and to this end it is therefore an indirect duty to cultivate the compassionate natural (aesthetic) feelings in us, and to make use of them as so many means to sympathy based on moral principles and the feeling appropriate to them.”²⁹ Thus, in the case of sympathy, one “makes use” of his or her natural feelings, allowing them to be impetuses for moral action. At the same time, however, the reader must remember that the moral action is not dependent upon or derived from the natural sympathetic feelings. Instead, what Kant delivered in the *Duties of Virtue to Others* is that one is bound to naturally sympathize with others and share their joys and pains. To this extent, sympathy is passive, not demanding of thought, and producing no real motive to action – it simply happens.

The moral component of sympathy is injected into the natural occurrence of the sensible feeling from its source in reason. The source of moral sympathy is not a hybrid of sensible feelings and reason – that is, the two do not mix and become one. Rather, moral sympathy is a convergence of natural receptive feelings and the will to share in another’s emotive affairs in such a way that reason takes over and makes the event a

²⁸Maria Baron, “Kantian Ethics and Claims of Detachment,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Kant*, ed. Robin May Schott (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 164.

²⁹Kant, *DV*, §35, 575.

representation of duty. Richard McCarty distinguishes what he calls an *intellectualist* interpretation of Kantian moral motivation from an *affectivist* view. The intellectualists, McCarty claims, hold that motivation to respond to circumstances arises solely from an intellectual recognition of the superiority of the moral law, independent of any pathological motivational resources of human agency. Affectivists do not deny the intellectualists interpretation, but add to the interpretation that moral motivation also depends on special moral feelings.³⁰ The crucial factor for moral motivation is, and must be, a grounding in the respect for the moral law. If a determination of choice precedes the representation of the law, the action is an emotive response. The affect that might motivate an action that follows the representation of the law is the moral feeling.³¹ Regarding sympathy, sympathy is a moral feeling if and only if the sensible feeling is influenced independently and directly from reason.

Conclusion

In sections of Kant's writing where he seemingly denigrates emotions it may be more appropriate to view him as combating empiricism rather than concepts of emotions and feelings. Empiricists of Kant's time claimed that desires were legitimate determinants for the will, and could lead to happiness, freedom, and morality. They also claimed that human beings held a common repertoire of sentiments that functioned to inform people of right and wrong. Emotions, conceptually, were bundled with inclinations and desires. The idea was that emotions played a formative role in

³⁰McCarty, 422 – 423.

³¹Kant, *DV*, §399, 528.

producing desire – animals do what they think will feel best. Therefore, Kant refuted such claims by pointing out the inherent flaw of desire's incapacity to deliver any universal sense of morality. Reason is the true common, distinctive possession of human beings, and it alone can recognize and motivate one to obey the moral law even when desires suggest alternative actions. If humans were without reason, then they would be guided by every inclination, just as any other animal.

Kant's harsh criticism and negative portrayal of emotions must be seen as an attack on empiricists and not on sentiments themselves. It would be absurd to completely devalue feelings and emotions. Human beings depend on emotions. Emotions and feelings simply provide for us another way of sensing our environments. However, guided by reason we must interpret and judge our feelings, meaning that while sensible feelings may be the initial motivators to sympathetic actions, they must not be the prime motivators. Kant's writings on sympathy have been used in this chapter to illustrate the purposive role of emotions in dutiful action, but it is quite obvious that for Kant, it is reason, detached from sensible, animal feelings that interprets emotions and prescribes the appropriate responses. Thus, while we can see that Kant's theory may consist of an account of the purposiveness of emotions, in the end, reason must conquer the sensible feelings in order for the sympathetic action, or any action, to be a moral action.

CHAPTER III
THE MORALIZATION OF DESIRES IN T.H. GREEN'S
MORAL PHILOSOPHY

As a philosopher during the British Enlightenment, the long line of theorists before T.H. Green – namely, Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Mill and Darwin – influenced his moral philosophy. Green approached each of these figures with not only a great degree of reverence, but also with a posture of critique. Ultimately, Green's theory carries more indebtedness to Aristotle and Kant, seeing Hume, Mill and Darwin as oppositional thinkers. However, despite the similarities between Green and Kant, there are crucial differences between the two (too many to give a full account of here) throughout their works. Keeping within the scope of a discussion regarding the role of emotions in moral behavior, one key distinction between the perspectives of Kant and Green revolves around how each defines what desire is. For Kant, desire is clearly a pathological or sensible feeling rooted in one's animalistic nature; this much we have discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, here we will concentrate on Green's definition of desire, which will ultimately lead us to question just how similar the moral theories of Kant and Green are.

In the first section of this chapter, "Rational Desire," I will work to explain the relationship Green believed to exist between desire and reason. For Green, a desire becomes what it truly is for a human being only when she consciously identifies her good with the particular desire. As we will see, in such a process of identifying oneself

with a desire, the desire to be actualized has been rationally endorsed by the self-conscious agent; thus the desire now has a rational structure.

In the second section, “Desire for the Common Good,” I will discuss how, according to Green, acting out of desire does not necessarily entail an action of mere self-interest, nor does acting from desire necessarily mean that one is guilty of self-love, as Kant argued. While Green did not speak at length about sympathy precisely, he dealt extensively with the concept of sympathy in his account of the dynamics of social interest, encapsulated in what he called the “common good,” which is the predominate subject of his *Prolegomena to Ethics (PE)*¹. At its core, the concept of the common good is based on the idea that human beings are naturally social creatures, and that one cannot appropriately conceive of herself without considering the precondition that she belongs to others; hence one’s self-interest, or the agent’s own good, includes others.² In the end, Green’s theory displays a higher regard for animal impulses than Kant allowed, but only in so far as they constitute a part of human experience that provides content for the conscious deliberation of moral agents. Much more will be said about this, but first we will turn to the subject of Green’s understanding of desire.

Rational Desires

Green began his discourse in Book Two by distinguishing mere want from the consciousness of a wanted object. Animals experience the succession of mere wants, such as the want for food in order to alleviate hunger, but their wants are simply

¹T.H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, edited by David O. Brink (New York: Clarendon/Oxford Press, 2003).

²David Brink, *Perfectionism and the Common Good: Themes in the Philosophy of T.H. Green* (New York: Clarendon/Oxford, 2003), 27. Brink gives this summation citing *PE*, §92, 191, 200, and 244.

impulsive propulsions; hence they operate in a deterministic fashion. According to Green, when an animal is hungry it does not view itself as hungry or as a subject experiencing hunger. It does not view itself at all. The animal, a non-self-conscious being, merely feels hungry, and while under that condition, the animal “knows itself” only as hunger. The self-distinguishing subject, (i.e., a human), on the other hand, separates herself from the instinctual or impulsive feeling and presents that feeling to herself as something that is not herself. Considering the occurrence of the feeling, the agent presents to herself an object that she plans to attain. With the concept of a self-distinguishing subject, Green insisted that the agent’s object of desire was rationally identified and defined; therefore the object of desire was a rational desire. This notion in direct contradiction to Hume’s belief that reason cannot evaluate desire because, according to Green, the only relationship between reason and desire in Hume’s theory is the relation in which reason is “the minister who counts the cost and calculates the means, without having anything to do with their [the desires’] initiation or their direction to an end...”³

Agents seek objects they believe will better themselves in their current conditions – i.e., the agent presents to itself an object of desire, which exists only as an idea until it is realized. Utilizing the capability to distinguish oneself from a given feeling, the conscious being differentiates between things as they are and can begin to develop

³Green, *PE*, §116, citing Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature*, Book II, Part III §3-4. Geoffrey Thomas influences the discussion here, noting this distinction in his work, *The Moral Philosophy of T.H. Green* (New York: Clarendon/Oxford, 1987), 33.

concepts of things as they *should be*.⁴ It is crucial to notice here, according to Green, that the self-conscious subject does not seek a feeling, such as pleasure, but rather the subject seeks an object she believes will bring about satisfaction. This should not be confused with what Green claimed to be a mistake of Utilitarianism⁵ – that the object of desire is always pleasure – for not only is it true that a person may sometimes find satisfaction in things that render no enjoyment, but moreover, it is true that one may seek “self-satisfaction with the clear consciousness that no enjoyment of pleasure can yield him satisfaction.”⁶ In order to fully understand these complex conclusions, it is necessary to first give attention to Green’s definitions of motives, human character, the will, desire, and the good.

Motives for Moral Action

Moral action is distinctively human. The determining causes for moral action are *motives*, which Green defines as “ideas of ends, which the self-conscious subject presents to itself, and which it strives and tends to attain.”⁷ Green’s theory here can fall victim to accusations of appearing deterministic because he claimed that the ideas on which motives depend originate from experiences of natural phenomena. That is to say that the perceived experience has a direct effect on the formation of motives and that the

⁴Green, *PE*, §85-86.

⁵In *PE* there are several places in which Green attacks Utilitarianism, but his real enemy is the hedonistic psychology he finds in Utilitarianism. Nevertheless, Green appreciated at least two principles he finds in Mill’s writings: First, a principle of higher and lower pleasures – some kinds pleasures are more desirable and valuable than others (discussed in §162); and Second, a principle of impartiality – that everyone should count as one and no one for more than one (discussed in §214). On these two points, Green claims Mill is not like the older Utilitarians, by which he means Benthamites.

⁶Green, *PE*, §158-9.

⁷*Ibid.*, §87.

subject is effectively reacting to given stimuli. This view, however, is not incompatible with free will, according to Green, because the reactions to stimuli are processed by a self-distinguishing agent who, throughout the perceptual experience, relates the stimuli to her understanding of prior ideas and to her conception of her relationship to these stimuli.

In other words, according to Green, we do react to our current environments – this seems obvious – but throughout the experience we consciously judge what the things experienced mean to us on an individual basis. Based on our judgments of the numerous stimuli we encounter, we are as capable to disregard particular stimuli, as we are capable to respond to the stimuli we determine as worthy of our response. It is true that the deterministic chain of cause and effect is not broken in Green's theory, but the important factor for Green was that we consciously choose which causes affect us. Indeed, keeping the deterministic chain intact was important for Green. By keeping the chain intact, yet stating that we choose what stimuli affect us and to what extent they affect us, Green believe he preserved an important similarity between human beings and animals, while he enabled himself to emphasis a most profound difference between humans and animals – the human's capacity to self-determine the weight of a given stimuli, and respond as they see fit.

The distinguishing factor in all motives is self-consciousness. Green said that, contrary to popular confusion, a motive is not made up of a want plus self-consciousness, rendering it partly animal impulse and partly moral action.⁸ The animal

⁸Green, *PE*, §91.

want is merely an elementary reflex to a given perception. We are to appropriately understand that in the agent's deliberation, the animal condition does not survive in the result; otherwise the action would be instinctive rather than moral. In the agent's deliberation, the agent consciously reflects on a conception of personal good of which the agent recognizes herself as the author. The conception of personal good, accordingly, is dependent upon the agent's own idea of herself – i.e., her character.

Character, thus far, has been defined as the agent's own conception of herself. There is more to be added to this definition, however. The conceptual representation a person has of herself involves the action of a self-distinguishing consciousness upon the process of feelings under given circumstances. The character of the agent is the identity of the agent that exists and operates throughout all experiences. Thus, Green called this the eternal consciousness of the agent, for it is the self-representation the person has of herself that she continually aligns with the current situation, yet it remains unconditioned by time.⁹ Hence, two things – the past and present experiences and the past and present conceptions of the self – are always held present for self-reflection in the agent's mind;

⁹Green, *PE*, §95. "Eternal" refers to being unconditioned by time – i.e., outside of time – not a concept of beginninglessness or endlessness. From what I have gathered, there seem to be two ways in which Green talked about eternal consciousness (EC) that leads to some confusion. There is for Green a concept of EC that is in reference to God, who exists outside of time and to whom all things exist as present, much like Aristotle's unmoved mover. However, there is a concept of EC in regards to human mental activity as well. This is the idea taken up here and it consists of how humans hold all past and present experiences in their mind making the events always present to the agent. Obviously, conflating these two notions of EC can lead to much confusion. Based on the first two books of *PE* it is not entirely clear that Green always referred to a God-like entity when discussing EC. Most often, at least in these section of *PE*, he seems to be talking about the self-conscious state of a human being. In Colin Tyler's entry, "Thomas Hill Green," in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, however, Tyler almost exclusively discusses EC as a reference to God. I am not sure he is right for doing so in his presentation of this concept.

and this completes the necessary repertoire an agent utilizes in assessing her current experience or desire, before choosing how she will respond.

We might ask how the current situation itself influences the agent's choices or desires, but Green would give a ready answer to that inquiry, stating that the quality of the circumstances are not determined by nature, but rather their quality is defined by the agent they influence. Green differentiated between *mere* circumstances, or what we might call ordinary influences or animal wants, and circumstances defined by the agent of which type affect moral action when set in combination with the person's character. To illustrate this distinction, Green used the Old Testament narrative of Esau selling his birthright for potage, supposedly due to severe hunger. Green took the "mere circumstance," or animal want of Esau to be his physical hunger, but the significant circumstances influencing the actions of Esau, as a morally endowed being, are things such as "the state of his health, the outward manner of his life (his family arrangement and the mode in which he maintains himself and his family), and the standard of social expectation."¹⁰ Circumstances such as these are what they are to Esau because Esau himself has defined them as such through the self-conscious process in which he has presented the environmental influences to himself, alongside his conception of his character.¹¹ Mere circumstances certainly have an influence on the subject, but the morally endowed agent's reaction to those circumstances gives them their shape; hence the agent defines for herself what the circumstances are, and how they will contribute to

¹⁰Green, *PE*, §98.

¹¹*Ibid.*, §98 & §106.

her conduct. In so doing, the agent takes from the circumstances a motive that has been processed through her own idea of personal good.

Feelings, Desires, Thoughts and the Will

The self-conscious agent unites feelings, desires, and thoughts, by her character, and presents them to herself as ideal objects. Green stated that this unifying action in the mind of the agent constitutes the Ego.¹² The action of the Ego, as it identifies with some desires and sets its self-determined motives to make real the ideal objects, is indisputably an act of free will in Green's view.¹³ This, however, raises the question what Green understood the will to be.

The free agent's motive determines the act, but Green warned that the motive is not produced by the winning-out of the strongest desire over other desires – such a position belongs to the “Hedonistic Utilitarians” Green refuted. According to Green, a strong desire may cause “much disturbance in the tenour of a man's conscious life,” but this is to be contrasted with what he took to be a ‘strong character,’ which refers to the “habitual concentration of a man's faculties towards the fulfillment of certain purposes” – namely those he defined as good.¹⁴ In the same fashion that a want becomes an idea of a wanted object, desires become what they are when processed and objectified by the conscious agent who reflects upon these impulses and declares what they mean to her. In this process, the desire that had not been reflected upon becomes a *Desire* when set in

¹²Green, *PE*, §102.

¹³Ibid., §103.

¹⁴Ibid., §105.

relation to the person's conception of her character. Then, when acted upon, the Desire constitutes the agent's freely chosen will. David Crossley summarizes this point stating:

Morality, therefore is, in Green's view, largely concerned with the type of person one becomes by virtue of the character developed through choices. ...any account of intentionality of desire, is incomplete if it fails to recognize the role played by the agent's over-all plans and the agent's concern about the kind of person she wishes to be.¹⁵

Green's handling of the notion of akrasia is useful in understanding how he viewed desire and will. Green claimed that akrasia was typically thought of in two common, but erroneous ways. The common views were: 1) that one cannot make up her mind between competing objects until a desire for a particular object proves strongest; or 2) there is a distinction between a desire and a will – the 'will' being determined by the desire that proves strongest. Green refuted both of these views by insisting that the way 'desire' is being thought of in either of these scenarios is no different than the experience of an animal want. None of the desires, to this point, have been transformed into a wanted object the agent is seeking to realize. Therefore, neither desire (if we assume only two competing desires) has found the deliberative endorsement of the agent; but as soon as one is endorsed, it becomes a desire of a wholly different kind than it was in its previous state as an animal want. The impulsive desire becomes her will when it is that with which she identifies herself and her concept of personal good. Thus, it is when a will is formed that the agent "for the first time desires, having not done so while divided between the conflicting influences."¹⁶

¹⁵David Crossley, "Self-Conscious Agency and the Eternal Consciousness," *Ultimate Reality and Meaning: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Philosophy of Understanding* 13:1 (1990) 16.

¹⁶Green, *PE*, §140-146.

Is the will simply desire plus thought? Green said no, but it may be accurate to say that the will is Desire plus thought, if we recall the distinction Green made between ‘desire’ and ‘Desire.’ John Skorupski explains Green’s distinction:

[w]hen a desire becomes a motive it becomes a spontaneous action of the self rather than a passion which the self merely receives or undergoes. ‘Desire’ in this sense is aptly described by Green as desire with which I identify; as one might say, I *make* it mine, I don’t treat it as a funny alien impulse, something ‘I can’t help wanting’. I accept its *legitimacy*.¹⁷

It is this type of desire – *Desire* – that enters into willing, for it is a desire thoughtfully reflected on, producing the direction the self-conscious subject will take. The will, then, as Green stated is “equally and indistinguishably desire and thought – not however *mere* desire or *mere* thought...”¹⁸ The will, accordingly, can never be just an event of desiring that some end be realized. Green gave the example that one cannot will a debt to be paid, unless, in contemplating this action, the person was also taking actions to bring about the realization of this end. Thus, to will is to act; hence, willing is the outward expression of an agent’s character. Green concluded, “But for all that it is only the feeling, thought, and desire represented by the act of will, that the man recognises as for the time himself. The feeling, thought, and desire with which the act conflicts are influences that he is aware of, influences to which he is susceptible, but they are not *he*.”¹⁹

Desire and Well-being

Green believed that will, desire, and reason are all part of one principle because they are united in and by self-conscious subjects. Green stated, “Sometimes desire and

¹⁷John Skorupski, “Desire and Will in Sidgwick and Green,” *Utilitas* 12:3 (2000), 312-3.

¹⁸Green, *PE*, §153.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, §153.

reason have been represented as inviting the man in different directions, while the will has been supposed to decide which of the two directions shall be followed.”²⁰ This statement, if not directed specifically toward Kant’s philosophy, certainly sounds like an interpretation of Kant’s theory as discussed in the previous chapter. For Green, however, it is the self-consciousness of a moral being that makes desires what they are. Without self-reference, the desire would not be a function of moral nature. On the other hand, Green asserted, that it is through self-reference that one identifies her well-being with her success in bringing about events.²¹

This raises a new question, however: what is *well-being*, according to Green? Green defined well-being as “the medium through which each desire is at once qualified and reinforced by all the rest, directing the man’s efforts to that end in which he presents to himself the satisfaction of them all.” The question is, however, how is this concept something other than the subjective self-interestedness Kant warned against? How is it that Green could claim that my satisfaction has moral quality consisting of not just my well-being, but also the well-being of others? Is an action moral simply because an agent has identified her concept of good with the object she seeks? This seems to play straight into the Kant’s conclusion that acting out of subjective interests, such as happiness, leads people in different directions, ultimately dissolving community. Green, therefore, needs to provide ‘the good’ with objective property. In order to address these issues, we must turn to Green’s concept of the common good.

²⁰Green, *PE*, §116.

²¹*Ibid.*, §128.

Desire for the Common Good

Green, I believe, did successfully circumvent the threat of subjective self-interestedness Kant feared. Green's success in overcoming the obstacle of self-interestedness rests on two points within his theory of the common good, mostly contained in Book Three of *PE*. First, Green sought to define what is 'moral good'. After working through a lengthy examination of the Kantian and Utilitarian concepts of good, Green proposed in his doctrine that the nature of the will is dependent on the nature of the object desired (the object in which, once realized, the agent will find self-satisfaction). As a result, the nature of the object desired depends on whether or not they can *truly* satisfy a moral agent. That is to say that the person with a good will desires things that result in an end in which the effort of the moral agent can find rest – i.e., true, or complete satisfaction.²² Green's Aristotelian leanings are quite obvious in his perspective of what moral good is.²³

Secondly, Green employed a principle of progress, consisting of the convictions individuals have that something better should always be assumed to exist, which in turn implied, according to Green, a conviction of there being a such thing as the Best. However, one's contemplation of oneself in a better state of being, or on her way to the Best, is incomprehensible if she does not consider the welfare of the others with whom

²²Green, *PE*, §171.

²³Green's definition of 'moral good' looks very familiar to Aristotle's definition of 'virtue' (or 'excellence') as found in *The Nicomachean Ethics*, "...to feel them [pleasure and pain] at the right time, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right aim, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of excellence [or 'virtue']." Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106^b21-23. David Brink notes that Green's similarity with Aristotle on the concept of true, or complete satisfaction resonates with Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* (1094^a18-19, 1097^a27-^b6) that describes a complete good as a good chosen for its own sake, something intrinsically good, not merely instrumental. Brink's discussion on this issue is found in *Perfectionism and the Common Good*, 50-51.

she finds herself in natural relationships. Accordingly, as one's well-being in some way affects and is effected by the well-being of others, humans come to understand that well-being transcends the individual – it is societal. This, together with the concept of the Best, leads individuals to view ultimate satisfaction as not a temporary subjective feeling of the individual agent, but it is required to consist of a permanence that extends beyond the individual.

The Good

Green began his discourse on the “Good and Moral Good,” in Book Three, with a return to the subject of the nature of the will. Green stated that all conduct, “whether virtuous or vicious, expresses a motive consisting in an idea of personal good which the man seeks to realize by action.” The only thing in common in all acts of willing, according to Green, is that the will “in actuality must be the self-conscious individual as so directing himself.”²⁴ Green admits, however, that at this point this definition tells virtually nothing of the nature of the will or whether there could be such a thing as a national, or corporate will that operates in and upon members of a group.

To address the question of nature of the will, Green insisted that the nature of the will depends on the nature of the objects the person wills to realize and that the real nature of one's character also depends on the nature of the objects in which she seeks self-satisfaction.²⁵ However, if the nature of the object desired depends on whether or not it produces self-satisfaction, it is difficult to see how Green was basing the goodness

²⁴Green, *PE*, §154.

²⁵*Ibid.*, §154.

of the will, or the goodness of a person's character, on anything other than the effects of her action – whether or not the realization of the desired object produces self-satisfaction. Nonetheless, it is precisely the notion that the nature of the will is determined by the effect of the action, that Green claimed to oppose.

Green claimed agreement with Kant in his articulation of the good will being good in virtue of what it is in itself as an absolute end. Green's major opposition, as just noted, was with the Utilitarian notion that the effects of the action determine the good of that action. Green did not suggest that self-satisfaction was a result, or effect, of a realized desire, although at times it is difficult to see the distinction he tried to make from that notion. Rather, for Green, self-satisfaction is a state of being one wants to achieve; it is a virtue in and of itself. Geoffrey Thomas points out that Green modeled his idea of self-satisfaction after the Aristotelian concept *hexis* (an active disposition), which entails a constant or continuous condition of the agent.²⁶ Thomas' observation seems accurate, for throughout Green's discourse on the good, he worked extensively to prove that the object of desire must be more than an anticipated feeling of pleasure, because desire for pleasure would be inextinguishable. Hence, if pleasure were an object of desire it could never provide permanent satisfaction because there would always be more pleasure to be sought. Green wrote:

But such desire for virtue is clearly not determined by any antecedent imagination of pleasure. It is of course open to any one to argue that what is called desire for virtue is really desire for pleasures that are to be obtained in a certain way; but in that case virtue is not an ultimate object of desire, the desire for it is not disinterested. That presentation of virtue which determines any disinterested desire for it, can only be a presentation of a possible state of

²⁶Geoffrey Thomas, *The Moral Philosophy of T.H. Green* (New York: Clarendon/Oxford, 1987), 25.

character or mode of action as an ideal object which we seek to realize; and the object thus presented cannot be identified with any pleasant feeling or series of feelings, which, having experienced it, we imagine and desire to experience again. If, then, the presentation of virtue as an ultimate object, and not merely as a means, does determine desire, there are desires which are not excited by the anticipation of pleasure, though in such cases as much as in any other the desired object, just so far as desired, is ‘part of the happiness’ of the person desiring it, in the sense that, having desired it, he cannot be happy without it.²⁷

If we can accept Green’s definition that the good is ultimately a virtuous state of being, we are still left with the question of how such a condition possesses an objective quality. That is, how might I be assured that another’s concept of the good could not contradict my own? A question that follows, put frankly, is why should I care what your good is, or whether or not you achieve self-satisfaction?

Seeking the Common Good

The human being differs from other animals in that rather than merely seeking to satisfy herself by gaining objects of desire, humans present to themselves certain possible states of being, and this capacity enables them to undergo consciously formed plans for self-development. The direction of self-development is good when it is in the direction of true progress – that is, in the direction truly leading toward a better state of being the agent presents to herself by the exercise of reason. It may be arguable whether this concept sufficiently provides an objective measure for moral behavior, but Green seemed to think the argument had strength.

It is the faculty of reason that enables a moral agent to conceive of bettering herself, and with the faculty of the will, the self-conscious subject is able to make a conscious effort to satisfy herself. While the faculties of reason and will are separate

²⁷Green, *PE*, §169.

faculties, it must be remembered, according to Green, that *they are possessed by one and the same self*. Thus, in every moral action, each capacity is mutually exerted in every step forward in self-realization.²⁸ The goodness of the agent's action, however, is objectively determined by its agreement with the true good. The reason and will of the virtuous person lead her in a path of improvement, which consists of finding satisfaction in objects conceived as desirable because they contribute to the best state or perfection of humankind.²⁹ One may still ask what the characteristics of the true good are. In order to identify the characteristics of the good, we are lead by Green to consider a fundamental aspect of humanity – its social nature.

Social interaction should not be seen from an economic perspective in which individuals uses others as a means to one's own goal, nor should society be thought of as an aggregate of pre-social beings who could find self-satisfaction outside relationships with other. Green found such views guilty of ignoring the importance of shared values and common bonds.³⁰ For Green, the social aspect of human nature was presupposed – we are simply animals who communalize. It is quite obvious that societies are composed of persons, but Green focused on a corollary idea – “Without society, no persons.”³¹ With this statement, Green had in mind the concept that just as thought is actualized in

²⁸Green, *PE*, §179.

²⁹*Ibid.*, §179.

³⁰Matt Carter, *T.H. Green and the Development of Ethical Socialism* (Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academics, 2003), 57 and Geoffrey Thomas, 256-257. Thomas claims that Green is rejecting, what he calls the “social atomism,” Green found in Hobbes, Bentham and Mill. Carter, on the other hand, points out that much of Green's quarrel with the theory of pre-social being comprising an society of aggregate individuals is in response to proponents of Darwinian evolutionary theories.

³¹Green, *PE*, §190.

language, people can really live as actualized persons only when they are in interaction with one another. Without such interaction, one is not provided the opportunity to come to understand other as ends in themselves; and until the one sees others as ends in themselves, she cannot *fully* understand herself as an end. We can only imagine how we would think of ourselves if we never experienced mutual interest between others and ourselves. It suffices to say, though, humanity would be nothing of the kind we currently know.

Why are we social creatures and why do we care for each other? Green's answer to the first part of the question is that we could speculate the origin of society to no end, but one thing we know is that we are born into families. We care for others, however, not simply because we are born knowing others, but because we conceive of ourselves as *belonging* to others. Green confronted the theory of evolutionists that social interest is derived from animal sympathies consisting of an excitement of pleasure and pain in one animal upon the sign of pleasure or pain given by another animal.³² The feelings of pleasure and pain do not contain a germ for social interest, Green argued, unless those feelings are processed by a self-conscious subject who distinguishes herself from her feelings, and who is capable of presenting to herself a good of herself as an end. Those conditions fulfilled, the self-conscious subject is capable of conceiving of others as ends in themselves because she has come to know herself as an end. Accordingly, on the conditions that the agent can view herself and others as ends, and that she conceives of herself as belonging to others, the desire for a renewal of pleasure can become a desire

³²Green, *PE*, §200.

for a good to be shared with another whose good is seen as her own good. Thus, all the conditions above constitute what distinguishes moral, or human sympathy, from animal sympathies. Noting Green's position that a fundamental distinction between humans and animals is self-consciousness, the difference between animal and human sympathy is indeed profound.

One's own good is dependent on the well-being of others with whom she shares her life due to natural relations – that we are born into families, or communities. Thus, when one guided by reason pursues her own self-improvement, striving toward her concept of something better, she cannot help but consider others while in her pursuit. In turn, this means that there must be agreement among all affected parties as to what the good is. However, the well-being of those with whom one shares direct, physical relations is not the full extent of Green's concept of the common good. One's immediate relationships with family and her particular community are merely paradigmatic illustrations of how and why we care for others. Green's concept of the common good is like Aristotle's view of virtue-friendship, but unlike Aristotle, Green, in Kantian fashion, universalized the notion in order to include all of humanity – a community of ends.³³ That is to say that the good, or common good, must consist of the betterment of the entire society, and ultimately, all of humankind.

³³Brink discusses the scope of Green's concept of common good and its reliance on Aristotle's account of virtue-friendship, citing Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 1167^a25-28, 1155^a24-28. Brink supports his account of Green, citing §§205-217, 244, 249, 253, 271, 285, 332. Brink, *Perfectionism and the Common Good*, 52-55. At this point, however, Brink does not discuss Kant; that inference is my own.

The faculty rendering it possible for an agreement on what leads toward betterment, or the conceivable Best, is, according to Green, Reason.³⁴ Reason, for Green, similarly to Kant on this matter, is the basis for society, functioning the same for the societal group – directing the group toward a conceivable better state of being – as it functions in the individual. Reason also directs the society in the institution of laws that help regulate societal life, and leads us to control our inclinations. For Green, reason is what made self-imposed obedience to the law possible, and it is both objective and subjective.³⁵ While Green’s portrayal of reason seems vastly similar to Kant, Green, nevertheless, felt something of human nature unrepresented in Kant’s theory – the role of sentiment.

Sentiment has a major role in Green’s moral behavior in at least two ways. In his discussion regarding the law-forming capacity of reason, Green claimed that justice is comprised of the law informed by reason, and general sentiment. Should we be surprised to find Green’s concept of justice dependent upon sentiment? Certainly not! Reason and sentiment working together to construct an idea of justice for a society or individual is merely another example of what Green has been saying all along. The desire for the satisfaction of the self, which, as we have seen is inseparable from the desire for the satisfaction of others, is after all, a *desire*; hence, it is a feeling – a feeling that consists

³⁴Green, *PE*, §204.

³⁵*Ibid.*, §217.

of the involvement of a consciousness of the ideal object and a consciousness of self.³⁶ David Crossley makes the same conclusion about the criterion of Green's concept of the good, stating, "As a test of truth is coherence, so the test of goodness is a felt satisfaction of peace, a feeling that our lives contain no contradictions."³⁷

It is an emotional, impulsive awareness that the subject wants something of the current state of experience to change. This is not different in hunger as it is with sensed wrongdoing. Green did not attend to reason at the expense of sentiment, nor did he forsake reason in any measure in order to tend to the significance of sentiment. Without reason, the subject cannot present to herself a possible state of being that will assuage the distress perceived in the current situation. Without reason, the agent could not self-consciously identify the ideal object of desire. Thus, the impulsive feeling, or animal desire, is a desire assessed by reason, in which process a new desire is formed – a rationalized desire, or, in Brink's terms, an "moralized desire,"³⁸ for an ideal object.

Conclusion

Green offered a theory of the moral behavior that differed from Hume and Kant in its presentation of the role of emotions. For Kant, there could be no inception of desire in moral behavior. For Hume, on the other hand, reason was a slave to the passions; hence purely instrumental. Green proposed an understanding of desire that gave desire a

³⁶Green distinguished the impulsive desire that arises out of a natural feeling from a rationalized desire at the outset of his discussion of desire in *PE* §118. Nevertheless, as the feeling might be changed, or added to, by a processes of rational assessment, it is difficult to say that Green intended to diminish the importance of an emotional feeling by combining it with the intellectual component of reason.

³⁷Crossley, 19.

³⁸Brink, 97.

rational structure. Green's theory appears to display a two-tiered conception of desire: the first tier consisting of the animal impulse, or non-rationalized emotional responses to the given state of affairs; the second tier consisting of the animal impulses processed by the self-conscious being who, in reflection of the emotive response, distinguishes herself from the feeling and constructs an idea of an object she believes will render a state of satisfaction.

Green's theory validates the animal nature that abides in human beings, and it offers a compelling view of the interplay between the animal nature and the rational aspects of human nature that make humankind distinct from other animals. Green's theory is certainly rich and complex, but considering the profound influence of Kant's philosophy in Green's thought, we must ask to what extent Green is in agreement with Kant.

CHAPTER IV

GREEN'S NOT-SO-KANTIAN VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE

Kant's influence on Green's moral theory is observable in at least three points relevant to our discussion on the role of emotions in moral behavior: the presence of a distinction between impulsive, animal actions and moral actions; the shared regard for a role of reason in moral action; and the common emphases on the concept of a community of ends, in which the claims are made that every individual is to be seen as an end in herself. Two of Green's contemporaries – a voice of opposition, Henry Sidgwick, and one of Green's students, D.G. Ritchie – each observed Green's Kantian leanings and indebtedness.¹ Considering the monumental shadow Kant cast on Western philosophy, it should not surprise us to find that such remarks have existed since Green's own time, and are indeed valid. However, while I admit similarities between Kant and Green in the points listed above, I feel that these similarities between Kant and Green must be restricted to these concepts only in so far as they are axioms each philosopher believed true. The premises and conclusion that each thinker made with respect to these axioms, on the other hand, are remarkably different; so different in fact, that I call into question just how similar Kant and Green are.

In this chapter I will focus predominately on the differences between Kant and Green. What I believe to be the most fundamental and most profound distinction is their

¹See Henry Sidgwick, *Lectures on the Ethics of T.H. Green, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and J. Martineau* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1902), 3; and David George Ritchie, *The Principles of State Interference; Four Essays on the Political Philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer, J.S. Mill, and T.H. Green* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 139-140. David O. Brink drew my attention to these comments in his work, *Perfectionism and the Common Good: Themes in the Philosophy of T.H. Green* (New York: Clarendon/Oxford, 2003), 92.

differing perspectives on human nature – that is, the dynamics of animality and rationality in human nature. Kant believed that when one is presented with a situation calling for a dutiful response², the animal nature conflicts with the moral nature within humankind. Green did not agree with Kant on this point, and claimed that an agent's moral capacity works in supplementation to one's animal nature by taking the feelings provided by the animal nature and aligning those feelings with the her conception of what the animal feelings mean and her conception of herself. This pivotal distinction effectively sets Kant and Green in contrast despite their shared beliefs in certain axioms. In order to show this, I will first give an account of Kant and Green's views regarding the relationship of the coexisting animal nature and moral nature within human nature. From there, I will show how the different understandings of the relationship of these two components of human nature influence their views of moral sympathetic actions. In the end, we will find that while there are identifiable similarities and shared beliefs of certain axioms, the moral theories of Kant and Green are radically different.

The Coexistence of Animal Nature and Moral Nature

The crucial distinction I find between Kant and Green lies in each figure's fundamental beliefs regarding human nature. In an effort to clearly discuss the

²Not all actions are the outcome of moral choices or have moral worth, according to Kant, for we carry out many mundane tasks on any given day. Near the beginning of the *Groundwork*, we find that Kant was interested primarily in discussing situations that called for dutiful responses – that is, when a sense of obligation is conceived, or when one reflects on a situation and deliberates what ought to be done (*GW* 52-56). Situations in which agents deliberate over possible responses and consider what ought to be done are the types of occasions in which moral choices are made; and are thereby occasions that give rise to actions of moral worth. Being that these are the types of situations and actions that Kant entertained, it must be kept in mind that as we discuss moral actions we are likewise limiting ourselves to similar parameters.

distinctions between Kant and Green on these issues, I will first address Kant separately from Green. Then, in the subsequent presentation of Green's theory, I will draw out the distinctions I find pertinent.

Kant – Animal Nature *Versus* Moral Nature

For Kant, the nature of a human being is comprised of coexisting animal and moral natures. The animal nature, according to Kant, is the endowment that supplies both humans and animals with the necessary biological elements required to enable them to react to their given environments. The moral nature, on the other hand, is an additional intellectual capacity human beings possess. It is humankind's capacity to reason that provides for human beings the ability to assess their animal impulses and act in a morally responsible fashion. However, Kant claimed that merely appraising animal impulses does not actualize moral action, but rather the animal impulses must be stifled by reason, so that the agent acts intentionally in response to reason rather than animal instincts.

The animal feelings and moral feelings are rooted in two completely detached origins, according to Kant. The animal feeling has its origin in the senses. For Kant that meant that the animal feelings are reactions to the "empirically conditioned laws" of nature; thus they are mechanical reactions, void of rational assessment.³ Such animal feelings are entirely based on the receptivity of the subject, which is dependent upon the

³Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. and transl. by Mary J. Gregor 135 – 271 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 174.

existence and nature of the objects that influence her.⁴ Kant took issue with this account of animal feelings not only because no rational assessment takes place during the occurrence of such feelings, but because it meant that something outside the self determined how the agent would respond to the situation; and this entailed an infringement on freedom.

On the other hand, the origin of moral feelings, or in Kant's terms "moral concepts," must "have their seat and origin completely a priori in reason."⁵ In giving the moral feeling an origin entirely independent of experience, Kant sought to stress his case that an action is morally good only when the response to given stimuli and animal feelings is determined autonomously by an agent's rational assessment of all the conditions of a situation; hence, by the faculty of reason that is not part of the situation itself. The agent's freedom in the situation, according to Kant, depends upon her capacity to distinguish herself from all other things, including herself as an affected object.⁶ According to Kant's view, to act in a morally good way meant that one's actions were guided solely by reason. Conversely, if there was the slightest influence of something outside the agent – that is, a heteronymous condition – then the agent's capability to act morally would be attenuated because her freedom of choice was compromised.

In Kant's theory we see that the animal feelings are relegated to a status equivalent to any and all other stimuli in the given situation. That is to say that Kant

⁴Kant, *CPrR*, 156.

⁵Immanuel Kant, *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. and transl. by Mary J. Gregor 39 – 108 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 65.

⁶*Ibid.*, 99.

believed that even if the animal nature and moral nature were to lead a morally endowed agent to perform action *Y* under conditions *a*, *b*, and *c*, action *Y* would be moral (*Y'*) only if it were consciously determined by the moral agent's response to reason. In such an occurrence, the influences of any pathological feelings the agent might have in the given circumstances are not exactly disregarded. It is more accurate to say that the pathological feelings, or animal influences, are counted as circumstances in addition to stimuli *a*, *b*, and *c*. In this way, reason is given the privileged status to act upon all the conditions equally, rather than counting the animal impulses as belonging to a higher class of conditions. Indeed, for Kant, the animal and moral capacities of humankind coexist in every moral agent. It must be noted, however, that when one is put in a situation of duty – i.e., a situation of moral worth – the natures coexist in *conflict*.⁷

Even if I accept the concept of separate origins of animal nature and moral nature that Kant proposed in his theory, I do not find his insistence on the idea that the two natures must be in conflict as entirely necessary. Nevertheless, the notion that these two natures reside in conflict is pervasive in Kant's moral theory. According to Kant, the animal nature pulls a person in a direction other than that of the moral nature. Whereas the moral nature would lead us to follow the strict command of duty, which is in accordance with the love for humankind, the animal nature in us absolutely draws us toward acting out of self-love. Kant wrote that while most of our actions appear to be in conformity with duty, "if we look more closely at the intentions and aspirations in them [the actions] we everywhere come upon the dear self, which is always turning up; and it

⁷See footnote 2.

is on this that their purpose is based, not on the strict command of duty, which would often require self-denial.”⁸ Thus, for Kant, the animal impulses always led one toward actions of self-love that are determined in the most elementary fashion – by the agreeability or disagreeability of possible resulting pleasure or pain. Moreover, actions based on self-love and subjective feelings of pleasure and pain lead people in different directions, meaning there could be no hope for the progress of humankind as a united body.

The person acting under the guidance of her animality is nothing less than evil, according to Kant. Kant illustrated this point by giving a contrasting description of a moral person. Kant wrote:

This better person [the one free from impulses of sensibility and accustomed to use reason], however, he believes himself to be when he transfers himself to the standpoint of a member of the world of understanding, as the idea of freedom, that is, of independence from the *determining* causes of the world of sense, constrains him involuntarily to do; and from this standpoint he is conscious of a good will that, by his own acknowledgements, constitutes the law for his evil will as a member of the world of senses – a law of whose authority he is cognizant even while he transgresses it. The moral “*ought*” is then his own necessary “*will*” as a member of an intelligible world, and is thought by him as “*ought*” only insofar as he regards himself at the same time as a member of the world of sense.⁹

For Kant, actions determined by the moral nature versus those influenced by the animal nature are as antithetical as good and evil. It is worth noting, however, that the animal nature is not itself evil, but rather an action is evil when the moral law is set subordinate

⁸Kant, *GW*, 62.

⁹*Ibid.*, 101.

to one's animal inclinations.¹⁰ That is to say, that if a morally endowed being chooses to act in accordance with its animal inclinations rather than in accordance to reason, the action is evil; and accordingly, the agent committing the action is evil.

Green – The Harmonious Natures within the Human Being

Green also believed in the coexistence of the animal nature and moral nature within human beings, but in his view of these two natures there is no sign of conflict between them. In a way similar to Kant, Green claimed that there is an identifiable difference between animal nature and human nature, and this distinction hinges on the human being's capacity to reason. However, whereas Kant claimed grounds for conflict from the perspective of a dual nature, Green seemed to think of the two elements not as separate natures, but rather as distinguishable aspects of one nature – human nature. In other words, Green thought of the two aspects found in human nature as parts that work in harmony, or supplementation, with each other rather than in conflict.

Perhaps it was the influence of post-Darwin evolutionary theory that brought about this move in Green's understanding. At the beginning of Book III, Chapter III in *PE*, in his discussion entitled "The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideal," Green stated that it "may seem unphilosophical now-a-days to accept this distinctive social interest on our part as a primary fact, without attempting to account for it by any process of evolution."¹¹ This statement is followed directly by Green's argument that human,

¹⁰Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. and transl. by Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni, 39 – 215 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 77-78.

¹¹T.H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, edited by David O. Brink (New York: Clarendon/Oxford Press, 2003), §199.

moral sympathy is not fully derivable from forms of animal sympathy, but it nevertheless displays that he was attentive to the views of evolutionists of his time. While Green opposed some of the presuppositions found in evolutionary theories, he did see himself in a position to entertain and answer to their claims. One of the ways in which I see Green's acknowledgment of the influence of evolutionary theories presenting itself in his theory is in his diminishment of the Kantian dualism of human nature.

For Kant, reason may or may not assess a situation, and may or may not overcome the animal impulses elicited by given conditions; and therefore, may or may not result in the production of an action of moral worth. In contrast to this notion, Green united the self with the animal feelings and desires, stating that a person would not be what she is without feelings, desires and thoughts. Green wrote:

Just as we hold that our desires, feelings, and thoughts would not be what they are – would not be those of a man – if not related to a subject which distinguishes itself from each and all of them; so we hold that this subject would not be what it is, if it were not related to the particular feelings, desires, and thoughts, which it thus distinguishes from and presents to itself.... the self, as here understood, is not something apart from feelings, desires and thoughts, but that which unites them, or which they become as united, in the character of an agent who is an object to himself...¹²

For Green, the moral agent is directly related to her feelings, thoughts and desires, but such influences are not the person. The person, as a morally endowed being, has the capacity to distinguish herself from the influences in the act of self-consciously, presenting all the influences to herself. However, this capacity is not rooted in a separate,

¹²Green, *PE*, §100-101.

a priori origin – it is simply a capability of humankind in extension to its animal nature. Thus, there are not two completely separate natures coexisting in human nature, but rather the human nature consists of animal impulses and the intellectual capacity of the human being to self-consciously present the natural impulses and the person's concepts of herself, to herself. In other words, there are not separate origins of the two distinguishable aspects within human nature, nor are the two natures in any sort of conflict.

Green was able to escape the notion of conflict that permeated Kant's philosophy by instating different definitions of desire and will. For Kant, desires were inextricably the property of animal impulses, and the will was "the capacity to choose *only that* which reason independently of inclination cognized practically necessary..."¹³ To wit, for Kant the opposing forces within the person were essentially the animalistic desires versus the agent's will. Green, however, denounced that conflict by arguing that the desires themselves might compete, but the will is the action chosen by the self-conscious agent in response to the felt desires. Hence, any conflict that might have existed, according to Green, existed only during the state in which neither competing desire had been chosen as the agent's willed action; thus neither desire had yet become the moral agent's *Desire*, which would consist of a conceived ideal good to be obtained. However, when the agent has chosen which desire she will give deliberative endorsement, she moralizes that desire, making it an ideal object to be sought.¹⁴

¹³Kant, *GW*, 66.

¹⁴Green, *PE*, §140-146.

This raises the crucial question, however, what constitutes a moral action according to Green? It is clear in Kant that a moral action is one committed purely in response to reason, for any inception of heteronomous influences diminish the actions moral worth. The corollary in Kant's theory is that an immoral action is one in which reason is made subordinate to animal inclinations. Green, on the other hand, claimed that all actions outside of purely reflexive actions, such as pulling one's hand away from a flame due to a burning sensation, have moral worth. Green upheld the idea that all human actions committed are based upon the conclusions made by the self-conscious agent who has presented the animal impulses and her conceptions of herself to herself, and has acted in accordance to those conclusions.

If we accept Green's view, it would seem that all actions other than simple reflexes would have moral worth. I believe this is precisely the position Green advocated – that our actions have moral worth because they are the actions of morally endowed beings. For Kant, on the other hand, it would seem that one is as likely (if not more likely) to act immorally – i.e., without deliberative endorsement provided by the faculty of reason. Therefore, I find Green's view preferable because it instates the simple notion that we act morally because we are in fact moral creatures. Nevertheless, if we side with Green on the idea that a majority of our actions may have moral worth because they are the actions of a moral being, this leaves us with yet another question: what, in Green's theory distinguishes a morally good action from an immoral action.

To answer this question, Green would return to his Aristotelian, eudaimonistic leanings, that the moral actions, or the actions of the virtuous person, are actions aligned

correctly with that which is truly good in itself.¹⁵ In contrast, the immoral, or vicious actions are simply those resulting from an erroneous conception of what is truly good for the agent and the betterment of all humankind. This is another departure of Green from Kant – for in Kant the immorality of an action was based on the agent’s disregard to reason; whereas for Green, all actions (other than simple reflexes) necessarily required the exertion of reason. Green stated, “it must be borne in mind that this same capacity [the capacity to reason] is the condition, as has been pointed out, no less of the vicious life than for the virtuous.”¹⁶ Thus, both the virtuous person and vicious person exercise reason, but it is only with the virtuous person that her reason leads to true satisfaction.

Moral Sympathy

As we turn to discuss how Kant and Green handled the topic of sympathy, some of the commonalities existing between the two are more evident. Kant and Green agree that reason plays the definitive role of enabling the existence of society. Green defended Kant’s position that reason leads us to recognize a common humanity – i.e., the ability to see others and ourselves as ends, resulting in the principle of human equality. Green also sided with Kant on the notion that reason guides the production of laws and institutions that regulate social relations and ensure human equality. Furthermore, Green agreed with Kant that the prime impediment to social relations is selfishness, or, “a preference of private pleasure to common good.”¹⁷ Despite these shared axioms of Kant and Green,

¹⁵Brink, *Perfectionism and the Common Good*, 100.

¹⁶Green, *PE*, §178.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, §215-216.

and Green's own attribution of these concepts to Kant, there remains the significant disagreement of how each conceived the relationship between animality and rationality.

The differing views of Kant and Green on the dynamics of sympathetic action are related to, indeed derivative of, their opposing views on the coexistence of animal and moral nature. To avoid redundancy, we can safely infer that an argument vastly similar to the positions presented above will belong to their views on sympathy as well. However, noting the peculiar involvement of emotion and reason in Kant's discourse on sympathetic action, as discussed in Chapter I, I will articulate how the differing views on the coexistence of animal nature and moral nature play out in Kant and Green's discourses on sympathetic actions.

The Animal Feeling and Moral Feeling in Sympathetic Action

For both Kant and Green, the animalistic, or emotive reaction to the observed state of another's pleasure or pain precedes the occurrence of the moral feeling. Both thinkers agree that this initial sympathetic reaction, which consists of a feeling of pleasure or pain in the observer herself, provoked by the perceived pleasure or pain experienced by another person, is an animal feeling. However, it is only to this extent that they agree.

As discussed in Chapter I, Kant's notion of conflicting natures created an obstacle for him to address in his account of sympathetic action. Kant could not allow pathological feelings to play a defining role in sympathetic action, yet he could not dismiss the importance of animal feelings in the occurrence of sympathy. Kant overcame this obstacle by distinguishing an animal feeling of sympathy from a moral feeling of

sympathy. Whereas the animal feelings were nothing more than contagious, reflexive feelings acquired during one's observance of another's states of being, moral feelings were those produced by reason's recognition of the moral law. That is to say, that the animal feelings and moral feelings are two completely different feelings, according to Kant, having in common only the situation in which they exist.

Kant argued that the animal feeling created in the observing agent an awareness of the situation of the other agent. Thus, an agent cannot help but feel some sensation of pleasure or pain upon witnessing the pleasure or pain of another. However, this animalist reaction is morally worthless according to Kant, because the observer's reaction is not directed toward the person affected by the given conditions; rather the observer's reaction is in attention to the possibility of finding herself subjugated to similar circumstance. That is to say, that the sympathetic actions, as determined by the communicated animal feelings are based upon the observer's desire to either share or avoid the perceived circumstances of the other person. Hence, the resulting actions taken by the observer are fundamentally selfish, for sympathetic actions burgeoning from one's natural impulses aim at only three things according to Kant: "a) his self-preservation, b) the preservation of the species, and c) the preservation of his capacity to enjoy life, though still on the animal level only."¹⁸

Since animal feelings led to selfishness, Kant required a notion of psychological detachment in moral sympathetic action. As discussed in Chapter I, Kant found his

¹⁸Kant, *Doctrine of Virtue*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, edited and translated by Mary J. Gregor 541 – 588 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 545.

exemplar for moral sympathetic action in the Stoic, who appropriately understood his limitations of the extent to which he allowed himself to be affected by another's state of affairs, and who understood correctly the extent of his responsibility to the other. Without compromising the integrity of the principle of human equality, Kant required that the observer must stand in a position outside the felt natural sympathies, and "let" herself be affected "imaginatively" – that is, contemplatively. In this way, moral sympathy is both free from the natural impulses and is a work of reason. This is the appropriate position to be assumed by a morally sympathetic person, because, Kant argued, it is the exercise of self-restriction to animalistic, impulsive reactions.¹⁹

The resulting action, if it is to be a moral action, must be in response to the moral feeling founded on reason that another human being – that is, another agent who is an end in herself – is in a condition worthy of the rational response of the observer. The moral feeling, then, is not only directed toward the person rather than the conditions acting upon the person, but the moral feeling is produced by the observer's recognition of another's worthiness as an end. The worthiness of the other, meant, according to Kant, that the other person demanded respect. Kant stated that one's own dignity is based upon her respect towards others. Failure to willingly restrict one's self-love – i.e., to have a lack of modesty – constitutes egotism.²⁰ In order to show just how profoundly egotism impacts humanity in Kant's view, we hear from Kant that egotism is at the root

¹⁹Kant, *DV*, 574-575.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 579.

of malice, which is the opposite of sympathy and the opposite of love for one's neighbor. As such, malice, rooted in egotism, is an attack on the very essence of humanity.²¹

As cohesive and felicitous as Kant's argument is, it, again, hinges on a principle of the oppositional natures of animality and rationality coexisting in the human being. The animal nature is only, and always, an obstacle within the human mind to a person's fulfillment of duty.²² Yet, for a fleeting moment Kant gave some value to the animal feeling, in so far as it could elicit an awareness of another's state of being. Kant rapidly diminishes the value of animal sympathy, however, by requiring that it be overcome by reason before any morally worthy response could be delivered. This, I find most disturbing.

In a somewhat simplistic analogy, what I see in Kant is an attitude of praise for the automobile over the outdated transportation by means of a mule. However, when the automobile gets stuck in the mud, Kant runs to use the mule to dislodge the inert automobile. As soon as the vehicle is capable of resuming as it is supposed to do, he thanks the mule for its utility, sends it back to the stable, and returns to esteem the automobile. Did the mule pull in an opposite direction of the car, or hinder it in anyway? Did the mule need to cease to exist?

Perhaps the mule ceased to exist as a mode of transportation, but the action of the mule had a continuing affect throughout the situation – that is, even after it was sent back to the stable – because without it, the automobile could not have resumed

²¹Kant, *DV*, 577.

²²*Ibid.*, 513.

movement. Thus, in a way, the movement of the automobile at every ensuing moment following its rescue by the mule is indebted to the mule. Kant might agree with the notion of indebtedness, but since the subsequent movement of the automobile is not dependent on the mule, at every subsequent moments, the mule, if it remained on the scene, could only get in the way of the automobile. Why Kant insisted that we must forget the due respect for the mule simply because the automobile exists, I cannot fully understand.

Kant saw in the occurrence of moral sympathetic action a convergence of animal feeling and moral feelings, wherein the animal feelings must be conquered by the moral feelings. Green, on the other hand, with his conception of the self-distinguishing agent who presents her animal feelings to herself and effectively moralizes her feelings in a process of conscious awareness, created grounds for the continuity of the particular animal feeling. The animal feeling is transformed into a moral feeling. Green stated in his discourse on the will, in Chapter I of Book II:

The motive is not made up of a want and self-consciousness ... It [the agent's motive in moral action] is one and indivisible; but, indivisible as it is, it results, as perception results, from the determination of an animal nature by a self-conscious subject other than it; so results, however, as that the animal condition does not survive *in* the result.²³

This means that, according to Green, in the creation of a moral motive the agent changes the animal impulse through the process of self-conscious reflection on the feeling. With the phrase, “the animal condition does not survive *in* the result,” it appears that Green too required the overcoming of animal feeling. However, what Green said differs from

²³Green, *PE*, §91.

Kant's suggestion of a convergence of the animal feeling and the moral feeling, in which two fundamentally different feelings arise – one out of animal nature, the other out of reason.

Green claimed that the moral feeling is continuously indebted to the animal feeling because everything of the moral feeling is founded upon the animal feeling. The animal feeling is entirely transformed into a moral feeling – something new and different from the animal feeling – by the self-distinguishing agent. The animal feeling is a pre-conscious sensation that becomes a feeling proper – or, what it truly is to be a feeling felt by an agent – when processed by a self-distinguishing agent. Green stated:

Even those desires of a man, then, which originate in animal want or susceptibility to animal pleasure, in the sense that without such want or susceptibility they would not be, yet become what they are in man, as desires consciously directed to objects, through the self-consciousness which is the condition of those objects or any objects being presented. And it is only as consciously directed to objects that they have a moral quality or contribute to make us what we are as moral agents.... without reference to a self which presents the pleasure to itself as a good among other possible good things, is not a function of our moral nature.²⁴

Regarding sympathetic feelings, the agent's animal feeling of pleasure or pain produced in the witnessing of another's pleasure or pain is transformed into a moral sympathetic feeling when, through the process of self-awareness, the agent sees herself and the other as ends and develops an ideal object to be realized. The object to be realized will lead not only to the betterment of the other individual, but also to her own betterment as well. Green believed this to be true because he believed that humans are

²⁴Green, *PE*, §125. "Feeling" can safely be used interchangeable with "desire" and "pleasure" without compromising the integrity of this passage.

inherently social creatures. One conceives of herself as belonging to others due to the familial relationships she has experiences throughout her life. Thus, as the agent conceives of her own pursuit of betterment, she includes those with whom she finds herself in relationship, because, according to Green, the satisfaction, or true good, she seeks consists of a good that has permanence, meaning it must outlive herself and be inheritable by those in and following her life. Green argued, however, that the familial relationships one experiences primarily function to set a principle of common good that is to be universalized beyond the scope of the family, and indeed include all of humanity.²⁵

The distinguishing factor that renders human sympathy something altogether different from animal sympathy is consciousness. Nevertheless, the animal feeling was not dismissed nor depreciated. In fact, Green claimed that without the animal feeling, the self-conscious agent would have nothing to deliberate. While Green refuted the claims of evolutionists that human sympathy is directly derivative from animal sympathy, he did admit a close, and necessary relationship between the two. Green made this point:

We may take it, then, as an ultimate fact of human history ... that out of sympathies of animal origin, through their presence in a self-conscious soul, there arise interests as of a person in persons. Out of a process common to man's life with the life of animals there arises for man, as there do not apparently arise for animals,

Relations dear and all the charities

Of father, son, and brother:

and of those relations and charities self-consciousness on the part of all concerned in them is the condition.... It is not any mere sympathy with pleasure and pain that can by itself yield the affections and recognized obligations of the family. The man for whom they are to be possible must be able, through

²⁵Green, *PE*, §229-231.

consciousness of himself as an end to himself, to enter into a like consciousness as belonging to others, whose expression of it corresponds to his own.... Having found his pleasures and pain dependent on the pleasures and pains of others, he must be able in the contemplation of a possible satisfaction of himself to include the satisfaction of those others, and that a satisfaction of them as ends to themselves and not as a means to his pleasure.²⁶

This statement displays that in Green's theory of moral sympathy, the animal feelings are retained throughout the process of being consciously addressed by the individual. Whereas in Kant's theory there was a need for the psychological detachment of the observer from her animal feelings, it appears that Green would rather the observer have a strong attachment to her animal feelings – for it is her animal feelings that are acknowledged, endorsed, and moralized. Thus, the animal feelings are continually before the mind of the self-conscious agent because they are indeed the content of the agent's deliberation.

Conclusion

Kant certainly had an influence on Green – this much can be seen in the axioms they share regarding the work of reason and the principle of human equality founded on a notion of viewing people as intrinsically valuable, or as ends in themselves. However, the chasm that exists between Kant and Green based on their differing perspectives on the relationship of animality and rationality is indeed deep. This fundamental difference between Kant and Green, being as it is a fundamental difference, leads us to reasonably reconsider the extent to which Green can be presented as Kantian. In the end, we are left with yet other questions: what does Green's moral theory provide for us that Kant's view

²⁶Green, *PE*, §201.

did not; and why, if we are compelled to do so, should we prefer Green's account of human nature over that of Kant's?

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSORY CONCERNS

As seen in Kant's discussion of sympathetic action, Kant did pay a certain respect to the role of emotions in moral behavior. It is, according to Kant, the sensible feeling of sympathy that elicits in the moral agent an awareness of the need for a moral response. However, beyond this utilization of animal feelings, we do not find in Kant a more thoroughgoing respect for the animal impulses that are admittedly a part of our human nature. True to the cold, intellectualist caricature often painted of Kant, we find that while Kant claimed a purposiveness for human emotions, he ultimately views the animal feelings as hindrances to moral actions. Green, on the other hand, managed to uphold a distinction between animal nature and moral nature within humankind, but in his theory he proposed that human self-consciousness should be viewed as that which unites animal feeling with the uniquely human capacity to reason. Thus, rather than endorsing a dualistic understanding of conflicting natures within the human being, Green instated a theory that built continuity between humankind's endowments of animal feelings and moral capacity. The question to ask here, however, is what problems does Green's theory solve that Kant's moral philosophy does not?

I find that Green's moral philosophy solves three problems created by Kant's dualism. First, Kant's dualism leads us to the conclusion that we act either according to reason, or in accordance with reasonless animal impulses. The problem here, however, is that Kant said we choose which nature we will follow in a given situation, but if reason

is one of the choices rather than part of the very ability to choose, then on what faculty are we reliant in choice making?

Following in a similar vein, I find that if we accept Kant's dualism, and his notion that moral actions are the products of stringent contemplation – including the conquest over animal impulses – we are affirming a position that qualifies many, if not most, of our actions as animal behaviors. For Kant, it was the human capacity to reason that separated them from animals, yet this capacity may or may not be engaged in a particular decision. The question is, then, given Kant's theory, are we more likely to act like animals than moral beings?

Lastly, Kant's dualism requires an emotional disengagement from others upon witnessing their pleasure or pain – i.e., in an occasion eliciting sympathetic feelings. Of course, such emotional detachment makes sense given a presupposition that mostly vilifies emotions because they are born out of animal impulses. However, is it true that I should deny my feelings at a certain point in the name of acting morally? Is such detachment truly required for the progression of moral sympathy? And, would a high regard toward one's emotional feelings necessarily yield a weaker bond between two people, or an inferior foundation to understanding others as ends?

Here, I wish to further discuss each of these points respectively.

Reason's Role in Conflict

In order to secure the position that humans are responsible for their actions, Kant had to seat the forces that drive a person toward good or evil actions in the person herself. Kant did this by suggesting that one's evil actions arise from her susceptibility to

her animal inclinations, while one's morally good actions are attributed to her following the guidance of reason. Therefore, the unique struggle of humankind between good and evil, according to Kant, must be viewed as forces drawing in one direction or the other, but each coming from within the human being. In saying these things I mean to bring focus to Kant's notion of conflict between the animal nature and moral nature of humankind when situations of duty are presented to the moral agent.

Given Kant's concept of conflict, or internal struggle, I have to ask whether there would truly be a struggle within an agent if she were not cognizant of her choice to either follow or subordinate reason? It seems that if one is to be in an actual struggle, she must be consciously aware of her decision to pursue her animal impulses rather than the moral law provided by reason, or vice versa. Accordingly, if it is in fact a decision for which she is responsible for making, then it would seem to suggest that some form of reasoning has led her to choose her animal nature in particular circumstances. As we have discussed, this conscious choice was for Kant precisely that which makes the agent who chooses her animal nature over her moral nature evil.

In all of this, however, we must contest that it appears as though the agent in fact exercises some form of reasoning when making the choice to follow her animal impulses, or in Kant's terms, "the *corruption* of the human heart is the propensity of power of choice to maxims that subordinate the incentives of the moral law..."¹ Thus, it seems that a contradiction is present in Kant's theory – that reason subordinates reason.

¹Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. and transl. by Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 78.

If it is not by reason that we choose between our animal impulses and our moral concepts, then what faculty is enlisted to make this choice? Kant would respond to this alleged contradiction by claiming that it is one's will, or one's character, that determines whether or not one will follow reason's presentation of the moral law and how one will use gifts of nature (courage, perseverance, temperament, etc.).² This response, however, leads only to another question: what is the will or character, and how is it determined? It seems to me that either one's character is predetermined by some unknown means, or individuals have some ability to shape their character, and this ability would seem to depend on one's self-reflection and reasoning when considering her character. Thus, it appears to me, that ultimately it is reason that leads us one way or the other, but that admits to the contradiction that reason may lead against itself.

If this argument can be upheld, this scenario seems to point in favor of Green's views that the virtuous person and the vicious person both exercise reason³ because consciousness is reason⁴ rather than a detached, yet accessible moral nature humans happen to possess. Green offered to us the theory that it is by our very nature as human beings that all of our feelings, thoughts, and desires are subjected to, and united by, our capacity to reason – this is what it is to be a self-conscious being.

²Immanuel Kant, *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. and transl. by Mary J. Gregor (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 49.

³Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, edited by David O. Brink (New York: Clarendon/Oxford Press, 2003), §178.

⁴*Ibid.*, §205.

The Deliberateness of Consciousness

Kant did not see the moral action as one's default response to a given situation, such as another's felt pain. In order for an action to be moral, according to Kant, deliberation regarding the circumstances, possible alternative responses, and future affects (among other things) are part of an agent's considerations when determining how to act. Such deliberation is simply what is required of an agent in making a conscious and moral choice. One could ask of Kant just how contemplative we must be in making our decisions? Is there a possibility of deliberating, but not quite enough? Ultimately, the question is, are we more likely to act in accordance with our animal nature than our moral nature?

Green, on the other hand, clearly wrote of the necessity of reason and consciousness (or, reason/consciousness as just discussed). Consequently, by making reason synonymous with consciousness, Green's theory claims that all of our actions carry with them deliberative endorsement. Thus, we are clearly more likely to act in accordance with our moral nature than with our animal nature, unless, of course, the action is a simple reflex. However, we may want to be somewhat cautious on this point, for it seems that Green's theory may be too lax in its requirements for moral actions. The question we must ask Green is just how deliberative are we in our conscious choices? While Kant's requirements may be too strict, Green's theory runs the risk of making the process of deliberation too frictionless.

However, I am reluctant to concede this point in Kant's favor due to the following concern: If we are more inclined to respond to influences impulsively, and it is

our capacity to reason through given circumstances that separates us from animals, then are we, according to Kant, as likely, if not more likely to act like animals? Green's account, although it may be a little too lax, keeps us in position to behave as the moral beings we are, rather than vacillating between acting as animals on one occasion and as moral beings on another occasion. It does seem that whatever characteristic we find within humankind that purportedly separates us from other animals, we would want that characteristic to be continuously fully engaged.

An Inextricable Sense of Belonging

Lastly, I believe that Green's concept of sympathy flowing out of the natural bonds we have with others, due to preconceptions we have of ourselves as belonging to others, seems more intuitive than what is found in Kant's theory. As moral beings, we naturally moralize the animal feelings when we consciously acknowledge them, according to Green. This pertains to feelings of sympathy just as it does to any other kind of felt desires.

I find a two-fold problem in Kant's account of sympathy. First, Kant's prerequisite for emotional detachment from the other's conditions before a morally sympathetic action can take place can be problematic. If it is the animal feeling that creates in the observer the awareness of another's pleasure or pain, I cannot understand why this emotional response must be subsequently jettisoned in order to make room for the moral feeling. Why is it that I cannot remain attuned to my animal feeling while entertaining the moral feeling? Better yet, the real-life question is whether we in fact do discard our animal feelings when we seek to respond to another's fate in a moral fashion.

Secondly, Kant admitted that the purpose of the animal feeling of sympathy was to create awareness in the observer, of another's pleasure or pain, but beyond this they only stand to obstruct obligation. For Kant, the animal feeling was void of reason, and lead only in a direction to appease selfish concerns. Green, however, made the case that my understanding of myself is directly related to my knowing myself to be in mutual and codependent relationships with others. Kant esteemed the emotional detachment of the Stoic, saying, "the same wise man [the Stoic], when he could not rescue his friend, said to himself 'what is it to me?'"⁵ This notion contradicts the central thrust of Green's paradigm.

Conceiving myself as one in a state of mutually belonging to others, and my understanding that my well-being is contingent on the well-being of others, renders it difficult to make the notion "what is it to me?" the appropriate moral stance I must take. Green would argue, I believe, that the virtuous person who understands others as sharing in her ultimate good, would not come to the conclusion "what is it to me?" at any point in any situation, because she views the other as part of who she is. The fate of the other never transcends a threshold at which point the other's fate ceases to matter to, or affect, the observer in an emotional and moral way. Thus, speaking to one who would conclude "what is it to me," I believe Green would respond, "It has very much to do with you."

We must admit, however, that there are potential problems in Green's theory of the common good, as founded on concepts of familial relationships. First, it seems

⁵Kant, *Doctrine of Virtue*, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, edited and translated by Mary J. Gregor (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 575.

natural to care more for those closest to us than for those whom we have never met, or for those who are of nationalities in opposition with our own, or for those of ethnicities hardly comparable to our own. Secondly, the idea that I should see all humanity in a way analogous to how I view my belongingness to my own family seems quit fanciful. However, to say that it seems fanciful is not to say that it is incorrect. After all, if I cannot imaginatively conceive of those I have never met, or even my supposed foes, as similar in quality to those people dear and familiar to me, then how might I begin to contemplate all humans as meaningful ends in themselves? It appears reasonable, then, to suggest that I must conceive of the most remote strangers as vastly similar to those with whom I am very familiar. Thus, if I am going to conceive of those strangers as ends in themselves, I find it necessary to mentally depict them as capable of eliciting the same emotional responses and senses of moral obligation as those closest to me.

In the end, I do believe Green's account of human nature and his moral philosophy paints a truer and picture of the human condition than does Kant's theory. Green shared with Kant the respect for certain axioms: a noted distinction between impulsive, animal actions and moral actions; the shared regard for the role of reason in moral action; and the common emphases on the concept of a community of ends that claims that every individual is to be seen as an end in herself. However, by making reason synonymous with consciousness, thereby making it that which unifies all emotional and perceptual influence, Green's theory offers to us an escape from Kant's troublesome dualism. Thus, Green delivered a more intuitive and accurate account of the human condition than Kant's dualistic view that entails continual conflict, for Green's

account offers a presentation of the human condition in which there is harmony and supplementation between the coexisting animal nature and moral nature within humankind.

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