CHAPTER NUMBER
IMMANUEL KANT ON THE MORAL FEELING OF RESPECT[1]

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Kant's critical practical philosophy is well known as a theory of freedom, of autonomy, of duty, and of the categorical imperative. Yet almost no one recognizes that it is also a theory of moral feeling. This is unjustified, for Kant claims that the emergence of the practical law on the one hand, and compliance with this law on the other hand, are accompanied by a feeling, a pure but also sensible a priori component, which is indispensable for the foundation of the morality of an action. Kant specifies this feeling as a moral feeling of respect (awe, highest esteem, elevation of the soul).

The moral feeling of respect belongs to the a priori elements of the foundation of morals no less than the practical law itself. It is "inseparably connected with the representation of the law in every finite rational being" (5:80). Systematically, it is

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Kant's works are cited according to the edition of the Prussian Royal Academy of Sciences, for example 5:80 (= volume 5, page 80). Abbreviations and works cited are:
Observations: Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime, 2:205–56;
Distinctness: Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality, 2:273–302.
Dissertation: De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis, 2:385–420;
Groundwork: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, 4:385–464;
second Critique: Critique of Practical Reason, 5:1–164;
Metaphysics of Morals, 6:203–494;
Announcement: Announcement of the Programme of his Lectures for the Winter Semester 1765–1766, 2:303–14;
Pedagogy, 9:437–500;
Religion: Religion within the Boundaries of mere Reason, 6:1–202.

subordinate because it emerges only as a consequence – albeit as a necessary one – of the moral law. The moral feeling cannot be replaced by the moral command of reason because it makes a separate, purely sensible contribution to the foundation of the morality of an action. But, conversely, it alone is not sufficient to establish the morality of an action.

The moral feeling has two aspects: respect for the moral law (nomological aspect) and respect for the moral person (personal aspect). Respect for the law emerges immediately whenever an acting person has to make a moral decision and becomes aware of the command of reason in herself. Respect for the law is directed to the idea of morality and to the objective command of reason itself. Respect for the moral person, on the other hand, emerges only after an acting person has made the decision to accept the practical law as the leading determining ground of her actions.[2]

The following investigation is divided into three parts. I will begin in part I with a short introduction into the historical background and the development of the theory of moral feeling in Kant's writings. In part II, I will examine the fundamental systematic features of the moral feeling of respect in Kant's approach. In this part of the paper, I will first discuss all the characteristics that make the moral feeling an *a priori* feeling, strictly distinguishing it from all empirical feelings (II.1). Then I will investigate the feeling of respect as a *feeling* (II.2). Finally, the core of the systematic inquiry will consist in the discussion of the three ethical functions of respect: the evaluative, the causal, and the educational function (II.3.1–3). Part III of the investigation will deal with arguments against and alternatives to Kant's theory of moral feeling. Kant's claim that there is only one purely moral feeling of respect in the strict sense is discussed against a graduated model of the moral relevance of feelings (III.1), and then evaluated against alternative classical interpretations of moral feelings such as love (III.2.1), sympathy, and compassion (III.2.2).

Apart from the handful of historically oriented monographs (Seidler 1986, Lee 1987, Park 1995) and papers (Henrich 1957/8, MacBeath 1973) dealing with moral feeling in Kant's writings, there are but a few systematic investigations (Packer 1989, Sokoloff 2001, Scarano 2002, Ameriks 2004, Theiss 2005) and shorter statements in commentaries, monographs and essay collections on Kant's ethical writings (Allison 1990, Guyer 1993, Wood 1999, Ameriks 2000, Wood/Schoenecker 2002, Sala 2004, Esser 2004). The moral feeling *itself* in Kant is the focus of the investigation only in the minority of cases. Although some of the works discuss the role of feelings in Kant's ethics, they overlook the most

[2] On the systematic difference between the two aspects cf. Theiss 2005.

important one, namely the moral feeling. For instance, Baron (2002a, 97–8, 101) says that feelings "do not play any role in grounding morality" and that "[d]uty is not a matter of 'affection'". But, already in the *Groundwork*, Kant defines duty as "*the necessity of an action from respect for law*" (4:400). In other words, the moral demand is not just a result of the practical law but of both law *and* respect for the law, both duty's command *and* a feeling of duty. Baron seems to be aware of empirical feelings only, not of the moral feeling of respect. Williams (1973, 226), too, claims that Kant provides three reasons why morality cannot be discerned from the emotional condition of an acting person, "the emotions are too capricious," "they are passively experienced,"[3] and "a man's proneness to experience them or not is the product of natural causation". Williams does not see that all three features do not apply to the moral feeling of respect.

Above all there is no systematic overview of all the functions of moral feeling in Kant's critical ethical approach (II.3.1–3). Those systematic investigations that do exist mostly examine only one of the functions, for instance the evaluative (Wood 1999, Wood/Schoenecker 2002) or the causal function (Ameriks 2004, Scarano 2002, Allison 1990), while almost no one discusses the educational function (some remarks can be found in Beck 1960 and Ameriks 2000).

I. Historical roots and the adoption of a theory of moral feeling in Kant's writings

Kant's theory of moral feeling is partly a development, partly a radical reinterpretation of the British Moralists' theory of moral sense. The guiding thought of British moral philosophy is that of grounding morality in feeling.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury, (1671–1713) is considered their founder. In his essay, *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit* (published anonymously in 1699), he mentions for the first time a "sense of right and wrong," by which he understands the mental abilities and sentiments that guide human beings in moral affairs. The moral sense appears as antipathy against and aversion to injustice and falsity, and as love for justice and rightness (Shaftesbury 1699, 173). One generation later, Francis Hutcheson, who of the British Moralists, had the greatest influence on Kant, published his book, *Illustration upon the moral sense* (1728).[4] His analysis is more sensitive and detailed than that of Shaftesbury. It states that the moral sense includes kind and benevolent affections, their approbation, and the selection of motives for an action. Contrary to Hobbes' principle of self-love, the moral sense is regarded as altruistic. It is objective,

[3] As the following passages show the moral feeling of respect is both passive *and* active.
[4] Cf. Goy/Hoeffe 2004.

indifferent to experience and history, and the same for all human beings. Furthermore, it is a kind of affect or instinct (Hutcheson 1728, 107–24). Kant's contemporary David Hume (1711–1776), too, claims that in all moral questions reason can only be the slave of the passions (Hume 1739/40, II.3.3). His argument is the following: all human perceptions are either ideas of reason or impressions of feeling. Morality is something active because it influences human actions and inclinations, and either hinders affects or generates them. Reason, on the other hand, is a passive principle. Therefore moral distinctions and decisions are a matter of feeling. They originate from the moral sense or moral sentiments (ibd., III.1.1–2). All three advocates of the theory of moral sense tend to give an empirical interpretation of the moral feeling – this will be Kant's strongest point of attack against the traditional explanation of the moral feeling. The fourth of the British Moralists, Adam Smith (1723–1790), is never referred to directly in any of Kant's works.[5]

Kant's struggle with the theory of moral sense can be traced back to his earliest writings at the beginning of the 1750s. Then, under the influence of the Leibniz-Wolffian moral philosophy, which was dominant in Germany at that time, Kant adopted the idea of the primacy of reason in moral actions and the formal principle of perfection as the highest principle of morals.[6] At the beginning of the 1760s he came under the influence of the countermovement to rationalism: that is to say, he became acquainted with British moral philosophy. He then added a material principle to the formal principle of morality: an indissoluble and "unanalysable feeling of the good" as a material principle of obligation (*Distinctness* 1764, 2:299–300). The reading of Rousseau's *Émile* and the *Contrat social* in October 1763 and February 1764 further encouraged Kant's turn to a morality based on feeling.

There is some evidence that in the middle of the 1760's Kant turned away not from the moral sense in general but from the empirical interpretation of it. The "attempts of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume" in the *Announcement* from 1765/66 are said to be "incomplete and defective" (2:311). Through a more

[5] A German translation of the third edition of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759/^{3}1767) was available in Germany in 1770.

[6] "Do the most perfect which you can possibly do, [...] omit that by which the greatest perfection possible is prevented by you" ("Thue das Vollkommenste, was durch dich moeglich ist, [...] [u]nterlasse das, wodurch die durch dich groeßtmoegliche Vollkommenheit verhindert wird") (2:299). Wolff himself says: "Do that which renders you and your or someone else's state more perfect; omit that which makes it less perfect." ("Thue was dich und deinen oder anderer Zustand vollkommener machet; unterlass, was ihn unvollkommener machet"), cf. Wolff 1720, 12, 16.

thoroughgoing study of human nature, Kant intended to give them that "precision and completeness" which they still lacked.

The *Dissertation* of 1770 finally formulates the main insight of Kant's critical ethics – namely, that it belongs to *pure* philosophy. All material or psychological foundations of morality, thus also the foundation of morality in a moral feeling interpreted empirically, have to be excluded from ethics. Kant distances himself clearly from Shaftesbury and his supporters, who are now said to be very rightly blamed (2:396).

The transition to critical ethics that Kant formulated fifteen years later includes a twofold insight: 1. In addition to the formal principle of morals, feeling plays a decisive role in moral philosophy. 2. If feeling is to take part in the foundation of morals, then it cannot be empirical but must be interpreted as an a priori pure feeling. Both insights will form the basis of Kant's main ethical writings after 1785. On the one hand, Kant criticizes his predecessors for their traditional empirical explanation of the moral sense (4:441–2, 5:39–40) and, above all, provides proof that the binding character of the moral demand cannot be explained through empirical feelings (cf. Henrich 1957/8, 52). On the other hand, he interprets moral feeling as an a priori feeling and integrates a pure, emotional moment in his non-empirical approach to a foundation of morals.

II. Systematic features of the moral feeling of respect

The apriorization of the moral feeling is the most important step in Kant's re-interpretation of the moral sense. While insisting on the idea of a pure moral philosophy, Kant at the same time adheres to the claim that the supreme moral principle, the practical law, is relevant for an action only if it is connected with an affective basis as a source of motivation. Thus, he is left to search for an a priori moral feeling which, unlike empirical feelings that have a material content, has a pure moral content and at the same time exhibits affective features typical of all other feelings.

I will now examine the characteristics of moral feeling that result from its apriorization, as well as Kant's argument for his claim that the a priori practical feeling of respect[7] is different from *all* other feelings (II.1), while remaining nonetheless a *feeling* (II.2).

[7] The moral feeling of respect belongs to the a priori practical form of sensibility and is opposed to empirical practical sensibility. Although Kant acknowledges theoretical forms of sensibility alongside the practical forms, they cannot be treated in the present investigation, which is limited to the field of practical philosophy. Practical forms of sensibility are relevant for acting, while theoretical forms of sensibility are of importance for knowledge.

II.1 Respect as a feeling *a priori*

The feeling of respect is singular and uniform. It appears in the same way in all subjects and therefore has more than mere subjective validity. It represents an objective value (the idea of morality) and thus has the same power of moral justification for every acting person. The reason for this is the exclusivity of the intentional object of respect, which is directed either toward the moral law itself or toward the moral person. Empirical feelings, in contrast, are ultimately directed toward an egoistic, material motive even if they have rational contents. They are various in kind, various in degree, and they are subjectively contingent (4:442). It is not possible to derive a binding measure for morality or a moral justification of an action from empirical feelings.

The moral feeling of respect is "self-wrought" (4:401 note; cf. Wood/Schoenecker 2002, 81) by human reason and by the particular subject, for it is not caused by external stimuli but is, rather, a consequence of the practical law which each subject becomes aware of in herself. It does not represent anything other than the practical law on the level of feeling. Therefore, it is exclusively directed toward a moral thought and belongs to the a priori rational nature of a human being. Empirical feelings, however, are caused by external sensible stimuli, inclinations, and desires that are directed toward empirical objects. They belong to the physical, animal nature of a human being.

The moral feeling of respect moves the subject to act – and to act in a way that is morally right. The action itself is its end. Empirical feelings, in contrast, include an interest in the object of an action (4:459–60). The action itself is a mere means to an end.[8]

II.2 Respect as a *feeling* a priori

Although different from empirical feelings in many essential regards, the moral feeling of respect is nevertheless a *feeling*, its emotional dimension being comprised of two special characteristics: the *negative* quality of respect consists in a "pain," because the moral feeling wards off empirical impulses and has a stronger

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Empirical theoretical forms of sensibility include the five senses insofar as they give information which is relevant for knowledge. A priori theoretical forms of sensibility are the forms of intuition: space and time. Empirical practical forms of sensibility are the five senses insofar as they give information which serves as material determining grounds for actions. The a priori practical form of sensibility is only *one*: the moral feeling of respect.

[8] Concerning the systematic differences between the moral feeling of respect and all other feelings cf. in Kant's own days: Mellin 1797–1804, 51–69.

effect and influence on the mind than external sensible stimuli. Because the human being does not immediately pursue his empirical sensible incentives, his animal side feels disrespected and humiliated. The *positive* emotional quality of respect consists in the feeling of highest self-esteem, for, by hindering sensible stimuli, the influence of the moral law emerges much more purely and clearly. The human being rises to his highest moral purpose and begins to resemble beings without senses (God, angels), who always behave in a morally ideal way. The God in the human being thus feels elevated (5:72–4, 6:435).

Respect as self-esteem nevertheless cannot lead to an *over*estimation of self, because it presupposes sensibility in human beings and thus the consciousness that human nature is finite and lacks moral ideality. This is the reason why "respect for the *law* cannot be attributed to a supreme being or even to one free from all sensibility" (5:76). Furthermore, respect always includes consciousness of a subordination or even non-fulfilment of immediate desires. Respect is always paired with disrespect. Moreover, an *over*estimation of self cannot occur because a human being must also concede to other moral persons the same respect as to himself, and must limit his self-esteem such that it can coexist with the esteem of the moral person in all others (6:449).

II.3 Ethical functions of the moral feeling of respect

Three further differences between empirical feelings and the a priori moral feeling result in three functions of respect that are indispensable to the foundation of the morality of an action: the *evaluative*, the *causal*, and the *educational* function.

a) *The evaluative function*: While empirical feelings can only reflect relative values, the moral feeling of respect can fathom the unconditional and absolute value of the idea of morality that is expressed in the practical law.

b) *The causal function*: Like the main part of the tradition before him, Kant interprets empirical feelings as passive. They are events and effects insofar as they are suffered.[9] Kant calls them "pathological" (5:80 from the Greek word *πάσχειν*: to suffer). But he also interprets them as active, as a material basis for determining action (5:22–6). This active causal function actually makes them rivals of the moral feeling as incentives of a will which subjectively can be moved to an action either by empirical feelings or by the a priori feeling.

Conversely, the moral feeling of respect also has a passive feature, because it is an affect of pure practical reason. More importantly, however, the moral feeling of respect influences the realization of moral action actively. For it is precisely because it is an affect of pure practical reason that it – in contrast to empirical

[9] According to Gordon (1987, ix), feelings were traditionally regarded "to be states that lack causal depth".

feelings – has an exclusively a priori motivating power that can only lead to *moral* actions.

c) *The educational function*: While empirical feelings can be influenced by and educated through a person's character, the a priori moral feeling of respect is neither subject to development nor can it be changed under the influence of individual character. Rather, it itself is the condition for the possibility of the empirical and historical generation and formation of a moral character.

Each of these three functions also marks a different focus in the historical development of Kant's ethical writings. The evaluative function, as it relates to the nomological aspect of respect, is particularly thematized in the *Groundwork*. The causal function is at the center of the *second Critique*. The educational function is added in the later critical writings, above all in the *Religion*. At this stage of his ethical theory, Kant also returns once again to the evaluative function – now, however, with regard to the personal aspect of respect.

II.3.1 The evaluative function

The moral feeling of respect plays a decisive role in the evaluation of a moral action. It guarantees that *all* human beings are susceptible to the moral content of an action and that they must appreciate its value. Therefore it is indispensable for the claim to universal validity of moral values.

Kant develops the evaluative function of the moral feeling of respect in his first main ethical work, the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), and in the "Doctrine of Virtue" in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). Respect, according to Kant, is the "representation of a worth" (4:401 note) – "worth" not in the sense of an arbitrary value but in the sense of the absolute value of the pure will, which is determined by reason alone and which is "good in itself". No other emotion feels the unconditional dignity of morality. Rather, they merely comprehend the relative "price" of all objects (4:428, 4:434–5)

In the *Groundwork,* the morally pure will is introduced as something "that could be considered good without limitation" and "as something that has its full worth in itself". It is "to be valued incomparably higher than all that could merely be brought about by it in favor of some inclination and indeed, if you will, of the sum of all inclinations" (4:393–4). In Kant's approach there are only two instances able to provide this estimation: the moral power of judgment and moral feeling. Kant does not deny that the idea of morality or of a will which is good in itself could be *judged* propositionally to be the highest moral worth. But it is more important for him to stress that the highest moral esteem can also be achieved pre-propositionally, through a feeling, at the level of perception. Since the epistemically more demanding moral judgment cannot be presupposed to be within the ability of all human beings, the epistemically less demanding, non-

propositional, merely perceivable feeling – which nevertheless represents the same content as the moral judgment – is more easily accessible to everybody (even to children and uneducated persons). Therefore the feeling alone can already provide a binding measure of moral worth, which demonstrates the moral demand to be plausible and one that is a fact for all persons.

Kant deals with the way in which moral feeling brings about the highest esteem for the good will in the first part of the *Groundwork*, where he explains all those elements of ethics that are accessible to "common" moral cognition, which is available to all individuals (4:392). In the same vein, he writes in the *Religion* that "even the most limited human being is capable of all the greater a respect for a dutiful action". Even "children are capable of discovering [...] the slightest taint of admixture of spurious incentives: for in their eyes the action then immediately loses all moral worth" (6:48).

In the *Groundwork* the feeling of highest moral esteem is mainly directed towards the practical law. Respect is respect for the law and "[a]ny respect for a person is properly only respect for the law" (4:401 note). In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, however, the esteem that the moral feeling of respect evokes is directed more strongly towards the moral person who follows the practical law. It is between the writing of these two works that Kant explores the distinction between the nomological and the personal aspect of respect (6:399–403).

In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant defines virtue as "the strength of a human being's maxims in fulfilling his duty" (6:394). On the one hand, the feeling of respect supports each person in the fulfillment of his moral duties toward himself. His ability to follow the law inspires a person with "highest self-esteem, a feeling of his inner worth (valor)" and an "inalienable dignity (dignitas interna)". The person feels "his sublime vocation" that causes an "elation of spirit (elatio animi)" (6:436–7). On the other hand, the feeling of respect supports each human being in fulfilling his moral duties toward other persons. For, he must exhibit toward others, insofar as they are moral persons, the same esteem that he has for himself as a moral person. The feeling of respect is a "*maxim* of limiting our self-esteem by the dignity of humanity in another person" (6:449). Furthermore, respect is one of the prerequisites of friendship (6:469–71), the other being love.

II.3.2 The causal function

The moral feeling of respect guarantees through its *causal* function that the moral action is not just present in thought but also carried out.

Kant develops the causal function most fully in his second main ethical writing, the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788, 5:126–159). Asking how the objective command of reason can become the subjective basis for determining action and therefore can be the cause of an action in an individual subject, he identifies the

moral feeling as the sought-after executive moral power, as an "incentive" a priori.[10] Kant's conception of the causal processes in the mind distinguishes two steps: the practical law causes the feeling of respect, which in turn causes the realization of the moral action in the realm of experience. Beck (1960, 216) has already interpreted the moral feeling of respect as a "conative or dynamic factor in volition". Allison (1990, 120–2) refers to the moral law as *principium diiudicationis*, to the moral feeling, however, as *principium executionis*. The literature (cf. Fischer 2003, 181) also describes them respectively as objective motive and subjective motivation, or as the cognitive and the conative moments of an action.

But there is also controversy in the current literature regarding the motivational function of respect. So, for instance, de Sousa (1990, 306) says, "Some emotions seem likely to motivate moral behaviour, and some do not. On the Kantian view, the former class is empty"; Williams (1985, 190) writes, "Kant did not think that [...] a feeling, was itself what provided the reason for moral action. As a feeling, it was just a feeling"; and Turski (1994, 143) says, "respect" is "only product" and "not the motivation behind, the law's or rational concept's unconditional impinging on the rational will".

Kant is aware of the fact that no one before him had the idea that pure feeling can have a moral causality a priori (5:153). Already around the time of the *Groundwork*, he discovered that besides a posteriori incentives – i.e. sensible determinants of action, which emanate from empirical feelings, desires and inclinations – there could be a second kind of sensible driving force: the non-empirical incentive of a moral feeling. A posteriori incentives belong to the causality of nature. They are heteronomous. The a priori sensible driving force of respect, however, belongs to the causality of freedom. Actions from respect for the law are autonomous (cf. Wood/Schoenecker 2002, 73).

This distinction once again appears in the *second Critique*. Respect now is explicitly called an incentive of pure practical reason (5:71). It is Beck who has noted that this modifies Kant's approach of a pure practical reason, i.e. a reason that can be practical by itself alone, and that Kant delegates a part of the motivational function to moral feeling. In this context the conative moment, the moral feeling, is interpreted in a strongly cognitive way as an intellectual feeling or a sense of duty (Beck 1960, 203). Still, Kant does not go so far as to say that

[10] It is not easy to say what the etymology of the term "incentive (elater animi)" (5:72) is. The word "elater" is unknown in classical Latin. Possibly it is a loan word from the Greek word *ἐλατήρ*: herder (from *ἐλαύνειν*: to drive, to drive away, to draw, to push). In classical Latin the participle "elatum" belongs to the verb "effero" (to elevate, to arise), which is derived from *φέρειν*, meaning to carry, to bring, to give rise to; in greater detail cf. Sala 2004, 161–2; Schwaiger 1999, 161–2; and also Theiss 2005, 335.

feelings are the same as moral judgments, like the most extreme among the modern cognitivist theorists of emotions do, who ignore or eliminate the epistemic difference between a non-propositional feeling and the propositional power of judgment.[11] With his concept of the moral feeling of respect, Kant's theory represents a moderate cognitivism which, although it equates the content that is represented in the moral feeling with the one represented in the moral judgment, does not eliminate the aesthetic character of the feeling as a perception.

In the *Groundwork* Kant already explores the difference between empirical and a priori sensible incentives. But he does not yet see the causal connection between the a priori sensible incentive of a moral feeling and pure practical reason. As a result, he cannot give a full explanation of the causality of pure practical reason (4:461–2).

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant has found a solution for this problem: Pure reason becomes practical through moral feeling; for "[r]espect for the moral law is [...] the sole and also the undoubted moral incentive" of pure practical reason (5:78). It is a pure feeling, "which is directed only to the practical". This means that once the moral feeling is caused by the practical law, its causal power remains a *pure* "interest in the law" (cf. 4:413–4 note, 4:459–60 and note, 5:80) that is never directed to empirical objects but always to the realization of the moral command, to moral practice itself.

Kant's claim is that, although one can hear the practical law inside oneself and can recognize its necessitating and obligatory character, it might happen that one nevertheless does not follow the law. Only when the moral motive is reflected in the feeling as a subjective motivation, is the subject not only *motivated* to act but *acts* morally.[12]

II.3.3 The educational function

The *educational* function of the moral feeling of respect is the basis of Kant's hope that human individuals are beings who can make teleological progress in history and improve morally, such that over time they are able to acquire a moral character.

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[11] For instance Solomon (2003, 229) writes: "[A]n emotion is a normative judgement, perhaps even a moral judgement". Nussbaum (2003, 275) is a bit more cautious: "[E]motions are a kind of judgement or thought".

[12] Ameriks (2000, 319) expresses another doubt about the causal function of respect: Given that the moral feeling can execute and effect the moral action by itself, why, then, a pure practical reason at all, why not *only* the moral motivation by moral feeling alone? The answer according to Kant's approach is relatively easy: The moral feeling is caused by reason. It only exists at all through the law of pure practical reason and only in this way is there a guarantee that the feeling is a moral, and a pure feeling.

Kant develops the notion of the educational function of the moral feeling in the moral pedagogy of the *second Critique* and in the *Religion* (1794). This function can be subdivided into three steps: a) the moral feeling of respect is the emotional preliminary stage to making moral judgments that can serve to introduce to children their ability to judge morally and to inspire them to practice this ability; b) practicing the moral feeling of respect is the basis for the formation of an individual's moral character; and therefore c) the moral feeling is the source of possible progress and of the ability to improve the moral character of humankind.

a) The *second Critique's* "Doctrine of method" outlines a model of moral pedagogy, according to which it is the task of a moral educator to offer to young people concrete examples of moral behaviour taken from "the biographies of ancient and modern times," and to awaken their mimetic desire and their moral sensibility as a preparatory step towards moral judgment. In this way a "young listener" confronted with an example of a moral action will be "raised step by step from mere approval to admiration, from that to amazement, and finally to the greatest veneration and the lively wish that he himself could be such a man". Admiration, amazement, and veneration are feelings that ultimately develop into the moral feeling of respect, of highest esteem, and of reverence, which have "the greatest force on the mind of a spectator" (5:156–7). The feeling of respect that children feel in the presence of a moral example awakens the wish to achieve the feeling of elevation of the soul and of inner freedom by his own behaviour, although the child knows that a feeling of pain will precede it, for he will not be able immediately and unreflectively to follow his sensible nature and his desires.

b) The simple experience of the moral feeling of respect, if practiced and cultivated, can lead to a perceptible progress of the power of judgment and, consequently, to an increased interest in the foundation of a moral character. By moral character Kant understands "a consistent practical cast of mind in accordance with unchangeable maxims" – that is, a kind of behaviour that constantly follows the practical law (5:152). Similarly, Kant says in the *Religion* that the disposition to a moral personality can be "cultivated in no better way" than by letting the "apprentices in morality" judge "the impurity of certain maxims" or the "*example* of good people". "And so the predisposition gradually becomes an attitude of mind, so that *duty* merely for itself begins to acquire in the apprentice's heart a noticeable importance" (6:48).

The feeling of respect is a positive experience for human beings. Eventually, it causes self-contentment and joy, and the subject seeks to repeat and to renew the same experience. The "law of duty, through the positive worth that observance of it lets us feel, finds easier access through the respect for ourselves" in our consciousness (5:161), and is therefore "especially praiseworthy as a means of awakening moral dispositions" (6:50).

c) What is valid for the individual is also valid for the moral progress of humankind as a whole:

> For [take] a human being who, from the time of his adoption of the principles of the good and throughout a sufficiently long life henceforth, has perceived the efficacy of the principles on what he does, i.e. on the conduct of his life as it steadily improves, and from that has cause to infer, but only by way of conjecture, a fundamental improvement in his disposition: [he] can yet also reasonably hope that in this life he will no longer forsake his present course but will rather press in it with ever greater courage (6:68).

III. Objections, alternatives, and their critique

Against Kant's strict distinction between the a priori moral feeling of respect and empirical feelings, it has been argued that a theory of only *one* feeling that can be morally relevant for an action is too "thin". Other "circumstance–specific emotions" are conditions for grounding the morality of an action, too (cf. Sherman 1990, 165–6).

Kant does not deny that there are feelings that influence moral motivation in a subordinate but nevertheless conducive way. So, for instance, the *Religion* says that to follow the command of duty one has to acquire "a joyous frame of mind, without which one is never certain of having *gained* also *a love* for the good, i.e. of having incorporated the good into one's maxim" (6:24 note, cf. also 2:215–7). Nevertheless, nothing but the moral feeling of respect, which alone is caused by, or has an inner causal relation to the practical law, can guarantee the *exclusively* moral nature of one's motivation. Sympathy, benevolence, love, and compassion may in the best cases motivate one to act morally, but they do not necessarily do so.

III.1 A graduated model

Packer (1989, 431–3) has tried to classify Kant's statements about the influence of feeling on moral actions into five different levels. He suggests a graduated model, which describes different degrees of the moral relevance of emotions in Kant's approach. On a first level, there are those remarks that interpret heteronomous inclinations as a threat to the universality and autonomy of the practical law and that are excluded from the foundation of the morality of an action (4:405, 4:410–1, 4:442, 6:394). On a second level, there are feelings and inclinations that accompany a moral action but are irrelevant to the moral worth of that action. They are neither necessary nor sufficient to motivate one to moral behaviour (4:400, 4:410, 5:21–2). On a third level, Packer localizes the aesthetic feelings of the

sublime and the beautiful, which awaken a moral interest and which can be used in moral pedagogy. However, they are neither part of the objective definition of morality nor indispensably necessary subjective incentives for a moral action (2:211–2, 5:265, 6:457). On level four, one can find the moral feeling of "happiness" that Kant develops in the "Doctrine of the Postulates" in the *second Critique*. In the highest good, happiness is proportional to the worthiness to be happy (5:234). On a fifth and highest level, which is itself divided into two steps, there are the positive and the negative moral feelings of respect as the two components of moral feeling.

Packer's model makes sense insofar as it draws attention to the fact that Kant's approach is not blind to the richness of the emotional background of moral decisions and reasons. Still, it cannot ignore the categorical difference between the moral feeling of respect and all the other feelings on levels 1–4, and simply transfer them into a graduated model. For it is true that even "happiness" is a feeling which has empirical causes and which is generated by the sum of all material goods. Only the moral feeling of respect can be guaranteed to have a content that is pure and moral.

III.2 Alternative interpretations of moral feeling

Kant's interpretation of the moral feeling of respect is unusual. It has no prominent precursor in the history of philosophy and it consciously rejects all existing classical interpretations of moral feeling. Nor did it find any followers. Whether this reception was justified or not is a topic for another occasion.

In the remaining space, this investigation will consider the arguments that Kant offered for and against important alternative candidates for the moral feeling, such as love, sympathy, or compassion. While Kant accepts love and nearly elevates it to the level of the moral feeling of respect, he first and foremost refuses sympathy and, with some concessions, refuses compassion as well.

II.2.1 Practical love

For many years Kant tried to clarify the ethical status of love. His analyses always centred around two crucial themes: First, he repeatedly returned to the Christian doctrine of charity, which, in the course of developing his own moral philosophy, he first integrated, then refused, and at last critically re-interpreted. Second, in both his early and his late writings, he investigated the curiously interlocking but antagonistic relationship (Verflechtung) obtaining between love and respect.

The moral feeling of love for God, or charity, is a central concept in Jewish and Christian ethics. The command "*Love God above all, and your neighbour as*

yourself" (5:83) or "Love your neighbour because he is like you" (Mt. 22, 37–40; Lv. 19, 18) is the highest of the three Christian virtues alongside hope and faith.

In his early philosophy Kant took the doctrine of charity to be an example of the material principle of morality, which consists in an immediate feeling of the good (2:300), and which Kant accepted in the 1760s alongside the formal principle of morality. Charity is understood as an empirical, though elementary and simple, feeling of the moral good.

There are two reasons why Kant's Critical philosophy ceases to accept the command of charity. First, since love is a sensible and empirical feeling, and since God is not an object of the senses, one cannot love Him. Second, although human beings are objects of the senses, they cannot be obligated to love one another. Morality in Kant's theory has the character of necessitation. If love were a morally relevant feeling, it would appear as a necessitation, as a duty. But "*[l]ove* is a matter of *feeling*, not of willing, and I cannot love because I *will* to, still less because I *ought* to." Therefore, "a *duty to love* is an absurdity." Moreover, "every duty is necessitation, a constraint, even if this is to be self-constraint in accordance with a law. What is done from constraint, however, is not done from love" (6:401). Therefore love is not a moral feeling.

But Kant doesn't stop with a simple refutation of the command of charity. What attracts him to the Christian doctrine of charity is that love is considered an active and practical feeling, showing a constancy that seems to be grounded not in contingent inclinations but in a fundamental rational maxim, in a particular attitude (Haltung):

> It is undoubtedly in this way, again, that we are to understand the passages from scripture in which we are commanded to love our neighbour, even our enemy. For, love [...] is *practical* and not *pathological* love, which lies in the will and not in the propensity of feeling (4:399).

Practical love consists in the attitude of practicing all duties toward others "*gladly*" (5:83). It is not a spontaneous sensible feeling that one should strive for, but a rational habitus of benevolence toward others.

With regard to the connection between love and respect, an assimilation takes place as well. In his early *Observations* (1764) Kant describes love and respect as a pair of opposites in aesthetical and ethical contexts, and he claims that respect has a stronger and more lasting effect on the mind than love. The feeling of love arises in the presence of beautiful objects or goodhearted actions. The feeling of respect, however, arises if a subject encounters sublime and dignified objects or noble and righteous actions (2:211, 2:218). In the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant once again returns to the connection between love and respect. He now describes them as the ideal counterparts of moral friendship (6:469–71). By claiming that love as well as

respect is fundamental to maintaining moral friendship, Kant implicitly modifies his earlier held opinion that respect is related to more worthy objects than love.

Baron argues that respect and love are less opposite than it seems. Respect, the moment of repulsion, which creates a distance in one's relationship to others, has an affinity to love, the moment of attraction, which causes closeness, because both together create a third and positive thing: the moral friendship between human beings. Love is opposed to hate or ignorance but not to respect (Baron 2002b, 391–2).

The current discussion regarding theories of emotion often poses the question whether there is something like a set of "basic emotions" (cf. Goldie 2000, 87–8) that are simpler and more fundamental than all other feelings. Here the Kantian response must be that the moral feeling of respect is the most important and most fundamental feeling that a human being can have because it helps him to fulfill the moral purpose of humankind. If there is a second feeling that comes close to the moral status of respect, it is love, because love has, on the one hand, the rational-practical dimension of charity, and on the other hand, it serves as the complementary counterpart of respect in the friendship between human beings.

III.2.2 Sympathy and compassion

Sympathy. Kant's remarks about sympathy are scarce and on the whole very reserved. It is striking that Kant does not involve himself in the debate of his day about the moral function of sympathy. Rather, he directs his criticism to the original and older meaning of sympathy as a cosmological phenomenon and a speculative approach to nature.[13] In Kant's own time, more or less elaborate theories about the ethical function of sympathy had been presented by Shaftesbury (1699, II.2.1), Hutcheson (1728, 17), Hume (1739/40, III.3.1.–3), and, above all, by Adam Smith (1759, I.1.1/2) – the advocates of a sentimentalist ethics grounded in feeling. Kant could have responded directly to all four positions, but did not.

The few available sources in Kant's early philosophy indicate a kind of sceptical reservation. Contrary to true virtues grounded in maxims, the merely adoptive virtue of sympathy is "not yet enough" to "stimulate inert human nature to actions for the common good" (2:217–8, 2:222). It is a pathological incentive for

[13] The ethical interpretation of sympathy appeared relatively late in the history of philosophy. Until early modern times sympathy meant the consonance and the collective affective arousal of elements in the cosmos. Only since the middle of the 16th century has the original speculative concept, belonging to the realm of nature, increasingly been transferred to the realm of social, moral and political relations in human society. Sympathy then came to designate the attraction between human beings, the harmony of their feelings and their insight into each other's thoughts and feelings.

actions that generates "a frivolous, high-flown, fantastic cast of mind" (5:85). Most of the remarks rank sympathy and antipathy, without any further argument, among the sympathetic and speculative phenomena of nature that Kant deems absurd things, such as "idiosyncrasy (*qualitates occultae*)" (7:203), "water-divining, premonitions, the operation of the imagination of pregnant woman, the influence exercised by the phases of the moon on animals and plants" (2:356–7, cf. 7:179), sorcery, magic, spirit-seeing, and superstition.

Sympathetic joy and sadness. The moral feeling of compassion, advocated by Rousseau before Kant and by Schopenhauer after him, does not enter in any lasting way into Kant's thinking. But Kant treats compassion in a slightly more sophisticated manner than he does sympathy.

"Compassion" (pitié), according to Rousseau, consists in an "identification" with the suffering person. It prompts human beings to help suffering persons without any further reflection (Rousseau 1753, 154–6; german 61–4). Similarly, Schopenhauer says in direct opposition to Kant that compassion is the only and exclusively unadulterated moral incentive (Schopenhauer 1840, 231 and 1818/19/1844, § 67).[14] As with Rousseau, compassion means for Schopenhauer unification with the suffering of another person. This identification (Schopenhauer 1840, 208) is Kant's first point of attack against a moral feeling of compassion, for, as he says,

> when another suffers and, although I cannot help him, I let myself be infected by his pain [...] then two of us suffer, though the trouble really (in nature) affects only *one*. But there cannot possibly be a duty to increase the ills in the world and so to do good *from compassion* (6:457).

Kant criticizes compassion, just as he does sympathy and love, for its contingency as well as for its lack of regularity – these being typical features of sensible feelings. He considers it good behaviour "without support (Haltung) and without principles" (2:215, 2:217), or, even stronger, a sign of moral weakness which in "right-thinking persons" produces "the wish to be freed from" it (5:118).

The immediate appearance of moral feeling of respect is clearly attested to by children. In contrast, a similar test in the case of compassion leads to a contra-indication. "It is a good thing to give children pocket-money of their own, that they may help the needy; and in this way we should see if they are really compassionate or not. But if they are only charitable with their parent's money, we have no such test" (9:487). Children do not have an a priori feeling of compassion that is obligatory and that is strong enough to consistently generate moral actions.

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[14] On Schopenhauer and Kant cf. Koehl 1993, 140–150.

The Kant of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, however, concedes that *"sympathetic joy* and *sadness* (*sympathia moralis*)*"* appear spontaneously as natural "sensible feelings". But the immediately felt empathy (com-affectedness) is not the morally acceptable feature of sympathetic joy and sadness. Rather, it consists in the "*capacity* and the *will* to *share in others' feelings*". It is not in an aesthetic and emotional way, but through the rational "*humanitas practica*" of an understanding through communication, that sympathetic joy and sadness acquire a form that allows one freely to take an interest in the existence and the destiny of others (6:456–7).

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