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Kant's Metaphysics of Morals
Interpretative Essays

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Motive and Rightness in Kant's Ethical System

Mark Timmons

One deeply entrenched assumption of ethical theorizing is that the rightness of an act does not depend on one's motive in performing the act. Considerations of motive are generally understood to affect the moral quality of one's character and hence the moral worth of one's actions. But, on the assumption under consideration, the rightness of an act is to be sharply distinguished from whatever moral worth it may possess; moral worth depends on motive, rightness does not.

The assumption, which I dub the Independence Thesis, is shared by advocates of different types of normative moral theory—virtue ethics, consequentialism, and deontological ethics. One finds the thesis being attributed to Aristotle,¹ although Mill explicitly embraced it,² as have other utilitarians and consequentialists generally, including G. E. Moore.³ Perhaps its most ardent defender, W. D. Ross,⁴ held a deontological moral theory, and it was accepted by Henry Sidgwick, who attempted to combine common-sense morality with utilitarianism.⁵ This thesis is also reflected in Anglo-American law in the orthodox doctrine that motive is irrelevant to criminal liability.⁶ The fact that the thesis is common ground among major types of moral theory and is found

¹ I would like to thank the audiences at Brown University, Universität Erlangen, and the University of Mississippi for discussion of an earlier version of this paper. For their comments on an earlier version of this paper, I would like to thank Robert Audi, Marcia Baron, Josh Glasgow, Michael Gott, Onora O'Neill, Tom Nenon, Thomas Pogge, David Shoemaker, and Allan Wood.

² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1105b, trans. T. Irwin (Ithaca: Hackett Publishing Co., 1985), 40.

³ See J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1861; Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1979), 18, where Mill writes: "utilitarian moralists have gone beyond almost all others in affirming that the motive has nothing to do with the morality of the action, though much with the worth of the agent."

⁴ G. E. Moore, *Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1912), 77–80.

⁵ W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 4–6, and *The Foundations of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), ch. 6.

⁶ Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th edn. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1907), 201–4.

⁷ See e.g. J. Hall, *General Principles of Criminal Law*, 2nd edn. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960), 88, and Chanville Williams, *Criminal Law: The General Part*, 2nd edn. (London: Stevens, 1961), 48–50. For a

in the law is not surprising when one considers that it is rooted in pre-theoretical, common-sense moral thinking. We are used to distinguishing *what* a person did from *why* she did it, sometimes issuing separate moral judgements about the act and its motive. Thus, we have occasion to say, for example, that so and so did the wrong thing (committed perjury), but her motive was good (to save a life).

Kant is also taken to have embraced the Independence Thesis, and those who attribute the thesis to Kant typically take the examples in the first chapter of the *Groundwork* (G. 4:397–9) as evidence of Kant's commitment to it. Ross, for example, writes:

Again, the doctrine is stated very explicitly by Kant, when near the beginning of the *Grundlegung* he distinguishes between doing what is your duty and acting from duty (i.e. from a sense of duty). He clearly implies that you can do the former even when your motive is a purely selfish one; and I believe that he consistently describes action from a sense of duty not as the only action that is right, but as the only action that has moral worth, thus making the motive (or, as he prefers to call it, the principle or maxim of action) the ground of moral goodness, but the nature of the action apart from its motive the ground of its rightness.⁷

Although Ross is mistaken in claiming that Kant explicitly embraces the Independence Thesis (he simply does not expressly say that one's motives are always irrelevant to every kind of duty), Kant does strongly suggest by his examples that the rightness of an act is independent of one's motives. (Think of the shopkeeper giving correct change and hence doing the right act, but from self-interested motives.)

My principal aim in this chapter is to examine the issue of how, if at all, motives bear on the rightness of acts in Kant's ethical system, with particular attention given to the various duties of virtue elaborated in the second part of *The Metaphysics of Morals*. There are two main reasons for engaging in this study, one having to do with our understanding of Kant's normative moral theory, the other having to do with moral theory generally.

First, there is some reason to think that, even if Kant's *Groundwork* treatment of motive and rightness commits him to the Independence Thesis, it is not so clear that his treatment of duties of virtue is consistent with this thesis. In order to fulfil a duty of virtue, one must, so it seems, have the right end, and

recent defence of this doctrine in the law, see Antony Duff, 'Principle and Contradiction in Criminal Law: Motives and Criminal Liability', in A. Duff (ed.), *Philosophy and the Criminal Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 156–204.

⁷ Ross, *Foundations*, 139.

if having the right end requires being appropriately motivated, then we are led to agree with Marcia Baron in her contribution to this volume: 'In the *Groundwork*, conformity of the action with duty does not depend on the agent's motive or . . . on the agent's end. In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, this is true of juridical duties but not of ethical duties . . .'⁸

But even in the *Groundwork* one finds some reason for doubting that Kant is committed in that work to the Independence Thesis. For instance, in Kant's suicide example in chapter 2, the maxim to be tested by the Categorical Imperative is: 'from self-love, I make it my principle to shorten my life when its longer duration threatens more troubles than it promises agreeableness' (G. 4:422).⁹ Talk of acting *from self-love* seems to refer to one's motive in committing suicide, and this motive is crucially relevant in Kant's argument for the claim that the suicide maxim cannot be conceived of as a law of nature and hence that the action in question is morally wrong. In this example, the wrongness of the act is made to depend on one's motives.

The other main reason for examining this issue of the bearing of motive on rightness in Kant's ethical system is that the Independence Thesis has recently come under attack by philosophers who want to argue that motive does sometimes bear on an act's rightness.¹⁰ If such attacks are cogent, then it is of some interest in judging the overall plausibility of Kant's ethics to get clear about Kant's considered position on this matter. And, of course, getting clear about this matter in Kant's ethics should have some bearing on the debate in contemporary ethics over the plausibility of the Independence Thesis.

In what follows, I will begin in Section I by clarifying the notions of rightness and motive featured in the Independence Thesis. Then, in Section II, I consider challenges to the idea that Kant's ethics respects the Independence Thesis based on the claim that fulfilling certain duties of virtue require that one's dutiful actions be motivated by the thought of duty. I argue against this claim by showing why the various considerations one might marshal in its favour are unpersuasive. In Section III, I go on to reinforce this result by

⁸ Marcia Baron, this volume, 402.

⁹ I have used the translation of Kant included in the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), *Critique of Practical Reason*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ See e.g. Michael Stocker, 'Intentions and Act Evaluations', *Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1970), 589–602; Steven Sperdillik, 'Motive and Rightness', *Ethics*, 106 (1996), 377–49; and Michael Coar, 'Motive and Rightness', *Philosophia*, 27 (1999), 581–98. In Anglo-American law, the entrenched doctrine that motive is irrelevant to criminal liability has recently been challenged by Christine Stranske, 'Agent, Motives and Criminal Law', *Social Theory and Practice*, 13 (1987), 303–26, and Douglas Husak, 'Motive and Criminal Liability', *Criminal Justice Ethics*, 8 (1989), 3–14.

appealing to various doctrinal and textual considerations. However, in Section IV, I argue that, although Kantian duties do not (with one possible exception) require that one act from the motive of duty, a case can be made for claiming that motives can be and are relevant to the rightness of actions. In the end, we get a mixed verdict regarding the Independence Thesis and Kant's ethical system: on the one hand, Ross is correct (and some recent interpreters of Kant are wrong) in thinking that in Kant's system the content of one's duties does not include a motive component; on the other hand, motive (including non-moral motives) can affect the rightness of one's actions, and so, strictly speaking, the Independence Thesis (as I interpret it) does not hold in relation to Kant's ethical system. Finally, in Section V, I ground matters regarding the relevance of motive to rightness in Kant's ethics in a general Kantian theory of moral relevance.

I. The Independence Thesis

So far, I have characterized the Independence Thesis (IT for short) as the claim that rightness is independent of motive; motive is irrelevant *vis-à-vis* the rightness of an act. However, this admittedly rough characterization needs clarification. For one thing, we need some understanding of both motive and rightness as these figure in the IT, and, for another, the thesis, as it is intended by its advocates, makes only a qualified claim about the bearing of motive on rightness. In this section, I first want to clarify talk of rightness and then work towards a proper formulation of the IT. The concept of motive involves various complications that I will deal with in the following section.

(a) Rightness and Deontic Evaluation Generally

In clarifying the notion of rightness operative in the IT, I shall restrict myself to two remarks. First, talk of rightness is shorthand for talk about the deontic status of actions. An action is either morally wrong (forbidden) or not, in which case it is morally right (permitted).¹¹ Within the category of morally right actions, we distinguish between actions that are morally obligatory and those that are not, the latter being morally optional (merely permitted). Thus, there are three basic deontic categories—the forbidden, the obligatory, and the optional—and we can consider the bearing of motive on an act falling into any

one of these categories. For instance, one possibility is that some instance of a morally wrong act is such that its wrongness depends partly on the agent's motive in performing it. Another possibility is that in some cases we are morally obliged to act from some particular motive, so that lacking a proper motive means that the act will fail to fulfil the obligation. Although Ross, in defending the IT, is mainly concerned to argue that our various obligations do not require that we act from some particular motive, we should understand the IT to be claiming that, whatever deontic status an action has, it has that status independently of the agent's motive.

The second remark about rightness (and the deontic categories generally) is that there are various notions of right (and wrong) action and we need to specify which of these are featured (or may be featured) in the IT. There are two sets of distinctions concerning right action that we need to consider: *formal rightness/material rightness* and *objective rightness/subjective rightness*. Let us take these up in order.

An act is formally right (in the sense of being obligatory) when, given the agent's (morally relevant) non-moral beliefs about the situation, the act is the right thing to do—the act in question is the right act to perform in situations that are such as the agent believes them to be. An act is materially right when it is formally right and the agent's non-moral beliefs about the situation are correct.¹² These two notions represent two perspectives one can take in evaluating the deontic status of actions. The notion of formal rightness represents a first-person point of view: what is relevant in judging the formal rightness of an act is the agent's intentions, which reflect her beliefs about what she is doing or plans to do. The notion of material rightness represents a third-person point of view from which the agent's intentions are not solely relevant. If you are in my care and it is my duty to give you a certain medicine, then, if I give you what I think is the prescribed medicine but through no fault of my own the substance in question is a lethal poison, I do what is formally right; I intend to give you your medicine. Despite my intentions, however, I poisoned you (accidentally, of course), and so my act, although formally right, was materially wrong.

The importance of this distinction in relation to Kant's ethics should be fairly obvious. The decision procedure associated with Kant's Universal Law Formula of the Categorical Imperative involves formulating one's maxim to test the rightness of one's action. But, as Kant points out, maxims may involve various sorts of mistakes in the agent's conception of what she is doing: 'A *maxim* is the subjective principle of acting . . . [and] contains the practical rule

¹¹ Here, we are concerned with the all-things-considered deontic status of actions.

¹² I take these distinctions from C. D. Broad, *Broad's Critical Essays in Moral Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971), 76–8, 234–8.

determined by reason conformably with the conditions of the subject (often his ignorance or also his inclinations). . . . ' (G, 4:422). Thus, as a decision procedure to guide one's choices, the universalization test can reliably lead to conclusions about the formal rightness of actions (though, of course, one is aiming to come to conclusions about the material rightness of the act). One might therefore conclude that Kant's ethical theory can only deliver judgements about the formal rightness and wrongness of actions, but I believe this would be a mistake. I have argued elsewhere¹³ that Kant's theory does have the resources to generate conclusions about the material rightness of an act, a claim that I will simply take for granted. Thus, in examining the IT in relation to Kant's ethical views, we can consider the bearing of motive on both the formal and material rightness of actions. However, because nothing crucial relating to the topic at hand rests on whether we are viewing Kant's theory as yielding an account of formal rightness, material rightness, or both, I will continue to talk simply about the rightness and wrongness of actions in relation to Kant's ethical system.

In addition to the formal/material conceptions of rightness, philosophers often distinguish between objective and subjective rightness. The former notion is roughly equivalent to the notion of material rightness, but the latter notion is quite different from the notion of formal rightness. An act is *objectively right* if it really is right, independently of what the agent or anyone else might believe about its rightness; whereas an action is (in one sense) *subjectively right* (for a person to perform on some occasion) if the agent believes that the action is objectively right.¹⁴ Formal rightness allows for mistakes in the agent's morally relevant non-moral beliefs; subjective rightness allows for mistakes in moral belief as well. Clearly, the IT is not concerned with the notion of subjective rightness since there are cases where it is obvious that one's motive affects the subjective rightness of an act: acting from the motive of duty requires that one believe that the act in question is objectively right, and so motive, at least in this sort of case, does affect the subjective rightness of the act.¹⁵

¹³ See Mark Timmons, 'Decision Procedures, Moral Criteria, and the Problem of Relevant Descriptions in Kant's Ethics,' *Journal of Ethics* 5 (1997), 389–417.

¹⁴ Here I am borrowing from my 'Objective Rightness,' in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd edn., ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 624–5.

¹⁵ This point is made by Savelik, 'Motive and Rightness,' 334. Here is an appropriate place to acknowledge my indebtedness to this article in my thinking about the IT in relation to Kant's ethics.

(b) The Independence Thesis Formulated

I mentioned at the outset that the IT makes a qualified claim about the bearing of motive on rightness, and before proceeding it will be useful to explain the qualifications.

First, some duties may have as their content the adoption (in the sense of coming to have), development, or maintenance of some particular motive. It is plausible that one has duties of self-perfection, including a general duty to develop or strengthen some motivating characteristics such as kindness, compassion, and so forth, and to rid oneself of, or at least control, other motives like revenge. Certainly we find such duties in Kant, both duties to others and duties to oneself. The duty of beneficence, for instance, involves developing a disposition to act in certain beneficial ways towards others that presumably involves coming to be motivated by a direct concern for their welfare. Again, one's duty of moral self-perfection according to Kant involves striving to make considerations of duty the sole and sufficient motive in fulfilling one's obligations (see *MS* 6:446–7). One might, therefore, restrict the IT so that it applies only to actions other than those having to do with motives. But the fact that some duties have motives as their content is not a challenge to the IT. Let me explain.

The main point to be made is that we can distinguish external and internal duties. External duties are duties that involve external acts like returning a borrowed object, while internal duties are duties to engage in some mental activity like developing certain attitudes or striving to develop certain motives.¹⁶ The act of engaging in the fulfillment of both types of duty is (normally) something done for a reason—a reason that explains one's action in terms of some objective or goal that one is attempting to bring about through the action. Such reasons are motives (see below). Just as external acts can be performed from some motive, an internal act can also be performed from some motive. I may, for instance, succeed in developing a disposition of gratitude owing perhaps to my belief that being this way will be socially beneficial to me. Calculated self-interest motivates my endeavour to develop this particular trait. If we interpret the IT, as I think we should, as applying to both external and internal acts, then the claim is that what makes some act right (or wrong) does not depend on one's motive in performing that act.

However, there is one important aspect of the IT worth making explicit. The thesis does not make the sweeping claim that considerations of motive are never relevant to the deontic status of one's actions; rather, it claims that the

¹⁶ The distinction is clearly made by Kant when, in distinguishing juridical from ethical duties, he writes that 'in all lawgiving (whether it prescribes internal or external actions) . . . ' (*MS* 6:218). See also *MS* 6:393.

deontic status of one's actions does not depend on *one's* motive in performing the act. It is plausible to claim that my having a duty of gratitude towards someone depends in part on facts about my benefactor's own motives in benefiting me. If my benefactor's motive is really calculated self-interest or even a deep hatred for me, then I have (in fact) no duty of gratitude towards that person (even if I do not know this and think I ought to show gratitude).¹⁷ In this case, another person's motive is part of the external circumstances that are morally relevant in determining the deontic status of my action.

With these observations in mind, we can formulate the IT as follows:

IT The deontic status of an act (whether internal or external) is independent of the agent's motive (or relevant motive set) in performing that act.¹⁸

So in thinking about the plausibility of the IT in general and also in relation to Kant's ethics, our main question is nicely stated by Steven Sverdlik: 'does the motive of an action ever suffice to move an action out of one of the three deontic categories and into another? Could a motive make an otherwise wrong act merely permissible? Could a motive make an act that is merely permissible into an obligatory one?'¹⁹

(c) Maxims, Intentions, and Motives

On Kant's moral theory, the morality of an action is determined by considering whether or not the maxim corresponding to the action is universalizable.²⁰ Maxims are mental states that arguably are, or involve, an agent's intention(s) with regard to the action under consideration. Expressions of maxims that we find in Kant's works vary in terms of what sort of information is included. Focusing for a moment on maxims of action, expressions of what we might call simple maxims have the form,

I will _____, if/whenever _____,

where the blanks are to be filled with the agent's characterization of the action and circumstances respectively.

¹⁷ This claim is defended by Fred Berger, 'Gratitude', *Ethics*, 85 (1975), 298–309.

¹⁸ Two comments are in order here. First, the parenthetical remark about a relevant motive set is meant to recognize the fact that often one's actions are the product of a complicated set of motives. Secondly, we might also ask whether motive makes any difference to the so-called degree of deontic status, that is, whether motive affects the stringency of one's obligations or the degree of wrongness of an action, but I will ignore such possibilities here.

¹⁹ Sverdlik, 'Motive and Rightness', 333.

²⁰ Much of this section is based on section 1 of my 'Evil and Impuration in Kant's Ethics', *Jahrbuch für Recht und Ethik*, 2 (1994), 113–41.

In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant speaks of maxims of ends as distinct from maxims of actions (*MS* 6:395), and he claims that 'An end is an object of the choice (of a rational being), through the representation of which choice is determined to an action to bring this object about' (*MS* 6:381). Since, according to Kant, every action has an end (*MS* 6:385), we can express what we might call complex maxims this way,

I will _____, if/whenever _____, in order to _____,

where the first two blanks are filled as before and the third blank is a specification of an end, adopted or embraced by an agent and which she thinks is promoted by the action described in the maxim.²¹ Complex maxims can be understood as resulting from compressed bits of practical reasoning on the agent's part, where the agent either explicitly or implicitly reasons from certain general aims or intentions to more specific intentions that she believes will help her carry out the more general ones. Looked at in this way, complex maxims of the above form can be usefully understood as a fusion of two maxims: a simple maxim of action plus a maxim of ends.

Since maxims are, or involve, an agent's intentions, and since one's intentions at least partly determine the identity of the action itself, they are relevant for evaluating the deontic status of actions. But this fact about Kant's view is not unique among competing moral theories; it has been generally thought, by advocates of competing types of moral theory, that deontic status depends on one's intentions. Intentions are thus commonly distinguished from motives and advocates of the IT accept the verdict we find in Sidgwick, where, after a brief discussion of the deontic relevance of intentions and motives, he remarks: 'our judgments of *right* and *wrong* strictly speaking relate to intentions, as distinguished from motives.'²²

Things get messy, however, when we ask what motives are and how they are related to intentions. As a number of philosophers have pointed out, terms such as 'motive', 'intention', and 'purpose' are often used interchangeably in ordinary English. Even within the law, where there has been some attempt to define motive in relation to intention, one finds a variety of conflicting con-

²¹ Unfortunately, this simple schema is misleading in suggesting that considerations of circumstance, act, and end can be neatly distinguished in all contexts of action. However, matters are far more complex. For instance, certain terms denoting one's action entail what D'Arcy calls 'constitutive circumstances'. To describe an action as their entails, among other things, that the person did not own the item she took and that the owner had not given her permission to take or use it. See Eric D'Arcy, *Human Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), chs. 1, 2. In general, as D'Arcy argues, the distinctions between act and circumstance and act and consequence are flexible and context sensitive.

²² Sidgwick, *Methods*, 204. See also, Broad, *Critical Essays*, 78–81, and Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 2, n. 2.

ceptions of motive.²³ Here is not the place to sort out the mess; rather I plan to make a few brief remarks about motives, particularly as they relate to Kantian maxims.

Motives are plausibly understood as psychological states (sometimes occurring, sometimes not) that typically can serve as explanatory *sources* of action—serving to explain, in some deep or ultimate way, an agent's choices and action. They do so, in part, by revealing some goal or end that the agent finds attractive or desirable for its own sake and in terms of which the agent's interest in or attraction to some course of action can be explained.²⁴ For instance, if Andy is taking a logic course because he aims to get an undergraduate degree in philosophy (for which such a course is a requirement), one relatively immediate end of his action is the goal of earning a degree in philosophy. Suppose Andy's main reason for having this end is to please his parents and that he wants to please his parents to ensure that they leave him their fortune (even though he is already quite wealthy), and suppose further that his getting that money is something to which Andy has a direct, non-derivative attraction. Here, we have a (non-pejorative) rationalizing explanation (an explanation of the agent's action in terms of relevant aspects of his overall psychological set), involving a series of ends and terminating with an end that underlies the entire course of action and represents the agent's motive.²⁵

In the case just described, Andy's basic motive is greed. We have a battery of common terms that are typically used to denote motives: ambition, gratitude,

²³ For an overview of differing conceptions of motive in the law, see Sissare, 'Agent Motives', 303–7, who distinguishes two main views: the intentions-as-affective-states view and the motives-as-intentions view. Although philosophers differ on whether or not motives are mental states, those who think they are typically advocate one of the two views just mentioned. Sverdlik, 'Motive and Rightness', 334–9, for instance, takes motives to be basic desires; M. Bratelsky, 'Intention and Motive', in M. Bratelsky and M. Brand (eds.), *Action and Responsibility* (Bowling Green, OH: Applied Philosophy Program, 1980), 71–9, on the other hand, takes them to be ultimate intentions. (Of course, if one takes an intention to be a desire, as some have, then these two views collapse.) Note that, even if one accepts the motives-as-ultimate-intentions view, one has not thereby compromised the IT: the defender of that thesis will claim that certain intentions—those ultimate intentions that are one's motives—are not deontically relevant.

²⁴ Two comments are in order here. First, given the flexibility of motive talk in ordinary parlance, it is possible to distinguish between basic and non-basic motives where the latter do not directly involve intrinsic desires (though they may be traceable to such desires). But, in distinguishing motives from intentions (as is commonly done in ethics and law), I am restricting the term in the way indicated. (I thank Robert Audi for pressing me on this point). Secondly, I am ignoring Anscombe's distinction between forward-looking motives that concern a further end of action on the agent's part and backward-looking motives that, strictly speaking, do not. But nothing important for our purposes turns on such differences. See Elizabeth Anscombe, *Intention*, 2nd edn. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), sect. 13.

²⁵ Note that motive explanations do not always serve as justifying reasons or even as considerations that the agent takes to justify some course of action. Last may be the sole motive behind some adulterous act and hence helps explain what the person found attractive about some course of action and hence why he did it, even if he does not think that he is justified in what he has done.

lust, love, hatred, jealousy, and compassion, just to list a few. Such terms, when used to denote motives, indicate some end (for example, money or valuable goods) to which an individual has an attachment and which explains in some deep way the agent's behaviour.

We can understand how motives figure in Kant's theory of action if we understand both how they relate to maxims in patterns of rationalizing explanation and what sources they have.

The relation between motives and maxims is simply this: if motives are psychological states that represent ultimate ends of action for which one acts, and if, for Kant, having an end is a matter of adopting a maxim of ends (thus setting oneself to bring about some state of affairs that is the end), then, since maxims are intentions, it follows that motives are, for Kant, ultimate intentions.

Moreover, according to Kant's theory of action, such intentions have two main sources: desire and reason. Some motives (maxims expressing one's ultimate ends) are based on desire. The desire for one's own happiness is the basis for many ultimate ends one adopts. Here I think it is helpful to think of desires as prompting an agent to make certain choices—adopt certain maxims—rather than thinking of them as motives.²⁶ Whether some desire does in fact lead one to adopt some maxim depends upon whether the agent allows the desire to have such influence on choice.²⁷ In Kantian terminology, desires as such are (or perhaps reflect) incentives (*Triebe/dern*) to action without necessarily being motives to action. By contrast, a rational or reason-based motive has its source, for Kant, in respect for the moral law that provides a rational incentive to action. In cases involving both desire-based motivation and reason-based motivation, then, a motive can be understood in Kant's system as a maxim of ends that serves as a terminus in a rationalizing explanation of an agent's choices and actions.

A motive as an end of action may thus be mentioned in the expression of an agent's maxim and will necessarily be mentioned when one is interested in giving a full and illuminating rationalizing explanation. One might express such a complex maxim, mentioning certain immediate ends as well as one's ultimate end as having the form,

I will _____, if/whenever _____, in order to _____, out of _____, where the final blank mentions the agent's motive(s).

²⁶ Defence of this claim would require developing it in the context of a full account of Kant's theory of action.

²⁷ Here I have in mind the so-called incorporation thesis (as labelled by Allison): 'An incentive [emotional impulses including desires and aversions] can determine the will to an action *only insofar as the individual has taken it up into his maxim*' (R. 6:24).

We can now return to the IT and express it in Kantian terms:

KIT In Kant's ethics, the deontic status of an act (whether internal or external) is independent of the agent's motive(s); that is, the agent's ultimate maxim(s) of ends.

The fact that a complex maxim revealing an agent's plan of action may include reference to an agent's motive does not automatically show that KIT is false: it depends on the question of whether reference to an agent's motive is deontically relevant, to which we now turn.

II. Obligatory Ends and the Motive Content Thesis

One way in which motive might be relevant to the deontic status of an act would be if certain duties involved performing actions from certain motives; if, that is, motive, together with some act, was part of the duty's content. Let us call this the Motive Content Thesis (MCT for short). In defending the IT, Ross was mainly concerned to argue against the MCT, and it is on this latter thesis that those who think that Kant is not committed to the IT tend to focus. Specifically, some interpreters argue that the IT fails to hold in connection with Kant's doctrine of obligatory ends as elaborated in the *Tagendlehre*, because fulfilling such obligations requires that one's motive be the motive of duty. In this section, I explore the plausibility of this claim, arguing that it should be rejected.

According to Kant's doctrine of obligatory ends, there are two fundamental obligatory ends: one's own perfection and the happiness of others. In connection with both of these general ends, Kant elaborates various subsidiary duties—some of them duties of commission (whose justification depends on the fact that these more specific requirements involve activities that are crucial in promoting and maintaining these most general ends) and some of them duties of omission (whose justification depends on the fact that certain actions, if performed, would destroy or hinder the promotion or maintenance of these ends). Some philosophers have claimed that adoption of the two most general obligatory ends, as well as the adoption of various more specific ends (that partly constitute the adoption of the most general ones), are cases where fulfilling the duty requires acting from duty and thus motive is relevant to deontic status in such cases.

One important implication of accepting the MCT in relation to Kant's ethics is that, given Kant's account of moral worth, the fulfillment of any such duty (that is, a duty to perform some action from the motive of duty) necessar-

ily results in the relevant action's having moral worth.²⁸ That is, if there are some duties whose performance requires that we act from duty, then necessarily actions that have what Kant calls 'legality' (they fulfil one's duty) also possess 'morality' (they have moral worth).²⁹ Let us call this the Strong Thesis about moral worth. The MCT (together with Kant's account of moral worth) and the Strong Thesis about moral worth imply each other.

Certain ethical duties, then, are supposedly duties whose fulfillment requires that one act from duty: a moral motive is part of their very content and so necessarily actions that fulfil such duties have moral worth. This is what, in the quote above, Baron was suggesting, and we find it being explicitly advocated by O'Neill and Herman.³⁰ Let us consider this view in some detail.

(a) A Presumptive Case Against the Moral Content Thesis in Relation to Obligatory Ends

It will be useful to begin with a challenge to those who maintain that the MCT holds in connection with duties of virtue towards others. Since the duty of beneficence is often cited as an example in Kant where the thesis in question holds (and seems to be as plausible a candidate in relation to this thesis as any other duty in Kant's system), I will simply focus on it.

According to Kant, the general duty to make the happiness of others one's own end is explained as the requirement to adopt a maxim of beneficence—that is, 'making the well-being and happiness of others my end' (MS 6:452). According to the motive content interpretation of the duty of beneficence, fulfilling this duty involves: (1) adopting the end in question from the motive of duty and (2) on occasion performing specific acts of beneficence guided by one's commitment to the end. However, one can, it seems, adopt a maxim of beneficence for non-moral reasons: one might believe that one's own well-being is more likely to be promoted by adopting such ends, or one might be the kind

²⁸ Clearly for Kant, the only motive that is a candidate for inclusion as part of the content of some duty is the motive of duty. For one thing, all other motives are desire based and on Kant's view we do not always possess the sort of control over our desires that would be required for them to be part of one's duty as the MCT requires. Additionally, were Kant to require that we fulfil this or that duty from some non-moral motive, then, in connection with that duty, it would not be possible to perform it in a morally worthy manner. But Kant holds that every dutiful action is capable of having moral worth. Thus, in considering the MCT in relation to Kant's ethics, we need address only the question of whether, in addition to performing some internal or external action, we must also act from the sole motive of duty.

²⁹ Here, I am appealing to the legality/morality distinction, as Kant draws it at *KpV* 5:81. See n. 32 for more on this distinction.

³⁰ Onora O'Neill (formerly Nell), *Acting on Principle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), chs. 4-6; and Barbara Herman, *The Practice of Moral Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 15, 34, 186.

of person Kant describes as a philanthropist, 'Someone who finds satisfaction in the well-being (*salutis*) of human beings considered simply as human beings, for whom it is well when things go well for every other' (MS 6:450). If so, then the MCT fails to hold in connection with the duty of beneficence: one can fulfil the obligation to adopt the well-being of others as an end, yet one's motive need not be the motive of duty. This conclusion is reinforced by what Kant says about the ethical duty of commission one has to oneself to develop one's natural talents. And it is not merely that technically practical reason *counsels* him to do this as a means to his further purposes (or art); morally practical reason *commands* it absolutely and makes this end his duty (MS 6:387). Here, Kant is apparently allowing that one might adopt this end of self-perfection for prudential reasons rather than moral ones, and so (by implication) he is allowing that one can distinguish between cases in which the duty is fulfilled (and one's adoption of the relevant end fulfils a duty), and cases where the end is adopted from duty, in which case one's action has moral worth.

There is one ethical duty that may be an exception. Moral perfection, according to Kant, 'consists subjectively in the *piety* (*piaetas moralis*) of one's disposition to duty; namely, in the law being by itself alone the incentive, even without admixture of aims derived from sensibility, and in actions being done not only in conformity with duty but also *from duty*' (MS 6:446). Kant goes on to explain that our duty here is to strive to make the moral law one's sole and sufficient motive (in contexts of duty). But whether the duty is to act successfully from the motive of duty or only to strive to do so, we have here an apparent case in which the motive of duty is part of the content of a duty of perfection to oneself. We can grant this, however, since the interesting cases, about which there is some dispute, are all the other ethical duties featured in Kant's *Tugendlehre*.³¹ In general, then, the case for denying the MCT in relation to ethical duties is simply that such duties, although they require that we adopt general ends of action, can be fulfilled by adopting them from non-moral motives; moral rightness and moral worth thus do not collapse in connection with such duties. The burden is therefore on anyone who would deny this claim.

(b) Attempts to Rebut the Presumption

There are two main types of reasons to which one might appeal in an attempt to rebut the presumption against the motive content interpretation of the duty

³¹ Michael Gorr and Thomas Pogge have suggested to me that perhaps we should not interpret Kant's duty of moral self-perfection as having the motive of duty as part of its content. After all, the duty to perfect myself morally is the duty to bring it about in the future that I act from the sole motive of duty (or at least make it the case that I strive to do so) when duty calls, and I might best promote this end by, say, reading various novels, though, of course, I need not read them from the sole motive of duty.

of beneficence and other Kantian *Tugendlehre* duties: doctrinal reasons and conceptual reasons. Reasons of the former type appeal to various doctrines in Kant's moral philosophy; reasons of the latter type proceed from narrowly conceptual considerations having to do with the virtue concepts that figure in the *Tugendlehre* system of duties. Let us proceed to consider various specific arguments in defence of the MCT (and hence against the IT) falling under these two broad headings.

(i) Doctrinal reasons

There are at least three specific doctrinal considerations that one might be tempted to use in an effort to argue that the MCT holds in connection with certain duties of virtue: (1) Kant's way of distinguishing between juridical duties and ethical duties that make up respectively the *Rechtslehre* and the *Tugendlehre*; (2) Kant's claim that actions that fulfil duties of virtue are meritorious; and (3) the fact that the *Tugendlehre*, as the very title indicates, concerns duties of virtue. Let us consider these in order.

(1) In the general introduction to *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant explains the division between juridical and ethical duties in terms of two types of lawgiving: external and internal. All lawgiving involves, according to Kant, both a law, which specifies the action that is obligatory (the duty), and an incentive, which, he writes, 'connects a ground for determining choice to this action *subjectively* with the representation of the law' (MS 6:218). Kant summarizes the differences between these two types of lawgiving as follows:

All lawgiving can therefore be distinguished with respect to the incentive (even if it agrees with another kind with respect to the action that makes it a duty, e.g. these actions might in all cases be external). That lawgiving which makes an action a duty and also makes this duty the incentive is *ethical*. But that lawgiving which does not include the incentive of duty in the law and so admits an incentive other than the idea of duty itself is *juridical*. (MS 6:218–19)

Passages like this in which Kant either implies (as in this passage) or mentions the incentive of duty being 'included' in the law might be read as claiming that ethical duties have as part of their content (part of what is required) that one perform some action (external or internal) from the sole motive of duty.³²

But I think there is another, more plausible reading of Kant's views about juridical versus ethical lawgiving that has no such implication. Briefly put, I read Kant's remarks about two types of lawgiving as having to do first of all

³² In chapter 17, this volume, Baron claims that there is good evidence that ethical duties require that one fulfill them from duty and cites passages at MS 6:214, 216, and 220–1 as passages supporting this contention.

with a certain precondition on some action's being a duty at all (moral obligation requires some incentive to perform the required act) and second of all with two types of incentives that provide the basis for distinguishing two main types of duties. But such views about the nature and types of obligation do not entail anything in particular about the content of ethical as compared to juridical duties and so do not entail the idea that to fulfil certain ethical duties requires (as part of the duty) that one must act from the sole motive of duty. Let me explain.

We can usefully distinguish between (1) questions about the preconditions for moral obligation, (2) questions about the particular grounds of various specific obligations, and (3) questions about the content of one's obligations. Questions of the second sort concern the considerations that determine one's duties—considerations that, according to the IT, exclude one's motives—while questions of the third variety concern the very content of one's obligations—content that, according to the MCT, sometimes includes motives.

However, questions of the first sort include questions about what must be true of agents in general if they are the type of creature susceptible to moral obligation at all. Though I cannot argue the case here, Kant is plausibly interpreted as embracing some form of ethical internalism—the metaethical thesis according to which (roughly), for an individual to be morally obligated, it must be true of her that she has sufficient reason for acting accordingly.³³ To relate this to Kant's views, the idea is that all moral obligation necessarily involves the agent having some sufficient reason (some sufficient incentive (*Triebsfeder*)) for performing the act in question, where talk of reasons here involves both normative reasons for action and motivating reasons for action. The basic idea is that in order for an individual to be morally required to perform some action, it must be true of the agent that (1) there is an all-things-considered good normative reason for her to perform the action in question, which (2) is motivationally available to her. In the case of all duties then—both juridical and ethical—there must be some sufficient reason available to the agent in relation to the duty in question, and, since duties are not based on pathological incentives (desires and aversions), the thought of duty must be available as an incentive. Thus, Kant remarks in relation to juridical duties (which, unlike ethical duties, are not expounded in terms of the incentive of duty): 'All that ethics teaches is that if the incentive which juridical lawgiving connects with that duty, namely external constraint, were absent, the idea of duty itself would be sufficient as an incentive' (MS 6:220).

³³ Internalist readings of Kant can be found in Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), ch. 2, and Mark Timmons, 'Kant and the Possibility of Moral Motivation', *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 23 (1985), 377–98.

What is potentially misleading in the passage quoted above is Kant's talk of a kind of lawgiving that 'makes duty the incentive'. I do not think we should read this as saying that acting from duty is part of the content of ethical duties. To explain why not, let us consider Kant's characterization of lawgiving in general, keeping in mind my remarks about Kant's internalism.

At the beginning of the general introduction to *The Metaphysics of Morals*, entitled 'On the Division of a Metaphysics of Morals', Kant gives us his general characterization of lawgiving:

In all lawgiving (whether it prescribes internal or external actions, and whether it prescribes them *a priori* by reason alone or by the choice of another (which is the basis of the distinction between ethical and juridical lawgiving respectively) has to do with the basis of the law—whether it sets forth the act as rationally required or as required at the bidding of some external authority. It does not have to do with the content of what is required. Note also the manner in which Kant generically describes the incentive element in all lawgiving: law making duty the incentive. Law makes duty the incentive, not by making the motive of duty part of the content of the duty, but by connecting an action with a kind of (available) sufficient reason for action.

Now, although all duties must be appropriately related to the incentive of duty in the manner just explained, certain duties can also be represented in relation to what Kant calls external incentives—incentives for compliance that involve the threat of legal punishment and that therefore appeal to one's aversions. This class of duties composes the category of juridical duties that are elaborated in the *Rechtslehre*. Other duties, however—those featured in the *Tugendlehre*—cannot by their very nature be so represented; for them, the incentive that provides the relevant connection between the action or omission required and the agent's choice is the moral law itself. The latter is the kind of lawgiving that, in Kant's words, 'makes an action a duty and also makes this duty the incentive'.

So I maintain that we should read these passages as addressing an important question about the precondition of obligation in which Kant is committing himself to some form of ethical internalism. Notice further that the metaethical thesis of internalism is logically independent of the issue of motive and

rightness with which we are concerned. Internalism makes a claim about the conditions of moral obligation and does not entail anything either about the specific sorts of considerations that determine one's obligations (type 2 questions) or about the contents of one's obligations (type 3 questions). Thus, even if it is true, on Kant's view, that all ethical lawgiving (obligation) necessarily involves having a reason sufficient to motivate the agent, and even if the incentive in question must be the thought of duty, it does not follow that the contents of one's duties (what one is required to do) is to act from duty. I conclude that Kant's remarks in 'On the Division of a Metaphysics of Morals' do not support the MCT in relation to ethical duties.

There is another passage in the general introduction to *The Metaphysics of Morals* that might be thought to support the MCT in relation to Kant's ethical duties. Kant writes:

As directed merely to external actions and their conformity to law [moral laws] are called *juridical laws*; but if they also require that they (the laws) themselves be the determining grounds of actions, they are *ethical laws*, and then one says that conformity with juridical laws is the *legality* of an action and conformity with ethical laws is its *morality*. (MS 6:214)

Now in the *Critique of Practical Reason* at KpV 5:81, Kant distinguishes between the legality and the morality of actions in terms of moral motivation: an act has legality just in case it conforms to the moral law; it has morality if it not only conforms to the moral law but is done from the motive of duty. The passage just quoted from MS 6:214 thus seems to be saying that ethical duties involve as part of their content the motive of duty, since only if they do have such content does it follow that conformity with them involves not just legality but morality as well. However, it is not clear that Kant uses the legal/moral distinction univocally throughout his works. As Marcus Willaschek has pointed out, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant seems to draw the legal/moral distinction not in terms of one's motive but simply in terms of the type of law to which one's action conforms.³⁴ So perhaps the passage does not so clearly support the MCT in relation to Kant's ethical duties after all. In any case, I think passages like the one in question here (if taken to support the MCT) ought to be balanced against the kinds of considerations I bring forth against the MCT.

³⁴ Marcus Willaschek, 'Why the Doctrine of Rights does not belong in the *Metaphysics of Morals*', *Jahrbuch für Rechts und Ethik* 5 (1997), 209–10. (See MS 6:225 for a passage where it seems especially clear that the legality/morality distinction is not being drawn in terms of motive.)

(2) Kant claims that actions that fulfill duties of virtue are meritorious (MS 6:390).³⁵ If we assume that the concepts of moral merit and moral worth are, for Kant, identical, or at least that an act's being meritorious entails its having moral worth, then it follows that actions that fulfill duties of virtue have moral worth. Since moral worth is a matter of acting from the sense of duty, we are led to embrace the Strong Thesis about moral worth: fulfilling duties of virtue necessarily involves acting from duty. And, if we accept this thesis, we are (as noted above) committed to the view that the MCT holds in relation to them and consequently that the IT does not.³⁶

I think this argument can be disposed of in fairly short order. Robert Johnson³⁷ has convincingly argued that Kant's notions of moral merit and moral worth are not identical, and that actions can be meritorious without having moral worth. Here, for brevity's sake, I will simply summarize some of the main results Johnson reaches about moral merit, referring the interested reader to his article:

Kant's characterization of a meritorious action has two parts, the first concerning an action's possessing merit, the second concerning degrees of merit: (1) 'If someone does *more* in the way of duty than he can be constrained by law to do, what he does is *meritorious* (*meritum*)' (MS 6:228); (2) 'The greater the natural obstacles (of sensibility) and the less the moral obstacle (of duty), so much the more merit' (MS 6:228). Regarding the possession of merit, then, the crucial idea is that meritorious actions cannot be coerced by law—in relation to them coercion is not possible. Johnson points out that ethical duties that require the adoption of some end qualify as meritorious since it is not *physically possible* for someone to be coerced into adopting an end, while ethical duties whose fulfillment involve specific actions or omissions qualify as meritorious (when they reflect the pursuit of an obligatory end), since coercion is not *morally possible* (that is, permitted) in regard to them. As Johnson remarks: the rationale for judgments of merit is grounded in the reasonable idea that the merit of such actions should be attributed to the agent's own initiative (rather, than, say the prospect of punishment).³⁸ In this way, then, the various ethical duties featured in the *Tugendlehre* differ from the juridical duties featured in the *Rechtslehre*; fulfilling duties of the former sort are necessarily meritorious.

³⁵ In his *Lectures on Ethics*, Kant writes, 'in the observance of ethical laws, every action is a *meritum*...' (Col. 27:29n; see also Vig. 27:561).

³⁶ O'Neill (Neill), *Acting on Principle*, 50, n. 23, makes the assumption in question.

³⁷ Robert Johnson, 'Kant's Conception of Merit', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 77 (1996), 310–34.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 318.

Note that this characterization of merit in terms of objects of possible coercion does not entail anything in particular about one's motivation in performing such meritorious actions. So, it would seem that actions fulfilling ethical duties can possess merit even if they are not done from the motive of duty. Moreover, this conclusion is supported by the fact that ascriptions of merit and of worth relate to distinct evaluative purposes—ascriptions of the former sort serve the purpose of assigning praise and blame to agents, ascriptions of the latter sort serve the purpose of judging one's own level of moral perfection. If we follow Johnson on this matter, appealing to the Kantian doctrine that fulfilling ethical duties is necessarily meritorious does not provide straightforward support for the MCT and hence against the IT, as some have thought.

(3) The duties featured in the second half of *The Metaphysics of Morals* are called duties of virtue, hence the title of the section, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre*. Moral virtue, for Kant, is 'the moral strength of a human beings will in fulfilling his duty...' (MS 6:405). The moral strength in question is just the thought of one's duty being a sole and sufficient motive in fulfilling one's duties, and so one might conclude that fulfilling the various duties of virtue requires that one act from duty.

The immediate problem with this argument is that one can, reminiscent of Aristotle, distinguish between acting virtuously and virtuous action. Actions of the former sort are actions that spring from whatever motives confer moral worth on an agent and her action, and are definitive of having a morally virtuous character. However, actions of the latter sort involve only, in the words of Sidgwick, 'a settled resolve to will a certain kind of external effects,'³⁹ where questions about any motives underlying such a resolve or disposition are not directly relevant. Unless we find in Kant some reason to suppose that he does not or cannot allow this distinction, then we should not suppose that fulfilling duties of virtue requires acting from the motive of duty.⁴⁰

However, this is not the end of the matter. It may be that, if we examine some of the various specific duties of virtue (particularly the main duties of commission such as beneficence and gratitude falling under the obligatory end of others' happiness), we may find that Kant's concepts of beneficence, gratitude, and perhaps other duties as well require that actions fulfilling them spring ultimately from the motive of duty. This thought brings us to what I am calling conceptual reasons for thinking that the MCT holds in connection

³⁹ Sidgwick, *Methods*, 224.

⁴⁰ Kant warns against the 'practice of virtue' becoming a mere habit instead of being guided by principles (MS 6:409). This suggests that there is room in Kant to distinguish an act of virtue from a virtuous act.

with certain *Tugendlehre* duties and that consequently the IT does not hold for Kant. Let us examine this matter.

(ii) Conceptual reasons

The suggestion under consideration is that, owing to the very concept of the duty in question, certain ethical duties cannot be fulfilled unless one acts from duty. Not all Kantian ethical duties are plausible candidates in support of this suggestion. The concepts that refer to Kant's duties to oneself—both duties of omission (suicide, sexual defilement, intemperance) and duties of commission (duties to develop one's various powers and capacities⁴¹)—do not entail anything in particular about one's motive in fulfilling them. One can and often does conform to, and thus fulfil, these various duties for purely prudential reasons. It is in connection with duties to others that the suggestion in question might be thought to hold.

Kant divides duties to others into duties of love and duties of respect. In connection with duties of respect, Kant lists three main negative duties: duties to refrain from being arrogant, from engaging in defamation, and from being malicious. Whether we focus on these duties as they relate to one's character or as they relate to specific actions, I see no reason to suppose that refraining from such vices and the activities to which they lead require that one be motivated by the thought of duty. One might simply be averse to such actions and the associated vices or one might avoid such things out of calculated self-interest.

In connection with duties of love, Kant specifies three main duties of commission: duties of beneficence, gratitude, and sympathetic joy. We can think of these duties as requiring that we become beneficent, grateful, and sympathetic people—that is, that we develop certain traits of character—and that we act out of these traits by performing acts of beneficence, gratitude, and sympathy in appropriate circumstances on at least some occasions. But what, for example, is involved in having a truly beneficent disposition and, consequently, what is it to perform a truly beneficent act? Consider how Barbara Herman characterizes a truly beneficent act:

There are also certain kinds of action that cannot be done at all unless done from the motive of duty (as a primary motive). For example, not every act of bringing aid is a beneficent act. It is beneficent only if the agent conceives of what he is doing as an instance of what *any* moral agent is required to do when he can help another, and acts for that reason. For Kant, only the motive of duty could prompt someone to act

⁴¹ Excluding, of course, the duty of moral perfection mentioned above.

on a maxim with such content—for no other motive responds to a conception of action that regards the agent himself as impersonally or is impartial in its application.⁴³

Hence, on this reading, at least in connection with one of the primary duties of love, the MCT holds and hence the Kantian ethical system is incompatible with the IT.

Here is an initial response. One can agree that not every helping act counts as an act of beneficence. If I offer you my assistance, but my immediate aim is to help you along so that I can set you up for a terrible fate, my underlying motive of malice rules out my helping action as one of beneficence. The idea here is that beneficence involves both an external aspect (helping actions) and an internal aspect (one's state of mind). However, granting this, it is a further step to claim that genuine acts of beneficence require the specific motive of acting from duty. In the *Groundwork* (G. 4:398–9), Kant describes the naturally sympathetic person who takes immediate delight in the well-being of others—he calls the actions of this sort of person acts of beneficence. Moreover, an individual might reason to the conclusion that beneficence pays (at least in the long run) and adopt the end of beneficence for self-interested reasons. In both cases, so it seems, we have individuals who adopt the well-being of others as their end and act accordingly. In the light of such cases, then, the MCT does not hold in connection with the duty of beneficence and Herman's characterization of this duty in Kant is mistaken.

However, this reply is too quick because it fails to consider two important elements in Kant's duty of beneficence. First, there are passages where Kant seems to require that genuine beneficence be non-selfish in the sense that to be a person who is disposed to help others out of calculated self-interest does not satisfy the relevant duty. 'To be beneficent, that is, to promote according to one's means the happiness of others in need, *without hoping for something in return*, is everyone's duty' (MS 6:453; emphasis added). This emphasized restriction apparently rules out our calculating egoist. Moreover, Kant describes our obligation of beneficence as the duty to promote the *morally legitimate* ends of others. 'The duty of love for one's neighbor can, accordingly, also be expressed as the duty to make others' ends my own (provided only that these are not immoral)' (MS 6:450). The qualification is important. It is *morally constrained* beneficence that it is our obligation to adopt as an end. This feature of the duty of beneficence seems to rule out the naturally kind-hearted person whose helping acts are non-selfish but who simply responds directly and unrestrictedly to the plight of others. So, the duty of beneficence we find

in Kant's writings is the duty non-selfishly to adopt the well-being of others constrained by moral considerations. Perhaps, then, Herman is correct and we ought to conclude that the MCT does apply to some of Kant's duties.

Still, I resist this conclusion. It seems to me that even in the case of Kantian beneficence (with the two qualifications just described) one can distinguish the distinctness of adopting beneficence as an end (and performing beneficent acts) from doing so in a way that has moral worth. If so, then we are not committed to the MCT in relation to this duty.

Consider Mr Hidebound Altruist. Like the man of natural sympathy Kant describes, he has the well-being of others as an end, not from calculated self-interest, but from a natural liking for others. He is also very selective in how he promotes the well-being of others. He believes that one is more likely to promote the well-being of others if one operates within the bounds of duty. It is not that he is committed to duty and for that reason restricts his benevolence accordingly; rather his controlling motive is others' well-being. Mr H.A. performs genuine acts of beneficence, flowing as they do from having beneficence as an end, but he is not acting from duty. Relating this example to Herman's remarks: she characterizes the truly beneficent person as someone who (1) must conceive of her helping acts as an instance of what anyone should do, and (2) acts to help for that reason.⁴⁴ What my example challenges is the second of her claims. Mr H.A. acts in recognition of the fact that what he is doing is what duty calls for, but he does not act from duty. Since my example seems to capture Kant's concept of beneficence, I conclude that this concept does not entail acting from the motive of duty. Further, since none of the other concepts associated with the *Tugendlehre* duties seems to entail acting from duty (with the one exception already noted), these duties, too, should not be interpreted according to the MCT.⁴⁴

Let me conclude this section by raising an issue about moral worth that I have been putting off. The issue concerns the fact that there are two ways in which moral considerations might play a motivational role in the overall psychological economy of an agent, and do so in a way that confers moral worth. As a *primary motive*, the thought of duty (of some action's being morally

⁴³ It is interesting to consider O'Neill's (Neill's) characterization of fulfilling the duties of beneficence and perfecting oneself. On p. 106 of *Acting on Principle*, she raises the question of 'why should we do to treat other rational natures as ends, to perfect ourselves, or to make others happy, be considered morally worthy' (and thus done from the motive of duty?). Her response (as I understand it) is that 'Morally worthy acts need only strive for objective ends in the knowledge that they are such ends' (p. 111). But this characterization simply incorporates the first of Herman's requirements, which is arguably too weak as an account of Kantian moral worth, as my example shows.

⁴⁴ Obviously I cannot stop here to defend this claim in detail. I offer it as a challenge to anyone who would suppose otherwise.

required) motivates one to act accordingly. However, Herman and Baron have noted the importance of moral considerations playing a limiting, regulative function.⁴⁵ As an effective *limiting* motive, the motive of duty has as its object that the agent act only in morally permissible ways. Roughly, it operates like this: In cases where the agent takes what she is doing to be permissible, whatever original motive is behind the act serves as the primary motive. In cases where the agent believes that the action is impermissible, the moral motive interferes with the performance of the act in question. Now, to this point I have not explicitly distinguished between these two models of moral motivation, and one might wonder whether fulfilling the duty of beneficence (and possibly other Kantian duties) might be such that necessarily the motive of duty functions in a limiting role and thus, after all, that, in fulfilling the duty in question, one is necessarily motivated by the thought of duty.⁴⁶

The short answer to this query (which is enough for our purposes) is negative—fulfilling the duty of beneficence does not require that the thought of duty play a limiting role. This can be seen if we go back to the case of Mr Hidebound Altruist. I described the case as one in which there is a lack of the kind of moral commitment that must be present if the thought of duty is to play the sort of limiting role that is needed for an action's having moral worth. Mr H.A. is not committed to duty for the sake of duty and so is not committed in the right way for it to be the case that his brand of constrained benevolence counts as being done from duty. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to sort out the difference between cases in which one's commitment to staying within the bounds of duty expresses genuine moral commitment of the sort needed for moral worth, and cases in which this is not so.⁴⁷ However, it is reasonably clear from my example that beneficence does not require having the motive of duty as a limiting motive in the right way to confer moral worth.

I conclude that the presumption against interpreting Kant's system of ethical duties as involving the motive content thesis has not been overturned by any of the doctrinal or conceptual considerations we have been examining.

⁴⁵ See Barbara Herman, 'On the Value of Acting From the Motive of Duty', reprinted in her *Practical and also her 'Motive'*, in *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, 2nd edn, vol. II, L. Becker and C. B. Becker (eds.), (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 1187-8; and Marisa W. Baron, *Kantian Ethics Almost without Apology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), chs. 4-5.

⁴⁶ This is not how Herman is thinking of moral motivation in connection with beneficence; she is explicit in the quoted passage about the duty motive operating as primary motive.

⁴⁷ I believe this point about the kind of commitment comes out in Baron, *Kantian Ethics*, 140-1 n. 22, where she explains that the kind of moral commitment implicated in moral worth involves a complex set of manifestations that signify a genuine commitment to morality, and not just (as in my example) a commitment contingent on certain beliefs about the value of acting dutifully vis-à-vis some other end.

III. Bolstering the Presumptive Case

In arguing that we should reject the MCT, I have been swimming against a certain current of recent Kant interpretation. Let me now reinforce what I have been saying by offering a few additional reasons for rejecting that thesis.

First, if we accept the MCT, Kant's ethical theory is impoverished. We expect a plausible ethical theory to be able to make sense of various kinds of moral evaluations that reflect our various purposes. As mentioned at the outset, common-sense moral thinking does distinguish between the deontic status of what one does and the morality of the agent. In connection with the duty of beneficence, we can and do distinguish between what a person does in helping someone and her motives for doing so, and think that such actions (unless done from some evil motive) are dutiful or at least morally right. The same goes for the other duties featured in Kant's ethical system. Kant's moral theory loses its capacity to make such moral judgements if we tie the duty of beneficence to the motive of duty and then claim that one fulfils the duty only if done from that motive. Moreover, even were it true that the texts bear out this restricted reading, I see no reason why Kant's ethical theory lacks the resources for distinguishing between the rightness of an ethical duty and its moral worth.

Secondly, Kant formulates the fundamental moral principle of the *Tugendlehre* as follows: 'act in accordance with a maxim of ends that it can be a universal law for everyone to have' (*MS* 6:395), and he uses the universalization test associated with this version of the Categorical Imperative to derive the duty of beneficence. Kant formulates the maxim of ends to be tested as 'to make others' ends my own (provided only that these are not immoral)' (*MS* 6:450). Notice that there is no mention of one's motive in this maxim. Moreover, from the argument for the claim that adopting such a maxim is a duty that we find in the *Tugendlehre* at *MS* 6:393 and *MS* 6:451, it does not appear that the conclusion he derives specifies acting from duty as part of the duty of beneficence. Furthermore, when one examines Kant's arguments for the various other duties that compose the *Tugendlehre* system (where he consistently appeals to the Humanity formulation of the Categorical Imperative), we do not find him drawing moral conclusions that involve acting from duty as a component.⁴⁸ The argument he uses, for instance, to conclude that suicide is wrong is that it amounts to 'debasing humanity in one's person' (*MS* 6:423), while he argues that respectful treatment of others is a duty because failure to

⁴⁸ With, of course, one notable but (as explained in n. 31) apparent exception: the duty to make the motive of duty one's sole and sufficient motive.

do so violates a 'dignity (*dignitas*) in other human beings' (MS 6:462). These arguments make perfect sense as arguments for omitting or performing such actions, even if one's ultimate intention is other than acting from duty. This strikes me as good reason for being suspicious of the MCT in connection with Kant's system of duties.

Thirdly, throughout the *Tugendlehre*, Kant has two related projects going: he is concerned not only with setting out a system of duties that cannot be externally coerced, but he is also concerned with moral character and its proper development. Because he is interested in moral character and its development, Kant remarks in the Preface that, in teaching ethics, 'the kind of incentive by which, as means, one is led to a good purpose (that of fulfilling every duty) is not a matter of indifference' (MS 6:377). So, throughout the *Tugendlehre* we find some emphasis given to the proper incentive that is to play a large part in the teaching and inculcating of the virtues. Now, for the ideally virtuous person, the sorts of duties featured in Kant's system are compiled with out of the sort of motivation characteristic of genuine virtue—the motive of duty. Moral education ought to aim at cultivating this motive. Of course, among the various duties to oneself is the duty to strive to make the moral law one's sole and sufficient motive (in contexts where duty calls). In one place, Kant refers to what he calls the universal ethical duty as the requirement to 'act in conformity with duty from duty' (MS 6:391). But the fact that the virtuous person would act in this way, and that the rest of us ought to strive toward this kind of ideal, does not mean that fulfilling duties of virtue requires that one act from duty. Another way to put the point is this. From Kant's universal ethical duty, we ought to strive to be the sort of person who fulfils her or his duties from the motive of duty. Thus, we ought to be beneficent from duty; we ought to be grateful from duty, and so on with respect to all of the various ethical duties. Proper moral development depends crucially on coming to recognize the rational authority of considerations of duty and striving to make duty one's sole and sufficient motive (in contexts of duty).

But, important as this is for proper moral education and development, what Kant has to say about such matters does not entail that, in order to fulfil the duty of beneficence, we must have acted from duty; we need to distinguish fulfilling the duty in question *quia the duty of beneficence* and fulfilling the more general duty of acting from duty. We can fulfil the former without fulfilling the latter.

If we are mindful of the fact that in the *Tugendlehre* Kant is simultaneously setting forth a system of duties as well as addressing issues of character and development, and if we are also mindful of how these projects are related in this work, we will be less likely to read various of Kant's remarks as supporting the MCT.

Finally, having considered some of the alleged textual evidence in favour of the MCT, let me now offer one bit of textual support for the denial of this thesis. As we have noted, if Kant did hold the MCT, then he would be committed to the Strong Thesis about moral worth and consequently would not be able to draw the legality/morality distinction between actions the performance of which merely fulfil a duty and those which, in addition, are done from the sole motive of duty and hence indicate moral worth. However, in the Introduction to the *Tugendlehre* (MS 6:398), Kant presents a chart that he calls a 'schema' of duties of virtue viewed in accordance with the principles he has been setting forth. One major division represented in the chart is between 'What is Material in Duties of Virtue' and 'What is Formal in Duties of Virtue'. He mentions one's own perfection and the happiness of others as what is material in duties of virtue (that is, what is required). What is especially interesting for our concerns is that, with regard to what is formal in duties of virtue (that is, concerning possible reasons for action), Kant mentions both the law which is also the incentive on which the *morality* of every free determination of the will is based and the *end* which is also the incentive on which the *legality* of every free determination of the will is based' (MS 6:398). Unfortunately, Kant does not comment on the chart and its distinctions. However, the distinction within the formal aspect of duties of virtue between legality and morality make perfect sense on my interpretation of fulfilling such duties, but it does not make sense if one interprets these duties according to the MCT.

I conclude that, on balance, we should interpret the duties of virtue so that the legality/morality distinction can be made, which, of course, means that we should reject the MCT.

IV. The Relevance of Motive to Rightness in Kant's Ethical System

Even if we reject the MCT, we have not thereby completely vindicated the IT in relation to Kant's ethical system. In fact, I want to show that Kant's moral theory is committed to the denial of the IT, indicating in this section *how* motives can be relevant to the deontic status of an action in Kant's ethical system. In the following section, I explain *why* they can have such relevance.

But, before proceeding, it may help the reader digest the interpretation of Kant I am defending if we pause for a moment and consider how my view is situated vis-à-vis its competitors that I have been criticizing. The main theses involved are the MCT and the IT (as they relate to Kant's ethics). Since the two

theses are apparently incompatible,⁴⁹ there remain three possible stances one might embrace regarding them. Fig. 11.1 is a visual aid summarizing the three stances. Ross, as we have seen, claims that Kant accepts the IT, which would mean that Kant must deny the MCT. Recent Kantians such as Herman and Baron hold that Kant does accept the MCT, which means that on their reading Kant must deny the IT. I deny both theses, agreeing with Ross that for Kant the motive of duty is not part of the content of one's duties; while agreeing with Herman and Baron that the IT is false: motive is relevant for fulfilling certain Kantian duties (but relevant in ways other than such duties having as part of their content the motive of duty).

Main Theses	Ross	Recent Kantians	Me
MCT?	No	Yes	No
IT?	Yes	No	No

Fig. 11.1. Three views on the relevance of motive to rightness in Kant's ethics

Although a full exploration of the ways in which motive can be deontically relevant in Kant's ethics is well beyond the scope of this chapter, I shall proceed briefly to indicate three main ways in which motive can be deontically relevant for Kant. First, there are cases in which certain actions fail to fulfill a duty if the action is performed from a certain motive. Secondly, there are cases where otherwise forbidden actions may, owing to motive, be morally permitted. Thirdly, there are cases in which an otherwise optional action is made wrong by one's motive. I take these up in order.

(1) In my discussion of the general duty of beneficence (at least as Kant understands it), I have already noted that not any old helping action done on purpose can fulfill this duty. J. Llewellyn Davies objected to Mill's acceptance

⁴⁹ In correspondence, Thomas Pogge suggested to me that one might be able to embrace the MCT (and hold that fulfilling certain duties requires that one act on the basis of some motive—the motive of duty for Kant) and still accept the IT by claiming that, if one performs the action that is part of one's duty to perform but fails to perform it from the motive of duty, one might be said to have done the right act even if one does not *fully* satisfy the duty. This position would apparently require that we distinguish between doing a right act in the sense of performing an action that is required (and not just permitted), yet failing to fulfill (fully) one's duty. This kind of position would complicate matters and I will not pursue it here. However, let me point out that I see no basis for attributing the MCT to Kant, and any attraction attaching to the idea that one can partly fulfill a duty without fully fulfilling it is already accommodated in Kant's system by the fact that for Kant we have a duty to perform our various duties from the motive of duty. If we fulfill our duty of beneficence and yet fail to do so from the sole motive of duty, there is still a duty of moral perfection that we have not fulfilled.

of the IT by describing a case where, he thought, motive was deontically relevant. 'Suppose that a tyrant, when his enemy jumped into the sea to escape from him, saved him from drowning simply in order that he might inflict upon him more exquisite tortures . . . ?'⁵⁰ Davies thinks that, owing to the tyrant's motive, the helping action in such a case is morally wrong.⁵¹ Likewise, we have seen that the fulfillment of the Kantian duty of beneficence is not compatible with certain motives such as malice and (on the interpretation I offered) calculated self-interest. So, in connection with this duty (and others), it is clear that fulfillment of certain duties by performance of external actions rules out acting from certain motives. Hence, in general, actions that might otherwise fulfill certain duties in Kant's system might not do so if they flow from certain motives: otherwise duty-fulfilling actions become either merely optional (as in the case of beneficence from self-interest) or positively wrong when performed by certain motives (as in the case of 'helping' from malice).

(2) I mentioned at the outset that, in the *Grundlegung*, Kant's suicide example invokes the motive of self-love, which suggests that there may be room in Kant for claiming that certain acts of killing oneself are not wrong. In one place, Kant does characterize willfully killing oneself as murder, from which it follows that it is morally wrong (MS 6:422). However, in considering various matters of casuistry in relation to suicide, he asks: 'Is it murdering oneself to hurl oneself to certain death (like Curtius) in order to save one's country?—or is deliberate martyrdom, sacrificing oneself for the good of humanity, also to be considered an act of heroism?' (MS 6:423). This passage continues with Kant asking about three further cases: about a 'great king' who carried poison that he intended to take in case of capture so that he could not be coerced into acts that would harm his country; about someone who took his own life for fear of unintentionally harming others as a result of an incurable disease he contracted; and about the morality of being vaccinated against smallpox, which, although it puts a man's life in danger, is done 'in order to preserve his life' (MS 6:424). In each of these examples, a question about the person's motive is pivotal in the determination of the deontic status of specific acts of killing oneself. Though Kant does not answer his own questions, leaving them for his readers to ponder, one might plausibly argue that, from within the Kantian moral system, some of the actions in question are not morally wrong owing to the person's motive.

⁵⁰ The passage is quoted in Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 2, n. 2.

⁵¹ In reply to Davies's analysis of this case, one might insist we must distinguish between the tyrant's act, his motive, and his further acts, and claim that the motive was surely a bad one, his further acts of torturing his victim were wrong, but that we need not conclude that the original act in question was wrong. (Michael Coer in correspondence urged this rendering of the example.) But, aside from the details of this particular case, the point is that for Kant (as for Davies) motive is relevant to an action's deontic status.

There are two, related ways in which motive might be relevant here. First, if one defines suicide as murder (and hence as necessarily morally wrong), questions about one's motives in killing oneself are relevant for determining whether one's action is correctly described as a case of suicide. Secondly, if suicide is defined merely as intentionally bringing about one's own death, then various motives might be relevant for determining the justifications one might have for engaging in an act that is otherwise wrong. Considered in this manner, we would say that, in certain contexts, owing primarily to one's motive, an otherwise wrongful act (killing oneself) is permissible.³¹

(3) Another broad category of action where motive is crucial is the category of malicious actions.³² Kant includes malice as one of the three main vices of hatred opposed to our duty of love towards others. He also describes some of the vices opposed to respect for others as at bottom motivated by malice. Since a malicious act is by definition an act having a certain motive, it seems rather obvious that motive can be deontically relevant for Kant. However, in order to make clear that it is the motive in question that can be deontically relevant, I want to consider some examples. Whereas in the case of killing oneself we had examples of otherwise wrongful actions made right by one's motive, here we have examples of otherwise permissible actions made wrong by one's motive.

For example, Kant treats the desire for revenge as 'the sweetest form of malice' and describes the vengeful person as one who makes 'it one's end to harm others without any advantage to oneself' (MS 6:460). In discussing an avenging wrongs out of the motive of revenge, he argues that 'It is, therefore, a duty of virtue . . . to refrain from repaying another's enmity with hatred *out of mere revenge* . . .' (MS 6:460; emphasis added). These remarks suggest that one's motive can be deontically relevant as revealed by comparing similar cases involving punishment. If, for example, a certain form of punishment would be morally right to inflict on someone as a response to culpable wrongdoing, then Kant's remark here suggests that inflicting this kind of harm is itself wrongful if done from the malicious motive of revenge.

The motive of malice is also an apparently wrong-making feature of certain acts of defamation and ridicule that Kant presents as vices that are contrary to duties of respect towards others. Kant defines defamation as 'the immediate inclination, with no particular aim in view, to bring into the open something

³¹ For a discussion of how motives are both part of the very definition of certain legal offences and how they can figure relevantly in justifications and excuses in the law, see Sissler, 'Agent Motives', and Husak, 'Motive and Criminal Liability'.

³² We have already touched on malice in connection with helping others (where it makes an otherwise dutiful action either permissible or wrong); here the concern is with cases in which motive makes an otherwise permissible action wrong.

prejudicial to respect for others' (MS 6:466). The fact that this sort of inclination prompts action with no other particular aim means that Kant is thinking of defamation as an underlying motive that prompts certain negatively prejudicial acts. At bottom, this motive is a kind of malice (involving as Kant says, a malicious pleasure (MS 6:466)). A malicious motive also explains why certain acts of ridicule are wrong. Kant characterizes ridicule as the holding-up of a person's real faults, or supposed faults as if they were real, *in order to deprive him of the respect he deserves*. . . (MS 6:467; emphasis added). Ridicule, as Kant defines it, differs from defamation in that acts of the former sort are aimed at exposing others to laughter while the latter are aimed at exposing others to criticism. In the case of both vices, there are arguably examples in which an otherwise permissible act becomes wrong if done out of malice. For instance, Kant distinguishes friendly banter involving exposing another's faults (which is morally innocent) from cases in which such remarks are delivered in order to deprive the person of respect. Here, again, otherwise permissible actions are wrong when performed from a certain motive.

I have touched but on a few examples of duties from Kant's ethical system whose deontic status is arguably affected by motive.³⁴ Kant's discussion of the vices of envy and ingratitude suggest many more. However, I have done enough to make a presumptive case for the claim that motives are taken by Kant to be deontically relevant. I now want to strengthen my case by looking to Kant's normative moral theory as a way of grounding the deontic relevance of motives.

V. Grounding the Relevance of Motive in Kant's Moral Theory

Whatever stand one takes on the relevance of motive to rightness in Kant's ethics, it ought to be anchored in a general account of moral relevance. Elsewhere³⁵ I have argued that (1) a normative moral theory—a theory that purports to reveal what features of an action at bottom make the act right or wrong—is just a theory of moral relevance and that (2) the Humanity formu-

³⁴ Although we are concerned with the question of whether one's motive can affect which of the three basic deontic categories some act belongs to, motive can also affect which type of act (from among those falling within one of the basic categories) the action belongs to. For instance, Kant distinguishes between acts of greed and acts of avarice according to motive: 'The *maxim of greedily avarice* (prodigality) is to get and maintain all the means to good living *with the intention of enjoyment*.—The *maxim of miserly avarice*, on the other hand, is to acquire as well as maintain all the means to good living, but *with no intention of enjoyment*, (i.e., in such a way that one's end is only possession, not enjoyment)' (MS 6:433).

³⁵ Timmons, 'Decision Procedures'.

lation of the Categorical Imperative serves this role in Kant's ethics. Thus, (3) it is facts about the bearings of one's actions on the maintenance and flourishing of humanity (as Kant understands this notion) that are the morally relevant facts determining the (objective) deontic status of an action. I suggest then, that (4) the *Tugendlehre* system of duties be viewed as a specification, in fairly broad outline, of the various types of actions and omissions that bear most directly on the maintenance and flourishing of humanity.

To make this a bit more concrete, humanity (personality), as Kant characterizes it, concerns our rational natures and, in particular, our capacities as end-setting creatures. According to Kant, not only are we able to set ends in response to the promptings of desire and inclination; we are capable of a kind of autonomy that, he says, 'is that property the will has of being a law to itself (independence of every property belonging to objects of volition)' (*G*, 4:440). Thus, it is our natures as autonomous agents that provide the objective basis for right and wrong action. Actions that destroy or degrade humanity are *prima facie* wrong; actions that promote humanity are *prima facie* right. Thus, for example, maintenance of one's own autonomy requires that we omit actions that destroy or degrade autonomy, and so such actions as suicide, drunkenness, and gluttony are wrong (or tend to be wrong). Similar remarks apply to the other duties featured in the *Tugendlehre*, the basic idea being that the various types of action and disposition that are forbidden or required are types of action and disposition that bear on the maintenance and flourishing of humanity.

Given this framework, we can readily understand why various motives can be deontically relevant for Kant. Motives such as loyalty to others that motivates the martyr and self-preservation that motivates the individual to undergo a risky vaccination are motives that are necessarily aimed at the maintenance of 'humanity in the person'. Granted, in the martyrdom case one is intentionally bringing about one's own death and so this fact about the act counts against doing it, but the fact that one's ultimate aim is the preservation of the lives of others is also a relevant fact about the act and therefore should be considered in determining the all-things-considered deontic status of the action in question. Whether one's aim does justify the act of killing oneself is a difficult question, perhaps depending on other morally relevant features of the situation. However, the important point here is that motive is relevant and we have an explanation, from within the Kantian framework, of why it is relevant.

Malice involves a direct hatred for humanity, disposing the person infected with this vice to 'rejoice immediately' (*MS*6:460) in the misfortune of others. This kind of motive is thus necessarily contrary to respecting humanity, and consequently is a morally relevant fact in determining the deontic status of actions so motivated.

It is interesting to note in connection with malice that Kant's overall account of moral relevance allows for two main ways in which facts about one's motives can be deontically relevant. First, and most obviously, actions whose performance would in fact negatively affect the humanity in oneself or others (where there are no considerations that would justify such performance) are wrong. If someone's malicious gossip affects you negatively by, for instance, setting others against you thereby interfering with your pursuit of legitimate interests, the act is wrong. Here, the idea is that acts of malice are by their very nature oriented towards degrading humanity in the person and, thus, often have this very effect. But Kant's moral theory, though obviously at odds with various forms of consequentialist theory in rejecting hedonistic and eudaimonistic conceptions of the good as well as rejecting maximizing conceptions of moral action, also differs in allowing for and making sense of the deontic evaluation of actions that are causally inefficacious. The fact that an action, because of its mental component and in particular its motive, can express certain deontically-relevant attitudes means that the act can be right or wrong apart from its actual effects on humanity in the person. Acts of malice, for instance, simply because they express an attitude that is hostile towards humanity in the person, are (presumptively) wrong.

One might consider various generalizations about motive and rightness—for example, that a 'good' motive usually justifies an otherwise wrongful act while a 'bad' motive can make wrong an otherwise permissible act—but I doubt any such claims would correctly characterize Kant's considered views on the matter. Recall, for instance, his infamous essay in which he denies that a benevolent motive makes a difference to the deontic status of a lie. In order to sort out the bearing of motive on rightness in Kant's ethics will require, I suggest, nothing less than an extensive examination of the various Kantian duties and matters of casuistry associated with each.

In any case, not only do we have some textual evidence that motives can be deontically relevant for Kant, we also have an explanation of why they can be relevant. In fact, when one considers that, for Kant, the motives behind an action are high-level intentions and that, in general, one's intentions are deontically relevant if only because they help determine the identity of one's actions, the presumption, it seems to me, should be that, unless there is good reason to suppose otherwise, one's motives can be deontically relevant. Indeed, if one were to suppose they were irrelevant, how might this fact be explained within the Kantian framework? Contrast standard act utilitarianism. An act utilitarian has a principled explanation of why motive is deontically irrelevant: according to the utilitarian theory, it is only the values of the consequences of actions that bear on the deontic status of an action; motives are on the wrong

end of the temporal sequence to matter deontically.³⁶ I suggest that, for Kant, there is no principled reason for excluding motives from considerations of deontic status; there is thus good reason to reject the IT in relation to Kant's system of duties.

VI. Conclusion

I have argued for the following conclusions. (1) The Motive Content Thesis (MCT) applied to Kant's ethics—the claim that at least some Kantian duties have as part of their content the requirement that one act from duty—is mistaken. In supporting this claim, I have examined various doctrinal and conceptual claims that might be used to support the thesis and found them unpersuasive. Here, I take sides with Ross and against some recent Kant interpreters. However, (2) the Independence Thesis (IT) does not hold for Kant: motives can be included among the set of considerations that determine the deontic status of an action. Here, I disagree with Ross's more general claims about Kant's theory and find myself in agreement with interpreters like Herman over the general relevance of motive to rightness in Kant's ethical system (though, of course, for reasons other than appeal to the MCT in relation to Kant's ethics). In supporting this claim I considered various bits of textual evidence as well as the general philosophical case that can be made in support of the claim. Finally, I briefly indicated why motives are relevant to rightness in Kant's moral philosophy by appealing to Kant's general account of moral relevance.

I have not been able to explore questions about how my results affect the overall plausibility of Kant's moral theory, but in the light of recent (and, I think, plausible) challenges to the old doctrine that rightness is independent of one's motives, I hope my efforts will be viewed as bolstering the plausibility of both Kant's ethics and Kantian ethics generally.

³⁶ Here, I am reporting what utilitarians say about the matter, though matters are rather delicate since utilitarians like Mill do allow that intention is deontically relevant and so owe us some story about how intentions differ from motives in this way.

12

The Inner Freedom of Virtue

Stephen Engstrom

Kant holds that virtue is a kind of strength. Virtue, he says, is 'a moral strength of the will' (*MS* 6:405), 'the strength of a human being's maxim in the observance of his duty', a strength that is known only through the hindrances it is able to overcome, which lie in opposing natural inclinations (*MS* 6:394).¹ In presenting this view of virtue, Kant does not fancy himself to be an innovator, but rather supposes that strength is what the ancient authors generally had in mind when they praised the virtue of the sage. Moreover, when he introduces the idea of virtue in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, he seems clearly to be taking for granted that his readers understand that it goes without saying, as a matter of the very meanings of the terms, that *virtus* is *fortitudo moralis*, and that *fortitudo* is 'the capacity and considered resolve to oppose a strong but unjust opponent' (*MS* 6:380).²

Many of Kant's readers today, however, find his conception of virtue to differ substantially from, and to fall short of, the classical ideal presented in the ethical systems of the ancients. In particular, Kant's account is likely to remind

I am grateful to Mark Timmons and Allen Wood for their helpful comments.

¹ Translations of passages from Kant's writings are my own, though I have consulted the commonly used English translations.

² Kant recognizes, of course, that *virtus* refers specifically to a certain ideal of manliness. In one of his lecture courses on ethics, he is reported to have said: 'The very Latin word *virtus* originally signifies nothing else but courage, strength, and constancy, and the symbol for it indicates the same: a Hercules, with lion-skin and club, striking down the hydra, which is the symbol of all vice.' (Vlg. 27:492). The German term *Tugend* also conveys some suggestion of masculine virtue, though less prominently. But the notion of strength (*Stärke*) that figures in Kant's conception of virtue as a moral strength is a more general concept, one whose generality is liable to be obscured if it is linked directly to the specific images of lionskin and club. We will do better if we view this strength in the light of the fact that Kant's treatment of virtue is informed by the idea, pervasive among ancient Greek ethicists, that virtue is a kind of health of the soul, and vice an illness, where, as with their analogues in the body, health is understood to lie in a certain order among the parts, illness in their disorder (*MS* 6:384, 409; cf. *A* 7:251). The strength in which virtue is said to consist can thus be regarded as *robustness*, the strength of health (see *MS* 6:397, where *robur* is provided as a gloss for *Stärke*). Kant's description of virtue as a type of fortitude (*MS* 6:380), or constant condition of courage (*A* 7:250), can be understood along similar lines.