

# ‘Reason’s Sympathy’ and its Foundations in Productive Imagination

KANTIAN REVIEW, doi:10.1017/S1369415421000157

BENJAMIN VILHAUER  
City College of New York  
CUNY Graduate Center

## Abstract

This paper argues that Kant endorses a distinction between rational and natural sympathy, and it presents an interpretation of rational sympathy as a power of voluntary *a posteriori* productive imagination. In rational sympathy we draw on the imagination’s voluntary powers (a) to subjectively unify the contents of intuition, in order to imaginatively put ourselves in others’ places, and (b) to associate imagined intuitional contents with the concepts others use to convey their feelings, in such a way that those contents prompt feelings in us that are like their feelings.

**Keywords:** Sympathy, Imagination, First Person, Communication, Aesthetic Ideas.

## 1. Introduction

In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), Kant tells a famous (and infamous) story about a philanthropist whose benevolent actions only have ‘genuine moral worth’ when his ‘sympathetic participation (*Theilnehmung*) in the fate of others’ has been ‘extinguished’ by ‘grief’, and he acts ‘simply from duty’ (G, 4: 398).<sup>1</sup> The default reading of the grieving philanthropist is that he is motivated only by the feeling of respect for the moral law, since Kant emphasizes two pages later that ‘*duty is the necessity of an action from respect for law*’ (G, 4: 400). While it is ‘amiable’ to be ‘sympathetically attuned (*theilnehmend gestimmte*)’, it is ‘on the same footing with other inclinations’, and we can have a ‘far higher worth than what a mere

good-natured temperament’ would impart ‘even if we are cold and indifferent to the sufferings of others’ (G, 4: 398). The view seems to be that agents without sympathy can be motivated by respect for law alone to do everything that matters for morality. Yet in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, (1797), Kant tells us that ‘active sympathetic participation (*thätige Theilnehmung*) in [others’] fate is a duty’, and that ‘compassion (*Mitgefühl*)’ is ‘one of the drives that Nature has implanted in us to do what the representation of duty alone would not accomplish<sup>t</sup>’ (MM, 6: 457). Here, though his terms are not quite the same, he seems to tell us that morality requires us to sympathize, and that sympathy allows us to do something morally important which respect for law (the representation of duty) alone cannot motivate us to do.

If we have a duty to sympathize, then sympathy cannot be merely a matter of inclination. It must be capable of being guided by practical reason. It can be tempting for scholars most familiar with the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* to assume that the *Metaphysics of Morals* claims are peripheral, and perhaps confused, and to bracket rather than try to integrate them. If we look at Kant’s corpus as a whole, however, we find a number of other passages which support the *Metaphysics of Morals* claims. Taken together, they set out a distinction between two ways of sympathizing: what I will call *rational sympathy* on the one hand, and *natural sympathy* on the other. Over the past few decades, a number of commentators have discussed these passages, helping to bring sympathy to the foreground in the literature on Kant’s moral psychology, but this paper builds most explicitly upon the work of Rudolf Makkreel (1990, 2012) and Melissa Seymour Fahmy (2009, 2010, 2019). While I take my interpretation of these passages to be novel, my goal in presenting them is largely to set the stage for my main project here, which is to offer an account of *how* we can sympathize rationally, that is, by way of a voluntary, reason-guided activity of the imagination. This account will draw in a number of less-

familiar passages and issues not previously discussed in the sympathy literature. But let us begin with an overview and interpretation of the more familiar passages which set out the key distinction.

## **2. The Distinction Between Rational and Natural Sympathy**

Kant draws an explicit distinction between what I am calling rational and natural sympathy in at least five passages, ranging over at least 20 years.<sup>2</sup> His descriptions of the distinction involve variegated terminology, but I think we can discern the same distinction in all five places.<sup>3</sup> It is only Kant's elision of this distinction in the *Groundwork* which produces the apparent conflict we saw above. I will label the rational side of the distinction with '(a)' and the natural side with '(b)'.

Friedländer's 1775-6 Anthropology notes draw a distinction between (a) 'reason's sympathy' (*Antheil der Vernunft*; Anth-F, 25: 610) and (b) 'physical sympathy' (*physicalischen Sympathie*; 25: 607). Reason's sympathy is 'in accordance with ideas' (ibid.). Physical sympathy is 'based not on deliberation, but on animality' (ibid.): 'as soon as I am not the master of it, but am placed in it against my will, then it is an affect' (25: 611). Friedländer's notes define affect as '[t]hat degree of sensation that makes us unable to estimate and compare the object with the sum total of all our sensation': one example is 'joy ... if one is pleased with an object which has no noticeable influence on the whole of our well-being'; another is 'if one becomes angry about a dish having been broken in two', which Kant says likewise has no noticeable impact on our well-being as a whole (25: 589). This suggests that sympathetic affect can cause us to arbitrarily focus on particular features of others' experience in ways that exaggerate their impact on their happiness as a whole and diminish the accuracy of our sympathy. Kant also comments on the problem that sympathy (*Antheil*) can 'rise into an affect, or rather degenerate into it' at MM, 6:

409. There he describes affects as feelings which make ‘reflection ... impossible or more difficult’ (6: 407) and dispose us to act in ways that we ought not to act.

The same or perhaps a somewhat more general distinction, which includes our distinction as one of its main species, is drawn in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) and Mrongovius’ *Anthropology* notes (1784-5, demonstrating that Kant was lecturing about the distinction either shortly before or simultaneously with the publication of the *Groundwork* in 1785). Kant uses the terms (a) ‘sensitivity’ (*Empfindsamkeit*) and (b) ‘sentiment’ or ‘sentimentality’ (*Empfindelei*) (Anth-Mr, 25: 1320-1; Anth, 7: 235-6), which is also called ‘touchiness’ (*Empfindlichkeit*) at Anth-Mr, 25: 1320. According to Mrongovius, sensitivity ‘is the faculty of being able to have a sensation of the agreeable and disagreeable’. It is a ‘strength’ which allows us to ‘choose for others what they will enjoy’ and ‘does not come from the senses, but from concepts’. Sentimentality, on the other hand, is a ‘weakness’ that makes it possible to be ‘easily carried away by every sensation’ and prevents ‘rational reflection’ (Anth-Mr, 25: 1320-1). According to the *Anthropology*, ‘Sensitivity ... is a faculty and a power which either permits or prevents both the state of pleasure as well as displeasure from entering the mind, and thus it possesses choice’ (Anth, 7: 235-6). The *Anthropology* explains the idea of choosing for others what they will enjoy in more detail (though regrettably with misogyny): ‘Sensitivity is manly; for the man who wants to spare his wife or children difficulties or pain must possess such delicate feeling as is necessary in order to judge their sensation not by his own strength but rather by their weakness’ (7: 236). The connection between the concepts of sensitivity/sentimentality and sympathy is made explicit when Kant says that sentimentality ‘is a weakness by which we can be affected, even against our will, by sympathy (*Theilnehmung*) for others’ condition who, so to speak, can play at will on the organ of the sentimentalist’ (ibid.).

The most famous passage addressing the distinction is Doctrine of Virtue §§34-5, entitled ‘Sympathetic Feeling is Generally a Duty’ in Gregor’s translation (MM, 6: 456-8, also cited above). Gregor’s translation of this section has received criticism from commentators who think she errs in translating as ‘sympathy’ terms which should be translated differently, and a brief discussion of some of this controversy will help explain my motivation for providing an account of how we rationally sympathize. All commentators agree that Kant is drawing a distinction between (a) ‘*humanitas practica*’, to which we have an obligation, and (b) ‘*humanitas aesthetica*’, to which we have no obligation. According to Gregor’s translation, *humanitas practica* is the ‘capacity and the will to share in others’ feelings’, which is ‘free’, and based on ‘practical reason’, while *humanitas aesthetica* is ‘unfree’—it is ‘the receptivity, given by nature itself, to the feeling of joy and sadness in common with others’, which ‘can be called *communicable* ... like receptivity to warmth or contagious diseases ... since it spreads naturally’.

Rudolf Makkreel emphasizes the crucial distinction between passive and active feeling which I too emphasize, and his view is thus an important antecedent of the view I advance here (Makkreel 2012: 111-2). He points out that the term in the section title which Gregor translates as ‘sympathetic feeling’, *theilnehmende Empfindung*, can be translated as ‘participatory feeling’ (111). He argues that his translation is preferable, because he thinks that if we begin the section with the title ‘Sympathetic Feeling is Generally a Duty’, as Gregor does, we start by claiming we have a duty to experience feelings that sound like *humanitas aesthetica*, which Kant goes on claim we do *not* have a duty to experience, rather than *humanitas practica*, with respect to which we *do* have a duty (ibid.).

There is, however, strong support for Gregor's translation in the Friedländer Anthropology lecture notes, which include the following passage:

Finally ... we can consider sympathetic feeling (*sympathetische Gefühl*). [The term] sympathy (*Sympathie*) must not be rendered (*übersetzt*) by “compassion” (*Mitleid*), but by “sympathizing” (*Theilnehmung*). Compassion (*Mitleid*) is more concerned with misfortune. However, we have sympathy (*Sympathie*) also in good fortune. We have compassion (*Mitleid*) for those who are weak, but we have sympathy (*Sympathie*) also with those who are strong. Sympathy (*Sympathie*) is thus the genus and compassion (*Mitleid*) the species. (Anth-F, 25: 606)

The key word *übersetzt* here is also rendered as ‘translated’ elsewhere in the Cambridge translation (CPrR, 5: 60; MM, 6: 237). So this passage amounts to Kant's own translation advice on this controversy: he tells us to translate *Sympathie* as *Theilnehmung*. I think this provides strong evidence that Kant sees no difference between the feelings to which these terms refer. I will therefore translate *Theilnehmung* as ‘sympathy’ frequently below, though I will sometimes use ‘participation’ because of the way it evokes the idea of perspective-taking, which (as I will explain below) is crucial to understanding sympathy.

However, Makkreel's motivation for wanting a translation which distinguishes *Sympathie* and *Theilnehmung* is to address a problem about how we are to understand Kant's contrast between *activity* and *passivity* in Kant's theory of sympathy, which remains to be resolved even after we adopt Kant's translation advice. Makkreel sees sympathy as an inherently passive feeling, and *theilnehmende Empfindung* as a fundamentally different feeling which is ‘a more active counterpart to sympathy’ and is ‘not passively received, but a spontaneous expression of “practical humanity”’ (Makkreel 2012: 111), which has the ‘moral import to cultivate a “love of human beings”’ (112). By contrast, according to my interpretation, the passive and the active kinds of feeling are both kinds of sympathy. However, in view of the remarks we have seen in

which Kant associates sympathy with passivity, it would be unreasonable to simply stipulate that there is an active kind too. An account of what it means for it to be active is also required.

Makkreel's strategy for resolving this problem is to argue that the active feeling is not sympathy at all.

Melissa Seymour Fahmy's interpretation is also an important antecedent for my account, and she resolves this problem about activity and passivity in yet another way. I will follow some of the threads in her interpretation to get to the path to the alternative resolution I want to propose here.

Fahmy highlights Kant's original German description of *humanitas practica*:

*Diese [humanitas] kann nun in dem Vermogen und Willen, sich einander in Ansehung seiner Gefühle mitzuteilen (humanitas practica) ... gesetzt werden.*

(MM, 6: 456; Fahmy 2009: 35)

Fahmy argues that to accurately translate this, we should not give Gregor's version, 'humanity can be located ... in the *capacity* and the *will* to *share in others' feelings*', but instead 'This [humanity] can be located in the capacity and will to communicate with each other in view of (with respect to) one's feelings'. She concludes that the duty of *humanitas practica* is not a duty to *have* or *share* feelings, but rather to *communicate about* whatever sympathetic feelings we have (Fahmy 2009: 35). She acknowledges Kant's clear reference to a duty to 'cultivate the compassionate natural ... feelings in us' (MM, 6: 457), but interprets this as a duty to *strive* to have these feelings, which we can fulfil even if we do not succeed (Fahmy 2010: 321-2, 2019: 418-9).

Fahmy's interpretation is textually well-grounded if we focus just on MM, §§34-5. But we often talk of communication and feeling without the prepositional mediation of expressions like *in*

*Ansehung* (with respect to)—communicating feelings can mean that one person conveys feelings to another in such a way that the other experiences the feelings too. In §34 Kant is clearly using this unmediated sense of ‘communication’ in characterizing *humanitas aesthetica* (the natural side of the distinction)—he says it ‘can be called *communicable (mittheilend)* ... like receptivity to warmth’. In my view, despite the presence of *in Ansehung* in the description of *humanitas practica*, we cannot be sure that Kant means to rule out the unmediated sense of communication there—he may think that the rational side of the distinction involves communication *about* feelings which prompts communication *of* feelings.

Evidence that this is indeed what he thinks is provided in a discussion of friendship and communication in Vigilantius’ Ethics notes (1793-4) from just a few years before the *Metaphysics of Morals*, which I take to distinguish (a) ‘moral’ sympathy and (b) ‘instinctual’ sympathy:

[Friends] stand together, to communicate not only their feelings and sensations to one another, but also their thoughts (*sich nicht allein ihre Gefühle und Empfindungen, sondern auch ihre Gedanken einander mitzuteilen*). Of these two kinds of communication, the mutual disclosure of thoughts is the best, and is truly the ground for the communication of feeling (*Communication der Gefühle*). For feelings can be disclosed no otherwise, than by the imparting of thoughts; thus we must have an idea of the feeling in advance, and must hence have employed reason, in order to have known it accurately before we communicate<sup>t</sup> it (*ehe wir sie mitteilen*), so that the feeling thereafter may be correct and not instinctual; without thoughts, therefore, we would have no feelings, at least none of a moral kind; the other would be able to express<sup>t</sup> (*äußern*) not moral, but only instinctual



fellow-feeling (sympathy) (*der Andere würde kein moralisches, sondern nur instinctmäßiges Mitgefühl (Sympathie) äußern können*).<sup>4</sup> (Eth-V, 27: 677-8)

In this passage, we have three references to communication of feelings without any prepositional mediation like *in Ansehung*, all of which are clearly meant to characterize the moral side of the distinction. While Kant also emphasizes the communication of thoughts, it is clear that the purpose of communicating thoughts here is to accurately convey feelings to another, so that the other can have the feelings too, and by virtue of having them, express moral sympathy.

The conclusion I draw is that, here too, we see that Kant's lecture notes provide support for Gregor's translation, and so we should think that he really is telling us that sympathetic feeling is generally a duty (MM, 6: 456), and that fulfilling it involves the capacity and will to share in others' feelings (*ibid.*). However, as noted above, embracing the idea that morality requires us to have sympathetic feelings, as I aim to do here, poses its own interpretative challenge. In what sense can we actively or spontaneously prompt sympathetic feelings in ourselves?

As Makkreel and Fahmy both emphasize, Kant claims that we cannot will ourselves to have feelings of love: 'Love is a matter of *feeling*, not of willing, and I cannot love because I *will* to' (MM, 6: 401; Fahmy 2010: 313; Makkreel 2012: 114). It is natural to think of sympathy as a kind or aspect of love, so this claim about love presumably extends to sympathy. But Kant also holds that we can come to love people through the *practice of acting* in beneficent ways: 'Beneficence is a duty. If someone practices (*ausübt*) it often ... he eventually comes actually to love the person he has helped' (MM, 6: 402). According to the Collins Ethics notes, 'if I love others from obligation ... by practice (*Uebung*) it becomes love from inclination' (Eth-C, 27: 419).

The connection between the concepts of action, practice and the prompting of feeling in these passages makes it noteworthy that Kant's account of rational sympathy also includes the notions of action and practice. I interpret the ability to rationally sympathize as a skill in performing mental actions which prompt feelings, and Kant implies that rational sympathy is a *skill that we can acquire by practice*:

[T]he power to transpose the I is necessary, and to put oneself in the point of view and place of the other, so that one thinks with him, and has sympathy with him<sup>t</sup> (*sich in ihm fühlt*). ... To take a point of view is a skill (*Geschicklichkeit*) which one can acquire by practice (*sich durch Uebung erwerben kann*). (Anth-F, 25: 475)

If we *can* acquire a skill, then it is deontically consistent for reason to tell us that we *ought* to acquire it, and if we can acquire it by practice, it is consistent for reason to tell us that we ought to practice until we acquire it. When we have acquired a skill, we have volitional control over the task we are skilled in. This passage implies that rational sympathy is such a skill, and that when we have acquired it, we can volitionally (mentally) act in ways that prompt sympathetic feeling.

As I will discuss in greater detail below, the 'power to transpose the I' (ibid.) is a skill of imagination, and the locus of activity (volitional control) in rational sympathy is in imagining, not in feeling. That is, the voluntary mental actions which occur in the process of rational sympathy are actions of imaginatively adopting another's subjective viewpoint on the world, and imagining content to furnish that viewpoint. We acquire the sympathetic feelings themselves *in response* to these reason-guided imaginings, *not* by willing the feelings to spontaneously spring

forth. In this way, Makkreel's point about the passivity of sympathetic feeling is, in an important sense, preserved in my account.

Before I explain *how* this skill works in more detail, let me comment on *why* I think reason requires it, that is, on why morality requires sympathy. At MM, 6: 399, Kant lists a set of feelings which include moral feeling, respect, conscience and love, which he claims are 'conditions of receptivity'<sup>1</sup> (*Empfänglichkeit*) to the concept of duty. Sympathy is an aspect of love, and I take Kant's reference to *Empfänglichkeit* at MM, 6: 456, to imply that sympathy is included in that set of feelings. I think rational sympathy is required for receptivity to others' permissible ends, and that we need such receptivity if we are to adopt such ends as our own, which we must do to fulfil the duty of beneficence (G, 4: 430; MM, 6: 450). (Some formulations of the duty of beneficence refer to others' happiness (MM, 6: 452; also see CPrR, 5: 34), and happiness is an end (G, 4: 396; CPJ, 5: 437; MM, 6: 388) which is the 'sum' of our other, more particular permissible ends (CPJ, 5: 531; TP, 8: 282-3)) We need rational sympathy for receptivity to others' ends because receptivity to an end requires a desire to pursue it, and desire requires feeling (G, 4: 460; CPrR, 5: 9n; MM, 6: 212-3), not merely as a psychological force, but as an incentive which can be incorporated as a motivational ground. Ends are individuated by concepts which motivationally engage with agents' feelings (CPJ, 5: 220; MM, 6: 384-5). Concepts with marks of law (for example, *obligation* for perfect duty, and *merit* for imperfect duty) engage the feelings of all rational agents (that is just what it is to be a rational agent), and such concepts individuate objective ends (G, 4: 427). But concepts *without* marks of law only engage agents with sensibilities of a specific contingent constitution, and thus individuate subjective ends (4: 428). Agents' concepts of their permissible ends are often of the latter sort. I can only *adopt those same ends* under the guidance of practical reason if I can be *voluntarily*

*moved by the concepts that move them*, which I can only do if I can voluntarily conform my contingent feelings to theirs, and this is the role of rational sympathy. I can *promote* others' permissible ends by taking them as means to further ends, for example, improving my reputation or fulfilling my imperfect duty of beneficence. In both these cases I pursue a *different end* than the other's: in the first case, an end individuated by a concept with a mark of reputation; in the second, with a mark of merit (see MM, 6: 388, for an argument which I think implies this). It may well be worthwhile to promote others' ends as means, but there is a distinctive non-consequentialist value involved in adopting them *as ends*, not out of desire for reputation or even my own moral excellence, and I think rational sympathy is required for this. More argument is required to defend this view of why morality requires sympathy, which I cannot offer here due to constraints of space. But the evidence for thinking that the distinction between natural and rational sympathy is important should make scholars interested in an account of *how* rational sympathy works even if they are not persuaded by this sketch of *why* morality requires it. The goal of this paper is to focus on the *how* rather than the *why*.

### **3. Sympathy and the Imagination**

Kant repeatedly connects sympathy with the imagination, and here too his view is clear despite varying terminology. He says that sympathy is 'an effect of imagination' (MM, 6: 321n; also see 6: 457), and he refers to the 'sympathetic power of imagination' (Anth, 7: 179; also see 7: 238). If sympathizing is a way of imagining, then the difference between rational and natural sympathy must be a difference between two ways of imagining.

Imagination is a fundamental power in Kant's theory of mind, one of two 'parts' of sensibility, the other of which is 'sense' (Anth, 7: 153). Sense is the 'faculty of intuition in the presence of an object', while imagination is 'intuition even without the presence of an object' (ibid.; also see

B151). Another key function of imagination is to make connections which are different from the logical relations between concepts, but which are nonetheless necessary for experience.

In the first Critique's Transcendental Deduction, an aspect of imagination which Kant calls *a priori* productive imagination plays a role in spontaneously structuring sensibility as a part of the transcendental synthesis which makes *a priori* cognition possible (see e.g. B151-2; Anth, 7: 167, 174). In this role, the imagination is responsible for what Kant calls the *figurative synthesis* of the manifold of sensible intuition (B151- 4), one aspect of which is the establishment of *a priori* connections among times to form the schemata necessary for the application of *a priori* concepts of the understanding, that is, the categories of the understanding (A142-5/B182-5).

The imagination plays a crucial role *a posteriori* as well, including providing schemata for empirical rather than *a priori* concepts (B179-81/A140-2) and playing a crucial role in the generation of empirical concepts (a point to which I will return below). Its activities make up much of the mental contents of our waking and dream lives. Passively received sensible content is due to sense, and transitions between mental states are the work of the understanding or reason insofar as they are guided by active reasoning, but Kant thinks that the rest of the contents of intuition and transitions between mental states are the work of the imagination.

Even when reasoning is involved in the functioning of the imagination, Kant seems to think that the role of reasoning is merely to direct the imagination. Friedländer's Anthropology notes say that '[t]he power of choice can only do something insofar as it gives direction to the imagination and then it straightaway runs according to its new direction, like water in the stream' (Anth-F, 25: 515), and that when the imagination is not 'subjugated to the power of choice' it is 'often the path of many vices' (ibid.). Mrongovius' notes say that if we do not choose the direction of the

imagination, '[t]he imagination directs itself according to the inclinations'—for example, '[i]f one feels hatred, then the imagination shows everything from its most detestable side' (Anth-Mr, 25: 1260). The Collins Ethics notes relate our ability to choose the direction of the imagination to a power compared to a kind of 'monarchy':

The power that the soul has over all its faculties ... to subordinate them to its free choice, without being necessitated to do so, is a monarchy. If man does not busy himself with this monarchy, he is a plaything of other forces and impressions, against his choice ... If he does not have himself under control, his imagination has free play; he cannot discipline himself, but is carried away by it[.] (Eth-C, 27: 362)<sup>5</sup>

These ideas, along with the points about the hazards of affect in natural sympathy which we saw above, make it reasonable to think of natural sympathy as an aspect of the incessant involuntary churn of the imagination. The idea that it is constantly at work in us in a way that is not inherently subject to our will could help explain Kant's thought above that it is 'like receptivity to warmth or contagious diseases' (MM, 6: 409). We are not telepaths, so feeling cannot be directly conveyed from the mind of the other; however, if sympathy is part of the constant involuntary roving of our imaginations, it would make sense to think it would have a phenomenology such that sympathetic feelings seep into our sensibility unbidden, like sensations of temperature or disease symptoms.<sup>6</sup> This suggests that we can in turn understand rational sympathy as the voluntary guiding of the imaginative associations we make while sympathizing, so that we avoid affects that make it difficult to think clearly, and sympathies that dispose us to act wrongly.<sup>7</sup>

Contrary to what readers familiar only with the discussion of imagination in the first *Critique* might gather, Kant distinguishes between two kinds of productive imagination: an *a priori* and an *a posteriori* kind. The first *Critique* emphasizes *a priori* productive imagination, which (as mentioned above) is responsible for the transcendental figurative synthesis of the sensible manifold (B151-4). However, a *posteriori* imagination has both reproductive and productive faculties, and both are important in understanding sympathy. Reproductive imagination, which is exclusively *a posteriori*, ‘brings back to the mind an empirical intuition that it had previously’ (Anth, 7: 167; also see B152, Anth-F, 25: 512 and Anth-Mr, 25: 1257). A *posteriori* productive imagination possesses a kind of spontaneity which reproductive imagination lacks, and which is different from the kind of spontaneity possessed by *a priori* productive imagination. Kant says *a posteriori* imagination is ‘inventive’, though ‘not exactly creative’ (Anth, 7: 168)—while it does not merely bring previous empirical intuition back to the mind, in the way reproductive imagination does, ‘it is not capable of producing a sense representation that was *never* given to our faculty of sense. One can always furnish evidence of the material of its ideas’ (Anth, 7: 168). It is nonetheless ‘very powerful in creating, as it were, another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it’ (CPJ, 5: 314).<sup>8</sup> The fact that *a posteriori* productive imagination must draw on representations previously given to sense may suggest that it is a kind of spontaneity which is (as it were) of a lower order than the spontaneity of *a priori* productive imagination, since the latter involves determining the spatiality and temporality of things in sensibility which in themselves have no temporality or spatiality, and thus arguably adding a more fundamentally novel contribution to human experience than is added by *a posteriori* productive imagination. On the other hand, there is no scope in the activity of the *a priori* productive imagination for the distinctive kind of spontaneity which is transcendently free moral action, and on my view, the

*a posteriori* productive imagination involves that kind of spontaneity *when it is guided by practical reason*, as is the case in rational sympathy.<sup>9</sup> To keep things concise, ‘productive imagination’ is used henceforth just to refer to *a posteriori* productive imagination.

Kant’s description of the distinction between reproductive and productive imagination requires us to assume that sympathy involves the productive imagination (though as we will shortly see the text directly supports this as well). Representing some of our feelings as *shared* or *like another’s* requires us to represent them as something more than mere recapitulations of our own experiences. However, since we are not telepaths, we can only aim at having feelings like another’s by drawing on our own previous experiences in creative ways. But as we will shortly see in more detail, sympathy requires the functions of reproductive imagination too.

Productive imagination can function both involuntarily and voluntarily (Anth, 7: 174; Anth-Mr, 25: 1257). Involuntary productive imagination is called ‘fantasy’ (*Phantasie*) (Anth, 7: 167, 175; also see Anth-Mr, 25: 1258, Met-Mr, 29: 884-5), and in connection with this term Kant makes an explicit connection to sympathy:

[T]he **emotions** that can reach the strength of an affect are also quite diverse. We have **brave** as well as **tender** emotions. The latter, if they reach the level of an affect, are good for nothing at all; the tendency toward them is called **oversensitivity** (*Empfindelei*). A sympathetic pain (*theilnehmender Schmerz*) that will not let itself be consoled, or with which, when it concerns invented evils, we consciously become involved, to the point of being taken in by the fantasy (*Phantasie*), as if it were real, proves and constitutes a tenderhearted but at the



same time weak soul, which reveals a beautiful side, and which can certainly be called fantastic (*phantastisch*)[.] (CPJ, 5: 273)

The term translated here as ‘oversensitivity’ (*Empfindelei*) is the same as the term we saw translated as ‘sentimentality’ earlier. Since we saw earlier that the kind of sympathy involved in *Empfindelei* is natural sympathy, the connection Kant makes at CPJ, 5: 273, between *Empfindelei*, *Theilnehmung* and *Phantasie* implies that natural sympathy is a species of fantasy, and is thus a species of involuntary productive imagination.

We can maintain the symmetry in the distinction between rational and natural sympathy in the texts considered thus far if we suppose that rational sympathy is a species of the rational counterpart to fantasy, which Kant calls ‘disciplined fantasy <*phantasia subacta*>’ at Met-Mr, 29: 885.<sup>10</sup> This makes rational sympathy a species of voluntary productive imagination. It may give us pause to see that Kant appears to use ‘disciplined fantasy’ as equivalent to terms he uses for the productive imagination of artists—that is, ‘fabrication’ (Anth, 7: 175, *Erfindung*; Met-Mr, 29: 885, *Erdichtung*), and ‘composition (*Composition*)’ (Anth, 7: 175). However, as we will see in more detail later, Kant thinks that art and sympathy involve the imagination in similar ways.

Productive imagination must also draw on the powers of reproductive imagination.

Reproductive imagination is entirely governed by what Kant calls the ‘law’ (or sometimes ‘laws’) of ‘association’, and the productive imagination is not (CPJ, 5: 240, 269, 314; Anth-F, 25: 512; Anth-Mr, 25: 1272). The law of association is that ‘empirical ideas that have frequently followed one another produce a habit in the mind such that when one idea is produced, the other also comes into being’ (Anth, 7: 176). Through this law, ‘ideas that were often connected with present ones ... are produced’ (Anth-Mr, 25: 1273). The point that the productive imagination

can organize itself according to this law is implicitly established by the fact that Kant states the law of association in the *Anthropology* in a section entitled ‘On sensibility’s productive faculty of association’ (7: 176).

Let us approach the question of how the law of association functions in productive imagination by first considering how it functions in the reproductive imagination. This occurs when the current, passively received contents of one’s consciousness involuntarily prompt recapitulations of previous intuition:

For example, if we see smoke, then the representation of fire immediately appears. If the clock strikes at whichever time one is accustomed to eat, and one hears it striking, then the representation of food immediately appears. (Anth-F, 25: 512)

These habitual associations constitute the foundation in empirical psychology of our capacities to inductively generate new beliefs about empirical laws. Kant famously claims Hume goes wrong in thinking that these associations generate our concept of cause as well—he thinks Hume fails to realize that the possibility of temporal order itself depends upon a transcendently prior pure synthesis of imagination (A 766-7/B794-5; P, 4: 257-8). Reproductive imagination and its law of association is not limited to temporal order. Kant says it also associates intuitions based on ‘contiguity’ (‘unity of place’: Anth-F, 25: 513), which creates the subjective unity of space which, along with the subjective unity of time, subjectively unifies the empirical form of intuition. Last but not least it associates intuition based on ‘similarity’ (Anth-F, 25: 513) or ‘affinity’ (A766/B794), and this kind of association underwrites our empirical-psychological

capacity to generate empirical concepts, as well as our ability to call up imagined intuitive content to accompany concepts.

The associations made by the reproductive imagination produce subjective ‘unity of given representations’ which we then incorporate into ‘objective unity’ by testing them with judgements according to the categories of the understanding, to ensure that ‘representations are combined in the object ... regardless of any difference in the condition of the subject’ (B141-2).

The subjective unity produced by the reproductive imagination and the objective unity synthesized according to the categories differ in that the subjective unity is unified from the *first-person standpoint* of the *particular human subject* who does the unifying, while the objective unity is one which would be cognized by *any human subject* who synthesizes experience according to the categories.

As noted above, the productive imagination is not entirely governed by the law of association in the way the reproductive imagination is. The productive imagination’s freedom from the law of association is both hazardous and valuable. It can lead not only to inadequately disciplined fantasy which prompts affect, as it does in natural sympathy, but also to a ‘ruleless fantasy’ which ‘approaches madness, where fantasy plays completely with the human being and the unfortunate victim has no control at all over the course of his representations’—its inventions cannot ‘find their place in a possible world’, ‘because they are self-contradictory’ (Anth, 7: 181).

On the other hand, freedom from the law of association also allows disciplined fantasy, one species of which we have identified as rational sympathy. In disciplined fantasy, the imagination is not inherently governed by the law of association, but it must still regulate itself according to laws for its productions to be possible in imaginary worlds. On this point it is helpful to consider at greater length a passage quoted earlier:

The imagination (as a productive cognitive faculty) is ... very powerful in creating, as it were, another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it. ... we transform the latter, no doubt always in accordance with analogous laws, but also in accordance with principles that lie higher in reason (and which are every bit as natural to us as those in accordance with which the understanding apprehends empirical nature); in this we feel our freedom from the law of association ... in accordance with which material can certainly be lent to us by nature, but the latter can be transformed by us into something entirely different. (CPJ, 5: 314)

When Kant says productive imagination allows us to ‘transform the material which the real’ nature gives us according to ‘analogous laws’, it is not immediately clear whether the analogous laws he has in mind are analogous laws of nature, or of association—he refers to nature (though not natural laws) in the previous sentence, and he refers to ‘the law of association’ later in the same sentence. It is plausible to think that laws analogous to both of these play a role in productive imagination’s transformation of material from real nature into another one. The context for this passage is a discussion of art. It makes sense to think disciplined fantasy would produce fictional worlds of literature with natural laws different from, but analogous to, our own, though presumably not too different: fairy tales are salient examples, and Kant objects to them because they strain children’s imagination, so he seems to regard them as examples of insufficiently disciplined fantasy (Ped, 9: 476; also see OFBS, 2: 214). Fictional worlds of literature typically differ most from the actual world in the invention of fictional initiating events, from which the plot proceeds according to laws not discernibly different from the actual laws. However, when we draw on disciplined fantasy for the purpose of sympathizing with

actual people, we are presumably required to imagine their lives as governed by the laws of the actual world, so the notion of analogous natural laws seems to add no useful detail to our picture.

It is plausible to think that a disciplined fictional world must also provide, through the perspective of characters within it, an imagined subjective unity like that which the reproductive imagination creates when it follows the law of association. Just as we can build a fictional world by creatively imagining fictional events from which the story proceeds according to laws much like those of our own world, we can build a fictional world by imaginatively stepping into the first-person standpoint of a fictional character, and making associations according to principles of association much like those we apply from our own first-person perspectives, as we empirically synthesize our own subjective unities. This activity of productive imagination makes sense to posit not only in relation to fictional characters, but also in relation to actual people with whom we sympathize.

#### **4. Putting Ourselves in Others' Places**

Though Kant never explicitly connects sympathy with the subjective synthesis of the imagination, there is substantial evidence to think it must be his view. He remarks in many places that sympathy is the power to imaginatively put ourselves 'in the other's place' (Anth-F, 25: 575; for similar language referring to sympathy and others' places, see MM, 6: 321n; Eth-H, 27: 58, 65; Anth-F, 25: 607).<sup>11</sup> The reproductive imagination is what provides the subjective unity which puts me in my own place, so it is reasonable to suppose that it is the reproductive imagination's capacities placed in the harness of productive imagination which allow me to put myself in another's place. Kant claims that it is this imaginative projection which allows *Theilnehmung*, the sympathy/participation in others' lives discussed above through which we share their feelings (OFBS, 2: 215; MM, 6: 457, 469; Anth-F, 25: 476, 606; Eth-V, 27: 685-6),

and which finds its most complete form in the ideal of friendship, an ‘ideal of each sympathizing with and communicating about the other's wellbeing’ (*Ideal der Theilnehmung und Mittheilung an dem Wohl eines jeden*)’ (MM, 6: 469; also see Eth-V, 27: 677-8, quoted above) which guides us to strive toward a ‘maximum’ (MM, 6: 469) of sympathy in which ‘each mutually shares in every situation of the other, as if it were encountered by himself’ (Eth-V, 27: 677). Putting ourselves in others’ places is necessary but not sufficient for prompting sympathetic feelings. We can ‘put ourselves in the position of another’ in a merely ‘logical’, ‘heuristic’ way, for example ‘a follower of Crusius’, to ‘get better at certain things’ (Eth-H, 27: 58) such as understanding the structure of another’s philosophical views. We can also put ourselves into a universal position: when following the second ‘maxim of the common human understanding’, one ‘think[s] in the position of everyone else’ in order to reflect on his ‘own judgement from a universal standpoint ... which he can only determine by putting himself into the standpoint of others’ (CPJ, 5: 294-5; also see Anth, 7: 228). Neither of these necessarily prompts sympathy. But when we put ourselves in another's place for the purpose of sympathetic participation, ‘we really feel ourselves to be in his place’ (Eth-H, 27: 58), and ‘[w]e are sensible of this sympathizing feeling in our entire soul’ (Anth-F, 25: 606).

It is also noteworthy that, in what may be Kant’s most detailed remark on the phenomenon, he says that it occurs with reference to both fictional and actual people, just as proposed above:

When we read something, a history or a novel, we always put ourselves in the other’s place and this is participation (*Theilnehmung*). Every human being as person or as intelligence, relates all thoughts to himself by means of the I; there is nothing in the whole world closer to him than himself. Thus in his own regard he is a focal point of the world, but if he relates everything exclusively to himself,

then he makes himself the center. Every human being is a focal point of the world, but not the center. (Anth-F, 25: 476)

The contrast Kant makes here between the world's foci and its centre is inevitably expressed in pre-critical language at this time (1775-6), but it is recognizable as a progenitor of the contrast between subjective and objective unities of experience.

Two passages about sympathy and social subordination in Friedländer's Anthropology notes provide helpful detail about how voluntarily putting ourselves in others' places moulds our sympathetic feelings. One is about expanding the range of our feelings to sympathize more accurately with how the other feels. Kant says that 'a humble person can easily put himself in the position of the higher one and assume greater dispositions. However, the distinguished one cannot assume the state of the humble one, hence he also does not sympathize (*sympathesirt*) with his misfortune' (Anth-F, 25: 607). 'If the ills are natural, for example, famine, then the distinguished person sympathizes with the humble one just as well as the latter with him, but in the case of ... ideal ills, the distinguished one does not sympathize (*sympathesirt*) with the humble one, but the latter does in fact sympathize (*sympathesirt*) with the former' (25: 606-7). The distinguished one 'thinks that the one who is thus not accustomed to the refined life is indeed just a humble man, hence he always gets on [in life], if he can just live', and does 'not become as aware' of the 'distance' of the humble man's 'social standing from the civic one in general' (25: 607). Kant says that while a commoner 'has compassion (*Mitleiden*) for an unfortunate king', the 'unfortunate thing with kings' is that they 'have no inclination' to 'imagine the misfortune of their subjects' (ibid.).

As we saw earlier, when the imagination roves involuntarily, it is guided by inclination, and (ironically, given the passage currently under consideration) we must exercise the power of ‘monarchy’ to voluntarily direct it. Kant’s implicit point in this discussion is that when the ‘distinguished’ sympathize naturally, their inclinations may dispose them to imagine what it is like for the ‘humble’ to be hungry or in pain, but not to imagine their ‘ideal’ misfortunes – in particular, they do not imagine that the ‘humble’ have ideas of happiness which include more than just living, and resent the way their social standing makes it hard to do more than just live – and that the ‘distinguished’ should resist their inclinations, and sympathize rationally, and put themselves in the others’ place more accurately, in a way that brings them a greater range of sympathetic feelings.

A second passage on this theme appears nearby, where Kant argues:

[I]f people ... subordinate to the aristocracy ... are constantly under oppression, then they lose the idea of the right of humanity, for since they have no examples where justice prevails, then they think it must be so. There we must sympathize (*sympathesiren*) with the other’s right, but not with the physical ill[.] (Anth-F, 25: 606)

The frequency with which the oppressed lose the idea of the right of humanity is certainly debatable, and we must be cautious about assuming that social structures which people do not actually resent are really oppressive. But if it is clear that a society is oppressive, then we should sympathize with people who manage to live under that oppression without occurrent resentment by projecting ourselves into a version of their position inflected by the idea of right. So while our primary task in rational sympathy is to be accurate to the other’s actual feelings, we should in



some cases sympathize with their actual feelings as well as the feelings they would have if their social circumstances were adequate to their rational nature, by adjusting our sympathies in light of ideas of reason. In this way we can access feelings on their behalf, which we may be able to help them experience if we can do it without paternalism.

Associating intuitive contents we imagine others to have in terms of their imagined space, time and similarity relations allows us to empirically knit together and occupy an imaginary first-person perspective for the other. But this only gives us a theory of how we produce the imagined form of the other's perspective. It does not give us a theory of how we produce the imagined intuitive content which we are meant to have under voluntary control in rational sympathy, such as the additional imagined content that the kings discussed above ought to have. How would rationally sympathetic versions of Kant's kings perform better? Kant's answer, already indicated above, is to communicate better (Eth-V, 27: 677), and this requires us to draw on our ability to regulate our imagination by controlling our associations, both in communicating about how we feel and understanding others' communications about their feelings.

### **5. Communicating Feeling in the Third *Critique***

We can discern Kant's views on such communication by pursuing the connection we observed between sympathy and art. Both sympathy and art require us to communicate feelings, and both involve imaginatively putting ourselves in another person's place, whether it is a real or fictional person. All Kant's references to sympathy imply that we must put ourselves in others' places. The Friedländer passage cited above states that we must do this 'when we read something' (Anth-F, 25: 476), which suggests that we must do this whenever we read literature. The third *Critique* makes no general claim that all art or all reading involves putting ourselves in characters' places, but it does state that imaginative projection is a way to engage art:

[A] certain poet says in the description of a beautiful morning: ‘The sun streamed forth, as tranquillity streams from virtue.’ The consciousness of virtue, when one puts oneself, even if only in thought, in the place of a virtuous person, spreads in the mind a multitude of sublime and calming feelings[.] (CPJ, 5: 316)

Kant thinks that concepts communicated by the poet to the reader prompt the reader to put herself in the place of a character and imagine that concept applying to her, and that this sparks associations in the reader’s imagination which prompt feelings. If we assume that we can use the same powers of the imagination in sympathy that we use in the kind of case Kant mentions in this passage, then further details about how the imagination works in this kind of case are also applicable to the sympathetic imagination.

This passage is one of two examples Kant offers of ‘aesthetic ideas’. Aesthetic ideas are central in his account of communicating feeling through artistic language. An aesthetic idea is a certain sort of ‘representation of the imagination associated with a given concept’ (CPJ, 5: 316). It is not clear whether aesthetic ideas include feelings, or we respond to aesthetic ideas by having feelings. But it is clear that when one successfully expresses an aesthetic idea by means of expressing the associated concept in language, one is able to prompt another person to have the same feelings one has in connection with the aesthetic idea. The capacity to form aesthetic ideas is ‘genius’, and the capacity to express them is called ‘spirit’ (5: 317), and while the artists that we refer to as geniuses are ‘exemplary’ (5: 318) in their exercise of these capacities, these capacities are ‘really only a talent (of the imagination)’ (5: 314) which we all have in one degree or another. What Kant is describing in the ‘beautiful morning’ passage is the expression of an aesthetic idea by way of concepts, which the recipient receives by imaginatively putting herself

in the place of someone to whom those concepts apply, in a way that allows the recipient to have feelings that she takes to be like the feelings the imaginary person has.

In explaining how this works, Kant contrasts two uses of imagination, one ‘for cognition’ (CPJ, 5: 316), and another ‘through which the subjective disposition of the mind ... can be communicated to others’ (5: 317), including ‘inner feeling’ (5: 296), which Kant regards as the only purely subjective aspect of sensible content. This latter use is the one at issue in aesthetic ideas. When we use the imagination for cognition, ‘the imagination is under the constraint of the understanding and is subject to the limitation of being adequate to its concept’ (5: 316-7); concepts and the intuitions provided by imagination ‘flow together into a cognition’ (5: 296) as we attend to the aspects of our subjective unity that can be synthesized into the objective unity, which Kant thinks does not include how we feel about things.<sup>12</sup> The aspect of the imagination which assembles intuitions for synthesis into objectivity is reproductive imagination, as discussed above.

When we use the imagination for communication of aesthetic ideas, on the other hand, the imagination and understanding are related differently: ‘the imagination is free to provide, beyond ... concord with the concept’, a ‘manifold of ... representations in the free use of the imagination’ which the ‘imagination ... associates with’ that concept. These voluntarily associated representations ‘belong to the concept’ but ‘aesthetically enlarge ... the concept itself in an unbounded way’, and this ‘arouses a multitude of sensations and supplementary representations’ (CPJ, 5: 316-7) which prompt feelings. In the ‘beautiful morning’ example, the poet’s goal is to convey the ‘multitude of sublime and calming feelings’ she has when she thinks about virtue, and she does this by carefully making voluntary associations to select concepts she thinks will prompt the reader to imagine things that will cause her to have those same sublime

and calming feelings. The reader understands the concepts and imagines sensory content on the basis of them, and has feelings in response to them which she represents as conveyances of someone else's feelings by imaginatively putting herself in that person's place.

Given Kant's focus on art here, he is especially interested in simile. He appears to think that it is straightforwardly true of virtue that tranquillity streams from it in a way that is like the way sunlight streams forth—this is what he means in saying that this representation 'belongs' to the concept. But it is not part of the meaning of the concept—it is not something that we must have in mind to correctly use the concept, or that another person must have in mind to understand what we mean in saying 'virtue'. It is merely something that the poet associates with the concept in her own imagination, choosing it with the goal of helping the reader imagine sensory content which prompts the multitude of sublime and calming feelings.

Something very similar can happen in conversations that aim at sympathy. There are important differences, but they make our picture of sympathy simpler than the picture Kant gives us of aesthetic ideas. Kant appears to think of poems on the same model we saw him use above for novels, that is, as fictions with which we engage by identifying with fictional characters, so he says readers acquire feelings like those of the poet by imaginatively putting themselves in the place of a fictional person. In communications aimed at creating or refining sympathy, the only perspectives we need to include in our model are the perspective of the person communicating about her feelings, and the perspective of the person seeking to sympathize. We do sometimes use similes in such conversations – the 'humble' person may say to the 'distinguished' person that anxiety over his children's next meal is like being in a fog, or having a weight pressing upon him – but much of the basic structure Kant describes in his remarks about aesthetic ideas applies in just the same way to conversations meant to convey feelings which use language that does not

include literary devices. Because a concept is necessarily general and abstract, there are infinite specific, concrete intuitions which ‘belong’ to that concept in the sense of being appropriately subsumable under it, any of which can be coherently associated with it by the imagination, but none of which belong to the meaning of the concept, in the sense that none of these particular intuitions are such that the imagination must associate them with the concept for the concept to be understood. Concepts are all that we immediately convey when we communicate in language, and so we have the freedom to associate an infinite variety of intuitions with what language conveys to us (this is part of the ‘free play’ of the imagination). Given the finitude of experienced time and of the number of associations we can actually make, however, the variety of intuitions we associate with the concepts conveyed to us in language is also finite, and since different associated intuitions prompt different feelings, it makes a difference to our feelings that we associate some intuitions rather than others.

The passages we saw earlier about the continuous functioning of imagination imply that our imaginations always follow along in any conversation, in at least an involuntary way, and associate imagined intuitive content with concepts. If natural sympathy is part and parcel of that constant involuntary work, then natural sympathy can arise at any time as a by-product of those conversations. This can be valuable if it means that we happen upon morally useful insights, and it can be problematic if it surprises us with affect.

But we can also use our capacity to associate intuitive content with concepts voluntarily. The ability to do this is really just the productive correlate of reproductive imagination’s capacity (discussed above) to associate intuitions according to ‘similarity’ in the use or generation of empirical concepts—in this case, it is the ability to (as it were) inventively ‘backtrack’ from a concept to intuitive content that embodies that concept in a way that is effective for the

conversation at hand. We can converse for the purpose of sympathizing, and in such conversations, responding with feeling to the imagined intuitive content associated with the concepts is the point of the conversation. The communicator can voluntarily select the concepts she thinks are most likely to prompt imagined intuitive content in the sympathizer which will prompt feelings like hers, and on the other end of the conversation, the sympathizer must exercise discipline to associate imagined intuitive content she thinks likely to facilitate accurate and careful development in her of feelings like those the communicator seeks to convey. (This makes a 'lawful business' of the imagination's 'free play', to borrow an idea from Kant's discussion of the sublime (CPJ, 5: 269)). If the 'humble' person says to the 'distinguished' one, 'I would like just one day when people like you spoke with me as if my opinions mattered', the 'distinguished' person can discipline her imagination to make associations with remembered sensible content from experiences in her own life when her views were not respected, and transform them in imagination into an imagined life story in which few people ever respect her views, and thereby prompt relevant sympathetic feelings.

An important disanalogy between literature and sympathy is that Kant thinks we can know *a priori* that the feelings of a poet who writes beautiful poems are universally communicable, but we have no such knowledge regarding many of the feelings we seek to communicate through sympathy.<sup>13</sup> Kant thinks that the transcendental analysis of judgements of beauty shows that the pleasure we take in beauty is the result of judging that the contents of the imagination, even in its free play, are nonetheless harmonious with the understanding, in a way that makes this 'relation suited to cognition in general' (CPJ, 5: 217-8). It is a pleasure that results from judging that it is possible to bring aspects of our subjective unity to objectivity. Kant thinks that because cognition is universally communicable, pleasure in the possibility of cognition must be universally

communicable too. But as mentioned earlier, Kant thinks of feeling in general as the most subjective aspect of experience, and he holds that it cannot be universally communicated (5: 213, 224). This is of a piece with his view that happiness is an entirely empirically-based idea of the imagination, and there is no way to reason *a priori* about what will make anybody happy (G, 4: 418; CPrR, 5: 25). This does not imply that feelings are not communicable between particular individuals. But it does imply that our knowledge that our sympathetic feelings correspond accurately must be *a posteriori*—the only route to such knowledge would appear to be ongoing communication or other kinds of informative interaction.

A noteworthy exception to this disanalogy is the adjustment of our sympathies in light of ideas of reason, as we saw Kant thinks we must do in cases of people oppressed for so long that they no longer actively resent the injuries to their dignity. It is reasonable to assume that there are universally communicable feelings about dignity in the same way that Kant implies there are about virtue, as he indicates in the ‘beautiful morning’ passage. But we only have reason to make such adjustments in cases where the other lacks the feelings at issue, and it is acquiring feelings like other’s actual feelings which I take to be the vital moral core of sympathy. Our epistemic access to these is *a posteriori* as just noted, and very likely falls short of perfect certainty as a result. However, as mentioned earlier, the duty of sympathy subserves the duty of beneficence according to the present interpretation, and the duty of beneficence is imperfect, so the lack of perfect knowledge here is not an obstacle to my claim that morality requires sympathy for the fulfilment of the duty of beneficence.

## **6. Conclusion**

To conclude, let me say a few more words about the role of sympathy in fulfilling the duty of beneficence. As mentioned earlier, I think that a central problem in the adoption of others’

permissible ends is that others' permissible ends are individuated in terms of concepts that move others only because of the special constitution of their individual contingent feelings. I think we can only adopt their ends *as ends*, rather than as *means* to ends individuated in terms of *different* concepts, if we can voluntarily shape our own contingent feelings so that we are moved by those concepts too. In the discussion of the third *Critique* ideas above, I have provided an account of how others can share concepts with us which prompt a sharing of contingent feelings generated voluntarily in imagination under the discipline of practical reason. In this way, others' concepts come to engage with our feelings in ways like the ways they engage with others' feelings. Some of the concepts others communicate are concepts of permissible ends, like the end (mentioned above) of a day of conversation in which one's opinions are respected. Our shared feelings can ground shared desires for the ends those concepts individuate, thereby allowing us to adopt others' permissible ends *as ends*. The fact that these feelings are generated under the discipline of practical reason arguably means that we can incorporate them into the rational will as incentives of pure practical reason, and this would place rational sympathy on a footing in Kant's ethics much like that of respect. But the details of this argument must be deferred for another occasion.<sup>14</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In translating *Theilnehmung* as 'sympathetic participation' I borrow from Melissa Seymour Fahmy (Fahmy 2009: 43). I return to the question of translating this term in section 2.

Elsewhere, abbreviations and translations for Kant's texts are as follows, unless otherwise noted ("'" within quoted passages indicates my own translation). Except for A/B, pagination is by *Akademie* edition. **A/B**: *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1998). **Anth**: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert B. Louden in Kant 2007: 231-429. **Anth-F**: Friedländer



notes from Kant's Anthropology lectures, trans. G. Felicitas Munzel in Kant 2012: 37-255.

**Anth-Mr:** Mrongovius notes from Kant's Anthropology lectures, trans. Robert R. Clewis in Kant 2012: 335-509. **CPrR:** *Critique of Practical Reason*, in Kant 1996: 137-271. **CPJ:** *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Kant 2000). **Eth-C, Eth-H, Eth-V:** Collins, Herder and Vigilantius notes from Kant's Ethics lectures, in Kant 1997a: 37-222, 1-36, 249-452. **G:** *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in Kant 1996: 41-108. **Met-Mr:** Mrongovius notes from Kant's Metaphysics lectures, in Kant 1997b: 107-286. **MM:** *The Metaphysics of Morals*, in Kant 1996: 363-602. **OFBS:** *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. Paul Guyer in Kant 2007: 23-62. **P:** *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as a Science*, trans. Gary Hatfield in Kant 2002: 49-169. **Ped:** *Lectures on Pedagogy* (Kant's own lecture notes), trans. Robert B. Loudon in Kant 2007: 437-85. **TP:** *On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, But It Is of No Use in Practice*, in Kant 1996: 273-309.

<sup>2</sup> For previous discussions of these passages, see e.g. Baron (1995), Baxley (2010), Denis (2000), Fahmy (2009), Guyer (2010), Paytas (2015), Sherman (1997), Timmermann (2016) and Wood (1999, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> To read passages containing a variety of terms as reflecting a single underlying distinction is to make an interpretative decision to posit that Kant's diverse terms do not always reflect diverse concepts. Not all commentators make this decision, and it is not an unreasonable interpretative approach to think that we ought initially to assume that differing terms reflect differing concepts which should be preserved as different in one's interpretation. On the other hand, an interpretation is a kind of theory, and parsimony in theory-building can yield explanatory power, so the attempt to find a simpler set of concepts beneath a variety of terms can be valuable. I think

that this is the case in interpreting Kant's account of sympathy, and I hope to demonstrate that here. (Thanks to a reviewer for *Kantian Review* for encouraging me to address this point.)

<sup>4</sup> Interpretative reconstruction of the last sentence in the passage above is required to extract the distinction between moral and instinctive *Sympathie*. The key clause in that sentence is: *wir würden daher ohne Gedanken keine ... moralischen Gefühle haben; der Andere würde kein moralisches, sondern nur instinctmäßiges Mitgefühl (Sympathie) äußern können. Mitgefühl* is literally 'with-feeling' and the Cambridge edition translates it as 'fellow feeling' in this passage, though in other passages as 'shared feeling' (MM, 6: 443) and 'sympathy' (6: 320n). The adjacency of *instinctmäßiges Mitgefühl* and *Sympathie* makes it clear that Kant is saying that *instinctmäßiges Mitgefühl* is a kind of *Sympathie*. But the hanging '*moralisches*' has to be connected to something later in the sentence, either just *Mitgefühl*, or just *Sympathie*, or both *Mitgefühl* and *Sympathie*. I find the most natural way to read '*Mitgefühl (Sympathie)*' to be that Kant is offering *Sympathie* as a paraphrase of *Mitgefühl* here, and so I think it is most natural to suppose that '*moralisches*' connects to both. Kant uses the term '*sympathia moralis*' in the *Metaphysics of Morals* discussion at 6: 456, which he publishes just a few years later, so at the time of these lectures he will soon use an expression akin to 'moral sympathy', and this provides further support for the view that this is what he is talking about here. (Thanks to a reviewer for *Kantian Review* for encouraging a discussion of this issue.)

<sup>5</sup> The power of monarchy appears to be closely related to what Kant calls 'autocracy' in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (6: 383). See Baxley (2010) for a helpful discussion.

<sup>6</sup> See Timmermann (2016) for a helpful discussion of this aspect of natural sympathy.

<sup>7</sup> Examples of how sympathy disposes us to act wrongly include Kant's example of a judge whose 'sympathy becomes an affect' and fails to hand down a just sentence (Anth-F, 25: 611),

and Barbara Herman's example of an onlooker moved by sympathy to help a thief having difficulty moving a heavy package (Herman 1993: 4-5).

<sup>8</sup> See Makkreel (1990: 118-22) for a helpful discussion of *a posteriori* productive imagination, though not in connection with sympathy.

<sup>9</sup> There is controversy about how to distinguish the spontaneity involved in determination of the manifold of sensibility from the spontaneity involved in transcendental freedom. Robert Pippin appears to hold that they are the same (1997: 301-48). Dennis Schulting argues that they are not (2017: 124-31). I think my specification of the kind of spontaneity which is transcendently free *moral* action avoids this controversy, since whatever kind of imaginative action is involved in the transcendental synthesis, it is not moral action.

<sup>10</sup> The translators note that '[i]n his *Metaphysica*, §571, Baumgarten translates *phantasia subacta* as *wohlgeordnete Einbildungskraft* (well-ordered power of imagination)'.

<sup>11</sup> Makkreel (2012: 109) and Timmermann (unpublished book manuscript) discuss transposition and sympathy, but do not connect this to the subjective synthesis or the ideas in the third *Critique* discussed below.

<sup>12</sup> While psychological events involving contingent feelings are bound together with the rest of the empirical world in the objective order of time, contingent feelings are not objective in the sense that there is no reason for me to feel the way I do about the world apart from features of my sensible nature that I cannot know *a priori* to be shared by anyone else, and this notion of objectivity is the crucial one for understanding sympathy.

<sup>13</sup> Wood (2008: 176) and Fahmy (2009: 45) note the relationship between sympathy and Kant's discussion of shared feeling in the third *Critique*, but do not note this disanalogy.

<sup>14</sup> Acknowledgements: thanks to Matthew Altman, Jeffrey Blustein, Lara Denis, Corey Dyck, Melissa Seymour Fahmy, Jonathan Gilmore, Thomas Teufel, Jens Timmermann, Allen Wood and Rachel Zuckert for helpful communications at various points in the history of this project.

## References

- Baron, Marcia (1995) *Kantian Ethics Almost Without Apology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Baxley, Anne Margaret (2010) *Kant's Theory of Virtue: The Value of Autocracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Denis, Lara (2000) 'Kant's Cold Sage and the Sublimity of Apathy'. *Kantian Review*, 4 (1), 48-73.
- Fahmy, Melissa Seymour (2009) 'Active Sympathetic Participation: Reconsidering Kant's Duty of Sympathy'. *Kantian Review*, 14 (1), 31-52.
- (2010) 'Kantian Practical Love'. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 91 (3), 313-31.
- (2019) 'On Virtues of Love and Wide Ethical Duties'. *Kantian Review*, 24 (3), 415-37.
- Guyer, Paul (2010) 'Moral Feelings in the *Metaphysics of Morals*'. In Lara Denis (ed.), *Kant's Metaphysics of Morals: A Critical Guide* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 130-51.
- Herman, Barbara (1993) *The Practice of Moral Judgment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel (1996) *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1997a) *Lectures on Ethics*. Trans. Peter Heath, ed. Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- (1997b) *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Trans. and ed. Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1998) *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2000) *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, ed. Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2002) *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*. Ed. Henry Allison and Peter Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- (2007) *Anthropology, History and Education*. Ed. Günther Zöllner and Robert B. Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2012) *Lectures on Anthropology*. Ed. Allen W. Wood and Robert B. Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Makkreel, Rudolf A. (1990) *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (2012) ‘Relating Aesthetic and Sociable Feelings to Moral and Participatory Feelings: Reassessing Kant on Sympathy and honor’. In Susan Meld Shell and Richard Velkley (eds), *Kant's Observations and Remarks: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 101-115.
- Paytas, Tyler (2015) ‘Rational Beings with Emotional Needs: The Patient-Centered Grounds of Kant's Duty of Humanity’. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 32 (4), 353-76.
- Pippin, Robert (1997) ‘Kant on the Spontaneity of Mind’. In *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 29–55.

Schulking, Dennis (2017) *Kant's Radical Subjectivism. Perspectives on the Transcendental Deduction*. London: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Sherman, Nancy (1997) *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Timmermann, Jens (2016) 'Kant über Mitleidenschaft'. *Kant-Studien*, 107(4), 729-32.

— Unpublished book manuscript.

Wood, Allen W. (1999) *Kant's Ethical Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

— (2008) *Kantian Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.