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AN INTEGRATED KANTIAN MODEL OF MORAL COGNITION

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DECLARATION

This thesis

- has been composed by myself and has not been used in any previous application for a degree.
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Abstract

In this thesis, I intend to examine the relationship between reason and emotions in Immanuel Kant's theory, beginning with the challenges raised by the contemporary empirically informed debate on moral cognition. I argue that Kant can show the ineliminable presence of emotions in the moral experience and the necessary interaction between the emotional and rational components of the agent. In particular, I argue for the presence of an integrated model of moral cognition in Kant's ethics. In the last part of the thesis, I depart from a faithful reading of Kant to propose a development of this model that is enriched by interacting with Adam Smith's theory.

In Chapter 1, I present Kant's moral theory, stressing its rationalist foundations and, consequently, the crucial role of practical reason in discerning between moral good and evil.

In Chapter 2, I summarize the contemporary debate on moral cognition by beginning with the influence that Kant's ethics has had on the debate. I then focus on criticisms of Kantian-inspired rationalist models; these criticisms overturn the hierarchy between reason and emotions in favor of the latter. Finally, I show how, in recent years, the debate has turned toward an integrated view of moral cognition that rejects any kind of hierarchy, and insists instead on the ways in which reason and emotions interact and are integrated.

This debate compels a rationalist theory, such as Kant's, to address the role of emotions and their interaction with reason. Chapters 3 and 4 analyze Kant's conception of emotional life. In Chapter 3, I examine the nature of the feeling and the desire, their interaction, and their relation to reason and in Chapter 4, I focus on those affective phenomena that directly influence the agent's relationship with the moral principle such that one can fully understand its value and authority.

With Chapter 5, I conclude this reconstruction of Kant's conception of emotional life by proposing an integrated model grounded in his texts. Such a model shows the relevance

that Kant's ethics can still claim in contemporary debates about the relationship between reason and emotions.

In the sixth and final chapter, I work on a possible development of Kant's integrated model of moral cognition by drawing on a possible contradiction found in his texts and, especially, comparing the model with Adam Smith's sentimentalist moral theory. The result is a hybrid model, still Kantian, that departs from a faithful reading of the text and shows some Smithian contaminations.

Abstract (Italiano)

In questo lavoro di tesi, intendo approfondire il rapporto tra ragione ed emozioni nella teoria di Immanuel Kant a partire dalle sfide poste dal dibattito contemporaneo empiricamente informato sulla cognizione morale. Ritengo che Kant sia in grado di mostrare la presenza ineliminabile delle emozioni nell'esperienza morale e la necessaria interazione tra la componente emotiva e quella razionale dell'agente. In particolare, sostengo la presenza nell'etica di Kant di un modello integrato della cognizione morale. Nell'ultima parte della tesi, mi discosto da una lettura strettamente fedele del testo kantiano per proporre uno sviluppo di tale modello che si arricchisca anche dal confronto con la teoria di Adam Smith.

Nel capitolo 1, presento la teoria morale di Kant, evidenziando le sue fondamenta razionaliste e, di conseguenza, il ruolo cruciale della ragion pratica nel discernere tra bene e male morale.

Nel capitolo 2, riassumo il dibattito contemporaneo sulla cognizione morale proprio a partire dall'influenza esercitata dall'etica di Kant. Mi concentro successivamente sulle critiche rivolte a tali modelli razionalisti di ispirazione kantiana che portano al ribaltamento della gerarchia tra ragione ed emozioni a favore di queste ultime. Infine, mostro come negli anni recenti, il dibattito si sia indirizzato verso una visione integrata della cognizione morale, rifiutando qualsiasi tipo di gerarchia e insistendo invece sulle modalità di interazione e integrazione tra ragione ed emozioni.

Tale dibattito impone a una teoria razionalista, come quella di Kant, di confrontarsi con il ruolo delle emozioni e la loro interazione con la ragione. I capitoli 3 e 4 analizzano in profondità la concezione della vita emotiva offerta da Kant nei suoi testi. Nel capitolo 3, esamino la natura del sentimento e del desiderio, la loro interazione e il loro rapporto con la ragione. Il capitolo 4 si concentra su quei fenomeni affettivi che influenzano direttamente il rapporto dell'agente con il principio morale, consentendogli di acquisire una piena consapevolezza del suo valore e della sua autorità.

Con il capitolo 5, concludo tale ricostruzione della concezione della vita emotiva in Kant con la proposta di un modello integrato rintracciabile nei suoi testi. La presenza di questo modello mostra la rilevanza che l'etica di Kant può vantare ancora oggi nel dibattito sulla relazione tra ragione ed emozioni.

Nel sesto e ultimo capitolo, lavoro su un possibile sviluppo del modello integrato della cognizione morale di Kant, a partire da una tensione rintracciabile nei suoi testi e, soprattutto, da un confronto con la teoria morale sentimentalista di Adam Smith. Il risultato è un modello ibrido, ancora kantiano, ma che si discosta da una lettura fedele al testo mostrando, invece, alcune contaminazioni smithiane

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Introduction

In this thesis, I investigate the relationship between reason and emotions in Immanuel Kant's ethics. The goal is to show that his moral theory can contribute to the contemporary debate on moral cognition and, in particular, the debate on the relationship between reason and emotions.

I begin by introducing the fundamental theoretical kernels of Kant's ethics, which make it a rationalist theory, according to which the principle for distinguishing moral good and evil is to be found within reason (§1).

Next, I introduce the contemporary debate on moral cognition (§2) to show how Kant's moral theory influenced the debate until the 1990s, dwelling especially on Lawrence Kohlberg's account of the development of moral capacities. Several authors have criticized Kohlberg's rationalist conception of moral experience, and their criticisms initiated an affective turn in the debate that has led to a reversal of the hierarchy between reason and emotions: in the formulation of moral choices, the latter has become the main player and the former has been relegated to an inessential role. However, at the end of the chapter, I argue that the debate has shifted in recent years toward developing integrated models of moral cognition in which both emotion and reason participate and their integration is especially emphasized. If we want to use Kant's theory within the contemporary debate, it is necessary to show how he can meet two fundamental aspects of that debate: the ineradicable presence of emotions in the moral experience and the interaction between emotional and rational components.

The third and fourth chapters analyze the emotional life of the Kantian agent. First, I show that, for Kant, emotions are not inherently evil but that the moral value of action depends on the relationship the agent develops with them. That said, I get into Kant's view of emotional life (§3). Specifically, I analyze the nature of two affective phenomena that comprehensively summarize the Kantian agent's emotional life: the feeling and the desire. I intend to argue that they form an ineradicable part of the agent's moral experience. Without feelings and desires, the process of the determination of the will would lack a fundamental moment, the one concerning the agent's relationship with the reality external to them. The analysis of what Kant calls illnesses of the mind, that is,

affects and passions, will further reveal how fundamental the development of a determined relationship with one's emotions is. In §4 I focus on the affective phenomena that Kant considers fundamental to the full awareness of the authority of morality. The feeling of respect, the other natural predispositions for the mind's receptivity to the concepts of duty, and the aesthetic feelings of the beautiful and sublime are indeed central to becoming aware of the absolute value and authority of the moral law and, consequently, of practical reason.

At the end of this overview of Kant's theory of emotional life, I intend to show how from it and from the relationship that must be established between emotions and reason, it is possible to find an integrated model of moral cognition in Kant (§5). In this model, feelings and desires have a major role, and the interaction between them and reason takes place in a twofold way: through reason's critical examination of emotionally processed material and in reason's cultivation and education of specific feelings. By delving into the topic of cultivation and, more importantly, its moral requirement, I argue that cultivated feelings are not only a constitutive part of the agent's moral experience but also a morally necessary element in the development of moral character and the realization of specific duties. In general, that such an integrated model can be found in Kant shows that his theory is still relevant and can consequently contribute to the contemporary debate. In §5.3, I offer an example of such a contribution.

In the last chapter (§6), my goal is instead to introduce a new development to Kant's integrated model to relieve a tension, which I identify in Kant's texts, between the potential of the feeling cultivated by practical reason and the necessity of the constant recourse to practical reason in moral choices. For resources useful for overcoming this impasse, I consider Adam Smith's theory (§6.2). I do so by first pointing out why I choose Smith, insisting on the theoretical similarities between him and Kant. Next, I focus on what I think would benefit Kant's model and what, on the other hand, prompts me to retain Kant's model as the basis of the hybrid model I propose. Finally, I present this elaboration of Kant's model that results from a constructive dialogue with Smith's theory but preserves the basic features such that it remains Kantian.

1. Kant's Rationalistic Ethics

This chapter explores the rationalist foundation of Kant's ethics, starting from his critique of the moral sense theories (§1.1), theories that trace the ultimate justification of the distinction between good and bad to emotions. According to Kant, the fundamental principle of morality must be grounded in human beings' rational nature (§1.1). Because of the sensible and desiring nature of human beings, this principle presents itself as a duty, in the form of an imperative. I then analyze the role that the different formulas of the categorical imperative play in moral justification (§1.2).

1.1. Toward a Rationalistic Foundation of Ethics: A Critique of Moral Sense Theories

In investigating the role of emotions within the moral experience of the Kantian agent, one should remember that Kant's ethics is first and foremost a rationalistic theory. The principle by which good and bad are distinguished and obligation grounded is a principle of reason, the moral law, which Kant in the second *Critique* calls the *fundamental law of pure practical reason*.

In the preface of the *Groundwork*, Kant makes explicit the need for a pure moral philosophy, one independent of empirical considerations about the nature of human beings, to identify the founding principle of obligation:

> The ground of the obligation here must not be sought in the nature of the human being, or in the circumstances of the world in which he is placed, but *a priori* solely in concepts of pure reason, and that any other prescription that is founded on principles of mere experience […] can indeed be called practical rule, but never a moral law. (G, 4:390)

However, Kant comes to consider a rational foundation of ethics only at the end of a period that begins in the early 1760s and ends precisely with *Groundwork*. During this time, he devotes himself to analyzing both rationalist theories proposed by German-speaking philosophers and the moral sense theories of the Scottish and English philosophers, particularly Lord Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson, and David Hume (Kant will read Adam Smith from 1770 onward once the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* has a

German translation). As Stefano Bacin points out, Kant is eclectic in this period and does not favor either theory: "Kant did not take sides for one or another moral doctrine but tried to focus on the main tenets of the debate and bring them to bear on the demands of moral philosophy" (Bacin 2006, p. 2).

Nevertheless, Kant seems to lean toward seeking the source of moral knowledge and moral motivation in human nature, particularly in the moral sense or feeling.[1] Thus, and to keep to the task of developing an ethic for human beings,[2] he judges the notion of the moral sense of English and Scottish theorists as particularly productive.

Shaftesbury defines the moral sense as "a real Antipathy or Aversion to Injustice or Wrong, and […] a Real Affection or Love towards Equity and Right" (2001, p. 41). Kant seems to interpret moral sense precisely in this way when he argues for the existence of a "moral feeling, which is (1) universal (2) unequivocal" and that is "the ground of conscience" (LE, 27:4-5); his doing so echoes Hutcheson's characterization of the moral sense as universal and infallible. Kant goes even further and argues that "the sole moral rule, therefore, is this: Act according to *your moral feeling*!" (LE, 27:16). In this way, Kant believes he could overcome the theoretical shortcomings of the German school, whose fundamental concepts lack "any relation to how these concepts are brought into the moral life of acting beings, subjected to obligation, recognizing and perceiving it as a reason to choose their conduct" (Bacin 2006, p. 22). Kant believes that we can achieve a direct connection with the agent's actual moral life through moral sense or feeling and that we can, thereby, avoid making the fundamental concepts of ethics too abstract. Consequently, in his earlier work, both moral knowledge and moral motivation were about moral sense and not reason.

However, beginning in 1766, partly because of the growing interest in anthropology and while holding firm the motivational role of moral feeling, Kant challenges his idea of feeling as a source of moral knowledge. Because of its variability from person to person and its susceptibility to context, the feeling itself does not seem to guarantee the universality and necessity of judgment that Kant seeks: "Feelings, which by nature differ

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[1] Kant uses both the Latin term *sensus moralis* and German terms, such as *moralisches Gefühl*, *moralische Sentiment* or *moralische Empfindung*.

[2] "I do not at all have the ambition of wanting to be a seraph; my pride is only this, that I am a human being" (RO, 20:48).

infinitely in degree from one another, can do little to yield a uniform measure of good and evil, and one by his feeling cannot validly judge for others at all" (G, 4:442). Kant is indeed looking for "a principle of moral judgment, whereby we can unanimously decide about what is good or bad" (LE, 27:252). This principle must make good action necessary, that is, to ground the action's bindingness for all moral agents. Feelings cannot guarantee the universal validity of the notions of good and evil, which only a rational principle, clarified through pure philosophy and independent of what is empirical and belongs to anthropology, can show. In his lectures on logic in the 1770s, Kant had already developed this distrust for the potential of feelings and stresses the need to refer to firm principles: "Everything one does must occur from principles. Otherwise it is ambiguous, so that the same excitement leads me to good actions today, to bad ones tomorrow. Feeling excites tears, but nothing in the world dries more quickly than tears" (VL, 843). Feelings are about the subject and, consequently, are always influenced by personal preferences and contingent circumstances. Therefore, the origin of moral judgment must be sought in reason. The moral feeling "is not an original feeling" anymore but it "rests on a necessary inner law to consider" (Refl, 19:103). It becomes the moral *incentive* [*Triebfeder*] and loses its ability to judge morally and thus discern between what is morally good or bad; it becomes the way agents emotionally relate to the moral principle: they acquire an awareness of it and are motivated by it.[3] The moral principle is therefore a principle of reason.

1.2. The Role of Pure Practical Reason

The *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* stems precisely from the need for a rational, *a priori* "identification and corroboration *of the supreme principle of morality*" (G, 4:392). According to Kant, this principle is given by pure reason itself. Therefore, pure reason can be practical; it can by itself "influence the *will*" (G, 4:396)—the faculty that drives the agent to action—and constitutes the will's determining *motive*. The motive has an explanatory and justificatory role according to Kant (Cf. Herman 2022, p. 27). The determining motive [*Bestimmungsgrund*] of the will is the motive that ultimately justifies

[3] Regarding Kant's relationship with moral sense theories, see Bacin 2006 (ch. 2); Zhouhuang 2017; Mohr 2019.

the intended action and thus moves the agent. When pure practical reason and its law, "the objective law of reason" (G, 4:413), are the determining motive of the will, then the will can be considered good and its determinations universally valid.

In particular, Kant defines a practical principle as a proposition that contains "a general determination of the will" (KpV, 5:19). When the agent formulates this principle, from their specific relation to the objects around them and their situation, it applies only to them and is called a *maxim*, "the subjective principle of willing" (G, 4:401). However, for Kant, the maxim is not yet the end point of the moral deliberation process. Kant indeed seeks universally valid determinations of the will, namely, *practical laws* whose "condition is cognized as objective, that is, as holding for the will of every rational being" (KpV, 5:19). A maxim is a practical law when pure practical reason scrutinizes it and it is "*fit for a giving of universal law*" (KpV, 5:27).

However, the maxims of human beings do not directly constitute practical laws—and thus human beings' wills are not automatically determined according to the moral law—because, as Kant explains, "reason, in the practical, has to do with the subject, namely with his faculty of desire, to whose special constitution the rule can variously conform" (KpV, 5:20). In the following chapters, I will deal with the analysis of emotional life in Kant and the specific role of each affective state in the determination of the will. Right now, I note that, according to Kant, the human being is a being who by nature seeks *happiness*, which is defined as the "satisfaction with one's whole existence" (KpV, 5:25) or "the entire well-being and contentment with one's condition" (G, 4:393). Consequently, happiness will always be among the motives that determine the will. Kant calls the tendency of human beings to place their happiness as the determining motive of the will *self-love*. The problem is that happiness is strictly related to the agent, the satisfaction of one's particular desires, feelings, and inclinations—in general, one's subjective dimension; therefore, when the pursuit of this happiness becomes the determining motive of the will, rather than reason and moral law, then the agent obtains a merely empirical principle and not a morally valid determination. On the one hand, the human being is not an infinite rational being whose will is automatically determined according to a law of reason; on the other hand, the human being is also not an animal for whom sensible experience makes it necessary to act in a certain way: "The human power of choice is indeed an *arbitrium sensitivum*, yet not *brutum*, but *liberum*, because

sensibility does not render its action necessary, but in the human being there is a faculty of determining oneself from oneself, independently of necessitation by sensible impulses" (KrV, A534/B562). The human being is thus *free* in the determination of their will and capable of choosing how to relate to their sensibility. That said, a precise relationship must be developed, one that is universally valid.

Hence Kant introduces the distinction between the concepts of *autonomy* and *heteronomy*. The former indicates the ability of the will to be self-legislating, that is, to determine itself ultimately through reason and moral law "independently of any characteristic of the objects of willing" (G, 4:440). By contrast, when the determining motive of the will is sought outside of itself, "the will does not give itself the law, but the object by its relation to the will gives the law to it" (G, 4:441); that is, the will is heteronomous. Kant argues that every volition must have a desired object. He indeed says that one's own or other's happiness "can be the object of the will of a rational being" (KpV, 5:34). Still, if one's happiness becomes the determining motive of the will, that agent would obtain "the direct opposite of the principle of morality" (KpV, 5:35) and a heteronomous will. Indeed, Luca Fonnesu explains that the Kantian agent is faced with multiple possible legislations to adhere to: "on one hand that of pure practical reason, and on the other that which is ultimately rooted in sensible inclination. Only in the case that one chooses to adhere to the legislation of reason can the result of *autonomy* be achieved" (Fonnesu 2014, p. 43).

That the principle of self-love may lead the agent to not determine oneself according to reason and its law makes it necessary, according to Kant, to resort to the idea that reason must impose itself, through the form of the command, on the agent and the empirical motives of their will. The good will is the one that acts *from duty*, that is, by determining according to the moral law, which imposes itself as a command of reason and in the formula of the *categorical imperative*.

Kant enunciates the categorical imperative formula, expressed through an *ought* to stress its necessitating value for the will: "*act only according to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law*" (G, 4:421). The same formula is presented as the formula of the fundamental law of pure practical reason (Cf. KpV, 5:30). Kant defines this formula as "the canon of judging" (G, 4:424) a maxim morally, a moral "compass […] to distinguish what is good, what is evil, what conforms

with duty or is contrary to it" (G, 4:404). In critically sifting through the maxim, practical reason uses the categorical imperative as a *standard of rationality*, a "standard of its [reason's] judging" (G, 4:404), which avoids the contradiction of the will. Therefore, in practical deliberation, the moral agent can orient oneself thanks to the categorical imperative that provides, as Carla Bagnoli argues, "a scheme for rational self-governance" (2021, p. 187).

Kant provides more than one formula of the categorical imperative and argues that they are equivalent. Nevertheless, Bagnoli observes that "they are not equivalent in the sense that they can be substituted for one another without loss of meaning; rather, they capture different but complementary determinations of the moral law" (2021, p. 180). In the first formula of the categorical imperative, a constraint is imposed on the form of the maxim so that it must be conceivable as a universal law without contradiction in order to stand as a practical law; with the second, namely, the formula of humanity, there is the recognition of the absolute value present in oneself and all other persons, which is based on rational nature and the ability to determine oneself from it: "*So act that you use humanity, in your person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means*" (G, 4:429). The absolute value of the person as an end in itself requires not making use of a human being as a mere means that "does not at the same time contain in itself the end" (G, 4:429). In this way, Kant allows for the possibility that someone can be treated as a means. For example, one can use a doctor as a means without thereby disrespecting their humanity because the doctor is actively involved in my deliberative process and, therefore, agrees "to my way of proceeding with him and thus himself contain the end of this action" (G, 4:430).

The value of the person and one's ability to be autonomous is tied to the third formula, which focuses on the "idea of the will of every rational being, as a *universally legislating will*" (G, 4:432). Here it is emphasized once again that the will "is not just subject to the law, but subject in such a way that it must also be viewed *as self-legislating*" (G, 4:431). The agent can, through one's reason, be law to oneself and sift their maxim in a universally valid way, without the influence of any further interests. Finally, Kant argues that the idea that every person must consider oneself a universal legislator leads to the concept of the *kingdom of ends*, which emphasizes an intersubjective and communitarian element of the categorical imperative. This ideal realm, which consists of "a systematic

union of various rational beings through common laws" (G, 4:433), constitutes "the model of a deliberate structure" (Pirni 2001, p. 124) for the relationship between concrete moral agents. All these formulas participate in the clarification of the standard of rationality; they identify "the most complete form of rational agency" (Bagnoli 2021, p. 182) from which the agent critically considers their actions.

Kant's ethics is thus characterized as a rationalist proposal insofar as the agent can discriminate between what is good and evil through reason. The fact that, in determining itself, the agent's will has to do with the "subject" implies that it cannot automatically determine itself through reason and that reason must therefore be recognized as an authority and impose itself in the form of imperative so that objective practical laws can be derived from subjective maxims. The autonomous agent gives law to oneself through reason, regardless of the features of the object with which one relates and the effect it has on them. Kant's take on moral sense theories, which rely on feeling for moral evaluation—or, in Kantian terms, rely on feeling for the ultimate determination of the will—is now clear. These theories are heteronomous and unable to provide an instrument for objectively evaluating the human will.

2. The Contemporary Debate on Moral Cognition

The questions that Kant raises about the grounds of our ability to discern between moral good and evil are those that have been pivotal throughout the history of philosophy, which has in many cases also been supported by and paired with empirical research that investigates how subjects actually judge and develop this ability.

In this chapter, I investigate critiques of Kantian theory in moral psychology to show how the debate has progressed through the so-called *affective turn* (§2.1) and, recently, has identified a need to develop *integrated* models (§2.2) that are devoid of a hierarchical conception that privileges either reason or emotion. I then conclude with the challenges the contemporary debate on moral cognition poses for Kant's ethics (§2.3), especially on the role of the emotions and their interaction with reason.

2.1. From Reason to Emotion: From Kohlberg to Haidt

2.1.1. *Rationalism and Moral Judgment: Kohlberg's Kantian Account*

Around the 1990s, the narrative of the contemporary debate on moral cognition took an "affective turn" in which its interlocutors shifted from models of moral cognition, and in particular of moral judgment, inspired by the "dominant moral theories" (Held 2006, p. 12)—Kantian and utilitarian theories—to models that instead recognized emotions' crucial role. Although this reading does not entirely credit the influence that eighteenth-century sentimentalist theories had until the 1960s—as Jonathan Haidt (2001) himself points out by recalling common points between the theories, their emphasis on emotions, and the major schools of psychology of the time, including Sigmund Freud's—before the 1990s a certain reading of Kant's theory strongly influenced some developmental theorists, including Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg.

Piaget and Kohlberg focus on moral reasoning and, in particular, how individuals' conscience relates to moral rules and how this relation develops over time. Piaget (1932)

offers a model of children's moral development that leads to the attainment of a Kantian autonomy of the will, whereby right is defined in accordance with principles that the agent rationally gives to oneself. Indeed, Piaget defines a series of stages in children's development of moral reasoning that, after an initial moment when the child has no sense of obligation to rules, are divided into two basic moments that mark the transition from a morality of heteronomy to one of autonomy. Until nine or ten years old, the child is passive toward the given normativity, applying moral rules and thereby avoiding possible sanctions. The child does not recognize the intrinsic obligation of rules but applies them only because they are imposed. However, in later years, the child understands that there are no absolutely good or bad laws, regardless of his will, and reaches a higher stage of autonomous morality in which the now autonomous subjects accept and respect the rules.

Kohlberg (1971; 1975) validates but redefines Piaget's research through longitudinal and cross-cultural studies. Again, the model is a Kantian-inspired model, which focuses on the development of moral reasoning from heteronomy to autonomy: "The tradition of moral philosophy to which we appeal is the liberal or rational tradition, in particular, the 'formalistic' or 'deontological' tradition running from Immanuel Kant to John Rawls" (Kohlberg 1975, p. 672). Kohlberg identifies three levels, each divided into two stages. The first level is the pre-conventional level in which the child responds to cultural rules and notions of good and bad but understands them in terms of the physical consequences of action or in terms of the physical power of those who enforce the rules. The second level is the conventional level in which adherence to the given rules and maintenance of social order are important as they maintain the expectations of one's family or group and respect its internal hierarchies. Finally, the last level is the post-conventional one, or "autonomous level," in which the subject develops "a clear effort to define moral values and principles that have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles and apart from the individual's own identification with these groups" (Kohlberg 1975, p. 671). In the second stage of the post-conventional level, the *universal-ethical-principle orientation*, the subject is aware of oneself and others as ends in themselves, is capable of giving oneself laws and, as a result, knows that they should not treat themselves and others as mere means or recipients of externally imposed norms.

For both Piaget and Kohlberg, "the latest or principled stages of moral reasoning are morally better stages" (Kohlberg 1975, p. 672) and thus the highest expression of morality is the rational autonomy of the Kantian agent. The focus for both is primarily on the cognitive aspects of moral development and not the affective ones. Kohlberg recognizes, for instance, the motivational role of an emotional mechanism such as empathy; nevertheless, his focus is on its cognitive, role-taking component, which makes it possible to move to the conventional level in which attention to others' expectations has a central role. Therefore, Kohlberg's focus, even when dealing with emotional mechanisms, is always on its cognitive aspects, which are directly involved in an agent's moral development.

> The quality of affects involved in moral judgment is determined by its cognitive-structural development […]. Two adolescents, thinking of stealing, may have the same feeling of anxiety in the pit of their stomachs. One adolescent (stage 2) interprets the feeling as "being chicken" and ignores it. The other (stage 4) interprets the feeling as "the warning of my conscience" and decides accordingly. The difference in reaction is one in cognitive-structural aspects of moral judgment, not in the emotional "dynamics" as such. (Kohlberg 1971, 189-90)

Kohlberg seems to contrast emotions with the cognitive aspects of moral judgment, by analyzing them as "some kind of 'uninterpreted' feelings in the pit of the stomach and referring to these feelings as the 'emotional dynamics as such'" (Pritchard 1984, p. 47). Thus, the fully developed agent is defined as an agent who acts rationally through abstract and general principles, autonomously with respect to the bonds in which one finds oneself, and for whim emotions have a nonessential role.

2.1.2. *Criticism of Rationalism and the "Affective Turn"*

The criticisms scholars raised against these rationalist models of moral development were also directed, implicitly or explicitly, at the theories, namely Kantian and utilitarian theories, from which the models took inspiration. Carol Gilligan, who worked with Kohlberg, immediately pointed out the shortcomings of his model. In particular, she argues that there are "two ways of speaking about moral problems, two ways of describing the relationship between other and self" (Gilligan 1982, p. 1), but psychologists from Freud to Kohlberg represented the difference between these two ways, these two "voices,"

as different steps of development. Indeed, while the rationalist models analyze moral development as the path toward the attainment of autonomy and the use of reason and abstract principles, Gilligan notes the presence of a *different voice*, one whose moral experience is concerned with the awareness of interdependence and the need to "keep alive the web of connections in which we are all embedded and on which we feed and thrive" (Botti 2018, p. 90). Moreover, this voice finds a fundamental tool in the emotions, in "sentimental communication" (Botti 2018, p. 89). Kohlberg's studies were based primarily on male children and, as a result, his model adopts that specific mode of moral experience as the standard and then tries to fashion "women out of a masculine cloth" (Gilligan 1982, p. 6). According to Gilligan, women's voices were not adequately recognized as having the same right to be studied without being considered a development failure. Thus, Gilligan and her contemporaries pursued a feminist goal of overcoming "the most entrenched hierarchy there is" (Held 2006, p. 23), the hierarchy of gender: "A most important achievement of feminism has been to establish that the experience of women is as important, relevant, and philosophically interesting as the experience of men" (Held 2006, p. 23). However, Gilligan explains that this different voice "is characterized not by gender but by theme. Its association with women is an empirical observation [...]. But this association is not absolute" (1982, p. 2). This voice is therefore one that everyone has and can develop.

Gilligan's critical observations and her research supporting the presence of a different voice, a voice in which emotions have an important role, gave rise to the theoretical proposal of the ethics of care. From a critical point of view, the ethics of care broadened its critique from contemporary rationalist models in moral psychology to the dominant moral theories of modernity, particularly Kant's; from a constructive point of view, it moved away from the risks of a theoretical proposal close to a feminine ethic to assert one that speaks to all agents. In particular, the ethics of care focuses on the relationships between interdependent agents for whom emotions "such as sympathy, empathy, sensitivity, and responsiveness are seen as the kind of moral emotions that need to be cultivated" (Held 2006, p. 10), given that they enable the agent to become aware of one's relationality and responsibility to others. Emotions are indeed, according to Elena Pulcini, "the crucial center of interaction with the other" (2020, p. 12) through which we can recognize our deep bonds of interdependence. At the same time, emotions take part in the

process that brings the agent to "an assumption of responsibility" (Gilligan 1982, p. 16) toward those with whom one shares the relationship.

These philosophical considerations, which were supported by psychological research, were a beginning to the so-called *affective turn* in moral cognition. This turn emphasized the role of emotions in moral cognition and gained strength from the 1990s onward with works like those of Antonio Damasio (1994) and, in general, with what can be named a "neuroscientific revolution" (Songhorian 2020, p. 61). Indeed, how researchers study the human brain has changed because of neuroimaging techniques, such as magnetic resonance or positron emission tomography. They went from studying "a black box whose only inputs and, more importantly, behavioral outputs could be investigated" (Songhorian 2020, p. 61) to investigating *in vivo* what happens in the brain when we make moral judgments. Thus, these new techniques added further empirical findings to support the idea that emotions have a constitutive role in the agent's moral experience.

As Jesse Prinz (2006) argues, some of these empirical observations should be accepted by all, including rationalist theorists. First, it seems impossible to deny that emotions co-occur with moral judgments. Prinz mentions a study from Jorge Moll, Ricardo De Oliveirra-Souza, and Paul Eslinger (2003) in which they measured the brain activity of subjects who evaluate morally relevant sentences, such as "You should break the rules when necessary," and factual sentences, such as "rocks are made of water." Subjects were asked to respond with "right" or "wrong" to each sentence. Moll and colleagues note that when subjects make moral judgments, as opposed to factual ones, areas of the brain associated with emotional responses are active. This and other studies show that "emotions arise when we respond to a wide range of morally significant events" (Prinz 2006, p. 31). Other work, however, shows the involvement of emotions more clearly, as well as their influence on moral judgment: "A negative emotion can lead us to make a more negative moral appraisal than we would otherwise have" (Prinz 2006, p. 31). Again, emotions may merely function by focusing our attention on specific morally relevant aspects of the situation in which we find ourselves. These two empirical observations do not themselves challenge rationalism; rather, they show that emotions are a constitutive part of our moral experience.

In contrast, several authors argue for two strong theses about the role of emotions in the agent's moral experience; their arguments constitute a greater challenge for rationalist

accounts of moral cognition. The *sufficiency thesis* maintains that emotions influence judgment but adds that "people's emotional reactions alone are sufficient to explain their moral attitudes" (Sauer 2012, p. 100). Strong emotional reactions seem able to moralize a certain action and lead the agent from one moral judgment to another. Studies on disgust are excellent examples of the sufficiency thesis. In one study, Thalia Wheatley and Jonathan Haidt (2005), had subjects hypnotized to feel disgust when they heard the morally neutral word "often," and they then asked subjects to judge scenarios that described reprehensible characters or admirable ones. They observe how subjects who were hypnotized were likely to judge morally admirable characters as morally blameworthy after hearing the word "often". Therefore, it seems that a negative emotion like disgust "can give rise to a negative moral appraisal without any specific belief about some property in virtue of which something is wrong" (Prinz 2006, p. 31). In general, actions in the context of experimental settings that induced an emotional change in subjects could determine the subjects' moral judgments (Cf. Valdesolo–Desteno 2006). According to Haidt and his *social intuitionist model*, moral judgment is caused by fast moral intuitions, which he defines as "the sudden appearance in consciousness of a moral judgment, including an affective valence (good-bad, like-dislike), without any conscious awareness of having gone through steps of searching, weighing evidence, or inferring a conclusion" (Haidt 2001, p. 817). Consequently, emotions guide and determine our moral judgments: "In the social intuitionist model, one feels a quick flash of revulsion at the thought of incest and one knows intuitively that something is wrong" (Haidt 2001, p. 814). Moral reasoning, which he describes as an "intentional, effortful, and controllable" process (Haidt 2001, p. 817), is reduced to a secondary, supporting role for the emotionally made judgment. According to Haidt, when we find ourselves in social contexts that call for the agent to verbally justify one's emotionally made judgments, the agent, through reasoning, becomes a lawyer trying to build a case. However, these reasons have no part in the actual determination of the judgment. Haidt believes that reasons, and moral reasoning in general, act as a form of persuasion and can, sometimes, also override one's initial intuition. However, these occurrences are very rare. He also acknowledges that moral reasoning can by itself, "by the sheer force of logic," arrive at a judgment, but, again, it is very rare, since several conditions must occur: the agent should be in a situation where one has "adequate time and processing capacity, a motivation to be accurate, no *a*

priori judgment to defend or justify, and when no relatedness or coherence motivations are triggered" (Haidt 2001, p. 822). In other words, through the sufficiency thesis, Haidt reverses the hierarchy of moral judgment, which is no longer Kantian-ly oriented by reason but by emotions.

Likeminded authors also support the *necessity thesis*, which raises a serious challenge for the rationalist theory. Specifically, the thesis maintains that emotions are necessary for moral development. According to many, studies about psychopaths provide the perfect test cases, given the presumption of a link between the moral incompetence that psychopathic individuals exhibit, particularly in their failure to distinguish between moral norms and conventional norms (Cf. Nucci 1985), and their emotional deficits. Psychopaths are indeed "incapable of feeling guilt or empathy, their fear and pain responses are abnormal, and their emotions are shallow compared to the normal population" (Maibom 2005, p. 237). It seems that they "lack the capacity to 'feel' the special character of violations that are wrong regardless of what an authority thinks about them" (Sauer 2012, p. 99). Within his *sentimental rules*-theoretic proposal, Shaun Nichols (2004) argues that emotions moralize the violation of a certain norm. The combination of a normative theory, its internalization, and the activation of an emotional mechanism allows the agent to obtain a set of basic moral judgments. If, for example, children under the age of two do not have such basic moral judgments because they have not yet internalized any normative theory, psychopathic individuals do not have them precisely because of their deficit in emotional reaction.

From such considerations and the supporting empirical data, emotions seem necessary and sufficient for moral judgment. Consequently, the empirical findings have oriented the contemporary debate toward a "reevaluation" (Pulcini 2020, p. 18) of sentimentalist theories, which support the emotional origins of our moral judgments. At the same time, the data cast doubt on rationalist theories that treat reason as the fundamental vehicle for developing the ability to discern between right and wrong.

2.2. Toward Integrated Models

The empirical data thus leave no doubt that emotions have a constitutive role in the moral experience of human beings and that extreme rationalist models cannot fully account for moral cognition if they focus solely on reason. However, various scholars and

researchers, have criticized the necessity and sufficiency theses and, as a result, their impact has diminished.

For instance, Joshua May (2018) has challenged the generalizability of the sufficiency thesis by showing how, in Wheatley and Haidt's study, most of the effects they discuss were only found in a limited portion of the trial subjects, particularly in those who were highly hypnotizable. Moreover, when subjects reacted to the different situations, only a minority of them had the disgust effect. So, the impacts of disgust on judgment were not as relevant. Finally, the difference between the groups was rather limited: "Disgusted or not, both groups tend to agree about whether the hypothetical action was right or wrong" (May 2018, p. 10). One could respond to this criticism by citing instead studies on integral disgust and integral emotions in general. Integral emotions "are those that are elicited by the object of moral evaluation Itself, rather than by incidental conditions" (May–Kumar 2018, p. 8). These studies show how subjects often associate disgust with moral violations, which suggest that this sort of disgust has a role in moral judgment. However, while it is one thing to show the presence of an emotion and its possible influence in formulating moral judgment, it is quite another for the evidence to suggest that disgust, or another emotion, *produces* moral judgment.

Heidi Maibom (2005) has challenged the necessity thesis, which takes its strength from studies on psychopaths and sociopaths. She writes that "if emotion is centrally involved in morality, we should expect amorality to correlate significantly with disturbed emotions. Similarly, if rationalism is true, we should expect immorality to be connected with a high degree of practical irrationality" (2005, p. 238). Maibom then argues that while psychopaths show strong deficiencies in their moral competence and have significant emotional deficits, they simultaneously display "deficits in their practical reason that are rarely large enough for us to regard them as mad, but that nevertheless significantly impair their decision-making abilities" (2005, p. 238). Indeed, given a narrowed attention span, the psychopathic subject experiences trouble in lacking the necessary and sufficient means for realizing their ends and tracing those means. Kant himself defines the irrational agent as one who wants an end but not the means necessary for that end. In general, psychopaths fail to build a coherent life plan with specific long-term ends (Cf. Hare 1993). Moreover, precisely because of their severely limited attention span, they have great problems in coherently coordinating their various intentions and calculating the

compatibility of the foreseeable consequences. Consequently, psychopaths "experience a number of difficulties in reasoning that directly impacts their moral competence: difficulty coherently universalizing maxims, understanding their duty, and applying any moral understanding they might have" (Maibom 2005, p. 239).

The studies on psychopaths suggest that both the emotional and rational components are necessary for developing full moral competence. Any monistic reading of moral experience that advocates the primacy of either reason or the emotions fails to account for the real dynamicity and influence of affective and rational processes in moral experience.

Already in 2001, Joshua Greene and colleagues, following Daniel Kahneman's (2011) dual-process model for economic decisions, proposed that a dual process also exists for moral cognition and that this model can account for the role of emotional and rational components. Greene and colleagues tested subjects on a series of dilemmas, divided into non-moral dilemmas, impersonal moral dilemmas (such as the Trolley Problem), and personal moral dilemmas (such as the Footbridge) and monitored their brain activity with fMRI. Both the Trolley Problem and the Footbridge used the same scenario: whether it is acceptable to sacrifice one person to save five. However, in the Trolley Problem, the subject can choose to pull a lever to cause the train to divert its current course, which would hit five people so that it only hits one person; in the Footbridge case, the only way to stop the train's course is to push a man off the bridge, which, because of his mass, would stop the train's course. Greene and colleagues observed a difference in moral intuitions in the two cases: most subjects considered it acceptable to pull the lever but refused to push the man off the bridge. The fMRI data (Cf. Greene et al. 2001) show that, for impersonal dilemmas, there was greater activation of areas of the brain, such as the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and the inferior parietal lobe cortex, that are related to reasoning and higher cognitive tasks. For personal dilemmas, however, the data show greater activation of emotion-related areas, such as the amygdala, posterior cingulate cortex, and medial prefrontal cortex.

According to Greene, the data suggest that our brain has two systems, "two dissociable psychological patterns" (Greene 2008, p. 37) that it resorts to when dealing with moral problems. System 1 is fast, emotional, and automatic, while System 2 is cognitive, controlled, and slow. Greene (2014) analogizes these two different "modes" with a

camera's different modes: in familiar and known situations, one takes picture by relying on the camera's automatic settings and not adjusting anything manually. One resorts to manual mode in unfamiliar, non-typical situations and adjusts the shot settings, focus, and framing in response to the unfamiliar situation.

Greene's dual model thus recognizes a role for both emotional and rational components. However, this view still rules out a truly integrated model of the relationship between reason and emotion, given the competitive nature of the two systems: "A judgment cannot be made by the combination of the two systems, just as a photograph cannot be taken using either automatic or manual mode at the same time. One or the other must win, must be chosen" (Songhorian 2022a, p. 101). In other words, Greene does not believe the integration of information between one system and the other is possible. Both systems are always active, yet only one "wins" and determines the type of moral judgment that will be made. In fact, according to Greene, judgments that rely on rational processes are characteristically utilitarian, while automatic, emotional reactions make characteristically deontological judgments.[4] In addition to the lack of interaction and integration between emotion and reason, Greene's proposed model also requires a clear distinction between emotional and cognitive areas of the brain.

2.2.1. *Against "Boxology"*

Greene's model and other attempts in psychological research to model moral judgments seem to call for "an overly simplified view of reason and emotion as two fully independent cognitive faculties whose causal contribution to moral judgment can be clearly separated" (Saunders 2016, p. 253). That is, a strong separation between an emotional mind and a rational one, according to Saunders, results from a specific theoretical image of the mind, namely *faculty psychology*. Jerry Fodor (1983) has described this approach to the functioning of the mind in which the mind is structured into a set of mental systems, "organs" of the mind that attend to and perform different

[4] Several scholars are against this identification of deontological judgments with processes inherent to System 1 and utilitarian judgments with processes inherent to System 2. See, for example, Bence Bago and Wim De Neys (2019), who show that the content of a moral judgment should not be considered a reliable indicator of predicting its reflexive/rational or automatic/emotional nature.

operations. In other words, reason and emotion, as cognitive faculties, are closed boxes: "their respective internal operations and mechanisms are clearly distinct from, and causally closed off to, each other" (Saunders 2016, p. 256).

However, such a parceling of the mind is highly problematic as several studies show how brain regions, which were thought to be affective, are actually involved in complex cognitive tasks, and other regions, which were thought to be rational, are involved in emotional processes. For example, the amygdala is often categorized as an affective region that primarily processes fear. Nevertheless, Luiz Pessoa (2008) shows how the amygdala is also involved in several functions, such as attention and associative learning, that are deeply related to complex cognitive processes. An important function of attention is to modulate sensory processing: "Attention to a stimulus increases neuronal firing rates (and fMRI responses) in sensory cortex and is believed to improve behavioral performance" (Pessoa 2008, p. 149). This competitive advantage also occurs during the viewing of emotion-laden visual stimuli. The amygdala probably underlies these effects and, in general, actively guides "a form of emotional modulation of information that in many ways parallels the attentional effects observed in the visual cortex" (Pessoa 2008, p. 149). In addition to having an important role in these complex cognitive processes, the amygdala is not independent of the influence of conscious cognitive processes: controlling our attention and "cognitively" changing the meaning of emotionally evocative stimuli impacts the amygdala's responses.

Regarding rational areas of the brain that are involved in emotional tasks, there is much debate regarding the prefrontal cortex. There is a tendency to compartmentalize the prefrontal cortex into separate affective and rational regions: the anterior cingulate cortex and the ventromedial prefrontal cortex are considered as areas involved in emotion, while areas like the lateral prefrontal cortex, including the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, are thought to be purely rational. However, this strict distinction does not consider many studies that show "cognitive and affective information are strongly integrated in the lateral [prefrontal cortex]" (Pessoa 2008, p. 149).

In general, functional studies and studies on structural connectivity show that individual brain areas should not be considered as being isolated from each other but rather as being parts of networks. A single brain area is part of several networks that lead to integrated processes in which maintaining the distinction between reason and emotion

is very difficult. The best way to account for how our brain works in the case of moral judgments and regarding the relationship between reason and emotion "should be guided by an integrative view, according to which emotion and reason work synergistically" (De Caro–Marraffa 2016, p. 1698).

2.2.2. *Integration between Reason and Emotion*

Given the deep interaction between reason and emotion within the human brain, extreme rationalist and emotionalist models seem inadequate for explaining agents' moral experience. Instead, it is necessary to develop models that recognize the roles of both emotion and reason and, most importantly, their interaction and mutual influence.

If, indeed, the studies I introduced in the previous sections show the constitutive presence of emotions in formulating moral judgments and, in general, in the development of typical moral competence, the rational component has a fundamental role in the process by also influencing the agent's emotions. According to May and Kumar, we can "deliberately monitor our automatic responses and attempt to adjust them to best meet our needs. This might be fruitfully analyzed as a kind of education or attunement" (2018, p. 10).[5]

With his *educated intuitions model*, Hanno Sauer insists on this "formative role" (2017, p. 33) of reasons and reasoning for agents' moral judgments. Sauer believes that a rationalist theory can agree that emotions are causally sufficient for generating a moral judgment. Nevertheless, contrary to authors such as Haidt, he considers that reasoning has an effective role and is capable of critically sifting and effectively educating the agent's emotions and moral intuitions. Reasoning can act *ex ante*, that is, on the external conditions in which moral intuitions are generated by selecting, for instance, "the situational input they [the agents] are confronted with" (Sauer 2017, p. 75); reasoning can also act internally and directly influence "the formation of intuitive responses by altering the internal processes underlying judgment formation" (2017, p. 75). In this regard, Sauer draws on Peter Gollwitzer's (1999) study in which subjects modified their emotional

[5] These automatic responses may be the result of an emotional reaction as well as the result of "prior reasoning, whether conscious or unconscious" that "could have generated the judgment which is simply now being automatically deployed" (May–Kumar 2018, p. 10).

responses (i.e., disgust and fear) by forming an if-then intention to stay calm and relaxed when confronted with fearful situations. Sauer also argues for the possibility of *ex post* education by reasoning, given its ability for meta-cognition: "the ability to reflectively monitor one's own cognitive operations and alter them according to standards of rationality or reliability deemed appropriate" (2017, p. 76).[6]

In general, several studies argue that people often resort to emotion regulation techniques (Cf. Gross 1998); their doing so shows a "rich interaction between an individual's long-term, deeply valued goals and her short-term emotional reactions" (Helion–Pizarro 2015, p. 116). Kevin Ochsner and James Gross (2008) have traced several techniques agents use to regulate their emotions: from selecting or changing the situation in which they find themselves to techniques that require higher cognitive effort, such as "attentional deployment" or "cognitive change." The latter involves the ability to change "one's emotional understanding of the situation at hand by cognitively reappraising features of the situation" (Helion–Pizarro 2015, p. 117). To carry out such cognitive reappraisals, adopting a critical stance toward one's emotions, for example, by using a perspective-taking process, is helpful. Studies on the neural underpinning of the cognitive change technique show that it actually "relies on a bidirectional relationship between affective and cognitive regions" (Helion–Pizarro 2015, p. 119).

In conclusion, empirical data and theoretical reflections have orientated the contemporary debate on moral judgment, and moral cognition in general, toward integrated models that support the constitutive presence of both reason and emotions and, more importantly, show their deep integration and mutual influence.

2.3. The Challenge to Kant's Ethics

2.3.1. *How to Use Empirical Data*

I have just sketched the contemporary debate on moral cognition, showing how it is currently oriented toward developing integrated models in which emotions and reason

[6] For a more general discussion of the efficacy of moral reasoning in developing and improving moral competence, see Bina 2023.

cooperate. Now, what should the relationship between moral philosophy and empirical research be? How may Kant's ethics participate in the contemporary, empirically informed debate on moral cognition?

First, few moral philosophers have denied the relevance of empirical research and knowledge of human nature.[7] The crucial issue is what role the empirical data should have in metaethical and normative reflection. Kant is very clear when he claims that a pure, *a priori* philosophy has priority in identifying the grounding principles of a metaphysics of morals. Nevertheless, he recognizes the role of empirical research:

> A metaphysics of morals cannot dispense with principles of application, and we shall often have to take as our object the particular *nature* of human beings, which is cognized only by experience, in order to *show* in it what can be inferred from universal moral principles. But this will in no way detract from the purity of these principles or cast doubt on their *a priori* source. (MS, 6:217)

Kant believes that empirical psychological research should stand "in the service" of moral theory and the requirements that this theory makes for the moral agent. In other words, as Patrick Frierson explains, "the moral function of empirical psychology would be to determine whether, to what extent, and how human beings meet (or fail to meet)" (2019, p. 517) the requirement the theory sets forth. Thus Kant considers moral anthropology to be a study of human nature aimed at implementing the laws of the metaphysics of morals. Indeed, the title of Kant's anthropology essay, namely *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, shows that moral anthropology has to do with "the development, spreading, and strengthening of moral principles" (MS, 6:217).[8]

However, given technological and scientific developments that were unthinkable in Kant's time and the resulting amount of data on human psychology, empirical data now play a diriment role in philosophical reflection on moral cognition. Certainly, empirical psychology guides philosophers in their search for methods of implementation of the theory, as Kant argued; however, it also shows the practical impossibility of fulfilling the moral requirements of the theory. Indeed, as Antti Kauppinen argues, "ethics is for human beings, and thus has to take into account human cognitive and motivational limitations.

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[7] For an in-depth review of the history of the relationship between philosophy and the empirical study of human nature, see Appiah 2008.

[8] For a more in-depth analysis of the role of empirical research in Kant, see Louden (2000, pp. 3-30).

Moral ideals and demands have to be psychologically feasible for the kind of beings we are" (2014, p. 302). That is, if a philosopher supports a theoretical proposal that respects how human beings concretely act, they must at least use empirical data as conditions of psychological feasibility.

I believe that Kant's ethics can actively participate in the contemporary debate on moral cognition by helping to define the role of rationality and especially by providing tools that justify the necessity for developing a specific relationship between reason and emotion. However, it is first necessary to show that Kant's ethics meets the "entry requirements" of this debate. The contemporary debate poses two hurdles for Kant's moral theory. First, the theory should show the constitutive presence of emotions within the agent's moral experience and their role in the determination of their will. Second, the theory must explain the interaction and deep integration between reason and emotion and why it is important for morality. Only in this way can Kant's model meet the requirements of psychological feasibility to participate in the contemporary debate. However, many critics of Kant's ethics do not believe he can respond positively to these challenges, condemning his theoretical proposal as unfeasible.

2.3.2. *The Cold Kant*

Critics of Kantian morality focus on Kant's claim that it is necessary to seek the fundamental principle of morality in the rational nature of the human being. Indeed, in several passages, Kant clearly distinguishes between human beings' empirical, sensible nature and their rational, intelligible, or noumenal nature (Cf. KrV, A539 B567). Thus, Kant apparently creates a marked and unbridgeable separation between the subject's sensible and intelligible natures—two worlds that cannot interact with each other. The picture is of an agent with a "Janus-like personality" (Röseler 1947, p. 326): one face toward the phenomenal and natural world; the other toward reason.

According to some reconstructions of Kant's view, the Kantian moral agent, to act morally, encloses themself within the intelligible world of pure rationality. Prinz, for instance, argues that Kant's goal is to "liberate moral rules from the passions" (2007, p. 134). The agent judges in a morally appropriate way only when their emotions are excluded from the decision-making process. If emotions enter the process, the agent runs the risk of compromising the moral value of their action. Kant seems to uphold this view

when, to distinguish between an action performed in conformity with duty and one from duty, he uses the example of the philanthropist. He states that the action of an agent who is motivated only by their sympathy and compassion, "however amiable it may be – still has no true moral worth" (G, 4:398). On the contrary, if this agent's mind "were beclouded by his own grief, which extinguishes all compassion for the fate of others" but they nonetheless tear "himself out of his deadly insensibility" (G, 4:398) and act only out or reason and duty, then the action would have its genuine moral worth. Emotions are not necessary for understanding what needs to be done, and what is more, they likely would undermine one's full awareness of one's duty. Through an evocative metaphor, Simon Blackburn (1998) tries to clarify how Kant understands the role of emotion: the Kantian agent is compared to a ship, whose captain is the autonomous will that chooses what to do rationally, and the crew is composed of passions, feelings, desires, and particular interests. According to Blackburn, the Kantian ship is one in which the captain would rather sail alone: "Sometimes, it seems, the happiest ship will have no crew at all, but only a Captain" (1998, p. 243).

This apparent lack of a role for the emotion and, consequently, the description of a purely rational moral agent devoid of emotion, has led several authors to point out the difference between the Kantian agent and concrete individuals. Kant indeed strips the individual of all the elements that define one's identity and that normally, and according to the empirical data, guide one's moral decisions. Kant and his theory appeal "to us not as creatures with desires but as rational beings […]. There is no relevant difference between one rational being and another. All may differ in inclinations, but as rational beings they are indistinguishable" (Dancy 1993, p. 177).

By completely dismissing the emotional dimension from the moral process, Kant deprives human beings of their specific identities. He also outlines a psychologically unfeasible normative theory, given the essential role of emotions in concrete individuals. This rationalistic perspective "would leave us cold. And if we could be emotionally indifferent to morality, we might fail to act morally" (Prinz 2007, p. 134). Herlinde Pauer Studer articulates the worry this way: "How can something which has validity for beings separated from their empirical character be relevant for persons who are part of an everyday world?" (1994, p. 280). Damasio even goes so far as to argue that the totally

rational strategy of the Kantian agent has much more to do with the way subjects with prefrontal damage act than with typically functioning individuals (Cf. 1994, p. 172).

If these critiques addressed a genuine interpretation of Kant's ethics, then his theory would not be able to engage the contemporary debate and, worse, it would turn out to be an unrealizable theory, given what we know about the role and influence of the emotional life in human beings' development of their moral capacities and their everyday moral decisions.

However, since the 1990s, a large group of Kant scholars (Herman 1993; Baron 1995; Louden 2000) have begun to address these criticisms by showing how the criticisms are based on a (questionable) reading of the foundational works of Kant's ethics and do not take into consideration all the works in which Kant addresses the nature and role of emotion. From the work of these scholars, a non-negative view of emotional life in Kant emerges. My goal is to not only join these arguments but also show the constitutive role that emotions play in the determination of the agent's will and the importance that some emotions have in the development of the agent's moral capacities.

3. Kant's Theory of Emotional Life

One of the major problems with criticisms of Kant's ethics about the role of emotions in the moral experience of the agent is that those who raise the criticisms lack knowledge of his extensive treatment of the agent's emotional life. An adequate understanding of the nature of affective phenomena and their interaction with reason allows us to outline a view of decision-making, and moral experience in general, that is much closer to views in the contemporary debate.

In this chapter, I provide a synthesis of Kant's conception of the agent's emotional life. First, I show that the emotional component of the agent is not in itself negative and that it does not have to be eliminated from the process of the determination of the will to protect the morality of action (§3.1). I do this by referring to his conception of radical evil. Once I have argued in favor of the innocence of emotions, I begin an analysis of Kant's conception of the emotional life of the agent. Although Kant uses several terms to refer to the emotional life of the agent, focusing on feeling (§3.2) and desire (§3.3) will help elucidate his position. Finally, I explore what Kant characterizes as illnesses of the mind, namely, affects, which are a kind of feeling, and passions, which are types of inclinations, or habitual desires (§3.4). Understanding why Kant considers these to be illnesses of the mind will clarify the relationship that the agent must establish with their emotionality to remain autonomous.

3.1. Emotions Are Not Intrinsically Evil

Most of the arguments mentioned in §2.3 are drawn from a partial reading of Kant's works, a reading that relies on the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Critique of Practical Reason*. Critics, however, do not consider works fundamental to understanding Kantian morality, such as the *Metaphysics of Morals*, or works in which Kant critically and empirically analyzes human nature. Missing, in other words, is what Louden (2000) calls Kant's "impure ethics," the second part of his ethics, which consist of his writings on education, anthropology, aesthetics, religion, and history. In these works, the human being stands out as a finite rational being, distinct both from infinite

rational beings, whose will automatically determines itself according to the moral law, and from brute beings, from nonhuman animals, who are unable to freely place themselves in the relationship between impulse and reaction. The human being is an emotional being, with desires, inclinations, and feelings, but, at the same time, who has the ability to determine one's will according to a rational law that one gives oneself. For Kant, morality plays out in the relationship between sensible and rational nature.

Contrary to what some authors, including Blackburn and Prinz, believe, the Kantian agent does not have to eliminate their emotions to act morally. The problem for Kant does not lie in the sensible component of the human being and he makes this clear in his analysis of the cognitive faculty and in the apology defending sensibility against the charges his contemporaries commonly raised. Indeed, sensibility is first and foremost fundamental because "without sensibility there would be no material that could be processed for the use of legislative understanding" (Ant, 7:144). That said, the relevant issue is how the material that sensibility provides is processed by the legislative understanding. In the area of practical and moral action, Kant offers a similar move and argues for the innocence of the agent's emotional component. He further argues that all predispositions of the human being, including those to animality or self-love, "are not only (negatively) *good* (they do not conflict with the moral law) but are also predispositions *to the good* (they further compliance with that law)" (Rel, 6:28). They do not in themselves oppose the moral law. Rather, the Kantian agent has a natural predisposition to the good, since one has within oneself all that is needed to discern between right and wrong, and all of one's other components do not oppose the realization of morality but can facilitate it.

However, Kant also refers to the natural propensity to evil in humans. This natural propensity should not be traced back to our emotions but instead to the way we relate to them: "A propensity to evil can adhere only to the moral ability of the power of choice […] for this evil must arise from freedom" (Rel, 6:31). The agent perpetrates moral evil the moment one chooses to admit these sensible incentives into the decision-making process "*as by themselves sufficient* for determining the power of choice, without being concerned about the moral law" (Rel, 6:36). Kant is thus aware that the agent is overdetermined, namely, that multiple elements, emotional and rational, participate in moral decisions. What underlies the distinction between good and evil human beings

"must lie not in the distinction of the incentives that he admits into his maxim […] but in their *subordination* […] *which of the two he makes the condition of the other*" (Rel, 6:36). Multiple motives and incentives can coexist within a moral action.[9] However, the determining motive of the will, the one that ultimately justifies the action and would suffice by itself to justify it, must always be the moral law. The other elements must be subordinated to it.

Consequently, the idea that emotions must be eradicated and the resulting cold and emotionless view of the Kantian agent are actually far from a faithful reading. Kant clearly argues that "natural inclinations, *considered in themselves*, are *good*, i.e., irreprehensible; and not only is it futile, but it would also be harmful and censurable, to want to eradicate them" (Rel, 6:58). Moreover, Kant repeatedly criticizes a certain kind of Christian understanding of the body as the source of sin, which should therefore be mortified. In particular, he admonishes monkish ascetics, "which from superstitious fear or hypocritical loathing of oneself goes to work with self-torture and mortification of the flesh, is not directed to virtue but rather to fantastically purging oneself of sin by imposing punishments on oneself" (MS, 6:485). The sensitive and emotional component of the agent is therefore neither to be blamed and mortified nor eradicated as one becomes an ideal pure agent. Instead, one must develop, guided by the moral law, a determined relationship with these components.[10]

For certain passages, such as that of the philanthropist in *Groundwork*, in which Kant appears to present a totally rational agent stripped of their emotions, it is important to understand the aim of these passages. In the case of the philanthropist, Kant clarifies why an action is morally worthy. Very often, as Kant explains, it is difficult to distinguish actions that have their determining motive in the emotions and those that have it in reason and duty. Kant applies a "method of isolation" (Paton 1948, p. 47) and reduces the action to a single essential element so that either the emotion of sympathy or reason and duty remain. Even though an action performed solely out of emotion is in conformity with duty and amiable, Kant believes that the agent can be sure of the morality of the action only in cases where the motive of duty is present and the action is performed from duty. However,

[9] Borges 2019 offers a similar reading about overdetermination in Kant.

[10] For more textual references to the innocence of the body and emotions, see Bochicchio (2006, pp. 147-161).

as Herbert Paton says, "to use such a method of isolation is by no means to assert that when an inclination is present as well as a will to do one's duty, there can be no moral worth in the action" (1948, p. 49). So, emotion alone cannot provide the connection between the motivation and the morality of the action because the involvement of reason and the subordination of other motives to it is also required.

The Kantian agent thus lives an emotional life that is an essential part of their interaction with the reality external to them and, consequently, is involved in the determination of their will. Thus, to better determine whether Kant's ethics can offer a theoretical model relevant for the contemporary debate on moral cognition, I turn to analyzing the emotional life of the Kantian agent. My analysis involves distinguishing different affective phenomena, understanding their nature, and focusing on the relationship the agent must develop with these phenomena.

3.2. Feeling

Kant uses several terms to refer to the affective phenomena of an agent's emotional life: *Gefühle*, *Affekten*, *Begierden*, *Neigungen*, and *Leidenschaften* among others. The number of terms make it difficult to address a theory of emotion in Kant, especially when trying to identify a German term that can be translated in English as "emotion." Both Kelly Sorensen (2002) and Maria Borges (2019), for instance, stress the fact that Kant "presents us with a very colorful, wide range of emotions, which cannot be captured in one model type" (Borges 2019, p. 87). Probably the best way to account for Kant's view of emotional life is to follow his distinction of the three mental faculties. Indeed, the Kantian agent has a cognitive faculty that concerns the representation of objects and allows them to acquire knowledge of how things are. The other two faculties—the faculty of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure and the faculty of desire—are more concerned with the relationship the agent has with objects around them and how this relationship leads them to act. These faculties bring the agent into the practical dimension of the determination of action. In this section, I explore why understanding the nature of feelings and desires is crucial for offering an adequate account of the Kantian agent's emotional life, and then I analyze the relationship of these two affective phenomena with each other and with practical reason. Doing so will give us a clear picture of the Kantian agent's decision-making process.

The affective states that come closest to what the contemporary theories of emotion call "emotion" are *Gefühl*, and *Affekt* (i.e., a kind of *Gefühl*). English translations of Kant usually render these as "feeling" and "affect," respectively. However, in this thesis, I use the term "emotions" to refer to the emotional life of the agent in general, which involves both feelings and desires. I will argue that, together, they help orientate and guide the agent in their relation to objects around them.

Let us begin with Kant's account of feeling [*Gefühl*]. In recent years, several authors have analyzed the nature of feeling in Kant.[11] Kant scholars are divided on several issues, but the biggest debate is over whether the feeling has intentional content (i.e., is directed at an object the agent is aware of). Determining whether it has such content is crucial for understanding whether the feeling is a brute force, whether it is disconnected from other higher mental functions, and whether the agent has control over it. Another important debate is about the internal structure of the feeling, and this debate also entails disagreement about the feeling's function. For instance, Alix Cohen (2020) offers one of the most influential contemporary views of feeling in Kant. Cohen proposes a non-cognitivist theory of feeling as *valenced appraisal* in which the feeling has a derived intentionality.[12] With the notion of derived intentionality, Cohen acknowledges, but does not fully embrace, Paul Guyer's (1997) non-intentionalist reading of feelings. According to Guyer, indeed, the feeling is a brute and opaque force. Several authors, such as John Sabini and Maury Silver (1987) share this view; however, they draw from it an animalistic and negative view of feeling that, if it has a role in moral life, that role "is an ignoble one" (Sabini and Silver 1987, p. 166). Cohen does not give up Guyer's non-cognitivist reading of the feeling, but she moves away from an overly negative characterization that makes interacting with the feeling impossible. Indeed, according to Cohen, the agent can understand the aboutness and directionality of feeling through reflective judgment.[13] Before such reflection, the feeling is a mere force that moves the agent in a certain direction and can only be analyzed in terms of quantity. In contrast to this non-cognitivist

[11] For a detailed review of this debate, see Cohen 2017.

[12] "Feelings function as appraisals, but rather than conveying their appraisals through representational content, as judgment does, they convey it through their valence—either pleasurable or painful" (Cohen, 2020, p. 437).

[13] "[Feelings] have intentionality, but an intentionality that is 'derived' […] feelings need to be reflectively interpreted by judgment in order to acquire intentionality" (Cohen, 2020, p. 435).

reading, Janelle DeWitt (2018) proposes a cognitivist one, defining feeling as an *action-initiating evaluative judgment* of the goodness of an object that also provides reasons to act. According to DeWitt, feelings "are determinations of value, and it is in virtue of this that they motivate" (2018, p. 74). They are types of judgments that attribute the predicate of good or bad (specifically, agreeable and disagreeable) to an object and thereby motivate the agent. The affective element is not necessary for understanding a feeling as such. In this way, DeWitt's reading comes very close to contemporary cognitivist readings of emotion from, for example, Robert Solomon (1983) and Martha Nussbaum (2012). In my interpretation, I agree with DeWitt and other authors (Allison 2001; Eran 2021a), who, unlike Cohen, argue that the feeling has a cognitive content and, therefore, an intrinsic intentionality. However, unlike DeWitt, I hold that the affective element is necessary for defining a feeling as such so to distinguish it from "cold" practical judgment.[14]

In general, I define the feeling as a state of mind concerning the relationship between an object and the agent, and the state has an affective quality and can motivate the agent by informing their faculty of desire.

The first feature of the feeling is the cognitive content. Kant defines the feeling of pleasure [*Gefühl der Lust*] as "the representation [*Vorstellung*] of the agreement [*Übereinstimmung*] of an object or of an action with the subjective conditions of life" (KpV, 5: 9n). The feeling is directed toward something, and Kant thinks that the agent is aware of this directionality given that he also defines the feeling of pleasure as "the consciousness of the agreement of an object with the productive power of imagination of our soul" (LM, 29:891). As Henry Allison argues, the feeling is not a "raw feel" (2001, p. 122); on the contrary, the agent has an "intentional awareness" (2001, p. 54). Thus, the feeling has an intentional character, a form of "aboutness." In particular, the agent becomes aware of the relationship between an object and their subjective conditions of life. Consequently, the feeling makes the agent know something, but not the object itself, because the feeling of pleasure and displeasure is not an objective perception that gives one knowledge of the world in the same way the cognitive faculty does. For this very reason, it "does not contribute anything to cognition" (KU, 5:204). However, that

[14] In the contemporary debate about the theory of emotions, scholars object to cognitivist theories because they cannot distinguish between emotion (i.e., the feeling in the Kantian sense) and practical judgment. For instance, see Ben-Ze'ev 2004.

"feelings are not about objective properties we perceive with our senses […] does not preclude them from being about something else" (Eran 2021b, p. 376), namely, from being about the relationship between an object and a particular agent.[15] Moreover, Kant refers to the representation of the *agreement*, particularly "the relation of agreeable fit" (Holberg 2020, 376), between the object and the agent's subjective conditions of life. The latter are about their desiring dimension and, in general, their happiness, which Kant understands as "the entire well-being and contentment with one condition" (G, 4:393).

The agent becomes aware of this agreement, this harmony (or disharmony, in the case of the feeling of displeasure) between the object and oneself. Then, in addition to this cognitive dimension, the feeling also displays an affective quality: the agent "feels […] how he is affected by the representation" (KU, 5:204). The agent is affected by this representation in a certain way. In the case of the feeling of pleasure, for instance, a pleasurable experience results from the harmony between the representation and the entire power of the mind: "if a representation harmonizes with the entire power of the mind, with the principle of life, then this is pleasure" (LM, 28:247). Described in this way, with a cognitive and affective component, the feeling is a sort of evaluating state or a "very special power of discriminating and judging" (KU, 5:204). Now, precisely because the relationship judged is between the object and the agent's desiring dimension, the judgment of the feeling will always be a subjective one. It distinguishes between what is good or bad but the judged has a relative rather than absolute value. The object is good for the sake of the satisfaction of the agent's happiness. Indeed, Kant writes that the good of such a judgment is not "good absolutely, but only with reference to our sensibility" (KpV, 5:62). He makes this point clear by distinguishing between *das Gute* and *das Wohl* and *das Böse* and *das Übel*. *Wohl* and *Übel* refer "to our state of agreeableness or disagreeableness" (KpV, 5:60) and have relative value, while *Gute* and *Böse* have absolute value. The distinction is between the *good for something*, judged by the feeling, and the *good in itself* or *absolutely*, judged by reason.

[15] One of the determinations of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure is the sensation [*Empfindung*]. According to Kant (Cf. KU, 5:188-9), it is necessary to distinguish the feeling from the representation of a thing through the senses, as a receptivity pertaining to the cognitive faculty. The latter is an *objective sensation* and can give knowledge, while the feeling is a *subjective sensation*, as it refers to how the representation of the object relates to the subject.

Finally, the judgment of the feeling also has a motivational output, which generates in the agent a practical interest in preserving a certain state or leaving that state through a specific activity. In this way, Kant distinguishes between "contemplative pleasure or inactive delight," the aesthetic feeling that prompts the agent to remain in that specific state, and "practical pleasure" [*praktische Lust*] that motivates the agent to act by causing a desire: "as for practical pleasure, the determination of the faculty of desire which is caused and therefore necessarily preceded by such pleasure is called *desire*" (MS, 6:612).

There is a kind of double cross-reference between feeling and desire. Indeed, feeling bases its judgment on the comparison between the object and the agent's faculty of desire. Desiring (i.e., the natural tension toward happiness) is original and therefore moves the agent in the first place. In the feeling, the agent relates the objects around them with their original desire to realize happiness. However, the feeling, through the judgment, ends up informing and providing content for the faculty of desire: "A judgment of an object by which its agreeableness is affirmed […] provokes a desire for similar objects" (KU, 5:207). Thus, as Erica Holberg explains, the judgment of feeling "is more than mere liking. The agent desires the existence of the represented agreeable object in relation to herself" (2020, p. 375). Or, as Kant writes, there is a "connection between the subject and the existence of the object. It is not merely the object, but also its existence, that pleases" (KU, 5:209).

In conclusion, the role of the feeling in Kant is motivational and epistemic. Although the feeling does not cause the agent to know the object itself, they do know the relationship between themself and the object, the worth that object has *for them*. The representation of the agreement or disagreement between the object and the agent's subjective conditions of life, combined with the resultant affective position-taking, ensures that the content of the feeling is evaluative. This judgment of the object's worth for the agent creates a practical interest that forms a desire. I now turn to an analysis of the latter and, in general, of the faculty of desire and its relation to practical reason, to further clarify how Kant understands the interplay and integration between reason and emotions.

3.3. Desire

Feeling and desire are, thus, very closely connected, although not all feelings result in desires, as Kant explains of the contemplative pleasure of the feeling of taste. However, when it comes to the decision-making process and, consequently, to the Kantian agent's action, desire cannot but be involved and does so in close relationship with feeling. In fact, Kant believes that "the involvement of the desires is to determine activity" (Fried, 25:577).

Each desire is thus tied with the activity of the agent. Kant defines the desire [*Begierde*] as "the self-determination of a subject's power through the representation of something in the future as an effect of this representation" (Ant, 7:251). It concerns the agent's causal capacity; it is what ultimately moves one to the realization of the action and the attainment of the object. Kant then introduces the notion of inclination [*Neigung*], or habitual desire, which results from the agent's repeated satisfaction of a desire. In this case, the connection with the feeling is important to distinguish inclination, as habitual desire, from other phenomena, such as instinct or propensity. Indeed, the desire first requires an object to refer to and, most importantly, that the agent judges that object to be good for themselves and that they have a practical interest in its existence. For this to occur, the desire must be preceded by the feeling: "The faculty of feeling must first represent an object to be good […] before the faculty of desire can become the cause of the object represented" (DeWitt 2018, p. 76). When this relationship between the feeling and the desire, as a force that leads the agent to actualize the representation of the object, becomes habitual, we have an inclination. The latter is distinguished from instinct [*Instinct*], which Kant defines as "a desire in accordance with an object which one does not know […]. Instincts are therefore principles of desires, which are directed to an indeterminate object" (Fried, 25:584). Instinct does not have a connection with an object and therefore is not related to a feeling: it is a force or a tension the agent has toward certain actions that moves the agent without awareness of the object they are moving toward.[16] Kant identifies two basic instincts in human nature: the instinct for the nutrition and preservation of one's own person and the instinct for the propagation or preservation of one's species. Inclination

[16] "The inner *necessitation* of the faculty of desire to take possession of this object before one even knows it is *instinct*" (Ant, 7:265).

also differs from natural propensity [*Hang*]. Kant says that propensity is the "inner basis of all possible desires […]. Future desires are already prepared by a natural propensity of the human being" (Fried, 25:580). As Kant says in the *Anthropology*, propensity is therefore merely the "subjective *possibility* of the emergence of certain desire, which precedes the representation of its object" (Ant, 7:265). Unlike propensity, desire calls for a direct relation to the object and the relative judgment of fit or unfitness from the feeling of pleasure or displeasure.

In general, the desire is the "determination of the faculty of desire" (MS, 6:211). The faculty of desire [*Begehrungsvermögen*] is "a being's faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations" (KpV, 5:9n). Through this faculty the agent disposes oneself to action and to the realization of the objects of which one has a specific representation; morality is played out through this faculty. Indeed, the interaction between the agent's emotional life (i.e., one's feelings and desires) and reason occurs in the determination of the faculty of desire. In the *Groundwork*, Kant argues that the only thing that can be considered good without exception is the will. The will "is the faculty of desire" (KU, 5:172), and it is morally good if the agent develops the right relationship between their emotional life and reason. The two can relate in different ways. They also may not interact: feeling might directly determine the faculty of desire without the mediation of the rational component. The paradigmatic example of this possibility is the philanthropist in the *Groundwork* who acts only out of their sympathy, without any consideration of any other kind. When reason intervenes and interacts with the feeling and the desire for the object, it may do so in two ways: either by following the desire for the object and merely seeking the means by which it can be satisfied, or by critically examining the desire both in its form (i.e., in how the agent desires the object) and in its content by actually examining the desired object or course of action. In both cases, reason creates a *maxim*, a subjective principle, that presents in its internal structure an end, the necessary means to attain the end, and the motives that give reasons for the end. The desired object and the relative feeling can be accepted into the maxim as its determining motive or be sifted by practical reason and the moral law (the latter would thus act as the determining motive): "the same inclination can serve as the matter of the maxim in both cases, but the form is different" (Hare 2011, p. 57). That is, how the agent relates to the desired object differs. When the feeling bypasses

reason, and when reason intervenes but only to seek the necessary means, the agent's will is heteronomous and has no moral worth, since its determining motive comes from the matter of faculty of desire.[17] On the contrary, when reason examines the feeling and the desire, with the categorical imperative working as the standard of rationality, the will has moral worth because it presents reason as the determining motive, as what ultimately motivates the agent to action.

In §5, particularly in §5.1, I will more clearly explain the interaction between reason and emotional life, as I discuss Kant's integrated decision-making model. However, here it has been important to provide an overview of the agent's emotional life, to distinguish between feeling and desire, and to show that their interaction orientates the agent and motivates them to act in a particular way: the morality of action is played out in the relationship between emotions and reasons. In the next section, I explore the complexity of the relationship, which can give rise to specific affective phenomena (i.e., affects and passions) that fall into the category of feeling or desire but that nevertheless cause difficulties for the agent to act morally.

3.4. Affects and Passions

According to Kant, affects and passions constitute a problem for the moral agent; he calls them "illnesses of the mind." Both "shut out the sovereignty of reason" (Ant, 7:251) and thereby complicate that morally fundamental interplay between one's emotional life and reason. Affects are modes of feeling, while passions are mental states of the faculty of desire and, in particular, are kinds of inclinations, or habitual desires. Kant insists that the problem with these mental states is not so much their intensity but the influence they have on the agent's ability to reflect on them and the action they intend to take: "If in the case of the feeling and of the desires, the mind's composure is kept, then no matter how intense sensation and desire may be, sensation does not then become affect, and desire

[17] Whether an agent must always construct a maxim to act or, instead, whether the desire and feeling can directly determine one's faculty of desire is widely debated. I agree with Valtteri Viljanen's (2020) position, which supports the possibility that emotions directly determine the agent by bypassing the rational activity of maxim construction. Indeed, Kant appears to state this possibility several times (Cf. KpV, 5:81; Ant, 7:286). The idea that only action based on a maxim can qualify as genuine action is the result, according to Viljanen, of a "tendency in the literature [...] to define human action in terms of rational action" (2020, p. 436).

does not become passion" (Fried, 25:590). However, although affects and passions complicate agents' reflection, they do so differently and agents must resort, as Kant explains, to different methods to prevent and cure these illnesses. Moreover, while affects do not constitute an entirely negative affective phenomenon, passions do.

Kant defines the affect as "the feeling of a pleasure or displeasure in the subject's present state that does not let him rise to reflection," where "reflection" means "the representation by means of reason as to whether he [the subject] should give himself up to it or refuse it" (Ant, 7:251). The affect catches the agent by surprise, acts quickly, and its effect fades quickly but, in doing so, it suspends the mind's composure and may make reflection complicated, if not impossible. Kant considers the case of a rich man whose servant breaks a valuable crystal goblet. The sadness and anger that assail the rich man prevent him from reflecting on what happened. Indeed, sadness and anger, as I show in §3.2, represent the relationship of disagreement between the broken object and the man's faculty of desire, which produces an affective reaction. Thus, the two feelings negatively evaluate the incident and motivate the rich man to behave in a certain way. Nevertheless, if this man were to reflect and compare "this loss to *one* pleasure with the multitude of *all* the pleasures that his fortunate position as a rich man offers him" (Ant, 7:254), he would understand that his sadness and anger are unjustified. However, the moment the agent fails to immediately restore the mind's composure and regulate the growth of the feeling, the latter becomes an affect: the agent "gives himself over completely to this one feeling of pain" (Ant, 7:254). Following other authors, such as Krista Thomason (2017), Melissa Merritt insists on this feature of the affect, which captures the agent's attention through its "claim"—I understand the affect's "claim" to be the evaluative dimension that the representation of the situation-subject relationship and the resulting affect reaction constitute. Indeed, she argues that the agent's mentality is consumed "by the claim of the affect […] so that no other consideration enters in" (Merritt 2021, 345).

That said, Kant, in defining the affect, refers to a "suspended" reflective capacity and the "possibility" of the growth of the affect. In other words, Kant leaves space for the agent to be autonomous by controlling affects and maintaining their mind's composure. Hence, Kant does not altogether condemn this affective phenomenon. On the contrary, agents can relate to affects in ways that would be morally praiseworthy. Indeed, he argues that "the human being manifests greater strength in [a state of] affect, and is of more

significance and power in this state, than if he is cold-headed" (Fried, 25:615). Here Kant emphasizes how the emotionally involved agent possesses greater strength than does the cold agent. He goes on to argue that affects "have something agreeable about them if one is on their edge, so that one is emotional with one foot [hold], but not with the other" (Fried, 25:616). The agent on the edge of an affect is in an "intermediate state between affects and cold-headedness" in which the affect is "subject to the direction of reason, so that it will be kept in the moment" (Fried, 25:616). The courageous agent, for instance, will not be without anxiety, rather they will have the "composure of the mind to take on fear [and anxiety, which is a degree of fear] with reflection" (Ant, 7:256). Therefore, the agent on the edge of an affect and who can relate to it appropriately seems to have more moral value than does the cold-headed agent.

This optimistic reading of affects does not seem plausible for passion, the other illness of the mind. According to Kant, a passion is "a sensible desire that has become a lasting inclination" (MS, 6:408). It is thus a form of desire, particularly an inclination, that is a habitual desire, which the agent has repeatedly satisfied. The first problem is that a passion is an inclination that "prevents reason from comparing it with all the sum of all inclinations in respect to a certain choice" (Ant, 7:265). As a result, the agent becomes ineffective at the practical level because they are blinded by the inclination such that they cannot reflect on the relationship between it and other inclinations. That is, as Anna Wehofsits explains, passion violates "the regulative principle of prudential reason" (2023, p. 1187), a principle that should mediate the relation between the inclination and promoting one's happiness. Moreover, and this constitutes the main reason for its thoroughly negative evaluation, passion is "always connected with [the agent's] reason" (Ant, 7:266). Unlike affects, which act quickly and exhaust their effect immediately, passions takes time and act "like a river that digs itself deeper and deeper into its bed" (Ant, 7:252). Therefore, it can accompany the calmest reflection and, above all, have "the appearance of reason" (Ant, 7:260). Passions are typically human because, by their nature, they interact with the rational capacity of the agent by deceiving and ultimately subjugating it. Indeed, passion "finds its pleasure and satisfaction in a slavish mind" (Ant, 7:267). The agent confuses passion with the result of reflection and then rationalizes the passion by creating a maxim and making morally acceptable the action that has passion as its determining motive. Interestingly, in this case, Kant's account of the decision-

making process is very close to contemporary emotivist theories, such as Haidt's (2001). Indeed, I have shown how, according to Haidt, emotions, to use Kantian terminology, drive the determination of the agent's will with reason providing *post hoc* rationalization for a decision. Likewise, when the agent is in the grip of passions, reason acts like a lawyer making up a case for the goodness of the passion. However, as Merritt notes, the Kantian agent has the "resources needed to recognize the passions as the perversions that they are" (2021, p. 343). These resources derive from the awareness, both conceptual and emotional, of the moral law that the Kantian agent cannot but have.

Through the analysis of feeling, desire, and their particular forms as affects and passions, I have presented the complex emotional life of the Kantian agent. It is now possible to delineate an integrated model of moral cognition within Kant's theory: an agent's emotions have an essential role in one's practical relation to the world, given that they direct and motivate the agent to specific courses of action. These emotions must then interact in a specific way with the rational component of the agent. I believe that this model can satisfy the entry requirements of the contemporary debate. However, before presenting this model, I should dwell on one more aspect of the Kantian agent's emotional life. Indeed, so far, I have analyzed the agent's non-moral emotional life—an integral part of the agent's moral experience, albeit one that has no direct connection to morality (in §5.2, I will explain how this connection can and must be created). However, the Kantian agent can also emotionally interact directly with morality, with the moral principle. In the next chapter, I analyze the moral feeling and the aesthetic experience, which are both essential for the agent, as a human being, to have a full awareness of the moral dimension. In this way, I can better explain the relevance and moral necessity of emotions for Kant's ethics.

4. The Emotional Awareness of Morality

The emotional life of the Kantian agent includes both non-moral affective phenomena, (i.e., phenomena not directly related to moral law and morality in general), as I discussed in §3, and morally relevant affective phenomena. The latter are fundamental to a full understanding of morality for the Kantian agent. Indeed, moral principles must also interact with the emotional component of the Kantian agent to be fully effective.

In this chapter, I first argue for the fundamental role of the feeling of respect in Kant's ethics (§4.1). Then, I analyze the moral value of the aesthetic experience, from the natural predispositions to the receptivity of moral principles in the *Doctrine of Virtue* (§4.2) to the treatment of the feeling of the beauty and sublime in the *Critique of Judgment* (§4.3).

4.1. The Feeling of Respect

The role of the feeling of respect for Kant is a matter of debate, given that the agent already has an awareness of the moral principle as a fact of reason [*Faktum der Vernunft*]. Thus, the moral law is intellectually known to the agent and can motivate them. However, Kant introduces this feeling, giving it a major role. In what follows, I explain why the feeling of respect is relevant for understanding of the authority of morality in finite rational beings, such as human beings.

4.1.1. *The Fact of Reason: A Partial Recognition of the Moral Law*

How is it possible to know the moral law? Kant asks himself this question in the two works that ground his moral theoretical framework, namely, the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. However, since Kant's approach in the two works differ, so do his answers. In particular, the change involves "the relationship between the principle of morality and the freedom of the will, as far as the procedure of justification is concerned" (Landucci 2013, 83). In the *Groundwork*, Kant concludes the reality of the principle of morality from the possibility of the freedom of the will. However, in the second *Critique*, Kant does not consider it possible to follow

this path and, therefore, takes the opposite direction—from the knowledge of the reality of the moral law to the inference of the freedom of the will:

> I ask […] from what our cognition of the unconditionally practical starts, whether from freedom or from the practical law. It cannot start from freedom, for we can neither be immediately conscious of this, since the first concept of it is negative, nor can we conclude to it from experience […]. It is therefore the moral law (KpV, 5:29).

Kant seems to believe that the path he takes in the *Groundwork* is wrong or, at the very least, unsuitable for moving from the freedom of the human being to a strong position on the reality of the categorical imperative. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that freedom was indeed possible but nevertheless problematic, as merely possible (i.e., noncontradictory; KrV, A 445 / B473). To maintain consistency, Kant also argues in the *Groundwork* for the mere possibility of freedom and thus derives the (mere) possibility of the principle of morality from it.

In the second *Critique*, Kant switches strategy and decides to start from the practical principle, arguing that no real foundation for it is possible.[18] He believes that "we become immediately conscious" of the moral law (KpV, 5:29). Then, Kant enunciates the fundamental law of pure practical reason (Cf. KpV, 5:30) and argues that knowledge of this is possible in the same way that we become immediately aware of theoretical pure principles, as we know a postulate:

> Pure geometry has postulates as practical propositions which, however, contain nothing further than the presupposition that one *could* do something if it were required that one should do it […]. Here, however, the rule says: one ought absolutely to proceed in a certain way. […] For, pure reason, *practical of itself*, is here immediately lawgiving (KpV, 5:31).

Therefore, the awareness of the fundamental law of pure practical reason is "a fact of reason, because one cannot reason it out from antecedent data of reason […] and because it instead forces itself upon us" (KpV, 5:31). As a fact of reason that requires no further justification, the moral agent knows the fundamental law of pure practical reason—the

[18] Kant scholars debate the relationship between the deduction of the moral law in *Groundwork III* and the argument in the second *Critique*. In particular, participants are divided between compatibilist and incompatibilist readings of the two arguments. See Bojanowski 2017.

law of the self-legislation of the will. That is, the moral agent knows the possibility of the will determining itself independent of the influence of natural laws and their relationship.

By recognizing the moral law in this way, the feeling of respect has only a motivational role. Therefore, "the conception of the feeling for the moral law presented by Kant should not be understood as an epistemological thesis, i.e., a thesis aimed at explaining how subjects know moral principles" (Bacin 2022, p. 117). The epistemic dimension is exhausted with the knowledge of the moral law as a fact of reason. What remains is how this moral law motivates the agent. Respect plays this motivational role as the only true moral incentive [*Triebfeder*] to action.

However, I believe that this interpretation of the role of respect rests on two problematic theses. The first is the idea that conceptual knowledge of the law of self-legislation of the will is sufficient for recognizing this law as the moral law and categorical imperative, which has priority and absolute authority over empirical motives.[19] On this issue, I agree with Pauline Kleingeld's interpretation of the *Faktum der Vernunft*; she distinguishes the consciousness of the fundamental law of pure practical reason from moral consciousness.

> It is striking and significant that the argument of the first chapter of the Critique of Practical Reason proceeds not in terms of morality and the moral law, but in terms of practical reason and the fundamental practical law […]. It is the consciousness of the fundamental law of pure practical reason that is called a fact of reason (2010, p. 66).

The fact of reason allows the agent to be aware of a rational principle, namely, the fundamental law of pure practical reason. However, something more is required for the human agent, the finite rational being, to understand that principle as a moral principle with absolute authority over principles derived from inclinations to which, precisely because of our finiteness, we also accord value and recognize as (subjectively) good reasons to act.

The second problematic thesis concerns the underlying conception of feeling in Kant as that of a mere brute force, devoid of any cognitive content and that, consequently, is

[19] For instance, Owen Ware argues: "We are […] actually conscious that moral laws provide us with immediate determining grounds of choice, and for that reason we do not need to ask whether our moral consciousness is possible" (2021, p. 55).

incapable of making something known to the moral agent. Contrary to this interpretation, I hold that the experience of the feeling of respect, which does not follow the conceptual recognition of the moral law but occurs simultaneously with it, [20] is fundamental for finite rational beings' acknowledging the authority of this law over inclinations and, thus, for fully understanding the meaning of the concepts of autonomy, duty, and imperative. Accounting for some of Kant's statements in the *Metaphysics of Morals* requires such an interpretation. While discussing moral feeling, Kant argues that "any consciousness of obligation depends upon moral feeling to make us aware of the constraint present in the thought of duty" (MS, 6:399). Thus, truly understanding the concept of duty requires moral feeling. Similarly, Kant points out that the human being "must have respect for the law within himself in order to even think of any duty whatsoever" (MS, 6:403).

It seems that for the moral agent, as a finite rational being—as "an animal endowed with reason" (MS, 6:456)—conceptual knowledge of the moral law is not sufficient for understanding the priority of morality; a concomitant sentimental knowledge of the moral law is also necessary.

4.1.2. *Respect as a Particular Feeling*

For Kant, respect is a particular kind of feeling. Indeed, "even though respect [*Achtung*] is a feeling [*Gefühl*], it is not one received by influence, but one self-wrought by a rational concept and therefore specifically different from all feelings of the former kind" (G, 4:401n). Respect is the only moral feeling and, in particular, is "the consciousness of the subordination of my will to a law" (G, 4:401n). The feeling of respect differs from non-moral feelings in two essential ways.

The first difference is that the object of respect is not external to the agent but internal: this object is the moral law, the fundamental law of pure practical reason, that can by itself determine the agent's will.[21] Therefore, the evaluative content of the feeling of respect concerns the relationship between the moral law and the subject. In the latter's conception resides the second characteristic that distinguishes respect from non-moral feelings. In

[20] "What I recognize immediately as a law for myself I recognize it with respect" (G, 4:402).

[21] Kant argues that "the object of respect is therefore solely the law." Even respect for persons is "actually only respect for the law (of righteousness, etc.) of which he gives us the example" (G, 4:402).

the non-moral feeling, the relation at hand is between the external object and the subjective conditions of life (i.e., the agent understood as 'happiness seeker'). In respect, the relation is between an internal object (i.e., the moral law) and the subject understood as both happiness seeker and rational being. Consequently, the feeling of respect conveys a double relationship and a double evaluation. On the one hand, the agent and their willingness to realize their desires and inclinations (i.e., habitual desires) are considered: "All inclinations together (which can be brought into a tolerable system and the satisfaction of which is then called one's own happiness) constitute regard for oneself" (KpV, 5:73). On the other hand, the agent is regarded as a subject who can determine themself only through the fundamental law of pure practical reason, independently of any individual desire or need.

Respect represents the disagreement in the relationship between the moral law and the desiring subject to the agent: "the moral law [...] infringes without end upon *self-conceit*" (KpV, 5:74), where 'self-conceit' is the term Kant uses to indicate when desire seeks to unconditionally make itself the determining ground of the will. At the same time, there is a relation of agreeable fit between the moral law, considered as the possible determining ground of the agent's will, and the rational nature of the agent. The epistemic function of the feeling of respect is thus to make the agent aware of the relationship between themself, as both a desiring and rational being, and the moral law. Then, this dual representation also affects the agent. As Chad Wellmon rightly claims, respect works analogously to the non-moral feelings and mimics "the pathology of sensibility" (2009, 566). The subject feels pain—*humiliation*—the moment one becomes aware of the disagreement between the moral law and one's inclinations: "the negative effect upon feeling (disagreeableness) is *pathological*" (KpV, 5:75). At the same time, the agent has a positive affective experience in being aware of the possibility of determining oneself through that law autonomously. This positive affective experience is an "elevation of the moral […] esteem for the law itself on the intellectual side" (KpV, 5:79).

Thus, through its cognitive intake and consequent affective reaction, the feeling of respect judges such relationships and enables the agent to fully recognize the value of *personality*, that is, of the "freedom and independence from the mechanism of the whole of nature, regarded nevertheless as also a capacity of a being subject to special laws—namely pure practical laws given by his own reason" (KpV, 5:87). The content of respect

is therefore evaluative, which makes it "the representation of a *worth*" (G, 4:402), that of the moral law. Through the feeling of respect, the agent becomes fully aware of the moral value of the fundamental law of pure practical reason, especially of its superiority and priority over individual inclinations and the principles that develop from them.

Finally, the feeling of respect also has a motivational dimension such that it is "the sole and also the undoubted moral incentive" (KpV, 5:78). Just as non-moral feelings can induce a practical interest in the agent to abandon their current state, respect can do the same and induce a moral interest by motivating the agent to adopt the moral law as the determining motive of the faculty of desire. Indeed, contrary to the interest that the non-moral feeling toward the object creates, the feeling of respect "produces an *interest* in compliance with the law which we call *moral* interest" (KpV, 5:80). The desire for the object is thus subordinated to the authority of the moral law, which evaluates the form of that desire. Thereby, through respect, the moral law imposes itself as the determining motive of the faculty of desire. Such is the reason why respect is "a crucial element in Kant's new manifesto about the efficacy of reason" (Bagnoli 2020, p. 145) for finite moral agents like human beings; practical reason is effective because of respect.

Given this description of the experience of respect, how could one summarize its role within the agent's moral deliberation? Some Kantian scholars go so far as offering a thesis that overlaps the feeling of respect with the determination of the agent's will, that is with moral judgment.

For instance, Anastasia Berg maintains that "a coherent interpretation of Kant's account of moral respect requires recognizing the *identity* of the conscious determination of the will and the feeling of moral respect" (2021, p. 740). Berg defends this interpretation by citing passages in which Kant appears to affirm this identity, such as "the immediate determination of the will by the law and the consciousness of this is called *respect*" (G, 4:402). However, Kant clearly explains that the object of respect is only the moral law. In the next part of the sentence that Berg quotes, Kant states that respect "is viewed as the effect of the law on the subject and not as its cause" (G, 4:402). A more correct reading of this passage would show Kant's concern about reminding the reader that respect is a feeling in relation to a law that it does not cause, a law that can determine the will of the agent without any mediation by other motives arising from inclinations.

Even though Berg ends with a different conception of the nature of feeling in Kant, she and DeWitt both accept the identity between the feeling of respect and moral judgment. Indeed, DeWitt understands the feeling in Kant as an action-initiating evaluative judgment. Having thus defined the nature of feeling in general, she maintains that the feeling of respect evaluates the relation between an object and "the subject's *spiritual* or *rational life*" (DeWitt 2014, p. 47) to which the moral law is necessarily linked. The object of evaluation cannot be a physical object or empirically conditioned thing, since these relate to the agent's desiderative and animal life, not their rational life. Consequently, "the objects of the higher feelings must be internal to the activity of the will—i.e., they must be general concepts of action" (DeWitt 2014, p. 50). DeWitt takes into consideration the concept of truthfulness: "when truthfulness determines the will, it increases the will's universal law-giving activity (by being an instance of that activity), and so furthers the subject's spiritual life. As a result, truthfulness is judged to be morally good" (2014, p. 51).

However, Berg and DeWitt seem to overlook the passages in which Kant denies the possibility that respect can serve or coincide with moral judgment or deliberation. For instance, in the second *Critique*, Kant points out that respect "does not serve for appraising actions and certainly not for grounding the objective moral law itself" (KpV, 5:76). Similarly, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, he argues that "respect (*reverentia*) is, again, something merely subjective, a feeling of a special kind, not a judgment about an object that it would be a duty to bring about or promote" (MS, 6:402). Consequently, readings that tend to identify respect with deliberation or moral judgment fail to remain faithful to the Kantian texts.

What does the agent achieve through respect? They acquire knowledge of a value, that of the moral law, and awareness of its authority over them. In fact, the agent is immediately aware of the fundamental law of pure practical reason by its being a fact of reason, but they become fully aware of its absolute value and authority through the feeling of respect, which acts on an epistemic-evaluative dimension—with the representation of the relationship between the law and the subject, which affects the subject—and on a consequent motivational dimension, which makes that moral law the only possible moral

incentive.[22] Therefore, the agent is aware that they are *overdetermined*—exposed to several motives involved in the determination of their will. Along with the feeling of respect, the superiority of the motive of practical reason and the consequent subordination of selfish motives are added to this awareness.[23] The concepts that participate in the normative structure of Kant's ethics acquire meaning and authority for the moral agent *qua* finite rational being only through this experience.

In the next section, I show how this experience of the relation to the law and the consequent awareness of its value and authority unveils the normative structure of Kant's ethics to the agent.

4.1.3. *Unveiling Normativity*

Having described the experience of respect, I can begin to show how such an experience is necessary for the concept of duty to emerge. Indeed, as I mention in §4.1.1, Kant argues that the agent "must have respect for the law within himself in order to even think of any duty whatsoever" (MS, 6:403). The feeling of respect seems to be a necessary condition for the concept of duty to become clear in its structure and, in turn, "to unravel the concept of a will to be highly esteemed in itself and good apart from any further purpose" (G, 4:397). Kant goes so far as to define duty itself as "the necessity of an action from respect for the law" (G, 4:400). Through respect, the subject becomes fully aware of the superiority of the moral law and the impossibility of attaining a will that is "good absolutely and without limitation" (G, 4:402) by determining itself through motives that come from inclinations. Thus, what Kant in the second *Critique* calls the fundamental principle of pure practical reason appears for the first time in the *Groundwork*, in the form of duty and constraint, with the verbal form "ought": "I ought never to proceed except in

[22] Without relying on a precise interpretation of the nature of feeling in general and, therefore, limiting himself to the analysis of respect alone, Michael Walschots (2022) also acknowledges the presence of this dual—cognitive and motivational—dimension. He defines respect as altogether a "cognitive attitude," a form of recognition, and a "feeling" that "functions as a motive and incentive" (2022, p. 263). However, it is not clear whether this cognitive dimension is also present in the nature of feeling in general, as is the case with my interpretation.

[23] For a comprehensive resume of the debate on the overdetermination of the will in Kant, see Borges (2019, pp. 8-13). I agree with Borges' interpretation, which sustains the possibility that multiple motives coexist in the process of the determination of the will. To have an action that has moral value, the moral law must be the determining motive—must be the motive that subordinates all others and that alone would be able to determine the agent's will entirely.

such a way *that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law*" (G, 4:402).

When, because of the feeling of respect, the moral imposes itself as superior to other selfish motives present in the process of determining will, it appears as a *command*, as "the representation of an objective principle in so far as it is necessitating for a will" (G, 4:413). It appears in the formula of the imperative, expressed by an *ought*.

The formulations of the categorical imperative have this content because the agent recognizes the absolute value and authority of the law present in oneself and *every other agent*. Indeed, the feeling of respect does not only have a *vertical* dimension (i.e., recognition of an authority internal to the subject, the moral law) but also presents a consequent *horizontal* dimension that recognizes this value as something present in every finite rational being. This fundamental power, whose value we understand as finite rational beings through respect, is present in every human being.[24] Its awareness gives meaning to the content of the three formulations of the categorical imperative. In fact, the first formula—that of the universalizability of the maxim—can be interpreted as a formula for the communicability of reasons that requires "acknowledging the 'practical space' that belongs to the other" (Spinosi 1998, p. 111). In other words, the first formula involves the recognition of the absolute value of other people and the inferiority of selfish motives, which may lead the agent to create an exception to the rule just for themself. Even in the third formula—that of the kingdom of ends—the relational element is distinctly present in the value given to this "systematic union of various rational beings through common laws" (G, 4:433). The second formula has the clearest connection with respect, so much so that it could be renamed the formula of *respect for humanity*. Obviously, there is no duty to respect people because Kant, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, considers such a duty impossible.[25] There is, however, a duty not to treat people as mere means, which derives from the absolute value we give to the person through the feeling of respect.

In general, the very concepts of autonomy and heteronomy have the form they do only because of the recognition of the superiority of the moral law and the possibility of the

[24] For an analysis of this relational recognition through the feeling of respect, see Mordacci 2024.

[25] "There can be no duty to have moral feeling or to acquire it; instead every human being (as a moral being) has it in him originally" (MS, 6:399).

agent to determine themself through it regardless of their inclinations. Therefore, the autonomy of the will is "the characteristic of the will by which it is a law to itself […]. The principle of autonomy is thus: not to choose in any other way than that the maxims of one's choice are also comprised as universal law in the same willing" (G, 4:440). Instead, were the relationship between the motive of law and inclinations reversed in favor of the latter, the agent's will would be heteronomous. Autonomy is nothing more than the agent's ability to determine a specific relationship with their own finiteness. Bagnoli explains that "autonomy is not a denial of our dependent and relational nature […]. It is a practical response to the many ways we are dependent, rooted, and situated" (2007, p. 125). An awareness of the superiority of the moral law over inclinations and non-moral feelings guides this practical response.

Thus, the agent can fully understand the fundamental concepts of the normative structure of Kant's ethics only after acquiring the awareness of the moral law's authority and consequent priority. However, the agent, as a human being—as a finite rational being—needs the experience of the feeling of respect to fully recognize this value over the other motives that they consider good. Only with respect can the human being fully understand the superiority of the *good in itself* over the *good for something* (Cf. KpV, 5:57-68).

4.1.4. *Kant and the Psychopaths*

As I discussed in §2.1.2, some participants who initiated the affective turn in the moral cognition debate maintain the necessity thesis, the view that emotions are necessary for the typical development of the agent's moral competence.

The existence of psychopaths, who exhibit a deficit in their moral competence, provides support for the thesis because its proponents show that psychopaths have an emotional deficit. However, as already mentioned, authors such as Maibom emphasize the co-presence of a deficit in the agent's rational capacities. As a result, Maibom argues that "although psychopathy supports sentimentalism, it does not speak against rationalism" (2005, p. 238). Nevertheless, rationalist theories must acknowledge the relevance of emotions to the agent's moral competence, particularly for the distinction between moral norms and conventional norms (Nichols 2004).

I believe that Kant's treatment of the role of the moral feeling of respect can account for the connection between emotional and moral deficits in psychopathic subjects. Kant repeatedly highlights the emotional dimension's importance for one's relationship to morality; he goes so far as to state that an agent who lacks moral feeling should be considered "morally dead" (MS, 6:400). The agent who does not feel respect is unable to know the law of pure practical reason as the moral law, to appreciate its authority, and to place it as the determining motive of their will, subordinating the empirical motives to it. As a matter of fact, the awareness of obligation proceeds through the emotional effect that the moral law has on the agent. Consequently, it is possible to explain the psychopath's inability to distinguish between moral and conventional norms. The psychopath does not feel the absolute worth of the moral norm over conventional ones.

Therefore, Kant's ethics proves to be extremely effective in accounting for the moral development of the agent and the reasons that lead particular subjects, such as psychopaths, to have deficits in their moral competence. The Kantian agent's moral development includes the development of one's rational capacities to set ends and decide the respective means and, most importantly, the development of the ability to relate critically to these. At the same time, the emotional component is crucial in developing the agent's awareness of the authority and superiority of the moral law and, therefore, in making possible the resulting distinction between moral norms and conventional norms. Kant thus, in his account of moral development, accounts for the necessary role of both rational and emotional components in a way that is close to how it is done in the contemporary debate.

That said, the feeling of respect is not the only way the Kantian agent relates emotionally to their moral dimension.

4.2. The Natural Predispositions on the Side of Feeling

Respect is the feeling by which the moral agent, as a finite rational being, acquires full awareness of the authority of the moral law. However, Kant does not limit the agent's emotional relationship with the moral dimension to respect, since, in the *Doctrine of Virtue*, he mentions four "moral endowments" (MS, 6:399) that "only follow from consciousness of a moral law, as the effect this has on the mind" (MS, 6:399). According to Kant, there is no duty to have these moral endowments, since they are natural

predispositions that human beings as moral beings cannot fail to have and that allow them to be "affected by concepts of duty" (MS, 6:399). Kant defines them as "*ästhetische Vorbegriffe*," which Mary Gregor translates as "predispositions on the side of *feeling*." However, according to Guyer, it is more appropriate to translate the passage as "aesthetic preconditions," given that Gregor's translation might lead one to consider all four moral endowments as feelings. In contrast, his translation points more generally to "phenomenal feelings or effects on feeling […] that play a causal role […] in the actual transition from mere concepts of duty to the performance of action" (2010, p. 137). These four moral endowments and aesthetic preconditions are moral feeling, respect, love of human beings, and conscience.

Kant's discussion of moral feeling and respect largely echoes what he says about respect as the only moral feeling in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*. However, two interesting elements are worth noting. First, in the section on moral feeling, Kant repeats that, for all four natural predispositions, there can be no obligation to have such feelings and instead people have an obligation to cultivate the predispositions. Indeed, Kant deems it necessary to strengthen the feeling "through wonder at its inscrutable source" (MS, 6:400). In other words, Kant believes that the moral agent can work on one's feelings, particularly one's moral feelings, to strengthen them and make them more efficient.[26]

Second, in his brief discussion of respect [*reverentia*], Kant aims to focus on the issue of self-esteem; recognizing the absolute value of the moral law within oneself necessarily requires recognizing one's own absolute value and, therefore, feeling respect "for his own being" (MS, 6:403). For Kant, this characterization of self-oriented respect is crucial and reveals to the agent the moral necessity of duties to oneself. Once again, the feeling of respect allows the agent to access the full understanding of moral obligation, in this case of duties to oneself.

As for love, Kant emphasizes that no one can be forced to feel love: "*Love* is a matter of *feeling* [*Empfindung*], not of willing, and I cannot love because I *will* to, still less because I *ought* to (I cannot be constrained to love); so a *duty to love* is an absurdity"

[26] I will explain in §5.2 how this process of regulation, to use a contemporary term, and cultivation can, and ought to, be carried out on non-moral feelings as well.

(MS, 6:401). Kant believes that people can be compelled to beneficence, as he argues later in the section on duties to pursue the happiness of others. The feeling of love arises precisely in dealing with the obligation to others. Indeed, Kant rereads in that vein the saying "you ought to love your neighbor as yourself" as meaning "*do good* to your fellow human beings, and your beneficence will produce love of them in you (as an aptitude or the inclination to beneficence in general" (MS, 6:402). The feeling of love is thus the effect that moral duty, particularly that which requires one to be beneficent, has on the agent. The latter feels the value of duty and is motivated to act for others. For, if the feeling of respect reveals the moral necessity of duties to oneself, love reveals that of duties of virtue toward others.

Kant's view of conscience is more complex and is why Guyer finds Gregor's translation of "*ästhetische Vorbegriffe*" as "predispositions on the side of *feeling*" unsuitable: it is not possible to reduce the characterization of conscience to a feeling. Conscience can indeed be a predisposition on the side of feeling but also can be an intellectual predisposition. Kant defines it as "practical reason holding the human being's duty before him for his acquittal or condemnation in every case that comes under a law" and that it affects "moral feeling by its act" (MS, 6:400). In particular, conscience appears to be related to self-knowledge, which Kant believes is the "first command of all duties to oneself" (MS, 6:441), and consists of the exercise of self-examination that the agent must do on one's own actions.[27] That said, conscience serves as an inner judge, an "*internal court in the human being*" (MS, 6:438), that monitors whether the agent has submitted their judgment to practical reason (Cf. MS, 6:400). If the agent does not, conscience condemns the agent by making one suffer; otherwise, it relieves one from the anxiety. Thus, conscience works as a control mechanism, which has both affective and intellectual characteristics, over the agent's ability to resort to moral judgment for one's actions. As Thomas Hill writes, "the particular offense of which conscience accuses us is the failure to undertake seriously and carry out diligently a moral appraisal of our acts" (2002, p. 302).

[27] For a more comprehensive account of the relationship between conscience and self-knowledge in the moral sphere, see La Rocca 2013.

4.3. The Aesthetic Experience: The Beautiful and the Sublime

The feeling of respect and other natural predispositions show that Kant believes such feelings display a direct connection with morality. Of course, Kant is aware that the grounding principle of morality must be sought not in empirical experience but *a priori* through a pure philosophy. As he explains in the introduction of the *Critique of Judgment*, "between the realm of the natural concept, as the sensible, and the realm of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible, there is a great gulf fixed" (KU, 5:175-6). That is, Kant believes it is impossible to move from one realm to another through reason employed in its theoretical use. However, in the practical field, this great gulf can, and must, be filled, since "the concept of freedom is *meant* to actualize in the sensible world the end proposed by its laws" (KU, 5:176). Feelings such as respect are essential in making the transition effective, given that they help the agent *feel* the value of freedom and the need for its actualization. At the same time, again so that one can be aware of one's moral destination, Kant also analyzes the aesthetic experience with the feeling of the beautiful and the sublime. Interestingly, in the experience of these feelings, the agent has no direct contact with the moral law, yet from the sensible experience, from the representation of an external object and its relationship to their mental faculties, the agent can be aware of their moral destination.

As with other feelings, the predicate of the judgment of taste does not give a cognition of the object to the agent. Instead, the judgment, through the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, informs the agent of their relationship with the object. Specifically, with the feeling of the beautiful and sublime, the agent becomes aware of the agreement "of the faculty of presentation, or the imagination, with the *faculty of concepts* that belongs to understanding or reason" (KU, 5:244). In the feeling of the beautiful, the relationship is between imagination and understanding; in the sublime, between imagination and reason. In both cases, one's awareness is connected with delight, which, unlike the non-moral feelings, does not relate to the faculty of desire. Both the feeling of the beautiful and the sublime are thus disinterested.

Kant provides multiple definitions of the feeling of the beautiful that help readers understand its relation to morality; at one point he calls this feeling "the symbol of the morally good" (KU, 5:353). First, Kant states that the feeling of the beautiful expresses a judgment about the object, or the mode of representation, "*apart from any interest*" (KU,

5:211). The delight that arises from the awareness of the relationship between imagination (i.e., the faculty of representation of the object) and understanding is not connected with the faculty of desire and, therefore, is not "concerned with the existence of the thing" (KU, 5:204). However, an inherent causality is still present and related to the preservation of the state in which the agent finds themself. Indeed, Kant argues that "we *dwell* on the contemplation of the beautiful because this contemplation strengthens and reproduces itself" (KU, 5:222). There is, nevertheless, no connection with an end, and the agent is free in their aesthetic relationship with the object they judge as beautiful. Precisely because of this independence from any interest in the object and the absence of "personal conditions to which his own subjective self might alone be party" (KU, 5:211), the agent has reason to hold that this judgment, this delight, should be shared by every other person. Indeed, while other non-moral feelings judge something as "agreeable *to me*" (KU, 5:212), the beautiful involves "a claim to validity for everyone" (KU, 5:212). This claim, however, does not express an objective universality based on a concept but rather a subjective universal validity. The beautiful, says Kant, is that which pleases universally, and the agent "demands" (KU, 5:213) this agreement from everyone. To justify this universal validity and consequent necessity, Kant needs a principle. The latter, having to do with feeling, can only be subjective and Kant calls it *common sense*. Now it is possible to introduce "the underlying feeling not as a private feeling, but as a common one" (KU, 5:239), to justify its universal validity and necessity. While Kant scholars debate the proper interpretation of the necessity associated with the feeling of the beautiful, Kant himself calls this necessity a "necessity of a special kind" that "can only be termed *exemplary*": "exemplifying a universal rule which cannot be formulated" (KU, 5:236-7).[28]

Importantly, through the feeling of the beautiful, the agent is connected with the supersensible. They experience a freedom and disinterestedness in the relationship with the object and their mental faculties; this freedom symbolizes the moral freedom and disinterestedness that one experiences with the feeling of respect. As Weijia Wang explains, "in both representations of beauty and morality, we experience free lawfulness

[28] For more on the debate on the normativity of aesthetic judgment in Kant, see Feloj 2021.

of our mental faculties, such that both satisfactions are immediate, disinterested, free, and universal" (2018, p. 861).

In contrast, the feeling of the sublime focuses on the relationship between the representation of the object through imagination and reason. It differentiates itself from the feeling of the beautiful already from the object of concern: the mountains ascending to heaven, the deep ravines and torrents raging there. In the sublime, there is "a representation of *limitlessness*, yet with a super-added thought of its totality" (KU, 5:244). In particular, the feeling of the sublime is "bivalent" (Merritt 2018, p. 23), since the agent's mind "is not simply attracted by the object, but is also alternately repelled thereby" (KU, 5:245). Kant describes the delight associated with the judgment as a *negative pleasure*. Then, he distinguishes two kinds of feeling of the sublime, the mathematical and the dynamic. In the mathematical sublime, imagination engages the estimation of the magnitude of the object demanded by reason. Imagination proves itself inadequate to meet that demand, failing and generating a feeling of displeasure. However, in this failure, the agent becomes aware that they possess "a pure and self-sufficient reason, or a faculty for the estimation of magnitude" (KU, 5:258). The judgment of the feeling of the sublime represents "the subjective play of the mental powers (imagination and reason) as harmonious by virtue of their very contrast" (KU, 5:258). In other words, the failure of imagination unveils the consciousness of the unlimited capacity of reason. In the dynamic sublime, the agent relates instead to the power of nature. Nature reveals itself to the agent as might, as a power capable of threatening what one considers important to one's life, such as worldly goods or health. However, the agent can judge nature as fearful but not be afraid of it because of the awareness of "our power [*Kraft*] (one not of nature) to regard as small those things of which we are inclined to be solicitous […] and hence regard its might [*Macht*] (to which in these matters we are no doubt subjugated) as exercising over us and our personality no such rude dominion that we should bow down before it" (KU, 5:262). As with the mathematical sublime, in the contrast with nature, the agent becomes aware of the greatness and power of reason. Reason not only is not dominated by nature but can impose itself on nature to make the agent independent. The feeling of the sublime, therefore, helps the agent acquire awareness of their vocation through an awareness of the absolute value of reason over nature, despite one's experience of the sheer and immense power of nature and our "physical helplessness as beings of nature" (KU,

5:260). Here too, the relationship with the feeling of respect is strong such that Kant describes the latter as the experience of the sublimity of our moral destination (Cf. KpV, 5:88).

In §3 and §4, I have presented Kant's complex conception of the emotional life. The emotional experience is an essential part of the agent's relationship with external reality and the development of their moral capacities. In the next chapter, I show how the interplay between non-moral emotional life and reason in the process of determining the agent's will allows us to develop an integrated model of moral cognition for Kant as well. This model meets both entry requirements of the contemporary debate, namely, the intrinsic presence of emotions and the interaction and their integration with the rational component of the agent.

5. Kant's Integrated Model of Moral Cognition

The Kantian agent's rich emotional life actively participates in the deliberative process. Even in morally relevant cases, the emotional component is essential because it enables the agent to orientate themself within the particular situation. Indeed, the model that emerges from analyzing Kant's works is integrated, since moral decision-making always occurs within the faculty of desire. The good will represents nothing more than a specific relationship between desire, feeling, and reason within the faculty of desire, which is characterized as a *higher* faculty of desire when reason and the moral law ultimately determine it—when it is not "outweighed by any sensible conditions" (KpV, 5:30). However, although the agent is moral when reason imposes itself as the determining motive of the will, affective phenomena participate in the process and cannot be disregarded. The pursuit of happiness and the resulting relationship between objects and the agent is "an unavoidable determining ground of the faculty of desire" (KpV, 5:25). What matters most is how the agent relates to their emotions.

5.1. The Model: The Role of Emotions in Moral Deliberation

Kant's integrated model of moral deliberation begins with a private and subjective moment in which the agent relates to the situation and objects around them. In this moment, their emotional life plays an essential and ineliminable role. In particular, non-moral feelings guide the agent in their relationship with external reality and show them the value that specific objects have. Through non-moral feeling, the agent judges the object, action, or state of affairs, as "good *for something* [...] only in the means to something else" (KpV, 5:59). The object, in fact, enters into a harmonious relationship with the agent's subjective conditions of life. The motivational dimension of the non-moral feeling enables the agent to develop a practical interest in the object, which causes a specific desire. Overall, the first moment of the deliberative process is driven by emotions. These deliver the matter of action, but they do so with an evaluative and motivating contribution. Now, as I explain in §3.3, emotions can directly move the agent to action, given that the desire and non-moral feeling can determine the faculty to desire

and do so independently of the formation of a practical principle (a maxim). The *Groundwork*'s philanthropist adds no further rational consideration to the feeling of compassion and sympathy that moves him to altruistic action: he is determined directly by his emotions (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Emotions directly determine the will.

However, Kant considers it crucial that people avoid a direct determination of the will by the emotions. Indeed, a second phase of deliberation is necessary; in this phase, the emotions (i.e., feeling and desire) interact with reason. In interacting with the emotional component, reason creates a *maxim*, i.e., a subjective rational principle that presents an end, the means for achieving it, and the reasons that justify its adoption. At this moment, then, reason works on the matter of the faculty of desire and, therefore, cannot ignore the work of the emotional component. Kant indeed thinks it is "undeniable that every volition must also have an object and hence a matter" (KpV, 5:34). The process of moral decision-making can be illustrated as follows (Figure 2).

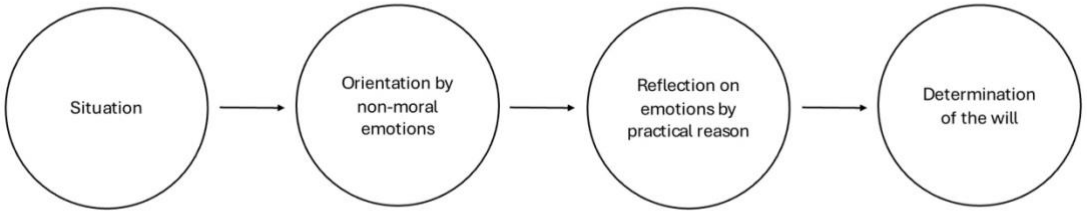


Figure 2. Emotions interact with reason in determining the will

As previously shown, reason can interact in two ways with the matter that results from the work of the agent's emotional life. First, reason can accept the desired object in the practical rule as "the condition of its becoming a principle" (KpV, 5:21). In this case, the determining motive of the moral decision is "the representation of an object and that relation of the presentation to the subject by which the faculty of desire is determined to realize the object" (KpV, 5:21). In other words, reason admits the non-moral desire and feeling as determining motives, as what ultimately justifies the agent's decision. In this way, reason places itself in the service of the emotions and the agent uses it "merely as a tool for the satisfaction of his needs as a sensible being" (KpV, 5:61). Here, reason looks for the best means to satisfy the end justified by emotions. It does not impose itself but rather *counsels* (Cf. G, 4:416) the agent by pointing out that "whoever wills the end also wills […] the indispensably necessary means to it that is in his control" (G, 4:417). However, the determination of the will directly by the emotions or through the interaction of reason in the way just described cannot give any practical law. In both cases, the non-moral feeling ultimately directs the agent. The principle "is thus *objectively* a very *contingent* practical principle, which can and must be very different in different subjects, and hence can never yield a law" (KpV, 5:25). In other words, the agent fails to leave a private and subjective dimension of deliberation, a dimension that is devoid of a direct connection with morality.

The second kind of interaction between reason and emotion is the morally valuable one. Indeed, Kant believes that, for the morality of the action, reason not only interfaces with the material processed by the emotional component but must interface critically with it by using the categorical imperative as the standard of rationality. The agent, through practical reason, sifts both the form and the matter of desire by trying to show the contradiction (or absence of contradiction) in the agent's will. Once the agent engages in this critical examination, the subjective maxim can now give itself as an objective and universally valid principle (i.e., as a practical law): practical reason imposes itself in this case as the determining motive, since it ultimately justifies the agent's decision. Maxims built in this way "*are fit for a giving of universal law*" (KpV, 5:27) and constitute by themselves practical laws.

This interaction can account for the role and efficacy of the agent's emotional component to the extent that our emotions sometimes determine our decisions entirely.

Thus, the model satisfies the first requirement of the contemporary debate—that the emotions are intrinsically present in the agent's moral experience. Of course, contrary to proponents of sentimentalist models, Kant believes that reason's involvement in regulating and sifting emotionally processed work is morally necessary. This involvement, however, shows the existence of an integrated model and, at the same time, stresses the efficacy of moral reasoning. Moreover, reason's crucial role does not contradict the various empirical studies that, contrary to Haidt's argument, show the importance and efficacy of critical reflection on emotional experience. As I discuss in §2, much of the contemporary debate considers, in the wake of the most recent empirical investigations, it "essential that we can (at least in principle) detach ourselves from our instinctive and immediate reaction" (De Caro–Marraffa 2016, p. 1695) or, more generally, from our emotional experiences. For instance, studies on emotion regulation show the effectiveness of conscious and controlled reasoning in regulating one's emotions:

> In the context of emotion, controlled processes influence attention to and elaboration of the meaning of a stimulus, as well as the monitoring and reporting of emotion, all of which can change how the emotional value of a stimulus is construed, how we categorize and perceive our affective states, and how they will inform our future behavior. (Helion – Ochsner 2018, p. 300)

As Kant argues, moral reasoning can interact with and change the way we understand and relate to our emotional experiences. This critical reflection permits the possibility that the agent can freely relate to their emotions and thereby freely determine their will.

This model focuses primarily on the interaction between non-moral feelings and reason. Of course, morally relevant feelings, such as respect or conscience, are fundamental for becoming fully aware of the moral principle that practical reason uses in its examination of desire. Without this emotional awareness of the value of the legislation of reason, reason would be suppressed and likely subordinated to the legislation of non-moral feelings and desires.

5.2. Emotion Cultivation: The Case of Sympathy

The model just outlined illustrates that emotions are essentially present in the moral experience of the Kantian agent and that non-moral feelings orientate the agent in one's relation to the external reality and generate an interest (and thus a desire) for a particular object or state of affairs. Practical reason intervenes through a critical examination of such

material to ensure the transition from the process's subjective and personal dimension to the objective and universally valid one. However, as DeWitt maintains, practical reason not only has the role of a "gatekeeper" (2018, p. 68) that regulates and critically examines the agent's non-moral emotional life. Indeed, practical reason also educates and cultivates the agent's non-moral emotions, particularly their non-moral feelings.

Nevertheless, Kant scholars debate whether Kant allows for the possibility of the cultivation and education of non-moral emotions. I not only argue for the possibility that we can cultivate non-moral emotions but also that doing so is morally necessary. If my argument is correct, then I have offered another step toward a truly integrated model. This constitutes a further step toward a true integration of emotions and reason in the moral experience of the agent. I especially focus on the feeling of sympathy because it is the non-moral feeling that Kant discusses most in his works.

Kant's position on sympathy is not completely clear because of seemingly contradictory stances in several of his works. For instance, as I have shown in §2.3.2, in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant sees no moral worth in an action performed out of only sympathy. The philanthropist, who acts through sympathy alone, can only act at most in *conformity with duty* but never *from duty*. By contrast, if the philanthropist loses all the drive to participate emotionally in the suffering of others but still acts because he must do so, then his action will regain its moral value. As I have argued, Kant is not calling for the exclusion of emotions and feelings from the deliberative process. He seems to be arguing, however, for a view in which emotions cannot give or add any moral worth to the action and in which, on the contrary, they may pose a danger to the agent's autonomy. That is, Kant is concerned about the risk of losing touch with the awareness of the moral necessity of an action when the agent determines oneself from sympathy alone. A morally valid action for Kant is one whose maxim, whose subjective principle, can be "fit for a giving of universal law" (KpV, 5:27). However, only recourse to practical reason and the moral law—and not the emotions—can establish the moral validity of the maxim.

But Kant's comments in the *Doctrine of Virtue* seem to contradict his position in the *Groundwork*, given that he argues that one has a duty to sympathize actively with the fate of others (Cf. MS, 6:457). He calls this duty the "duty of *humanity* (*humanitas*) because a human being is regarded here not merely as a rational being but also as an animal

endowed with reason" (MS, 6:456). Then, he also holds that agents must cultivate sympathy to achieve what the "representation of duty alone might not accomplish" (MS 6:457). It seems, therefore, according to Kant, that sympathy plays an important role in the fulfillment of the *duty of love* such that its cultivation is morally required.

Offering a reading that integrates these positions is difficult, but one could follow one of two strategies. The first is the *emotion-control strategy*, which is based on an understanding of the nature of sympathy and its relation to reason in terms of the *Groundwork* philanthropist's example. Thomason, for instance, argues that emotions are essential but animalistic features of human psychology, emphasizing their unreliability. Thus, emotions cannot be cultivated and the Kantian agent must seek to *control* them and develop "the right orientation toward them" (2017, p. 458).

Instead, I opt for a second strategy, the *emotion-cultivation strategy,* and argue for the possibility of cultivating sympathy in a way that accounts for the risks of dealing with sympathy present in the *Groundwork* and the moral relevance of sympathy in the *Doctrine of Virtue*. My aim is not only to argue for the possibility of cultivating sympathy but also that doing so is a *moral requirement*. Moreover, I believe this requirement can be grounded in Kant's texts, without needing to find arguments external to his theory, as many Kant scholars do (Baxley 2010). Specifically, I argue in favor of a *reformative* view of the cultivation of sympathy where the process of cultivation by practical reason takes part in the "gradual reform" of "the way of sensing" (Rel, 6:48) that contributes, in general, to the development of *moral character* and, in particular, to the actual fulfillment of specific duties.

In what follows, I support my thesis by, first, presenting and critical assessing the emotion-control strategy, particularly Thomason's argument about the impossibility of the cultivating sympathy and emotions in general. My goal is to show that an additional moment enriches Kant's integrated model: the agent can and should, through their reflexive capacities, educate their emotions, such as sympathy, so that they can be more effective and actively contribute to the morality of the action.

5.2.1. *The Emotion-Control Strategy and Its Limits*

Thomason argues against the emotion-cultivation strategy, which many authors support (Baron 1995; Sherman 1997) and maintains that "Kant can coherently reject

emotional cultivation and at the same time attribute a positive role to emotions" (Thomason 2017, p. 442). In this way, she offers an account of the emotions that emphasizes their unruliness and the impossibility of cultivating them but, simultaneously, distances herself from a cold interpretation of the Kantian agent. As she sees it, emotions should not be eradicated because they have a positive—but limited—role to play in the state of animality of the first human beings.[29] Nevertheless, they cannot be cultivated.

5.2.1.1. Reading Emotions Through Affects

The ground of Thomason's version of the emotion-control strategy lies in her specific understanding of the nature of sympathy and emotions in general. Indeed, a fundamental claim of her view concerns her suggestion to *describe the nature of emotions, and thus also of sympathy, through an analysis of affect*. She argues that emotions "command our attention" (2017, p. 452) and consequently make it difficult for one to maintain one's inner freedom (i.e., rational control over one's actions), the ability of "being one's own master (*animus sui compos*) and ruling oneself (*imperium in semetipsum*)" (MS 6:407).

Thomason draws on Kant's analysis of affects, although affects are only one of the mental states that he traces back to the agent's emotional life. As I have shown in §3.4, Kant believes that being subject to affects is "an illness of the mind" (Ant, 7:251) since they oppose the sovereignty of reason. Indeed, affect [*Affekt*] "makes [reflection] impossible or more difficult" (MS, 6:407), and by "reflection" he means "the representation by means of reason as to whether he [the agent] should give himself up to it or refuse it" (Ant, 7:251).

Thomason herself is aware that affects are only "subsets" (2017, p. 452) of the more general category of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. So, importantly, she generalizes Kant's negative reading of affects and extends it to feelings. That is, she offers a specific characterization of the nature of emotions in general. On Thomason's reading, *both* affects and feelings "challenge our ability to abstract," to freely relate with a representation, "because they command our attention" (2017, p. 454). If affects *totally*

[29] Thomason (2017) uses "emotion" in a narrower way than I do. In particular, she excludes desire and considers only *Affekt* and *Gefühl*.

preclude the possibility of reflecting on them and their objects, emotions in general do not necessarily make reflection impossible but certainly "make it *difficult*" (2017, p. 454).

This negative reading of emotions as being generally animalistic, unruly, and unresponsive to reflection leads Thomason to the heart of the emotion-control strategy: *according to Kant, we cannot cultivate emotions but we can and should seek to control them*. As I am about to explain, Kant understands cultivation as a kind of refinement of the human being's natural faculties and predispositions (Cf. MS, 6:387). So, if one can cultivate one's emotions, the emotions must be open to being the object of reflection and to the work of practical reason. No such possibility emerges from Thomason's reading of the emotions.

To support her reading, Thomason notes that Kant often resorts to language that involves controlling and disciplining and not cultivating the emotions. For instance, Kant does define *virtue* as the "*strength* of [the agent's] resolution in conflict with powerful opposing inclinations" (MS, 6:477). Given this framing, Thomason argues that Kant does not ask whether the agent can cultivate their sympathy but rather how they should control it and other emotions and, in general, "develop the right orientation toward them" (2017, p. 458).

But what about passages in which Kant directly refers to a duty to cultivate our sympathy? In section §35 of the *Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant calls for the cultivation of sympathy, saying that the agent must expose themself to situations in which sympathy may be aroused and, therefore, one should not "avoid the places where the poor who lack the most basic necessities are to be found but rather to seek them out" (MS, 6:457). According to Thomason, in this passage, Kant is not prescribing the cultivation of sympathy but rather responding to a "stoic-minded" reader who, while sharing Kant's concern that sympathy can blind us to what is morally significant, might conclude that we should eradicate natural sympathy. Instead, Kant is asking us not to "try to get rid of them [the emotions] or see them as a burden" (Thomason 2017, p. 446). Hence, we should not shy away from our duty to help others in distress just to avoid these emotions. We should, instead, seek out the places where we cannot but feel sympathy or compassion and then control those emotions through reason.

I suggest that Thomason's solution of controlling sympathy and developing the right orientation toward sympathy can be traced back to *discipline*, a specific emotion

regulation strategy. Indeed, with discipline [*Disciplin*], Kant intends "the constraint of inclination in accordance with rules" (Fried, 25:651). Discipline is the moral agent's ability to exercise control over their emotions through reason and the moral law: "By this we must seek to master and compel all our sensory actions, not by prudence, but in accordance with the moral laws" (LE, 27:360). The distinction between *sentimentality* and *sensitivity* (Cf. Ant, 7:236) is fundamental here: the sensitive person, unlike the sentimental one at the mercy of one's emotions, has the power and ability to allow or prevent their emotions from influencing the determination of their will. The sensitive agent, according to Thomason, "has the strength of mind to know that her anger will influence her response because it marshals our attention" and therefore "directs her attention away from her anger" (2017, p. 458); they can discipline their emotions to maintain the proper value chain of motives for action, subordinating empirical ones to that of duty.

5.2.1.2. Assessing Thomason's View

I agree that disciplining the emotions is crucial for Kant. I would also add, and I think Thomason would agree, that such discipline is *morally necessary* if we are to act *from duty*. Indeed, the human being, for Kant, is a *finite rational being* who has an emotional life. What matters for acting morally is, as Thomason correctly points out, having the right orientation toward one's emotions. Kant's philanthropist performs a morally worthless action not because sympathy is present within the network of motives that determine his will but because sympathy is the determining one and subordinates all his other motives to it. Discipline allows the agent to avoid this subjugation by maintaining control over their emotions and recognizing the authority of reason. Without discipline, the agent fails to follow any rules and becomes the "plaything" (LE, 27:362) of their emotions, which determine their will. The agent can thus at most act *in conformity with duty* but never *from duty*, since the latter requires the subordination of emotional and empirical motives to that of duty and reason. Indeed, the integrated model I propose shows the importance and necessity of practical reason in regulating and disciplining emotions: only in this way is it possible to move from the private dimension to the universally valid one.

Although I believe that disciplining emotions is necessary for acting morally, I maintain that Thomason is wrong to argue that this is the *only* way practical reason relates to emotions. Practical reason can also cultivate emotions, particularly sympathy. However, one should understand the nature of emotions, such as sympathy, in a different way than Thomason does (i.e., as animalistic and unreliable). Thus, a reading based on the more general category of feeling [*Gefühl*] better characterizes Kant's view.

As I have pointed out in §3.4, affects are one kind of feeling and Kant never claims that the feeling makes the agent's reflexive activity impossible. Feelings orientate agents in their practical relation to the objects of external reality. This orienting through feeling is not necessarily in conflict or discontinuous with practical reason and reflection. Consider anxiety, which is the "fear concerning an object that threatens an undetermined ill" (Ant, 7:255): when one experiences anxiety toward a particular event, anxiety may lead one to a state of passivity that prevents one from acting or, worse, causes one to act inconsistently with one's deliberate judgments. However, anxiety may also motivate one to critically reflect by, perhaps, focusing one's attention on relevant elements in the circumstances. If feeling were to make reflection impossible for the agent, Kant would not have a valid reason for attributing some feelings an active and positive role, even for moral agents who have fully developed rational capacities. Melissa Fahmy (2010) shows, for instance, that Kant not only claims that the agent must perform their duty to another person but that they must "practice all duties toward him *gladly*" (KpV, 5:83) with a positive, affective orientation. Here, duty is intertwined with the "pursuit and progress toward the [gladly] disposition" (Fahmy 2010, p. 320). The latter seems to be continuous with, and to motivate, reflection rather than oppose it. Similarly, in the *Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant couples the duties of beneficence and gratitude (MS, 6:452-6) with two emotional dispositions, namely benevolence and the grateful disposition called appreciativeness. These feelings are compatible with reflection as well as mental states that have a positive role: they participate in making the agent's action virtuous.

Affects themselves do not always oppose practical reason; rather, as I show in §3.4, they also have a positive role that is continuous with the agent's reflexive capacities. Indeed, according to Kant, the agent on the edge of affect is in a better state than the cold-headed one. The courageous agent is not without fear and anxiety: rather, they relate to fear and anxiety in a morally good way. The morally relevant point is thus always how

the agent relates to emotions. Affects, as kinds of feelings, tend to orientate the agent in their practical relation to the object. Contrary to what Thomason argues, the moral neutrality of Kant's description of feelings can explain both the moral requirement that practical reason disciplines one's feelings and the creation of space for other strategies, such as cultivation.

Given these elaborations of Kant's account, one can see why Thomason's reading fails to capture the positive contribution that emotions bring to an agent's deliberation process. According to Thomason, the emotions' only positive role is as "surrogates for reason" (2017, p. 455) when reason is not yet strong enough within the agent. Such emotions remain "with us even after reason develops" (2017, p. 456) and thus reason and emotion may sometimes be harmonious, as happens when an agent is on the edge of affect. This, for Thomason, does not add any value to the agent and the morality of their action. However, in the example of the agent on the edge of an affect and the others cited above, Kant seems to recognize a particular value in the harmonious connection between reason and emotion.

Certainly, disciplining emotions is crucial for maintaining control and the authority of reason. Nonetheless, the reading based on feelings, as well as the value that Kant seems to give to a harmonic relation between reason and emotions, allows us to account for the possibility of cultivating emotions, particularly sympathy. In §35 of the *Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant directly refers to the cultivation of sympathy. It would be a mistake to read this section downplaying Kant's demand for cultivation, as Thomason does with the stoic-minded move, or interpreting it as a demand for discipline. Kant has a specific account of cultivation, one that is distinct from his account of discipline.

On that note, the strategy of *cultivation* [*Cultur*] must be distinguished from discipline as a way of constraining emotions by the moral law.[30] I propose a *reformative* view of cultivation. When Kant refers to the duty of seeking one's own perfection, he argues that this duty necessitates cultivating one's faculties and natural predispositions to rise "from the crude state of his nature, from his animality [...] more and more toward humanity"

[30] In the *Anthropology Friedländer*, Felicitas Munzel uses "to cultivate" to translate both the German *Cultur* and the Latin *excolere,* which Kant adopts as the verb *excoliren*.

(MS, 6:387). According to this view of cultivation, the agent can develop one's natural and non-moral feelings into more refined and morally oriented ones.

5.2.2. *A Reformative View of Sympathy Cultivation*

That feelings do not in themselves preclude the agent's ability to reflect and that, on the contrary, they often cooperate with reason in the performance of certain duties, opens the possibility for their cultivation—a point others have noted. However, the thesis I argue for is not just that we have the *possibility* to cultivate sympathy but that we are *morally required* to do so. Moreover, contrary to others, I show how this fits within Kant's overall view.[31] To begin, one ought to consider a different interpretation of Kant's account of moral development than the one Thomason holds; she maintains that, to fully realize morality, agents must merely learn to control their emotions so that they always act by ultimately determining themselves through reason and duty. I intend to propose a characterological reading of Kant's account of moral development, which requires both the control of one's emotions and their cultivation. I will then focus on Kant's conception of cultivation, how we can actually cultivate our emotions, and how this affects the development of moral character.

5.2.2.1. Characterological Reading of Moral Development

Interpreting Kant's ethics as an ethics of virtue or, more accurately, an *ethics of character* suggests that cultivating sympathy is morally required for Kantian agents. As Roberto Mordacci explains, claiming that character is fundamental to Kant's ethics may seem to be an exaggeration to those who consider only his foundational works, namely the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*. However, considering works such as the *Doctrine of Virtue* and the *Anthropology*, "an image of ethics emerges as the cultivation of character" (Mordacci 2021, p. 162). Indeed, in the *Anthropology*, Kant defines character as the "absolute unity of the inner principle of conduct as such" (Ant, 7:295);

[31] Anne Margaret Baxley shares the cultivation strategy and explains why cultivating sympathy has a moral impact on the one's agency. However, she thinks her argument goes "well beyond the direct textual evidence available to us" (2010, p. 163). Among other proponents of the cultivation strategy, Nancy Sherman (1994) also does not bring adequate textual support to her arguments about the moral relevance of cultivated emotions.

that is, character involves the development of harmony, an inner unity of the agent that is marked by the recognized authority of the moral law.[32]

In particular, moral character is what the agent "is prepared to make of himself" (Ant, 7:285). Kant distinguishes between two ways of referring to character: "On one hand it is said that a certain human being has *this* or that (physical) character; on the other hand that he simply has *a* character (a moral character), which can only be one, or nothing at all" (Ant, 7:285). Thus, when we use "character," we refer to the empirical nature of a human being—one's natural aptitudes, temperament, and sensibility. This characterization is morally neutral and serves to indicate "what can be made of the human being [...] what nature makes of the human being" (Ant, 7:292). The agent has no power in choosing their temperament because it is given by nature. Nevertheless, the agent can relate to their nature and work with it. In this way, they can develop a *moral character*.

Many Kant scholars do not properly address the question, "what is involved in developing a moral character?" Kant offers many definitions of moral character. In particular, he argues that moral character requires a specific *Denkungsart*, a specific *way of thinking* or, according to Felicitas Munzel's (2021) translation, a specific *conduct of thought*. In particular, to have a character in the relevant sense, the subject must be able to "bind himself to definite practical principles that he has prescribed to himself irrevocably by his own reason" (Ant, 7:292). The agent who has a moral character can act by aligning their sensible motives with that of moral law and duty; they are able, for example, "to let his desires have a free play or to hold them back" (Fried, 25:437). An internal harmony within the agent is thus achieved that does not require eradicating or the passive subordination of human nature to reason, but rather involves "a genuine, cooperative responsiveness that allows for a single, united effort in realizing moral form" (Munzel 2002, p. 131). Developing this conduct of thought requires the exercise of *discipline* I referred to earlier: "The one who admits discipline and is capable of it, is

[32] While some may be unimpressed by these references to Kant's anthropological work, it is worth noting, as some authors do (Wolff 1973; Louden 2011), that the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique* also include references to character's centrality. These authors focus on the fact that the *good will* presents a deep relationship with the faculty of desire and therefore with the emotional life of the agent. They argue that to have a good will, the agent must reach a specific unity between practical reason and their emotional life. I argue for such a view of the will in §3.3.

already good. True, bad character is a lack of the capacity to act according to principles" (Fried, 25:651).

However, I maintain that moral character requires both the development of such conduct of thought and the development of a specific *Sinnesart*, a specific *way of sensing* or a "conduct of sensibilities" (Munzel 2021, p. 102). In particular, the determination of the agent's moral character "depends not on his drives and desires, but rather solely on the manner *in which he modifies these*" (Fried, 25:438). In a similar vein, Barbara Herman argues that, according to Kant, the development of the human being has always been "reason-responsive" and not merely "reason-following" (2007, p. 9). Agents must develop more than a firm conduct of thought through discipline. The emergence of such "rational musculature" (Herman 2007, p. 10) must be followed and accompanied by modifications to one's sensibility. Kant makes this point clear when he calls for a necessary, "gradual reform for the way of sensing" (Rel, 6:47). The cultivation of feelings, such as sympathy, and, in general, of natural character is thus part of the reform of the way of sensing necessary for the development of *moral* character. This reform aims at a human nature shaped by reason and raises the agent from animality toward humanity (Cf. MS, 6:387), which is what Kant means when he states that the moral law "is to furnish the sensible world, as a sensible nature (in what concerns rational beings), with the form of […] a supersensible nature, though without infringing upon the mechanism of the former" (KpV, 5:43). Kant's moral project aims at a harmonious unity between nature and reason, where the latter is realized in the former through nature's transformation.

5.2.2.2. Kant's (General) Process of Cultivation

In the *Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant argues for the duty to cultivate the natural faculties and predispositions "for furthering ends set forth by reason" (MS, 6:391). Indeed, he believes that the agent, as far as their natural perfection is concerned, must structure their maxims according to this law: "Cultivate your powers of mind and body so that they are fit to realize any ends you might encounter" (MS, 6:392). By connecting this to the notion of moral character that requires a specific way of sensing, one can see that such cultivation should be understood as part of the reform of the *Sinnesart* so that cultivated feelings can work harmoniously with reason. Kant not only hints at this reading of his overall conception of cultivation in the *Doctrine of Virtue* but also develops it in some of his other

writings. In *Anthropology Friedländer*, Kant argues that "the senses must be instructed and cultivated" (Fried, 25:500); the blind person "can cultivate [*excoliren*] his feeling, so that he can distinguish objects well" (Fried, 25:500). Here, the reformative view of cultivation stands out: the blind person can develop their sense of touch to make them responsive to features of reality that they could not usually access. A cultivated sense of touch succeeds in enhancing the agent's experience by also filling the role that was of vision. One ought to consider what Kant says about cultivating the senses as part of a general model that holds for cultivating particular feelings such as sympathy.

Just as in the non-moral cases, through the reform and transformation of feelings, agents can perceive the moral relevance of elements and features of the situation that they would have previously missed. Focusing on sympathy, in §34 and §35 of the *Doctrine of Virtue,* Kant distinguishes between two distinct forms of sympathy, one more immediate and one that calls for higher cognitive effort. Kant names the former *communio sentiendi illiberalis, servilis*, or compassion [*Mitleidenschaft*], given that it is a more instinctual form, in which imagination has a minor role and which amounts to an emotional attunement between agents. Kant believes this type of sympathy is given by nature itself and, therefore, it is something we also share with nonhuman animals (Cf. LE, 29:626): I call this type of sympathy *natural sympathy*. The second type, which Kant calls *communio sentiendi liberalis*, or sympathetic feeling [*Theilnehmende Empfindung*], is cognitively more sophisticated and concerns the "*will* to *share in* others' *feelings*" (MS, 6:456). This form of sympathy is the *active sympathy* that is nothing more than *natural sympathy cultivated by practical reason*.[33] Kant himself points out that this active sympathy "is based on practical reason" (MS, 6:457).[34] There is a kind of symmetry here with the cultivation of natural touch. In fact, just as with cultivated touch the agent becomes responsive to features that they were not previously aware of, through the reform of

[33] Hereafter, I refer to it as active sympathy or cultivated sympathy.

[34] Some Kant scholars believe that, because of the cognitive effort and direct willingness to participate in the feelings of others, the duty of sympathy [*theilnehmende Empfindung*] that Kant discusses is actually a duty to "active participation," which is devoid of any emotional element. However, I agree with Benjamin Vilhauer's (2021) reconstruction; Vilhauer clearly shows that by *theilnehmende Empfindung* Kant means *sympathetische Gefühl* and thus has the feeling of sympathy in mind.

natural sympathy the agent can better direct this feeling to make them do "what the representation of duty alone might not accomplish" (MS, 6:457).

The difference between this cultivation process and discipline, as a mere control process, is evident, even if discipline remains important. Indeed, the practice of discipline is a necessary precondition for cultivation. The two are not mutually exclusive strategies, since to be aware of one's moral duties and the moral law that guides one's cultivating natural feelings, the agent must first establish the right internal orientation and subordination relation between emotions and reason. Indeed, before the agent can work on and cultivate their sympathy, they must first develop the appropriate critical attitude toward it, so that they are aware of the limitations and partialities of sympathy. So, the agent must exercise control over their sympathy, and doing so requires discipline: "It is in this authority that moral discipline consists, and it is the condition under which alone we can perform the duties to ourselves" (LE, 27:360). All emotions, including feelings such as sympathy, must be disciplined. Thereby, agents can avoid that affected condition in which they become the playthings of emotions. Then and only then can one cultivate feelings such that they have a morally relevant role.

But how does the process of cultivation work? In his moral works, Kant does not directly show how the cultivation of emotions should happen. However, in *The Lectures on Pedagogy*, Kant discusses the cultivation of mental faculties.[35] He explains that "the best way of cultivating the mental faculties is to do ourselves all that we wish to accomplish" (Ped, 9:477). This idea consists of, for instance, "carrying out into practice the grammatical rule which we have learned. We understand a map best when we are able to draw it out of ourselves" (Ped, 9:477). After receiving the explanation of a grammar rule or the location of a country on a map, the best way to fully understand and make that knowledge one's own is to put it into practice: composing sentences that contain those grammatical expression or independently drawing a map of the region or country. In other words, "the best way to understand is to do" (Ped, 9:477).

With this insight into the process of cultivation, I also can develop a novel reading of §35 of the *Doctrine of Virtue* and of cultivating feelings in general. There, as I mentioned

[35] On the acknowledgment of the value of this work, which Friedrich Theodor Rink edited and published a year before Kant's death, for expressing Kant's view on education and pedagogy, see Louden (2000, pp. 33-36).

earlier, Kant states that we have a duty to actively sympathize with the fate of others and that, consequently, we have an indirect duty to cultivate those natural sympathetic feelings present in the agent. Kant thus explains that it is a duty "not to avoid the places where the poor who lack the most basic necessities are to be found but rather to seek them out, and not shun sickrooms or debtors' prisons and so forth in order to avoid sharing painful feelings we might be able to resist" (MS, 6:457). Contrary to Thomason's reading, which leaves room for the discipline of sympathy alone, I suggest reading this passage as expressing a kind of cultivation process, similar to what Kant says about learning grammar. Indeed, Kant does not simply ask the agent to expose themself to situations that can stimulate sympathetic feelings but also to do so with the awareness that something morally relevant is at stake, namely, their active participation in the fate of others and, in general, their fulfillment of the duties of love. So, just as Thomason seems to argue, agents must experience such situations and the emotional engagement they arouse and simultaneously be aware of their duty (because their awareness means that they are controlling and disciplining their feelings). However, this opens a possibility for the agent: they can reflect critically on their thinking and sensing. Their reflection may lead them to cultivate their natural sympathy so that, in the future, they will experience sympathy in morally relevant circumstances when they have duties to themself and others. In other words, cultivated sympathy will work harmoniously with reason and thereby participate in the creation of an internal unity typical of moral character. The best way to learn to sympathize with the misfortunes of others and to emotionally recognize their experiences as unjust is to go to those places with the awareness of their moral relevance so to critically inform one's emotional experience.

Through this process of cultivation natural sympathy develops into a morally oriented cultivated sympathy. However, this passage raises a question about how cultivating a morally characterized sympathy is possible without presupposing that natural sympathy has any trace of morality. Aristotelian scholars raise a similar question—the problem of the "moral upbringing gap"—about Aristotle's virtue ethics (Jimenez 2021, p. 6). The question is whether agents are "blank slates" who have a natural sympathy that is estranged from what morality requires, or whether natural sympathy contains some seeds that incline toward morality, as well as other seeds that incline the agent toward different directions. In this regard, Kant repeatedly claims that all natural predispositions "are not

only (negatively) *good* (they do not conflict with the moral law) but are also predispositions *to the good* (they further comply with that law)" (Rel, 6:28). Thus, Kant sides with the latter possibility: natural sympathy contains seeds that predispose our emotions to a relationship with morality. The reflexive work of practical reason allows this connection to be brought to light.

5.2.3. *The Roles of Cultivated Sympathy*

The contribution of cultivated sympathy to the development of moral character justifies the moral necessity of its cultivation. However, cultivation can also be justified on the basis of fulfilling specific duties, particularly those in which cultivated sympathy has an essential role. Indeed, one question that remains unanswered is: are cultivated emotions, such as active sympathy, which are in harmony with the moral law, necessary for the concrete realization of individual moral duties?

The question can be answered affirmatively. I intend to dwell on the motivational and epistemic roles that cultivated sympathy has in fulfilling the end, which is simultaneously a duty, of seeking the happiness of others. Given that Kant does not offer a precise and substantive treatment for the other natural feelings, the following section investigates these roles in the context of cultivated sympathy. However, because Kant's treatment of cultivation is not limited to sympathy but concerns all feelings, other feelings may have these roles as well.

5.2.3.1. The Motivational Role

Active sympathy, cultivated by practical reason, has an essential role in fulfilling the duty insofar as it provides agents with a specific motivation. In particular, it actively participates in fulfilling the general duty to seek the happiness of others and the consequent duties of love, which include the duty of beneficence. Kant derives these duties from the second formula of the categorical imperative, namely, that of humanity as an end in itself: "*So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means*" (G, 4:429). This formula has a negative element that limits agents' freedom, given that people should never be used simply as a means for the satisfaction of further ends. At the same time,

however, Kant emphasizes the positive element of the formula, which requires moral commitment on the agent's part: "For if that representation is to have its *full* effect in me, the ends of a subject that is an end in itself must, as much as possible, also be *my* ends" (G, 4:430). This demand to make others' ends one's own corresponds with the duty to seek others' happiness and thus with the duty of beneficence as the promotion of such happiness without hoping for anything in return (Cf. MS, 6:453). I distinguish two elements: the motivational support that active sympathy gives to the agent when the awareness of duty and its respect is not sufficiently strong, and the harmonic work between active sympathy with the feeling of respect that gives the agent a specific motivational attitude in the realization of certain duties.

When he claims that sympathy can do what "the representation of duty alone might not accomplish" (MS, 6:457), Kant argues that cultivated sympathy can help the agent succeed when duty and respect for it fails: cultivated sympathy can actively participate in the agent's moral motivation. However, it is important to explain what I mean in saying that cultivated sympathy motivates one to act morally: cultivated sympathy does not directly motivate one to action but rather moves the agent to recognize the moral relevance of the situation and thus to ultimately determine oneself through duty and respect for it. This last point has to be clear to avoid what Kant calls "the *impurity* (*impuritas*, *improbitas*) of the human heart"—that is, when the moral law cannot motivate the will by itself but requires "other incentives besides that law in order thereby to determine the power of choice to what duty demands. In other words […] that actions conforming to duty are not done purely from duty" (Rel, 6:30). Kant's concern is that the motive of sympathy could assume so much strength that it is no longer subordinated to the authority of duty but is equal to it. Keeping the proper subordination of the motives that determine the will is crucial for acting from duty and not merely in conformity with it. When duty is not strong enough to provide a motive for the agent, cultivated sympathy reveals the moral relevance of the situation and motivates the agent to rational deliberation. In this way, cultivated sympathy fits into the network of motives present in the agent's determination of the will but remains subordinate to, and indeed helps to recognize, the authority of the moral law and duty.

Even when the agent's awareness of the moral law and its respect is sufficiently strong, cultivated sympathy has a key role in the performance of some duties, for example, the

duty to strive for *friendship*, which Kant defines as the "union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect" (MS, 6:469). From this definition, one can see how natural feelings (in this case, love) and reason in its sensible awareness (respect) co-participate in the realization of duty and, consequently, are both necessary. Love and respect function like the principles of attraction and repulsion: love brings one closer and respect maintains a firm recognition of the other's freedom and, therefore, invites one to keep an adequate distance (Cf. MS, 6:470). Kant's definition of friendship presents further evidence against Thomason's argument that once reason has taken control of the deliberation process, emotions are no longer morally relevant to the agent: love actively participates in the realization of the duty to strive for friendship, to obtain that "good disposition toward each other" (MS, 6:469). Moreover, since friendship consists in "an ideal of each participating and sharing sympathetically in the other's well-being through the morally good will that unites them" (MS, 6:469), friendship involves a harmonic union of sympathetic participation and morality. However, such mutual sympathy must be cultivated and aligned with reason to avoid the risk of interrupting relationships with the other person—"such interruptions are common among uncultivated people" (MS, 6:471).

Sympathy cultivated through practical reason thus takes part in moral motivation both by motivating the agent to recognize the need for moral commitment and rational deliberation in specific circumstances and by providing, together with respect, the proper attitudinal disposition for fulfilling duties, such as that of friendship.

5.2.3.2. The Epistemic Role

From an epistemic point of view, two elements make active sympathy morally relevant for the agent. First, active sympathy enables the agent to access spheres of reality and knowledge that one could not otherwise access. This access becomes essential and constitutive of the process of realizing the duties of love and Kant's demand to make others' ends one's own. Reason and cultivated sympathy work harmoniously to fulfill this demand. Indeed, the agent is aware of the duty to seek others' happiness, which requires making others' ends one's own. In morally relevant circumstances, active sympathy allows the agent to attune their sensibility to that of the other person and access the other person's inner world. Sympathizing is necessary because the agent can benefit the other person "only in accordance with *his* concept of happiness" (MS, 6:454); this calls for

cultivating one's natural sympathetic participation and developing active sympathy, which, with its cognitive effort, allows the agent to imagine oneself "in the other's place" (Fried, 25:575).

Second, active sympathy also reveals the moral relevance of others' experiences or situations so that the agent appropriately weighs them in the process of determining their will. Sympathy, as a feeling, orientates the agent in their practical relation to the object, focusing their attention on, and giving value to specific elements in the situation. In section §35 of the Doctrine of Virtue, Kant describes active sympathy as helping the agent perceive the *moral* relevance in that context (i.e., perceive the moral relevance of the poor and sick's suffering). In his lectures on anthropology, Kant emphasizes the value of this ability to perceive the injustice of others' conditions through sympathy.

> If someone has become unhappy, then I may well feel sorry for him, but *if someone is offended, if his right has been violated, then I sympathize* with anger toward the other. *Those who do not have such sympathy, do not highly value the right of other human beings*. Sympathizing with a misfortune, where many thousands have become unfortunate, is not necessarily the same as if one single person had suffered injustice. (Fried, 25:606, my italics)

Such sympathy that captures the injustice that another experiences can only be the sympathy cultivated by an agent who is aware of the absolute value of humanity and who has reformed their natural sympathy through this awareness.

Other authors have made this second point as well. For instance, Nancy Sherman believes that natural feelings can be cultivated so that they can be assigned a "conditional moral status" (2014, p. 20); the "perceptual claim" is among the various roles of cultivated feelings.[36] According to Sherman, some cultivated feelings "enable us to apply moral principles by alerting us to circumstances that have a moral dimension and may require moral action" (2014, p. 20). However, it is unclear whether her clarification of the perceptual claim is about cultivated natural feelings or about moral feelings, such as respect or conscience. Sherman indeed argues that the perceptual claim is necessary for showing how "for a practical interest in the moral law to be truly practical, the interest must work in through emotional (pathological) sensitivities" (2014, p. 21). However, the

[36] Although I intend to focus here on Sherman's proposal of the perceptual claim, I disagree with her characterization of cultivation and the idea that cultivated emotions have only a conditional moral status.

feeling of respect, which represents the sensible recognition of the value and authority of the moral law, already has this role (Cf. G, 4:402n). Respect evaluates the relationship between the agent and an *internal* object, the moral law. On the contrary, cultivated sympathy has as its evaluative content the relationship between the agent and an *external* object (be it a particular situation, a person and one's emotions, etc.): it can disclose something morally relevant in the situation and, in the agent's deliberation, assign an appropriate weight to that element.

The possibility (and moral necessity) of cultivating and educating one's non-moral feelings shows that Kant's ethics can also meet the second requirement of the contemporary debate. The integration of reason and emotions is accomplished through reason's work of cultivating feeling. The emotional component not only constitutes an essential element in the process of determining the agent's will but, once cultivated, has a crucial and unique role in the agent's realization of morality—in the construction of the agent's moral character and in their fulfilling specific duties.

5.3. Kant's Relevance for the Contemporary Debate

Having shown the psychological feasibility of the model traceable in Kant's texts, I should quickly mention how this reading of Kant may offer constructive contributions to the contemporary debate on moral cognition. I limit myself here to an example specifically about the agent's relationship to their emotions.

In §2.2, I explained how the process of emotion regulation displays a deep integration of reflexive capacity and emotional experience and emphasized the efficacy of the former in influencing "which emotions they [the individuals] have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions" (Gross 1998, p. 275). The research of Gross and many others thus shows the *possibility* that one can consciously work on one's emotions through one's reflective capacities. However, the morally relevant question here, a question that requires philosophical reflection, is whether such a process of regulation is morally *required*. Gross clearly states that he does not intend to make "*a priori* assumptions as to whether emotion regulation is good or bad" (1998, p. 275). However, philosophers widely debate this issue. For instance, Michael Slote has argued for an ethics of care in which empathy plays a crucial role: empathy is all we need to live "a moral(ly good or decent) life" (2010, p. 14). At the same time, he is fully aware of

empathy's biases, which several empirical studies have analyzed. These biases include, for instance, those related to proximity and immediacy (Cf. Prinz 2011) and those related to membership in a specific group (Cf. Fuchs 2019). The studies show how relying on empathy in moral experience can lead the agent to feel a greater moral responsibility toward some subjects than to others. Slote is also aware of the agent's ability to critically reflect on their feelings and, to use Kantian terminology, to discipline and cultivate them. However, he believes that such "critical vigilance" (Slote 2007, p. 78) of one's feelings runs the risk of attenuating them, diminishing their moral efficacy. Slote thus morally justifies the differences in agents' empathic activation in various situations and, consequently, the "differences in the (normative) moral evaluations we tend to make about these situations" (Slote 2010, p. 21).

Kant's position may ground another argument in support of engaging in emotion regulation practices, despite Slote's position. According to Kant, regulating our emotions is fundamental to moral decision-making itself: disciplining emotions allows the agent to relate to their emotions autonomously and enables the agent to transition from the subjective and private dimension of decision-making to an objective and universally valid one. At the same time, it is also morally necessary to cultivate our emotions, in particular, feelings such as sympathy and empathy because they participate in developing a moral character that is a harmonious unity between reason and emotions and that can fulfill specific moral duties. This argument, based on the recognition of the equal value (i.e., humanity) present in every single person and that stands against partiality, morally requires the agent to critically engage with their emotions.

Kant can also contribute to the debate about emotion regulation techniques. As I mentioned earlier, the technique of cognitive change, or reappraisal, requires a lot of cognitive effort from agents. Through this technique, the "observer could reappraise the other's [or one's own] state" (Thompson et al. 2019, p. 288) by resorting, in particular, to the ability of perspective-taking. This reflexive process makes it possible to work on situations that elicit an emotional response by changing the meaning the situation has for the agent and, consequently, changing the subsequent emotional response (Cf. Helion et al. 2019). To make the process of perspective-taking as objective as possible, one could refer to the process of universalization and non-contradiction of the will that Kant illustrates in his works and that I summarize in §1.2. Empirical studies have tested the

efficacy of the universalization process in moral judgments. For instance, Sydney Levine and colleagues have shown how "the logic of universalization holds an important place in our minds" (2020, p. 26158). By universalization, they mean the process by which "people decide whether it is morally permissible for a person to perform an action by asking what would happen if (hypothetically) everybody felt free to do the same" (Levine et al. 2020, 26158). This perspective, they argue, involves elements from consequentialist, specifically related to the question "What would happen?", and Kantian ethics, which aims at impartiality and the creation of a rational principle valid for everyone. Future research could investigate the efficacy of the universalization process, in the way Kant precisely intends, as a technique for reappraising our emotional experiences.

In conclusion, Kant's ethics can participate in the contemporary debate by raising new research questions. In this way, Kant is useful philosophically (to explore the moral necessity of emotion regulation) and empirically (for broadening research horizons on cognitive change studies).

6. Pushing the Boundaries: A Hybrid Kantian Model of Moral Cognition

In this final chapter, I propose a potential development of Kant's integrated model of moral cognition. This development begins with the recognition of a tension in Kant's theory between the potential that non-moral feelings cultivated by practical reason have and the need for constant critical examination of an action (§6.1). The suggested hybrid model exploits the full potential of cultivated feelings by drawing insights from Adam Smith's notion of a virtuous agent who acts directly on their cultivated feelings (§6.2). Many authors have been interested in the theoretical similarities between Kant and Smith. I mainly insist on the presence of a procedural similarity. From this similarity, I try to explain how Smith's sentimentalism can support my hybrid Kantian model. I first show the process of regulating and educating the feeling of sympathy through the perspective of the impartial spectator. Then, I reflect on how Smith might modify Kant's model given his theory. To conclude the chapter, I present this development of Kant's theory as a model that is still Kantian but in which acting with cultivated feeling as one's determining motive of the will is not equivalent to acting merely in conformity with duty (§6.3).

6.1. Emotion Cultivation and Virtue: An *Impasse*?

The integrated model I have developed from Kant's works takes as essential the agent's emotional life. Feelings and desires participate in orientating the agent in the determination of one's will by stressing the value of specific objects and motivating the agent accordingly. The model also shows the necessary interaction between practical reason and the emotions. The critical examination of emotional inputs enables practical reason to form a principle that is objectively valid and endowed with moral value. However, I have shown how practical reason not only disciplines feelings but also educates and cultivates them so that they align with the moral law. This alignment is crucial for developing a moral character and fulfilling moral duties like beneficence. Indeed, as I have shown, cultivated feelings contribute both epistemically and motivationally to the determination of the agent's will.

Although Kant refers to the moral necessity of both modes of reason's interaction with agents' feelings (i.e., discipline and cultivation), he describes the nature of a cultivated feeling in only a few passages. Definitely, cultivated feelings are better than natural feelings in "furthering ends set forth by reason" (MS, 6:392). Given the parallel with the blind person's cultivation of their sense of touch, cultivated feelings should be triggered in contexts in which it did not previously do so—in morally relevant contexts—and thereby work harmoniously with practical reason by pointing out the moral relevance of certain objects and situations and motivating the agent accordingly (as I show in §5.2.3 regarding the epistemic and motivational roles of cultivated sympathy).

Despite the development of cultivated feelings, the presence of reason and its critical examination remains fundamental and crucial to the morality of action. Reason's work is so important for Kant that he builds the concept of virtue around it. He defines virtue as the "moral strength of the will […] in fulfilling his duty, a moral constraint through his own lawgiving reason" (MS, 6:405). Kant thus emphasizes the aspect of disciplining emotions in his definition of virtue and, shortly thereafter, insists on this aspect by describing the fundamental tenets of virtuous conduct that preserve the internal freedom of the agent: being one's master and ruling oneself through the moral law (Cf. MS, 6:407). The only way for the agent to maintain one's freedom and, more importantly, to express it is to use practical reason to critically sift the maxim.

All this leads Kant to negatively assess the development of habits—in the Aristotelian sense of the term—that result from the repetition of actions. He describes a habit [*assuetudo*; *Angewohnheit*] as "a uniformity in action that has become a necessity through frequent repetition" (MS, 6:407). According to Kant, if the practice of virtue were to become a habit in this sense, the agent would not act morally because they "would suffer a loss to that *freedom* in adopting his maxims which distinguishes an action done from duty" (MS, 6:409). Thus, the agent would not act virtuously because doing so requires acting from duty and the only way to act from duty requires the involvement of practical reason and the moral law. The only form of moral habit that Kant allows is the one he names "aptitude" [*habitus*; *Fertigkeit*]: "a facility in acting and a subjective perfection of choice" (MS, 6:407). Kant argues that "virtue cannot be defined as an aptitude […] unless there is added "to determine oneself to act through the thought of the law" (MS, 6:407). An aptitude is accepted because it "involves a choice on the part of the agent" (Hildebrand

2017, p. 28), while a habit bypasses one's choice. Kant thus refers more to the agent's effortlessness in the use of the moral law in sifting a maxim; an aptitude that results from "considered, firm, and continually purified principles" (MS; 6:383). In other words, Kantian virtue requires reason to always hold "the reins of government in its own hands" (MS, 6:408). That one cannot bypass the critical involvement of reason is why "virtue is always *in progress* and yet always starts *from the beginning*. […] Virtue can never settle down in peace and quiet with its maxims adopted once and for all but, if it is not rising, is unavoidably sinking" (MS, 6:409).

Thus, assigning a major role to a cultivated feeling, which is the outcome of work and training done by the agent through their reason, is difficult. Moreover, as I have shown in §5.1, Kant does not allow acting with a feeling as the determining motive of the will: if "the determination of the will takes place conformably with the moral law but only by means of a feeling […] the action will contain legality indeed but not morality" (KpV, 5:71). Kant does not seem to exclude cultivated feelings from this restriction. I showed that, according to Kant, the feeling can participate in the determination of the will in three ways: by determining the will directly and bypassing reason; by serving as the determining motive of the maxim created by reason; or by being subordinated to reason, which imposes itself as the determining motive. Cultivated feeling can only be virtuously part of such a process when reason creates the subjective principle of volition and then critically examines it. Indeed, in this case, the feeling is subordinated to the determining motive of reason and the moral law. The other two ways, however, are lacking in moral value. In case the feeling, even assuming that all the "finite rational beings were thoroughly agreed with respect to what they had to take as object of their feelings" (KpV, 5:26), directly necessitates action, there would be no moral value: "the determining ground would still be only subjectively valid […] and would not have that necessity which is thought in every law, namely objective necessity from *a priori* grounds" (KpV, 5:26). Similarly, in case reason intervenes by creating a maxim but still places feeling as the determining motive, the agent would build up "merely subjective principles […] that they must always be represented as mere maxims, never as practical laws" (KpV, 5:26).

This strictness by Kant does not seem to allow the cultivated feeling to express its full potential. Missing from Kant's account is a clear conception of a wise and virtuous agent who is capable of educating their feelings through critical tools and who can thereby

create a *moral sensibility* that can guide their moral decisions.[37] In the next section, I begin to ask whether Smith's theory provides an account of such an agent that can expand the Kantian agent's boundaries and possibilities.

6.2. Help From Sentimentalism: Adam Smith

Smith's theory clearly differs from Kant's in that it is a sentimentalist theory. In contrast to Kant's rationalist theory, in which reason discerns between moral good and evil, moral sentimentalism maintains that "our emotions and desires play a leading role in the anatomy of morality" (Kauppinen 2021, p. 1), particularly in our moral decisions. Smith maintains that one emotional mechanism, namely sympathy, is at the center of his theory. All human beings, even the "greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society" (TMS, p. 13), are naturally endowed with this mechanism.[38] Sympathy allows one to take an interest "in the fortunes of others" (TMS, p. 13) and to participate in their inner experiences. Imagination is crucial for sympathy. Indeed, Smith explains that "as we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation" (TMS, p. 13). Imagination "gets us 'inside' their experience" (Griswold 1999, p. 86) and thereby creates a spectatorial model, in which, through sympathy, everyone is a spectator of everyone's inner lives, including one's own.

For Smith, moral judgment occurs in the process of participating in others' emotions and inner lives. He argues that "when the original passions of the person principally concerned are in perfect concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to this last just and proper, and suitable to their objects" (TMS, p. 21). In other words, moral approval is based on judging the appropriateness of the actor's behavior and emotion to the situation one is in. Smith explains that sympathy arises from the view of the situation and not from mere participation in another's feelings (Cf. TMS,

[37] Several Kant scholars use the term *moral sensibility*. For instance, Andrews Reath refers to a "theory of moral sensibility" outlined by Kant that concerns "the interaction between practical reason and our sensible nature" (2006, p. 9). Reath then focuses on moral feelings like respect and their influence on the determination of the will. Here, I am stretching that concept to those non-moral feelings cultivated by practical reason.

[38] Hereafter I abbreviate Smith 2009 to TMS.

p. 16).[39] To judge properly, the spectator must "endeavor, as much as he can, to put himself in the situation of the other" (TMS, p. 28) to understand what the actor is feeling and, subsequently, what one would feel if one were the actor in that situation. Specifically, the viewer first imagines what the actor is feeling "by imagining what it is like for X in X's situation. The imagined feeling gives only 'some idea' of what another feels, but that is the best we can do" (Brown 2016, p. 236). As Smith explains, the spectator places themself in the actor's situation "as it were into his [the actor's] body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations" (TMS, p. 14). Once this is done, the spectator tries to understand what they would feel if they were the actor in the actor's circumstances:

> When I condole with you for the loss of your only son, in order to enter into your grief, I do not consider what I, a person of such a character and profession, should suffer, if I had a son, and if that son was unfortunately to die: but I consider what I should suffer if I was really you, and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters (TMS, p. 373).

Therefore, the spectator experiences and becomes aware of the actor's feelings first and then one's own (but in the actor's shoes and in the actor's situation). This epistemic element allows the spectator to experience an agreement (or disagreement) between one's emotions and those of the actor. The evaluative element arises because the agreement generates a feeling of approval and disagreement generates disapproval.

However, Smith is aware that emotions, as they are, cannot provide objectivity to the spectator's judgment, especially when one judges oneself. Emotions naturally lead to biases, as Smith emphasizes: "The loss or gain of a very small interest of our own, appears to be of vastly more importance […] than the greatest concern of another with whom we have no particular connection" (TMS, p. 157). Smith shows that we usually give much more importance to the loss of our little finger than to a terrible earthquake in the Great Chinese Empire. That is, we struggle to participate in and adequately value the inner experiences of others and, more importantly, to relate critically to our own. Smith believes it is necessary to consider one's interests and emotions "neither from our own place nor

[39] As Sarah Songhorian points out, Smith also refers to a form of participating directly in the actor's emotion: a form of "contagion-like sympathy" (2022b, p. 399) in which emotions "seem transfused from one man to another, instantaneously" (TMS, p. 15). However, this form of participation plays no role in moral approval.

yet from his, neither with our own eyes nor yet with his, but from a place and with the eyes of a third person, who has no particular connection with either, and who judges with impartiality between us" (TMS, p. 157). Smith thus introduces the impartial spectator's perspective to overcome the biases linked to the emotions. The actor attempts to observe one's own behavior and one's relationship to the situation "at the distance and with the eyes of other people" (TMS, p. 135). In this way, the agent becomes a spectator of oneself, and one's sympathy can judge one's conduct impartially. Smith then argues that even judging the appropriateness of others' behaviors and emotions from an impartial perspective has greater authority than from one's position (Cf. TMS, p. 153).

Nevertheless, Smith maintains that the agent who judges by reference to the impartial perspective does not always succeed in judging appropriately. Indeed, he calls the impartial spectator a "demigod" (TMS, p. 153), who shows its immortal nature when it leads agents to steady judgments that are free from partiality but who discovers its mortality when it nonetheless is confused by strong passions. For this reason, Smith introduces an additional device to counter the potential for self-deceit and help formulate objective judgments: general rules. Indeed, "our continual observations upon the conduct of others, insensibly lead us to form to ourselves certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done or to be avoided" (TMS, p. 183). Violating these rules generates the feeling of disapproval and, therefore, "we frequently appeal to them as the standards of judgment" (TMS, p. 184).

Smith's use of the impartial spectator and the general rules suggests that his theory is a form of reflective or hybrid sentimentalism (Cf. Frazer 2010, p. 10) in which the necessary presence of emotions is matched by the equally essential presence of a critical mechanism that serves to sift those emotions such that the outputs of moral decision-making are as objective and free of partiality as possible. Over the course of the next sections, I show how Smith's theory can be helpful for developing the Kantian hybrid model.

6.2.1. Smith and Kant

Scholars have made many attempts to find common threads between Kant's ethics and the sentimentalist theories of the eighteenth century, including Smith's (Fleischacker 1991, 1999; MacCormick 2009; Del Mar 2012; Vaki 2013). As I discuss in §1.1, Kant

was undoubtedly influenced by the moral sense theories during his pre-critical period before writing the *Groundwork*.[40] Regarding his relationship with Smith, Kant scholars assume that Kant read *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in its German translation, which was published in 1770. There is indeed a letter from Marcus Hertz written in 1771 that quotes Kant's admiration of Smith from Friedländer. More importantly, in several passages from the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*, Kant refers to Smith's impartial spectator in ways that connect it to practical reason.[41]

Recently, historians of philosophy have explored the topic of moral motivation and point out various ways that Smith may have inspired Kant. Michael Walschots, for instance, argues that Kant took the idea and design of the feeling of respect from Smith's attitude of "regard," which was translated into German as "*Achtung*" (the same term Kant uses for "respect"), toward general rules. This attitude of regard "can be characterized as the recognition of the action-guiding authority of the general rules" (Walschots 2022, p. 251). Kant's respect is framed as the experience of recognition of the authority and absolute value of the moral law. In addition, Smith says that "the regard to those general rules of conduct, is what is properly called a sense of duty" (TMS, p. 186). Walschots observes that "sense of duty" was translated into German as "*das Gefühl der Pflicht*," which thus renders it as a feeling and emphasizes its strength as an incentive [*Triebfeder*]. This, too, returns in the feeling of respect, which is the only moral incentive for Kant.[42]

I intend to focus on another common point: the critical relationship that, according to both philosophers, the agent must establish with their own emotional life to formulate judgments as objectively as possible. Samuel Fleischacker argues that both Smith and Kant are primarily concerned with the risk of self-deceit: a form of moral blindness primarily due to the strength of the passions, which often leads to biased judgments about others and oneself. Consequently, "the categorical imperative, like Smith's conscience [another name for the impartial spectator] and moral rules, seems to function as a remedy

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[40] Some authors believe that the influence of these philosophers, for instance Hutcheson, is present and traceable even in the critical period. On this point, see Walschots 2023.

[41] In the *Groundwork*, Kant refers to a "rational impartial spectator" (G, 4:393) who cannot approve of a being without a good will. In the second *Critique*, he speaks of an "impartial reason" (KpV, 5:110) acting as a judge. For a more detailed discussion of the connection of these occurrences with Smith's theory, see Fleischacker (1991, pp. 252-3).

[42] For further discussion of the motivational topic in the relationship between Smith and Kant, see also Mordacci 2023.

for self-deceit" (Fleischacker 1991, p. 164). While for Kant reason critically examines and disciplines feelings and desires, similarly, for Smith we have "the ability to curb our emotions if they do not align with those of the spectator" (Mordacci 2023, p. 363). Therefore, even for Smith, we must critically examine and discipline our emotions. In other words, the two philosophers' accounts share a procedural similarity, given the two dimensions of the decision-making process: a private and subjective one in which emotions guide the agent through their evaluative and motivational content and an impartial one that tends toward universality in which the agent must resort to critical-reflective devices as "standards of judgment" (TMS, p. 184). These serve to critically sift through the essential work of the emotional component so to avoid the risk of self-deceit and move closer to an objective decision. Without the latter dimension, the agent cannot step out of their subjective and private level of judgment that is based on their own interests and the influence others have on them.

In previous chapters, I have shown that, for Kant, practical reason not only has the task of critically examining the proposals of desire and feeling but can and must also cultivate and educate the agent's feelings. For Smith, too, the critical device of the impartial spectator serves to sift and discipline the agent's emotions and acts as a guide for educating and modifying one's emotions, including sympathy. In the next section, I will explain how the Smithian wise and virtuous person does so and how Smith's view is useful for developing a Kantian hybrid model.

6.2.2. What to Take and What to Leave

6.2.2.1. To Take: Smith's Wise Agent

According to Smith, the impartial spectator critically sifts and disciplines the passions. Indeed, just as Kant thinks that moral character develops through a specific way of thinking that requires self-mastery and disciplining one's feelings and desires, Smith thinks the wise agent "has been thoroughly bred in the great school of self-command" and "maintains this control of his passive feelings upon all occasions" (TMS, p. 168). The Smithian and Kantian wise agent knows how to control their emotions and act by

determining themself through the use of a reflective device, whether it be practical reason, the impartial spectator, or the general rules.

Moreover, for Kant, the mere control of one's emotional life is not sufficient for developing a moral character. Agents must cultivate their feelings so that they align with the moral law and participate in developing a specific way of sensing. This way of sensing is also crucial for the concrete realization of several aspects of morality, particularly the two ends that are also duties for Kant: one's own perfection and the happiness of others. The Smithian agent is also called to the same work of education and cultivation. The wise agent

> has been in the constant practice, and, indeed, under the constant necessity, of modeling, or of endeavoring to model, not only his outward conduct and behavior, but, as much as he can, even his inward sentiments and feelings, according to those of the awful and impartial spectator. (TMS, p. 169)

That is, agents need to model and cultivate their feelings in a specific way. The impartial spectator serves as a standard on which to base this work. Thus, Smith's and Kant's similar appeal to the use of the reflexive device goes beyond the simple control of emotions and reaches toward the development of a morally oriented way of sensing. Indeed, just as I have shown in previous chapters with Kant's ethics, Smith also argues that "emotions can be rationally informed and formed, educated and regulated" (Songhorian 2021, p. 16).

However, the Smithian wise agent and the Kantian agent have a key difference. Indeed, the Kantian agent cannot refrain from using reason in every morally relevant decision: the scrutiny of practical reason and the moral law is required to maintain the agent's autonomy and to ensure actions are done from duty. One must also always scrutinize one's cultivated feelings. While these feelings are aligned with the moral law and make the moral agent a morally better agent, they cannot ultimately determine one's will. The Kantian virtuous agent always and consistently resorts to their reason in morally relevant contexts. On the contrary, Smith's wise agent creates a kind of moral sensibility, which is cultivated through the impartial spectator, and then decides and acts on the basis of this sensibility. The Smithian wise agent thus "does not merely affect the sentiments of the impartial spectator. He really adopts them. […] He almost becomes himself that impartial spectator, and scarce even feels but as that great arbiter of his conduct directs him to feel" (TMS, p. 169). The Smithian agent models their sympathy through the figure of the

impartial spectator and creates an "impartial sympathy" that "brackets such foibles and biases" (Debes 2017, p. 187).[43] Once the Smithian agent has cultivated an impartial sympathy, they no longer need to always resort to the impartial spectator or the general rules. Only in specific conditions, in which one's distress is very strong and "his own natural feeling of his own distress, his own view of his situation, presses hard upon him," does the agent make "a very great effort" to "fix his attention upon that of the impartial spectator" (TMS, p. 170). However, in most cases, the agent will face morally relevant situations and act on the basis of their cultivated and educated sensibility: "The view of the impartial spectator becomes so perfectly habitual to him, that, without any effort, without any exertion, he never thinks of surveying his misfortune in any other view" (TMS, p. 171).

Unfortunately, Kant cannot offer a similar picture of the wise agent because doing so would risk losing sight of the moral value of the action. I believe that the Kantian agent can act on the basis of a specific moral sensibility and do so without the action being devoid of moral value. The hybrid Kantian model I propose benefits from the Smithian view of the virtuous agent.

Smith's proposal is better than Kant's in that it gives a truly decisive role to feelings that the agent cultivates through their reflective capacities. However, I think it is still important to begin with a Kantian framework because, on the one hand, Smith fails to come up with a truly critical and effective reflective device (both the impartial spectator and general rules fail to do so), and, on the other hand, his account fails to justify the moral necessity of resorting to critical-reflective devices. In the next sections, I analyze these problems in Smith's ethics and argue that, unlike the issue of the use of cultivated feelings, a Kantian position is better suited to resolve the problems.

6.2.2.2. To Leave: The Empirical Development of the Impartial Spectator

Smith explains how the constitution of the impartial spectator's perspective occurs in the agent by drawing on the element of socialization. He argues that if a human being

[43] Maria Carrasco writes about a "sympathetic impartiality" (2010, p. 180). Sherman offers another image of cultivated sympathy with her idea of "nonparochial empathy" (1998, p. 119), which overcomes its limits and prejudices through the cultivation of the agent's imaginative skills.

were to grow up in solitude, they could not reflect morally on their own character, conduct, or feelings. Every human being needs society and each other as a mirror to develop a critical attitude toward oneself. Indeed, "in the same manner our first moral criticisms are exercised upon the characters and conduct of other people […] we soon learn, that other people are equally frank with regard to our own" (TMS, p. 134). Smith thinks that "we become anxious to know how far our appearance deserves either their blame or approbation" (TMS, p. 134). From this curiosity and the internalization of the standpoints of "those he lives with" (TMS, p. 134), the agent creates the impartial spectator whose perspective they use to analyze their own conduct. One tries to understand how one's own passions and conduct appear to actual spectators by considering how one would appear were one in the spectator's position. The agent thus gains a perspective from which they can critically position themself against their emotions and identify their biases in conduct and judgment. Smith sees this empirical genesis also for the other critical device that agents can adopt—general rules. They too are grounded in experience and, in particular, in the experience that "all actions of a certain kind, or circumstanced in a certain manner, are approved or disapproved of" (TMS, p. 183); this approval or disapproval is always that of other agents.

Many authors have pointed out that such critical devices are certainly capable of making the agent critical of oneself and enabling a move from the private and subjective dimension of deliberation to a more impartial one. However, they also argue that, as the agent moves away from their biases, they acquire those of society. David Golemboski argues that the impartial spectator "personifies a perspective free of bias and self-interest" (2018, p. 177) but simultaneously personifies "the prevailing norms of the society in which the agent lives" (p. 181). That is, given the perspective of the impartial spectator, the agent does nothing more than conform their actions to social norms. One does not seem able to adopt a critical device that is critical both of one's own conduct and of social norms. Fonna Forman-Barzilai holds a similar view in which the standpoint of the impartial spectator is not really objective but actually reproduces "in our minds the

standards of value employed by actual spectators in our world" (2001, p. 150) and, in particular, those present in the specific contexts in which we live.[44]

In this regard, Amartya Sen distinguishes between a *closed impartiality* and an *open impartiality* in which a difference lies in the relationship between people whose actions are evaluated (the "focal group") and those who carry out the evaluation (Cf. Sen 2002; 2009). In the closed impartiality, only the people in the focus group participate in the evaluation process; in the open impartiality, the perspective is widened to include those who are outside the focus group. Closed impartiality makes the agent critical of their particular interests but tends to take established and contextual norms as given. Sen calls this "procedural parochialism." Instead, open impartiality is also critical of given norms. Accordingly, and contrary to Sen's analysis, Smith's impartial spectator seems to fall within a closed impartial perspective, while the Kantian critical device, practical reason and the moral law (which is an *a priori* principle that we do not acquire from experience), seems to provide the requisite openness for critiquing established norms.[45]

Following Sen's idea of closed impartiality, Golemboski interprets Smith's impartial spectator as a model of immanent critique—a critique that moves within the given context, traces the normative principles that sustain it, and evaluates the possible contradictions within it. The immanent critique, as Rainer Forst explains, "should orient itself to 'settled,' 'pre-given,' 'accepted,' or 'inherent norms'" (2017, p. 5). Golemboski considers the example of a society that widely condemns abortion as a violation of human dignity and, simultaneously, permits capital punishment. An immanent critique would trace the established norms that guide agency (in this case, the principle of human dignity) and point to the contradiction in practicing capital punishment. However, this type of critique does not solve the problem of parochialism. Indeed, Forst asks "who would want to suggest to a critic of the Indian caste system who rejects this system in toto that she

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[44] There is debate between commentators on this point. Massimo Reichlin, for instance, offers a different reading of the impartial spectator in which the impartial spectator, the man within the breast, does not base its jurisdiction on "conventional morality, but on a partly independent capacity of autonomous moral judgment" (2021, p. 589).

[45] Nonetheless, there are different takes on Smith's view of impartiality. Along with Sen, other authors argue, for example, that "Smith aims at a kind of universality of ethical approval" (Cremaschi 1984, p. 85). Indeed, some passages seem to refer to this universality: "Our good-will is circumscribed by no boundary, but many embrace the immensity of the universe" (TMS, 276-7). See Carrasco (2004; 2010) and Songhorian (2024) for further arguments that support this alternative reading.

should please proceed in an 'immanent' way?" (2017, p. 5). Smith's identification of the impartial spectator with the views of real spectators thus introduces "elements of closure in the criterion relied upon to ground moral approval [...]. The intervention of a subject who takes on the solid features of a spectator seems to be the result of a concern aimed at favoring, in the moral life, the demands of stability and continuity" (Lecaldano 2013, pp. 166-7).

Only a type of transcendental critique, such as that which Kant's practical reason allows, can challenge given and social norms and justifications and strive for true objectivity. The Smithian agent critically sifts and educates their emotions but does so through a reflexive device that fails to make them autonomous from given social conventions and norms. Therefore, the decisions of the Smithian agent, even when the impartial spectator sifts them, cannot be fully objective and universally valid in the way that the decisions of the Kantian agent are.

6.2.2.3. To Leave: Accounting Normativity

Regardless of the efficacy of the impartial spectator as a critical-reflexive device, another point that Smith scholars debate is the justification of the normative relevance of the impartial spectator. For instance, Karsten Stueber asks: "Why should we take the perspective of the impartial spectator normatively seriously and regard it as a standard that we ourselves are committed to?" (2015, p. 32).

Smith himself understands the importance of this issue, given that, in the sixth edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he introduces a distinction between two different desires: the agent "desires, not only praise, but praise-worthiness; or to be that thing which, though it should be praised by nobody, is, however, the natural and proper object of praise" (TMS, pp. 136-7). Every human being desires to be approved of by society—to obtain the favorable feelings of others—which often leads to faking virtue and dissimulating vice. Nevertheless, according to Smith, there is also a desire "of being what ought to be approved of" (TMS, p. 140) that originates from the love and admiration we feel for those whose conduct we approve of. Every human being cannot but want to be deserving of feelings of approval. Thus, the agent begins to look at oneself through the eyes of others and, thus, develops the perspective of the impartial spectator so one can judge oneself as objectively as possible. The desire to be praiseworthy does not cause one

to fake virtue but to love it and, consequently, hate vice. The wise agent, Smith explains, does not care about approval from other people because they are focused only on their own self-approbation, which is motivated by the desire to be worthy of praise: "The love of it [self-approbation], is the love of virtue" (TMS, p. 141).

Even this introduction of the two desires raises perplexities among scholars. Indeed, Stueber believes that the desire to be praiseworthy "might answer the question of why we in fact care about an impartial spectator […]. It does not really answer the question of why we should care about it" (2015, p. 32). Stueber believes that Smith fails to move from the descriptive to the prescriptive level and that grounding the normative relevance of the impartial spectator's perspective requires more work, perhaps even moving beyond Smith's text.[46]

To justify an appeal to the perspective of the impartial spectator, many authors insist on the sympathetic process. For instance, Remy Debes argues that sympathetic judgment is grounded in the dignity that all human beings ascribe to themselves. We ascribe this dignity, however, not on the basis of our being rational agents but rather because we are affective agents endowed with our own "affective perspective" (Debes 2017, p. 185), a unique perspective that requires everyone else's consideration. Each person's affective dignity thus grounds an implicit commitment to impartial sympathy. Stueber also begins with an analysis of the sympathetic process. He argues that we should read the impartial perspective as an *a priori* commitment internal to the sympathetic process, which concerns agents intent on negotiating "their mutual intelligibility" (Stueber 2015, p. 32) through their perspective-taking abilities. From the perspective of the impartial spectator "each persons' (agents' or victims') individuality and humanity is taken fully into account in light of the interlocutors' abilities to enter into their perspective and share their feelings, thoughts and emotions" (Stueber 2015, pp. 33-4). However, both authors agree that Smith lacks the resources to justify the moral necessity of resorting to the critical-reflexive device.

In short, given the goal of further developing Kant's integrated model, Smith's ethics is valuable because it illustrates how an agent may educate and cultivate their moral

[46] Again, whether Smith succeeds in transitioning from the descriptive to the normative dimension is widely contested. For a different position, see, for instance, Ben-Moshe (2020, pp. 1079-82).

sensibility through their critical-reflexive abilities. Such a sensibility guides the agent in their moral choices without their actions losing moral value. That said, remaining within the Kantian framework is important because Kant's version of the critical-reflexive device is better justified in its necessity and better suited to account for the problems regarding the self and socially established norms that Smith's view encounters.

6.3. The Hybrid Kantian Model

I have argued that Kant has an integrated view of moral cognition in which affective phenomena and reflective abilities are both essential. The affective phenomena orientate the agent in their relationship with the external world, highlight the value of objects, and motivate them to a specific kind of action. The fundamental role of reason consists in constructing maxims from the material that emotions elaborate and propose. Having built a maxim, reason critically evaluates it and permits the agent to transition from the maxim to the practical law (i.e., move from a subjective and private principle to an objective and universally valid one). In this interaction between reason and emotions, the morality of the action and the agent is played out. However, the relationship between reason and emotions does not stop with this critical interaction. The agent can cultivate, through their reflective abilities, natural feelings to better guide the agent's moral choices. I pointed out that, despite such cultivation and the resulting presence of a morally effective cultivated feeling, the agent cannot use the cultivated feeling as a determining motive of their will. Thus, to solve this deficiency in Kant's theory, I found it useful to refer to Smith's theory, which shares with Kant's a recourse to critical devices for examining and cultivating one's feelings. Smith's fundamental insight is that the agent can act directly on the basis of their cultivated feelings. The Smithian agent adopts these cultivated feelings, which are orientated on the impartial spectator and are thus less subjective and biased than are natural feelings.

That is, one can think of a Kantian agent who, in addition to standard morally valid ways of acting, can also act determined by their moral sensibility, which has been cultivated by practical reason. The Kantian model can now keep up with contemporary models that argue for changes in behavior that result from the "repeated execution of moral reflection" that result in "changes in attitudes and feelings" (Sauer 2017, p. 77). Daniel Lapsley and Darcia Narvaez speak of "chronically accessible cognitive-affective

moral schemas" (2004, p. 24) as the output of reasoning's work on emotionally charged intuitions.

Nonetheless, Kant would worry that the agent would not act from duty but, at most, would act in conformity with duty because there is no direct connection between the feeling and the morally relevant action. Sherman calls this critique against a morally crucial role for emotions the accidentality objection: "Emotions connect only accidentally with moral interest" (1997, p. 28). Taking the example of the *Groundwork*'s philanthropist who helps his neighbor because of his sympathetic feelings, Kant would not question the connection between the feeling and helping one's neighbor, but he would question the connection between the feeling, helping one's neighbor, and doing the right thing. Therefore, even if the action were to "hit the mark," it would be fortuitous and would constitute only an action done in conformity with duty and not from duty.

However, this critique applies only to natural feelings, which is indeed the case for the *Groundwork*'s philanthropist, but not to cultivated feelings, those in which an agent has created a connection between the feeling and moral salience. Cultivated feelings are the result of cultivation, which differs from mere control of and disciplining the feeling, and leads instead to its true modification. The feeling cultivated by practical reason activates in morally relevant situations, shows the moral relevance of that situation, and motivates the agent to a specific action. The agent who acts with cultivated feeling as the determining motive of their will acts emotionally but nonetheless from duty. Duty is still present because it has shaped the feeling so that it no longer accidentally conforms to morality. The Kantian agent thus develops a moral sensibility, a capacity to feel and act morally, that can help them in situations in which greater emotional involvement is required, such as in helping others or beneficent actions.

The model remains Kantian because those elements that, according to Kant, enable agents to act morally are preserved, namely, autonomy and, consequently, the action performed from duty. The agent remains free. Nonetheless, to remain free, the agent does not always have to involve reason in determining their will, which can be determined through the cultivated feeling and still remain autonomous given that the cultivated feeling is directly linked to the concept of duty because it was cultivated by practical reason. Indeed, reason uses the principle of the moral law to cultivate the agent's feelings, which, once cultivated, are morally valid motives and incentives. Cultivated feelings thus

can determine the will and bring the agent to the realization of a morally valuable action in a way that is not accidental.

Obviously, cultivated feelings cannot always perfectly guide the agent toward morally worthy actions. As Smith argues about the wise agent, despite the presence of the cultivated sympathy, a superior cognitive effort that appeals to the impartial spectator or some general rules may be necessary given the force of contrary passions or considerations. Similarly, in a hybrid Kantian model, other considerations or other feelings might undermine cultivated sympathy by pulling the agent away from the authority and value of morality.

In these cases, respect or conscience (i.e., moral feelings) might intervene and offer a kind of emotional reorientation. As I explain in §4, these feelings have a direct connection to the moral principle, but they are not used to judge an action external to the agent. They relate an agent to morality, particularly to the moral law. Feelings such as respect allow one to become fully aware of the absolute value and consequent authority of the moral law. Charlie Kurth, who works primarily on conscience in Kant, describes conscience as a "*pre*deliberative emotional capacity" (2024, p. 154). Kurth's description also can also characterize the feeling of respect: these moral feelings function as a moral alarm that either reinforces the agent's awareness of the value of the moral law or warns the agent when they diverge from the moral law. Within the hybrid Kantian model that I have outlined, in which the agent acts on their cultivated feelings, the feeling of respect or conscience can work as a moral alarm the moment an agent loses sight of the action's moral salience, given the force of other feelings and desires; the moral feeling emphasizes that the agent ought to engage in more rational deliberation. Thus, moral feelings would rebalance any cultivated feeling that was not strong enough to guide the agent and reorient the agent back onto the "right track" through the help of rational deliberation.

Kurth shows the empirical feasibility of this interaction between moral feeling and higher cognitive functions, with the former urging the latter to activity. Indeed, one possible piece of empirical and theoretical evidence comes from the so-called meta-cognitive emotions, which enable one to transition from an emotional dimension to a deliberative and cognitively complex one. Kurth focuses mainly on the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon, which consists in that familiar experience when, for example, one does not

remember someone's name, although one has some vague recollection of it.[47] This experience "gets one working to jog one's memory of what one cannot recall" (Kurth 2024, p. 157). There is, above all, a feeling at stake, namely the feeling of familiarity, which emphasizes the salience of the occasion and facilitates "the prompting of higher cognitive processes that's geared toward facilitating remembering (e.g., working through a particular mnemonic strategy)" (Kurth 2024, p. 157). This feeling identifies an occasion that requires rational deliberation and motivates the agent accordingly. Moral feelings, such as respect or conscience, could likewise do this work: monitoring cultivated feelings to identify when more deliberation is required to make the agent aware again of the value of the moral law and motivate them to use it to act.

In short, the hybrid Kantian model extends Kant's texts to explain how an agent may act directly on their cultivated feelings. The interaction between cultivated feelings and moral feelings makes it possible for the agent to reorient and deliberate further on the object or situation through practical reason.

Through the contributions from Smith's theory, this model solves a tension in Kant's use of cultivated feelings. To do so, the model gives up Kant's overly strict and demanding conception of virtue but preserves the fundamental elements of his theory so that the Kantian agent can act morally. The model is not a form of sentimentalism because it holds firm that our ability to discern between moral good and evil is found in a principle of practical reason, which continues to exercise its function as the determining motive of the will by critically sifting desires and feelings. The model I have proposed integrates the possibility of acting by having a non-moral feeling as the determining motive; this non-moral feeling must nevertheless be the product of cultivation through practical reason. Indeed, the feeling can do so only after practical reason modifies it.

[47] For more on this phenomenon, see Schwartz and Metcalfe 2014.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have explored whether proponents of Kant's ethics might engage the contemporary debate on moral cognition and actively contribute to that debate. I have shown that Kant's ethics meets the entry requirements of the debate—first, that emotions be ineradicable present in an agent's moral experience (and recognize their importance for the development of one's moral capacities) and, second, that reason and emotions be deeply integrated. I accomplished this through an extensive analysis of the emotional life of the Kantian agent, focusing in particular on the nature of feelings and desires. I have shown how the agent's entire moral experience develops within one's faculty of desire and in the relationship between feeling, desire, and reason. Feelings and desires are constitutive elements of the agent's moral experience and guide one's relating to the external reality. Moreover, specific feelings, such as respect or aesthetic feelings, have a major role in developing an agent's moral capacities. In other words, Kant presents us with an integrated model of moral determination and, in general, of moral experience in which the presence and integration of emotions and reason stand out. This model not only meets the entry requirements of the contemporary debate but can contribute to it by offering new arguments in favor of specific theses, such as the moral necessity of regulating one's emotions, or by introducing new empirical research insights, such as the efficacy of the universalization process as a technique for emotion regulation.

In the last part of the thesis, I went beyond providing a completely faithful reading of Kant's text to propose a hybrid Kantian model that addresses inadequacies in Kant's texts regarding the potential of cultivated feelings. Indeed, Kant's demanding conception of virtue does not allow the agent to act with a cultivated feeling as the determining motive of the will. The cultivated feeling could now assess the moral relevance of the situation without falling into the charge of accidentality that is reserved for natural feeling. However, according to Kant, reason must always be present and critically scrutinize the agent's emotions, even cultivated feelings, to obtain morally valid determinations of the will. In disagreement with Kant, I judge it possible to remain within a Kantian framework but adopt a different view of the virtuous agent, one in which the agent can act through a moral sensibility that results from critical education. I developed this model on the basis

Adam Smith's wise and virtuous agent. I chose Smith because of his similarities with Kant, particularly in how he deals with the relationship between emotions and reflection. Incorporating a Smithian conception of the virtuous agent allows the Kantian model that I propose in the last chapter to be fully in line with contemporary integrated models.

In conclusion, the contemporary debate in moral philosophy still cannot get rid of the philosopher of Königsberg. On the contrary, Kant's conception of moral experience shows that it is neither a form of strong rationalism nor strong emotivism; it offers an integrated view of the relationship between reason and emotions that is still extremely valuable to the debate on moral cognition.

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