

Kant and Respect

Shortened Title: Kant and Respect

Title: Kant's Account of Respect: A bridge between rationality and anthropology

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Abstract

Kant considers that the ground of duty, the moral law has its source *a priori* in our rational natures and is not based on our empirical knowledge of human beings. I claim that he is also pointing to certain features that are necessary to presuppose about human beings for the moral law to be applicable. Respect is one of these features that both allows for the recognition of *any* duty and provides an explanation of how the moral law can motivate in the human case. ‘Respect’ is also used in a narrower sense to reflect presuppositions of certain *specific* duties.

Key Words

A Posteriori

A Priori

Kant

Motivation and Respect

Respect

Respect necessary for the recognition of *any* duties

Respect necessary for the recognition of *specific* duties

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A priori and *A posteriori* aspects of Kant's Ethics

Kant starts the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* by emphasising the importance of separating the *a priori* or rational part of moral philosophy from the *a posteriori* or empirical aspects. Indeed, he reserves the term 'moral philosophy' for the rational part. He writes "...ethics ...the empirical part might be given the special title *practical anthropology*, the term *moral philosophy* being properly used to refer just to the rational part."¹ Throughout his writings in both theoretical and practical philosophy the distinction between what is *a priori* and what is *a posteriori* is given paramount importance. We need to separate that which has its source *a priori* from its application to, for example human beings.

Furthermore, the whole of moral philosophy is based entirely on the part of it that is non-empirical, i.e. pure. When applied to man, it does not borrow in the slightest from our knowledge of human beings (i.e. from anthropology).

Rather it prescribes to man, as a rational being laws *a priori*.²

The source of duty then, or what Kant calls the moral law, lies in our rational natures. The moral law is formulated in the first formulation of the Categorical Imperative as, "Act only on that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should

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become a universal law.”³ It is the moral law that is the object of respect and for Kant this is what is meant by respect for persons. “All respect for a person is actually only respect for the law (of righteousness, etc.) that that person exemplifies.”⁴ The respect then is both for the moral law in us and also in other persons. Respect then is not just about our relationship with other people since we owe respect to ourselves as well. It is in virtue of our rationality or, as Kant refers to this, our humanity, that we are objects of respect.

Recently, there have been contemporary accounts of Kant’s writings that have concentrated on what he has had to say about anthropology.⁵ Indeed, Nancy Sherman comments on “the growing reorientation of Kantian moral philosophy toward the human case and toward the interface of the rational ground of morality with our affective natures.”⁶ What I hope to show in this paper is that in all his uses of ‘respect’ Kant is pointing to *a priori* features in man that are necessary for moral philosophy to be applied to man. Although Kant claims that “the whole of moral philosophy is based entirely on the part of it that is non-empirical...”, the centrality of my thesis is the claim that the account of respect explains how this moral philosophy can be valid for human beings. To be applicable it presupposes certain claims about human beings. I will show that Kant’s account has implications for what must be assumed about rational finite beings if they are to be both aware of duties and be motivated by the moral law. In this sense respect provides a bridge between moral philosophy and practical anthropology since it is pointing to necessary features that must be presupposed in human beings for the application of the moral law. By ‘application’ I shall be referring to three roles for respect in “the interface of the rational ground of morality with our affective natures”. First, whilst Kant does not deviate from the

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position that it is the moral law alone that motivates, without his account of respect we would not have an explanation at the phenomenal level of *how* it could motivate in the human case. Second, the account of respect indicates what must be presupposed about human beings in order that they are able to be *aware* of *any* duties that have their origin in our rational natures. It is also what has to be presupposed for the recognition of *specific* duties that Kant attributes to respect as opposed to love. These are the duties that are owed to others and Kant claims that it is necessary to presuppose the feeling of respect in the human case to be aware of these duties.

The second thesis of the paper, that is an implication of the first thesis, is the claim that there is not a single account of respect, *Achtung*, in Kant's writings. Rather there is a broad account of respect that covers *any* duties and a narrower meaning when a specific range of duties are being considered. In each case there is a corresponding account of what features must be presupposed in our phenomenal natures in order for respect to perform the function allocated to it. I propose to call the first 'respect (B)' and the second 'respect (N)'.

Respect

There are four different contexts in which Kant discusses respect (*Achtung*).

1. Respect "as a subjective motive of activity, as a drive to obey the law and as the ground of maxims of a course of life conformable to the law."⁷ This feature is also discussed in the *Groundwork* and I shall claim that in this context he intends respect (B).

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2. Respect is isolated as being one of the necessary feelings that is presupposed for a human being to recognise something as a duty.⁸ In this context, Kant uses the Latin equivalent *reverentia*, reverence, respect, fear or awe. I shall argue that this feeling is respect (N) and is what is presupposed for the *specific* duties flowing from respect. Moral feeling is also isolated in this section of the *Metaphysics of Morals* as being a necessary presupposition for the recognition of *any* duty in man and I shall claim that this is synonymous with respect (B).
3. Within the duties of virtue to others, there are those arising from love and those arising from respect. Of the latter Kant writes respect “is therefore recognition of a *dignity (dignitas)* in other human beings, that is, of a worth that has no price, no equivalent for which the object evaluated (*aestimii*) could be exchanged.”⁹ In this context, Kant uses the Latin equivalent *observantia aliis praestanda*, the respect due to others. Here he is discussing, I shall claim, respect (N).
4. Within the duties arising from love, respect also figures in the discussion of gratitude. Kant writes, “*Gratitude* consists in *honouring* a person because of a benefit he has rendered us. The feeling connected with this judgment is respect for the benefactor (who puts one under obligation), whereas the benefactor is viewed as only in a relation of love toward the recipient.”¹⁰ This is also respect (N).

I shall argue that the use described in (1) above is where Kant is describing the phenomenal mechanism that accompanies the motive of duty. In this case it reflects the motive of duty but its occurrence is because we are considering duty in combination with beings who have phenomenal natures.

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I shall claim that in connection with point (2), Kant is arguing that there are necessary features that we must presuppose about human beings *per se* for the moral law to have an effect. They are analogous to the *a priori* features that he isolates in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that attach to the *a posteriori* components of knowledge discussed in the Anticipations of Perception and the Axioms of Intuition. In other words, although *a priori* it is about what it is necessary to presuppose for the moral law to have an effect on our phenomenal natures and not an attribute of the moral law *per se*.

The specific duties arising from respect in (3) above are based on not infringing the humanity possessed by others. These are negative duties since they are about what we ought not to do to *any* person and are not based on any specific, contingent features that certain individuals might happen to possess.

This point is further made in point (4) above where respect is accorded to a benefactor in recognition of their performance of a duty that is required by rational natures, namely, the duty to seek other people's happiness. This though is unlike the duties described in (3) above since gratitude is a positive duty that is owed to a benefactor.

Both the duties described in (3) and (4) result from applying the moral law to the *human* case. Since we are finite beings who are dependent on each other for assistance, the moral law prescribes duties of non-interference and assistance.

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Therefore, there does seem to be a more intimate connection between the pure moral philosophy that Kant distinguishes from our knowledge of human beings than Kant suggests in the quotation from the *Groundwork* at the start of this paper. The *a priori* features of morality when applied to man have also to take into account the sort of creatures that we are. Respect plays a crucial role in this as I shall show below. If this account is correct, to respect persons is explained by understanding the interaction of pure moral philosophy with general features about human beings.

Respect as the moral incentive

My claim here is that in this context Kant's account of respect is to be understood as an explanation at the phenomenal level of what it is for the moral law to "directly determine the will."¹¹ The most detailed discussion of this aspect of respect occurs in Kant's discussion the "Of the Drives of Practical Reason" in the *Critique of Practical Reason*.¹² I shall start then by considering what Kant says about the moral incentive both there and at those sections in the *Groundwork* that also address this problem. My first claim will be that Kant regards respect as a motive, "as a subjective motive of activity, as a drive to obey the law and as the ground of maxims of a course of life conformable to the law."¹³

Kant starts this section in the *Critique of Practical Reason* with the claim, "What is essential in the moral worth of actions is that the moral law should directly determine the will."¹⁴ In making this claim his initial purpose is to draw the distinction, familiar from the *Groundwork*, between actions that are merely in accord with the moral law and those where the moral law directly determines the will. It is only the latter that

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have moral worth. The question that Kant is addressing in this section is to give an account of the moral law as a moral “drive... and to see what happens to the human faculty of desire as a consequence of this motive.”¹⁵

A drive is defined by Kant as “a subjective determining ground of a will whose reason does not by its nature necessarily conform to the objective law.”¹⁶ Thus, drives are only possessed by humans and not by divine wills since they are attributes of beings in whom the moral law does not automatically determine the will. By describing these as “subjective”, I take Kant to be making the point that they are objects of experience and belong therefore to the phenomenal world. Drives are possessed by beings who have, in the language of the *Groundwork*¹⁷, selves that can be viewed both phenomenally and intelligibly.

What then is the “drive” of the moral law or, the question that Kant takes as synonymous, “what happens to the human faculty of desire as a consequence of this motive”?¹⁸ Kant’s reply is that respect for the moral law is the moral drive¹⁹ and his account of respect is thus designed to explain how the moral law can become the drive. The account of respect then provides an explanation of how the moral law can be a motive. Kant writes, “Thus the moral law... is also a subjective motive. That is, it is the drive to this action, since it has an influence on the sensuousness of the subject and effects a feeling which promotes the influence of the law on the will.”²⁰

The last part of this quotation requires elaboration. What does it mean to say that this feeling “promotes the influence of the law on the will”? In order to understand this we need to see what Kant says about the relationship between drives, interests and

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maxims. Kant claims that from the concept of “drive” there comes the concept of “interest” which, “ indicates a drive of the will so far as it is presented by reason.”²¹ I assume here that he means that interests are rationally stated versions of the original drives since, as he writes in the *Groundwork*, “Interest is that by which reason becomes practical, i.e., a cause determining the will. Therefore one says of rational beings only that they take an interest in something; non-rational creatures feel only sensuous impulses.”²² Maxims, or subjective principles of action,²³ in turn, rest on these interests. Kant then writes, “A maxim is thus morally genuine only when it rests on exclusive interest in obedience to the law. All three concepts – of drive, interest and maxim – can, however, be applied only to finite beings.”²⁴ This quotation then excludes divine wills (as was noted above) and the former quotation from the *Groundwork* excluded non-rational creatures. This respect for the moral law is what Kant describes as the “moral drive” and this produces an “interest” in rational finite beings that is the basis for a maxim of action.²⁵

If respect is a motive, we now need to look at precisely what Kant says about the composition of this motive. In particular, since he describes it, at least partially, as a feeling, how is this compatible with the contrast that he draws at the beginning of the *Groundwork* between the motive of duty and actions that result from immediate or mediate inclinations?

What exactly is this subjective motive then that Kant terms respect? Kant makes the following points.

Respect is:

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(1) a feeling because in thwarting all inclination that might be contrary to morality it is thwarting feelings. This is because all inclinations, according to Kant, are based on feelings and a negative effect on feeling is itself a feeling.

This feeling:

(a) "...is a feeling produced by an intellectual cause"²⁶

(b) "...is the only feeling that we can know completely *a priori*"²⁷

(c) consists of:

(i) a feeling of pain which arises when our inclinations are thwarted. This is described by Kant as the negative effect on feeling. He also describes this as humiliation (intellectual contempt).²⁸

(ii) A positive feeling is generated by the removal of the resistance of our inclinations. Kant writes, "respect for the law is thus by virtue of its intellectual cause a positive feeling that can be known *a priori*, for any diminution of obstacles to an activity furthers this activity itself."²⁹

(2) the cognitive state of consciousness of the moral law. He writes, "The immediate determination of the will by the law, and the consciousness thereof, is called respect..."³⁰

In this section of the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant explicitly states that both components are involved in respect. He writes, "The consciousness of free submission of the will to the law, combined with an inevitable constraint imposed only by our own reason on all inclinations, is respect for the law."³¹ Other writers³² have claimed that there are both this affective and cognitive aspect in Kant's account of respect and

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this view is supported by the above quotations. I shall return later to the relation between these two aspects.

If we start with the composition of the feeling described in (c) (i) and (ii) above where Kant describes respect as both a feeling of pain if our inclinations are thwarted and at the same time as a positive feeling, then this conforms to the account that he gives of choice. Kant writes, “Every determination of choice proceeds *from the representation of a possible action* to the deed through the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, taking an interest in the action or its effect.”³³ Both these elements are in the feeling of respect that Kant describes. However, it must be remembered that, as described above, the practical choice is an act of will whereby we act on maxims. Kant states this point succinctly in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* where he writes,

...that freedom of the power of choice has the characteristic, entirely peculiar to it, that it cannot be determined to action through any incentive *except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim* (has made it into a universal rule for himself, according to which he wills to conduct himself); only in this way can an incentive, whatever it may be, coexist with the absolute spontaneity of the power of choice (of freedom).³⁴

Therefore, all choice is represented as a practical activity whether the maxims are based on interests that have moral worth or not.³⁵ The contrast to be drawn then is not between the passivity of certain interests that are based on sensations and the activity involved in moral interests since to act on either involves a practical activity of reason. The contrast is rather to be explained in the causal account that Kant gives of

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the origination of the feeling of respect in contrast to the origination of other feelings.

In point 1(a) above he describes the cause of the feeling of respect as being an intellectual one. As such it is not a possible object of experience.

This feeling of respect is produced by an intellectual cause and is the only feeling that we can know *a priori*. Now because it is produced by an intellectual cause, we cannot be aware of this cause as an item of experience. In this way we have a contrast between moral feeling and pathological feeling because the cause of these latter feelings lies in emotions and passions that are the objects of experience. In the case of the first point³⁶, Kant distinguishes between a pathological interest and a practical interest. Interests, as mentioned earlier, are only found in rational finite beings that excludes divine wills or non-rational animals. Pathological interests are dependent on sensations that are represented in our inclinations for certain objects. Practical interest, by contrast, is based on principles of reason alone. As Kant makes clear in the *Critique of Practical Reason*,

Respect, in contrast to the enjoyment or gratification of happiness, is something for which there can be no feeling basic and prior to reason, for such a feeling would always be sensuous and pathological. Respect as the consciousness of the direct constraint of the will through law is hardly analogous to the feeling of pleasure, although in relation to the faculty of desire it produces exactly the same effect, but from different sources.³⁷

Pathological interests are in the object of an action that is based on our inclination.

Reason here is just needed to supply the rule for achieving the object for which we have an inclination. In the case of practical interests, it is the action that interests us and not the object.

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What we have then are two sets of distinctions:

1. a) Acting on the basis of a practical interest
b) Acting on the basis of a pathological interest
2. a) Account from the phenomenal point of view of respect
b) Account from the phenomenal point of view of the causality of inclinations

In the case of both 1 a) and 1 b), the act of choice, *Willkür*, is not an object of experience but described from the intelligible point of view what is causally determined is viewed as arising from free choice. In the case of 1 a) this *Willkür* is exercised as *Wille* and in the latter case the choice is exercised to achieve some object. Neither 1 a) nor 1 b) is an object of experience. However, this does not debar us in the case of 1 b) talking of the causal chain between objects that we desire and our feelings and this is what is described in 2 b). The same can also be ascribed to 2 a) with the only difference that here respect has an intellectual cause and is not something causally related to pre-existing sensations that we might contingently have.

Understood in this way, Kant is therefore giving an account, in this section of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, of the phenomenal mechanism that accompanies the motive of duty. As Kant reminds us frequently, this motive of duty is not an object of experience. He writes in the *Groundwork* that “there cannot be cited a single certain example of the disposition to act from duty.”³⁸

Kant is providing an account of the motive for adherence to the moral law when this is interpreted as demanding an account from the phenomenal point of view. This point

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is made explicitly by Kant both in the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In the *Groundwork* he writes, “ Now an action done from duty must altogether exclude the influence of inclination and therewith every object of the will. Hence there is nothing left which can determine the will except objectively the law and subjectively pure respect for this practical law...”³⁹ Additionally, in the *Critique of Practical Reason* he writes, “Respect for the moral law is therefore the sole and undoubted moral drive...”⁴⁰ The account that Kant gives of respect is the explanation of the motive of duty from the subjective or phenomenal point of view. Kant is not arguing that duty needs to be supplemented by a feeling – a feeling of respect – in order to motivate, but that this feeling is the expression of duty from the phenomenal point of view. Just as in the non-moral case the freedom of choice that is attributable to our rational selves does not debar an explanation at the phenomenal level, so the same point applies to the motive of duty. This point is explicitly endorsed by Kant in the section on the Critical Resolution of the Antinomy of Practical Reason in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant writes,

...one and the same acting being as appearance...has a causality in the sensible world always in accord with the mechanism of nature; while with respect to the same event, as far as the acting person regards himself as noumenon ..., he can contain a determining ground of that causality which holds under natural laws, and this determining ground of natural causality itself is free from every natural law.⁴¹

More needs to be said though about how exactly respect is the explanation, at the phenomenal level, of how the moral law should directly determine the will. I have already claimed that respect has both an affective element and a cognitive element

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and that the element of feeling should not be viewed as un-Kantian in anyway since moral feeling is to be distinguished from pathological feeling. Andrews Reath also claims that respect has both an intellectual and affective aspect and argues that “it is the intellectual aspect which is active in motivating moral conduct, while the affective side, or feeling of respect, is its effect on certain sensible tendencies...”⁴²

Since Kant views both these elements as being combined in the single concept that he describes as ‘respect’, it is difficult to claim that only one or the other aspect is responsible for the motivational element in respect. Also, as I noted above, Kant’s view about the determination of choice being dependent on feelings of pleasure and pain indicate the necessary inclusion of this aspect of respect. However, if both are involved, what exactly is the relation between the cognitive and affective aspects?

I will claim that Kant considers that this relation between the cognitive and affective aspect is a necessary one and not one that is contingently causal. We have already seen at 1(b) that Kant claims that it is a feeling that is a priori. I am claiming that the relationship is necessary because the generation of this feeling is a necessary consequence of consciousness of the moral law for Kant. Kant writes,

The feeling which arises from the consciousness of this constraint is not pathological, as are those caused by objects of the senses, but practical...it contains, therefore, no pleasures but rather displeasure proportionate to this constraint. On the other hand, since this constraint is exercised only through the legislation of one’s own reason, it also contains something elevating...⁴³

This feeling necessarily accompanies the consciousness of the moral law and can indeed, as Stratton-Lake suggests, be regarded “not as the effect of our consciousness

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of the moral law, but as the way in which we are so conscious.”⁴⁴ Indeed Kant states this point explicitly in the *Metaphysics of Morals* where he writes, “Respect for the law, which in its subjective aspect is called moral feeling, is identical with consciousness of one’s duty.”⁴⁵ Where Stratton-Lake is wrong is to equate this feeling with the respect that Kant describes as *reverentia*, since, as I shall argue below, this feeling is just connected with the *specific* duties of respect and hence is respect (N).

I am not claiming that Kant considers that respect is “the original motive for adherence to the law”. The original motive is obedience to the law but the phenomenal counterpart of that is respect. Although, Kant describes respect as an effect of the moral law, this does not preclude it acting as a motive.⁴⁶ Essentially, the prime source of confusion in the discussion here is an ambiguity in the word ‘effect’. However, my account is to claim that ‘respect’ is the label at the phenomenal level for the way in which we are conscious of the moral law. In this sense it can be both an effect and an incentive as is made clear by Kant when he writes, “...respect for the Moral Law must be regarded also as a positive but indirect effect of the law on feeling...we must see it as a subjective ground of activity. As an *incentive* for obedience to the law.”⁴⁷ Here then it is respect as a feeling that Kant is discussing and he is recognising that it can be both an effect and an incentive.

Andrews Reath, as I noted above, argues that it is consciousness of the moral law, what he describes as the intellectual aspect of respect, which is what is active in motivating moral conduct. He also misinterprets the sense of ‘effect’ that is operative when Kant describes the feeling of respect as an effect. He considers that passages

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such as the above are just misleading on the part of Kant since Kant “must avoid a view which makes use of a natural desire, or disposition, that moves us toward moral conduct, and provides morality with its content.”⁴⁸ Kant is not doing this if respect as a feeling is an incentive. This is not a pathological feeling but what constitutes consciousness of the moral law at the phenomenal level and this is why there are passages where Kant identifies the two. Indeed, Reath does backtrack from his position in some places where he writes, “...the *feeling* of respect is an incentive only in an attenuated sense. It is indeed the inner state of a subject who is moved by the Moral Law, but the active motivating factor is always the recognition of the Moral Law ... The affective aspect is ... an effect that occurs after, or in conjunction with, the determination of the will by the Moral Law.”⁴⁹

Respect as a subjective condition that is necessary for receptiveness to duty

In this section I shall indicate the connection between Kant’s earlier remarks about respect (B) in both the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* and his account in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. In the earlier works the account of respect provided an explanation at the phenomenal level of how the moral law determines the will. I will show how the claims made about respect (B) both connect with or are to be distinguished from the claims made about moral feeling, conscience, love of man and respect (N).

In particular, in the earlier works we have seen that Kant describes respect as a combination of a feeling of pain and a positive feeling. In the *Metaphysics of Morals* this is captured by his discussion of moral feeling since only beings who have the

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susceptibility to feel pleasure and pain from being aware that something is consistent or not with our duty can have the feeling of respect (B) that is necessary to explain the moral drive. The cognitive state of consciousness of the moral law, I claimed earlier, necessarily generates the feeling aspect of respect (B) or can be equated with it. This consciousness is now shown to be possible for human beings in virtue of their possession of conscience that allows for the recognition of *any* duty. It therefore enables rational beings to have the consciousness that is necessary for respect (B).

The second two feelings that Kant distinguishes here are love of man and respect (N). These are not specifically connected with the general remarks made about respect (B) as a moral drive in the two earlier works except in so far as they are connected with duties and, as such, will be covered by the moral drive explanation that applies to any duties. Love of man is a description of what needs to be presupposed for the specific duties arising from love and respect (N) is what is presupposed for the specific duties arising from what is owed to others.

Kant lists four “*subjective* conditions of receptiveness to the concept of duty” which he describes as “antecedent predisposition on the side of *feeling*.”⁵⁰ These are moral feeling, conscience, love of man and respect. Kant’s point is that it makes no sense to talk of a *duty* to acquire these predispositions since it is necessary for human beings to have them, at least to some degree, to recognise *any* duties. These predispositions ought to be *cultivated* but it makes no sense to say that we ought to have them or that we have a duty to have them since without them we would not have the necessary attributes to recognise any duties whatsoever. Kant writes, “...it is by virtue of them that he can be put under obligation.”⁵¹ They are what make us describable as *moral*

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beings since without these to some degree we “would be morally dead; and...humanity would dissolve...into mere animality and be mixed irretrievably with the mass of other natural beings.”⁵² They are necessary conditions for the *awareness* of duty in man although they are not the ground of these duties and consciousness of them “can...only follow from consciousness of a moral law, as the effect this has on our mind.”⁵³

Moral Feeling “is the susceptibility to feel pleasure or displeasure merely from being aware that our actions are consistent with or contrary to the law of duty.”⁵⁴ It is important for Kant’s account to connect apprehension of duty with feelings of pleasure or displeasure since these feelings, at the phenomenal level or level of experience are what explains choice at this level as described above. Kant is not claiming that this moral feeling is like a moral sense that informs us of what our duties are in the sense of giving us our knowledge of our duties. Rather, our duties are still the product of pure practical reason and moral feeling is the awareness of these duties on our phenomenal natures explained in terms of pleasure or displeasure.

Now, although Kant describes this as moral *feeling* his description of it as a “susceptibility”, a term that he uses three times in this short section, seems to suggest that it is not an actual feeling itself but rather a predisposition to have this feeling of pleasure or displeasure from consciousness of the moral law and it is this predisposition that is the “subjective condition of receptiveness to the concept of duty.” This account of moral feeling in the *Metaphysics of Morals* makes explicit what is a required attribute of human beings for them to be susceptible to the subjective motive of respect described in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. It is

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evident that we are able to have the feeling described earlier as respect (B) because we have part of the propensity that is necessary for this feeling, namely, the susceptibility to feel pleasure or pain. Since the receptiveness described when activated corresponds to the feeling of respect (B) when utilised to explain the moral drive, I think that it is a reasonable interpretation to assume that this can be described as the predisposition that corresponds to respect (B). Indeed, Kant equates respect and moral feeling at several points. For example, “This feeling (respect), under the name of moral feeling, is therefore produced solely by reason.” (My parenthesis)⁵⁵

Conscience “is practical reason holding the human being’s duty before him for his acquittal or condemnation in every case that comes under a law.”⁵⁶ It is what needs to be presupposed on the subjective or phenomenal side for awareness of what is our duty. It is what is necessary for us to recognise our duties. Kant discusses this predisposition later in the *Metaphysics of Morals* and describes conscience as “an internal judge; and this authority watching over the law in him is ... something incorporated in his being.”⁵⁷ Conscience is described by Kant as something within man originally and is not acquired. It informs man what is his duty and as Kant writes, “...is not directed to an object but merely to the subject (to affect moral feeling by its act)...”⁵⁸ (6:400). The susceptibility to feel pleasure or displeasure, moral feeling, is then necessarily activated since conscience informs us of what is our duty. It therefore seems to be what needs to be presupposed on the side of human beings for the cognitive state of consciousness of the moral law that forms one of the elements of respect when Kant is discussing the moral incentive. Consciousness, then, like moral feeling is a necessary feature of our phenomenal natures that is presupposed for us to have consciousness of the moral law, that is described under the general heading of

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respect (B) in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. The two propensities distinguished here under the headings of moral feeling and conscience are necessary on the phenomenal side for the possibility of respect (B) as a motive.

The last two subjective conditions that Kant describes are actually feelings. Love of man is again a feeling that needs to be presupposed in some degree for the recognition of duties. By love Kant is not here talking of the duty we have to practical love or benevolence. “*Love* is a matter of feeling...a *duty to love* is an absurdity. But *benevolence (amor benevolentiae)*, as conduct, can be subject to a law of duty.”⁵⁹ However, some susceptibility to “the love that is *delight (amor complacentiae)* is direct. But to have a duty to this...is a contradiction.”⁶⁰ Kant seems to be linking the presupposition of this feeling specifically with the recognition of duties to others that arise from love since he also mentions that, as an empirical claim, “*Beneficence* is a duty. If someone practices it often and succeeds in realizing his beneficent intention, he eventually comes actually to love the person he has helped.”⁶¹ However, Kant’s point seems to be that there must be *some* love of our fellow human beings in order to be receptive to the specific duties arising from love. As he points out, this love *might* increase if someone practices the duty of beneficence but if human beings were totally lacking in any of this feeling for their fellow man then the duties arising from beneficence would leave human beings untouched. Unlike moral feeling and conscience which are general requirements for the motive of respect described in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, love of man is a susceptibility that must be presupposed for the recognition of a certain *specific* set of duties: those that arise from love.

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Respect (*reverentia*) is also a subjective feeling like love and is the feeling of self-esteem. Again, Kant is not suggesting that there can be a duty of self-esteem but “he must have respect for the law within himself in order even to think of any duty whatsoever.”⁶² It might appear that Kant is linking this feeling with the susceptibility to recognise specifically duties to the self rather than to others by talking of this feeling of respect as being one of self-esteem. However, when he comes to the discussion of duties arising from respect (point 3 at the beginning of the paper), he explains that there are duties to others arising from respect. “The *respect* that I have for others or that another can require from me (*observantia aliis praestanda*) is therefore recognition of a *dignity* (*dignitas*) in other human beings.”⁶³ As can be seen, Kant uses different Latin equivalences for ‘respect’ in the case when he is referring to a feeling and when he is referring to the maxim of the respect due to others. It is therefore the feeling that is presupposed in human beings when he is discussing the *specific* duties arising from respect and hence corresponds to respect (N).

In summary, Kant is claiming that there are four conditions that are presupposed as being present in phenomenal natures that are necessary for the recognition of duties. The first two are more general than the latter two covering presupposed conditions common to all duties and the latter two reflect the feelings presupposed for the recognition of duties specifically attributable to firstly love and secondly respect. Clearly, Kant is not arguing that the *source* of duties lies in these predispositions. Kant holds consistently to the view that the source of duty lies in the moral law. Duty as the idea of the universality of laws is thus the source of duty. In discussing these four necessary presuppositions present in our phenomenal natures for the recognition of duties, Kant is not claiming that they provide either the ground of the validity of

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our duties or the motivational source for the performance of duties. However, they *are* necessary for the recognition of duties. They are *a priori* conditions that need to be presupposed for moral philosophy, being properly used to refer just to the rational part, to be able to gain applicability to man.

In highlighting the need for human beings to have the two *feelings* of respect and love in order to be able to be receptive to specific duties is one way in which Kant's moral philosophy, although derived from rationality, requires for its application that human beings have these feelings. Although not the source of our duties, feelings have a necessary role to play since without them we would not be the sort of creatures that could recognise duties. In this sense morality *requires* the presence of these feelings on the affective side of our natures.

We also, as Kant makes clear in his discussion of these four subjective conditions, have a *duty* to *cultivate* them. He mentions the duty to "cultivate one's conscience"⁶⁴ and that the obligation "with regard to moral feeling can be only to *cultivate* it."⁶⁵ He also remarks that if someone practises the duty of beneficence "often and succeeds in realizing his beneficent intention, he eventually comes actually to love the person he has helped."⁶⁶ This increase in the feeling of love is likely to make us aware of more occasions when we could help others and thus indirectly contributes to the duty of beneficence.

Duties that we owe to others arising from respect (N)

Kant divides the duties of virtue into those:

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by performing which you also put others under obligation and duties to others the observance of which does not result in obligation on the part of others. - Performing the first is *meritorious* (in relation to others); but performing the second is fulfilling a duty *that is owed*. - *Love* and *respect* are the feelings that accompany the carrying out of these duties.⁶⁷

Fulfilling duties that are owed and showing respect to others is described in negative terms of limiting our self-esteem. However, in discussing respect here Kant is not describing a feeling that we might have about our own worth as opposed to others but rather is referring to the duty that we have to recognise the rationality and free agency (humanity) of others as well as ourselves that we have a duty not to violate by arrogance, defamation or ridicule.

In other words, failure to fulfil these duties of respect infringes man's lawful claims and is expressed indirectly by Kant in terms of the prohibition of the opposite.

“*Arrogance* ...in which we demand that others think little of themselves in comparison with us”⁶⁸ denies respect that we owe to others since as rational agents we are all owed equally the same respect and demanding more respect for ourselves is prohibited. “Defamation...the immediate inclination, with no particular aim in view, to bring into the open something prejudicial to respect for others”⁶⁹ (6:466) is contrary to the respect that we owe others in virtue of their possession of humanity. Even if what is said about the other person is true, the vice still remains since it is contrary to respect for humanity as such. Ridicule that Kant describes as “*Wanton faultfinding* and *mockery*, the propensity to expose others to laughter, to make their faults the immediate object of one's amusement, is a kind of malice.”⁷⁰ This also deprives others of the respect that they are owed in virtue of their humanity even if the faults are real.

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This respect then is only a negative duty about what we ought not to do if respect is still to be maintained. Kant is clearly not saying that the duties of respect require positive actions on our part such as positively showing others high esteem. It is what we must *refrain* from doing to *any* other person if we are to show true respect for the moral law. This is another important aspect of Kant's account of respect that it emphasises that respect (N) is concerned with what we must not do if we are to respect humanity in any other person.

The specific duties arising from respect (N) then apply to all persons, or, as I indicated at the start of the paper, the moral law. It is not dependent on any particular position that someone might have in society or any particular relationships. These duties are present whatever the character of the individual and whatever that individual has done. Kant writes,

Nonetheless I cannot deny all respect to even a vicious man as a human being; I cannot withdraw at least the respect that belongs to him in his quality as a human being, even though by his deeds he makes himself unworthy of it. So there can be disgraced punishments that dishonor humanity itself (such as quartering a man, having him torn by dogs, cutting off his nose and ears).⁷¹

The duties of respect that are owed in virtue of man as a rational being and exemplar of the moral law are universal and cannot be denied whatever the individual has done. This bedrock of respect is owed to all men in virtue of their possession of humanity and is distinguished by Kant from respect that might be dependent on *contingent* differences between individuals and is therefore not attributable to their humanity *per se*.

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The different forms of respect to be shown to others in accordance with difference in their qualities or contingent relations – differences of age, sex, birth, strength or weakness, or even rank and dignity,...cannot be set forth in detail and classified in the *metaphysical* first principles of a doctrine of virtue, since this has to do only with its pure rational principles.⁷²

The duties of respect then are applicable to all persons in virtue of their possession of rationality irrespective of any contingent details about them, including any wrongdoing that they might have done.

Respect (N) and Gratitude

As I pointed out above, the duties arising from love are not owed but do put others under an obligation to you. Kant is not talking about a feeling here but the maxim of benevolence and so if one is beneficent to someone else then that person is under an obligation to you or has a duty of gratitude to you.

Gratitude consists in *honouring* a person because of a benefit he has rendered us. The feeling connected with this judgment is respect for the benefactor (who puts one under obligation), whereas the benefactor is viewed as only in a relation of love toward the recipient.⁷³

This is a *duty* and not just, for example, prudential advice about how to obtain further assistance. This is unlike the duties discussed in connection with respect above in two main respects. They were negative duties but here the duty of gratitude requires the positive duty that we honour our benefactor. The second difference is that this duty is not something that is owed to all men as such. It is only owed to the particular

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benefactor and the degree of gratitude can vary depending on “how useful the favour was to the one put under obligation and how unselfishly it was bestowed on him.”⁷⁴

Conclusion

If we accept the Kantian account that the ground of morality lies in reason alone then, if my argument is correct, this has implications for what must be assumed about rational finite beings if they are to both be aware of their duties and also to show *how* such beings can be motivated solely by the moral law. It is Kant’s analysis of ‘respect’ that provides this account and thus provides a bridge between moral philosophy, understood as referring to the rational part of ethics and anthropology. Although Kant does not deviate from the view that the ground of morality lies in the moral law, for the moral law to have application to human beings it is necessary to presuppose certain features about our natures, without which we would be morally dead and the moral law would have no application to us and would not be able to motivate us. I have shown that respect plays a pivotal role in this account.

Notes

¹ I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* trans. A. Zweig, ed. T. E. Hill and A. Zweig (Oxford: OUP, 2002 [1785]), 4:388.

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- ² I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:389.
- ³ I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:421.
- ⁴ I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:402 (footnote).
- ⁵ R. B. Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics: From Rational beings to Human Beings* (Oxford: OUP, 2000).
- ⁶ N. Sherman, "Reasons and Feelings in Kantian Morality", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55/2 (1995), 369 – 377, p. 369.
- ⁷ I. Kant *Critique of Practical Reason*, L. W. Beck, trans., 3rd Edition (New York: Macmillan, 1993 [1788], 5:79.
- ⁸ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* in M .J. Gregor trans., *Immanuel Kant Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999 [1797]), 6:399 – 6:403.
- ⁹ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:462.
- ¹⁰ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:454 – 455.
- ¹¹ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:71.
- ¹² I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:71 – 5:89.
- ¹³ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:79.
- ¹⁴ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:71.
- ¹⁵ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:72.
- ¹⁶ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:72.
- ¹⁷ I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:457.
- ¹⁸ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:72.
- ¹⁹ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:78.
- ²⁰ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:75.
- ²¹ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:79.
- ²² I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:460, Footnote 3.
- ²³ I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:400, Footnote 13.
- ²⁴ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:79.
- ²⁵ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:78 – 79.
- ²⁶ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:73.
- ²⁷ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:73.
- ²⁸ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:73,75 and 78.

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- ²⁹ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:79.
- ³⁰ I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:401, Footnote 14.
- ³¹ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:80.
- ³² For example, A. Reath, “Kant’s Theory of Moral Sensibility”, *Kant-Studien* 80 (1989), 284 – 302. R. McCarty, “Kantian Moral Motivation and the Feeling of Respect”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (1993), 421 – 435. P. Stratton-Lake, *Kant, Duty and Moral Worth* (London: Routledge, 2000). A. Broadie and E.M. Pybus, “Kant’s Concept of ‘Respect’”, *Kant-Studien* 66 (1975), 58 – 64.
- ³³ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:399.
- ³⁴ I. Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in A. Wood and G. di Giovanni, trans. And eds., *Immanuel Kant Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996 [1793]), 6:23 – 6:24.
- ³⁵ This thesis has become known as the ‘Incorporation Thesis’ from H. Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990)
- ³⁶ I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:413, Footnote *.
- ³⁷ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:117.
- ³⁸ I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:406.
- ³⁹ I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:400.
- ⁴⁰ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:78.
- ⁴¹ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:114.
- ⁴² A. Reath (1989), 287.
- ⁴³ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:80.
- ⁴⁴ P. Stratton-Lake (2000), 36.
- ⁴⁵ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:464.
- ⁴⁶ P. Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996). In chapter 10 of this book Guyer argues that respect is not the motive for adherence to the moral law. Respect is rather the effect of the decision to adhere to the moral law on feelings.
- ⁴⁷ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:79.
- ⁴⁸ A. Reath (1989), 288
- ⁴⁹ A. Reath (1989), 289.
- ⁵⁰ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:399.
- ⁵¹ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:399.

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- ⁵² I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:400.
- ⁵³ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:399.
- ⁵⁴ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:399.
- ⁵⁵ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:76.
- ⁵⁶ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:400.
- ⁵⁷ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:438.
- ⁵⁸ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:400.
- ⁵⁹ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:401.
- ⁶⁰ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:402.
- ⁶¹ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:402.
- ⁶² I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:403.
- ⁶³ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:462.
- ⁶⁴ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:401.
- ⁶⁵ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:399-400.
- ⁶⁶ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:402.
- ⁶⁷ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:448.
- ⁶⁸ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:465.
- ⁶⁹ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:466.
- ⁷⁰ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:467.
- ⁷¹ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:463.
- ⁷² I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:468.
- ⁷³ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:454-455.
- ⁷⁴ I. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:456.