Adam Smith in Immanuel Kant's Moral Philosophy

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Contents

Abstract

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* Adam Smith develops a moral philosophy that uses a psychological idiom to describe morality as a social practice. This description of morality goes entirely against the moral metaphysics Immanuel Kant develops in works like his *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*, which describe morality as a 'fact of reason' and the categorical imperatives of an ahistorical moral will. Despite this stark contrast, in 1771 Kant was recorded praising Smith's work. This thesis explains Kant's praise by developing an original interpretation of the relationship between the two thinkers. First, the two thinkers are situated as representing two divergent streams of Western thought to illustrate the scope of their philosophical antagonism. Second, the existing interpretations of the Kant-Smith relationship are critiqued for ignoring or downplaying this antagonism. Third, an original study of Kant's intellectual development is presented that shows how Smith's descriptions of morality and politics may have influenced Kant's moral and political philosophy.

While developing its new interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship this thesis raises some new exegetical questions and problems that are intended be of interest not only for Kant scholars but political philosophers in general. Drawing upon my interpretation of Kant's transcendental project, John Rawls' use of Kant's theory of moral reason to justify his own theory's claims to universality is critiqued. Similarly, in light of Smith's possible influence upon Kant, the idea that Kant's political cosmopolitanism is grounded on rationally justifiable rights is called into question. Finally, this thesis challenges Kant's traditional classification as a pillar of explicitly normative and prescriptive political and moral philosophy. The thesis seeks to do this by showing how Kant ultimately naturalises morality and politics into historical practices that are describable without reference to first principles.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Date: Signature:

Note on Sources

All citations to Immanuel Kant's works refer to Guyer P. & Wood. A.W. (eds.), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992-2012, 15 volumes with the exception of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Judgement*, which due to superior translation refer to Kant I. (Pluhar W.S. (trans.)), *Critique of Pure Reason*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996 and Kant I., (Pluhar W.S. (trans.)), *Critique of Judgment*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987.

In keeping with convention, all references to Kant's work refer to the original Academy Edition (AK) pagination with the exception of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which maintains its own pagination system referring to the first (A) and second (B) editions of the work published in 1781 and 1787 respectively.

The following abbreviations are used when citing Kant's works:

Announcement – Announcement of the Programme for the Lectures of the Winter Semester 1765-1766

Anthropology – Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View

Blomberg – Blomberg Logic Lecture Notes

CJ – Critique of Judgement

Collins Morality – Collins II Moral Philosophy Lecture Notes

Conflict– Conflict of the Faculties

Conjectural Beginning – Conjectural Beginning of Human History

Correspondence – Correspondence I, II, II

CPR – Critique of Pure Reason

CPrR – Critique of Practical Reason

Different Races – On the Different Races of Human Beings

Dreams – Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics

Enlightenment – What is Enlightenment?

Friedländer Anthropology – Friedländer IV.iii Anthropology Lecture Notes

Groundwork – Groundwork to a Metaphysics of Morals

Herder Morality – Herder V Moral Philosophy Lecture Notes

Inquiry – Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principle of Natural Theology and Morality

Living Forces – Thoughts of the True Estimation of Living Forces

MM – Metaphysics of Morals

Mrongovius Anthropology – Mrongovius I Anthropology Lecture Notes

Mrongovius Morality – Mrongivus II Morality Lecture Notes

Nachlass – Volumes 14-23 of the Academy Edition

Natural Science – Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science

New Elucidation – New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition

Observations – Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime

Perpetual Peace – Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch

Pillau Anthropology – Pillau I Anthropology Lecture Notes

Prolegomena – Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics That Will be Able to Present Itself as a Science

Religion – Religion with the Boundaries of Mere Reason

Right to Lie – On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives

Rotation of the Earth – Examination of the Question Whether the Rotation of the Earth on its Axis, by Which it Brings About the Alternation of Day and Night, has Undergone any Change Since its Origin, and How One Can be Certain of This, Which was set by the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin as the Prize Question for the Current Year

Theory & Practice - On the Common Saying: 'This may be true in theory, but it does not apply in practice

Theory of the Heavens – Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens, or Essay on the Constitution and Mechanical Origin of the Entire Universe, treated in accordance with Newtonian Principles

Universal History – Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose

Vigilantius Morality – Vigilantius IV Moral Philosophy Lecture Notes

All citations to Adam Smith's works refer to Raphael D.D. & Macfie A.L. (eds.), *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987, 8 volumes.

The following abbreviations are used when citing Smith's works:

Ancient Logics – The Principles Which Lead and Direct Philosophical Inquiries; as Illustrated by the Ancient Logics and Metaphysics
Astronomy – The Principles Which Lead and Direct Philosophical Inquiries; as Illustrated by the History of Astronomy
Languages – Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages
Letter – Letter to the Edinburgh Review
LRBL – Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres
TMS – The Theory of Moral Sentiments
WN – An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations

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First, I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisor Professor Christine Beasley for taking me on and continuing to support me even though I have been, to be completely honest, a rather poor student. Without her encouragement and continued exhortations to stop using the first person plural pronoun in every sentence this thesis would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Professor Lisa Hill for providing the initial idea for this thesis (though she can in no way be blamed for the wild direction I ended up taking this thesis) and later providing me with indispensable financial support. I must also gratefully acknowledge the small favours Professor Carol Johnson has afforded me over the years in the form of both financial and moral support.

Second, I would like to acknowledge and thank all my confreres who have supported me, entertained me, and struggled with me in the Napier building. These wonderful people are too numerous to list but you know who you are. I never imagined that I would find such kind and thoughtful friends. I only hope that when you read this acknowledgement you do not take it as a slight that I have not mentioned you specifically. If you do I will find a way to make it up to you. There are however three exceptional people who provided more than companionship and who went above and beyond what can reasonably be expected of any friend in the extent they directly helped me complete this thesis with their criticism of my work and time spent spell checking my convoluted and sometimes obtuse writing. These three people are Jess, Nic, and Mike. I have no way to express my gratitude for everything you have done for me.

Third and finally, I want to acknowledge the immeasurable support of the two most important women in my life; my mum, who has without complaint done innumerable things for me to help me finish this harrowing undertaking and 葉菁菁, 武當來的大眼美女, 自從妳進入我的生活以後, 就再也沒有甚麼事情比妳更重要了。你支持我, 安慰我, 鼓勵我, 讓我感受到難以想像的快樂。沒有妳我就不能完成這個論文。

Introduction

The Question of This Thesis

On the 9th of July 1771 Markus Herz wrote a letter to his friend Immanuel Kant in which he tells us that Kant had greatly praised the Scottish economist and moral philosopher Adam Smith. Herz however offers no further explanation as to why this was so. Kant's own works and written estate are equally silent, providing no obvious answer to this question. Thus the goal of this thesis is to answer the question "why did Immanuel Kant praise Adam Smith?"

This question is an interesting one because unlike Kant's well-documented interactions with David Hume, Isaac Newton, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, it is not immediately obvious what Kant would have in common with Smith. Kant's extensive corpus does not cover political economy in anything more than a fleeting manner nor does it try to explain morality through a psychological idiom the way Smith does in his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Worse still, not only does Kant *not* discuss the same topics as Smith, the epistemological programme Kant carries out in his *Critiques* is decidedly hostile to the methodology Smith uses in his *Moral Sentiments*.

In the course of answering this question I provide not only an extended study of the intellectual relationship between Kant and Smith but also develop an original intellectual history that reveals a shared intellectual lineage between Rousseau, Smith, and Kant. Furthermore, the interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship in this thesis is not merely an addition to intellectual history. By showing the various ways Smith's moral philosophy influences Kant's moral philosophy my thesis raises new questions about the relationship between Kant's 'anthropology' and his critical philosophy, the methodological and epistemological foundations of Kant's political philosophy, and our traditional understanding of Kant's moral philosophy as an exclusively ahistorical and rational exercise.

The Broader Relevance of This Thesis

While this thesis is primarily a philosophical exegesis of Kant and Smith's texts, it is not merely an historiography of two authors from a distant time. The theoretical vistas these two authors sought to establish still underpin contemporary debates in political philosophy. The broad Darwinian and historicist naturalism that underpins Smith's moral philosophy (which would later be replicated by people like Marx) still informs the theoretical starting point of writers as diverse as Friedrich Hayek and Jürgen Habermas. By the same token, Kant's final attempt at the end of the Enlightenment to try to develop rules and norms outside the murky waters of space and time still informs mainstream Western political culture and its belief in the sovereignty of the individual, the autonomy of reason, and the freedom of will. The conflict over the nature and status of science, morality, and justice covered in this thesis then is not just an historical curio but still very much a part of our contemporary conversation.

It is my hope that while reading this thesis the reader is not only able to discern the antagonisms and agreements between Kant and Smith but also relate these to contemporary debates. I have tried to assist this process by including relevant discussions about Thomas Kuhn's philosophy of science and Amartya Sen and John Rawls' theories of justice. However in order to stay focused on the central question of this thesis other interesting analogies to contemporary debates are not discussed.

The Plan of the Thesis

In order to answer the question guiding this thesis I have divided the thesis into three sections. The first section of this thesis – consisting of chapters one through six – is designed to systematically describe the methodological and epistemological assumptions that underpin Kant and Smith's philosophical projects. It is necessary to provide this analysis to both avoid the mistakes of other scholars who have investigated the Kant-Smith relationship and narrow down the range of topics and arguments that are compatible between these two authors' rather distinct philosophical programmes.

The first chapter of the first section provides the historical evidence that Kant had both read and understood the arguments made by Smith. I call on both chronological facts as well as textual evidence to demonstrate that the Smith referred to in Herz's letter is in fact Adam Smith. I then argue that it is *Moral Sentiments* to which Kant's praise is directed. This chapter concludes by arguing that while there is sufficient evidence to warrant asking why Kant was interested in Smith, the *prima facie* references to Smith's work do not fully explain his interest.

The second chapter of this section raises the primary obstacle that any interpreter of the Kant-Smith relationship must face: the fact that what Kant argues in works like his three *Critiques*, his *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*, and the *Metaphysics of Morals* is methodologically incompatible with Smith's *Moral Sentiments*. This chapter argues that Smith's philosophical methodology is essentially an historicist one and thus is diametrically opposed to Kant's transcendental philosophy. This chapter also argues that this difference is reflected in a broader antagonism in Western thinking.

The third and fourth chapters of this thesis build on my claim that Smith's philosophy is essentially historicist in nature and thus incompatible with Kant's transcendentalism. I first show that Smith's philosophy of science is Kuhnian in nature. I argue that Smith's philosophy of science denies any role for metaphysics and explains scientific progress as a practice that helps satisfy psychological demands, not something that creates bodies of knowledge that accord with any particular metaphysical system. Following this I show how this historicist approach to science also informs Smith's approach to moral philosophy where again, contra Kant, he argues morality is an historical practice driven by psychological, economic, cultural, and social needs.

In chapters five and six I conclude the first part of this thesis by showing how Kant's anti-historicist philosophy of science and moral philosophy are both explicitly and implicitly hostile to Smith's historicist approach found in both his *Astronomy* and *Moral Sentiments*. These two chapters will argue that because

Kant's moral philosophy is at its heart a philosophy of freedom it necessarily rejects Smith's description of morality as an historical and social process.

The second section – consisting of chapters seven and eight – of this thesis analyses and critiques the previous interpretations of the Kant-Smith relationship. This critique will call on the reading of Kant and Smith I develop in the first section of the thesis to show how the previous interpretations in one way or another overlook Smith and Kant's methodological and epistemological commitments in order to shoehorn Smith's moral philosophy into Kant's moral philosophy.

Firstly, in the seventh chapter, I provide a summary of Sen's interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship as he develops it in his *The Idea of Justice*. I argue that Sen overlooks the important differences between Kant and Smith's methodologies as described in the first section of this chapter and because of this erroneously conflates Kant's moral theory with John Rawls', which he then in turn links to Smith's moral philosophy. Against Sen I argue that Kant's moral philosophy is incompatible with Rawlsian proceduralism insofar as the latter focuses on how to achieve contingent goals, thus showing that Sens' attempt to link Smith to Kant via Rawls is misguided.

Secondly, in the eighth chapter, I look at Samuel Fleischacker's interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship. I show how Fleischacker avoids Sen's mistake of describing Kant's concept of reason as instrumental rather than transcendental when he argues that Smith's moral rules and Kant's categorical imperatives are intellectually related. However, as with my critique of Sen, I call on my reading of Kant in the first section of the thesis to show that insofar as Smith's moral rules are concerned with negotiating social life they cannot be treated as an alternative formulation of Kant's categorical imperatives.

The third section of this thesis – consisting of chapters nine through twelve – develops my original interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship. Building on my critiques of the previous interpretations I use textual and biographical evidence to show that Kant's moral philosophy changed throughout his lifetime

and that a study of Smith's influence on Kant's thought must be sensitive to this change. I trace the development of Kant's moral philosophy and show that at the time Kant was reading Smith he had a strong historicist current in his moral philosophy. I argue that it is at this juncture that we must search for Smith's influence.

In the ninth chapter I follow a thread I develop at the end of the previous section and raise the possibility that Kant has a second kind of non-transcendental moral philosophy. I argue that early in his career before the development of his critical philosophy, Kant advocates a virtue ethics that shares much in common with Smith's description of moral life.

The tenth chapter builds and extends on the idea that Kant has a 'pre-critical' moral philosophy that is methodologically and epistemologically compatible with Smith's moral philosophy. This chapter calls on the work of Martin Schönfeld to show how Kant's early-career failure to reconcile traditional metaphysics with Newtonian physics encouraged him to embrace a kind of sceptical empiricism, as revealed most visibly in his *Dreams of Spirit-Seer*. I then argue that this embrace of sceptical empiricism encouraged Kant to develop an historicist moral philosophy as evidenced by his announcement for his lectures on moral philosophy in 1765.

The eleventh chapter argues that Kant's pre-critical moral philosophy is a derivative version of the moral narrative in Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* that treats morality as an evolutionary product of social development. After making the case that Kant's pre-critical moral philosophy is essentially Rousseauian in nature the chapter shows that Smith too views Rousseau's *Discourse* as a precursor to his own more nuanced historicist narrative of moral evolution. Finally, this chapter shows some of the ways Smith revises Rousseau's narrative and suggests that Kant also makes these same revisions.

In the twelfth chapter and final chapter I argue that Kant copies Smith's revisions to Rousseau's moral philosophy and applies them to his own pre-critical moral philosophy. I argue that Kant makes use of Smith's invisible hand and couples it

with Smith's Stoic teleology in order to turn Rousseau's essentially pessimistic narrative into a progressive one that downplays Rousseau's romanticism for pre-social human life. The chapter concludes the thesis by arguing that it is because of Smith's revisions to Rousseau, not the similarities of Smith's moral rules to categorical imperatives, that Kant praised Smith.

PART 1 – BACKGROUND TO THE KANT-SMITH RELATIONSHIP

Chapter 1: The Apparently Strange Relationship between Immanuel Kant and Adam Smith

On the 9th of July 1771 Markus Herz – former student, life long friend and confidante to Kant – wrote a letter that gives us access to the Prussian's hidden broodings. Discussing the latest gossip in his letter to Kant, Herz tells us he was in fact quite upset to hear that his former teacher was "no longer such a great devotee of speculative philosophy"[1] as he used to be. Not only had Kant's faith in the authority of "speculative philosophy" diminished, Kant had told his friends "explicitly on a certain occasion" that he

took metaphysics to be pointless head scratching, a subject understood only by a handful of scholars in their study chambers but far too removed from the tumult of the world to bring about any of the changes that their theorising demands. Since most of the rest of the world has no comprehension of metaphysics at all, it cannot have the slightest effect on its well being.[2]

In addition to dismissing metaphysics as the petty games and puzzles of the ivory tower Kant had "supposedly" added as a rejoinder

moral philosophy for the common man is thus the *only* appropriate subject for a scholar, for here one may penetrate the heart, here one may study human feelings and try to regulate them by bringing them under the rules of common experience.[3]

Herz, clearly concerned by this change in Kant's attitude towards philosophy, tells us he even "trembled at this news!" Fortunately for the tortured Herz his fears were allayed upon receiving a letter from Kant which "called" him "back in the nick of time from" his "rashness". Herz consoles himself, suggesting that Kant simply "must have been in a bad mood" and was now happy to see his teacher was "still the same devotee of metaphysics as ever".[4]

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[1] *Correspondence* AK 10:124
[2] *Correspondence* AK 10:124
[3] *Correspondence* AK 10:124
[4] *Correspondence* AK 10:125

This happy little story took place at the beginning of what scholars now like (and dislike) to call Kant's "Silent Decade".[5] This was a period in which Kant published little and quietly developed the revolution in his thought that culminated in the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the *Critique* Kant maps out his programme very explicitly. His goal, contra Herz's worries, is nothing less than the wholesale rehabilitation of metaphysics. We need only quote the preface of the first *Critique* to see his commitment to the metaphysical enterprise:

> by the critique of pure reason… I mean the critique of our power of reason… in regard to all cognitions after which reason may strive *independently of all experience*. Hence I mean by it the decision as to whether metaphysics as such is possible or impossible.[6]

In Kant's mind the entire fate of metaphysics as a legitimate intellectual pursuit is in the balance, depending on the success of his work.

Whether Kant was or was not successful in meeting the challenge he lays out at the being of the first *Critique* is of course a matter of longstanding debate. However what is important for this thesis is that *prima facie* Herz's account appears accurate. Herz's account in fact almost appears to be a trivial reiteration of the basic story of Kant's intellectual development. In this development, so the story goes, Kant continually struggled with the dogmatic metaphysics of the "*Leibnizian-Wolffian* doctrinal edifice"[7] and Hume's scepticism before finally rescuing metaphysics from the abyss by carrying out his self-styled "Copernican revolution".[8] However there is something in this letter Herz seems to have ignored. Also included in Herz's letter is a conversation that contradicts the idea that Kant

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[5] For the debates about the nature and demarcation of this period see Washburn M., "Dogmatism, Scepticism, Criticism: The Dialectic of Kant's "Silent Decade", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, volume 13, number 2, 1975, pp. 167-76; Werkmeister W.H., *Kant's Silent Decade: a Decade of Philosophical Development*, Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1979, *passim.*; Kuehn M., *Kant: a Biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 188-237.

[6] *CPR* Axii

[7] *CPR* A273/B329

[8] *CPR* Bxvi. See also Thilly F., "Kant's Copernican Revolution", *The Monist*, volume 35, number 2, 1925, pp. 329-45 for a 'standard' account of Kant's intellectual development.

had "returned" to metaphysics or, more accurately, contradicts the idea that he had abandoned philosophy that studies the "hearts of common men".

Contrary to the 'bad hair day' thesis put forth by Herz the letter also suggests that Kant continued to maintain an interest in a kind of philosophy that is thoroughly hostile towards the metaphysical tradition he wanted to renovate in the first *Critique*. In particular, it can be seen that Kant had developed an affection for Adam Smith; an author very much interested in the "hearts and minds" of butchers, bakers and brewers, not the possibility of abstract rational knowledge or the safeguarding of morality as a set of ahistorical and immutable rules. Herz writes

I have various comments to make about the Englishman Smith who, Herr Friedländer tells me, is your favourite [*Liebling*]. I too was unusually taken with this man, though at the same time I greatly prefer the first part of Home's *Criticism*.[9]

Though Smith is not quite an "Englishman" it is not controversial to suggest that the Smith to whom Herz refers is Adam Smith. There are no other notable authors with the same name from the British Isles whom we can easily associate with Henry Home or philosophy in general.

The Different Backgrounds of Kant and Smith

It is not controversial to argue that the person to whom Kant refers is likely to be Adam Smith. However the suggestion that Kant was *interested* in a thinker like Smith is strange for two reasons. The first reason is biographical and geographical. The second and more substantial reason is philosophical.

Biographically and geographically Kant and Smith lived worlds apart. According to popular account Kant was, as Paul Guyer has described it,

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[9] *Correspondence* AK 10:126

born into narrow straights in a small city virtually at the outermost limits of European civilisation… Königsberg, where Kant was born… was hardly London or Paris or Edinburgh or Amsterdam.[10]

Kant spent his entire life in Königsberg, venturing no farther than the city's outlying districts during his ten year stint as a private tutor.[11] While Kant made the most of his influence and relative fame to dine and converse with a large cross section of people, he was hardly a globetrotter. Kant was content simply to read about distant worlds and cultures from travelogues[12] or hear the stories from the mouths of his merchant friends passing through the city. The most exciting change to the city's environs appears to have occurred when the stuffy and conservative Pietism of the city was displaced under the more liberal administration of the occupying Imperial Russian Army during the Seven Years' War. Against our immediate desire to associate Russian occupation of Eastern Europe with a moribund and soulless authoritarianism, [13] it appears Königsberg became something of a party town during the occupation. Russian army officers were keen to learn from Kant and his faculty and less concerned with enforcing the kind of Calvinist discipline that had hitherto stifled the atmosphere at the university.[14]

Smith on the other hand grew up in what appeared to be altogether different circumstances. He studied at both Edinburgh and Oxford. While it may be assumed that this was fortunate for the young man, it appears the teachers at the latter hallowed institution had "given up altogether even the pretence of teaching" [15] thanks to their professorships largely being sinecures. Indeed, according to Smith, "the youth neither are taught, nor always can find any proper means of being taught."[16] Smith instead taught himself, eventually managing to secure the chair of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow. These movements between institutions allowed Smith to experience the then clear

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[10] Guyer P., "Introduction: The Starry Heavens and the Moral Law" in Guyer P. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 3
[11] Kuehn, *Kant*, pp. 95-9
[12] And also recommends his students do the same. See *Anthropology* AK 7:120.
[13] See for example Jonathan Israel's (*Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 295-316) argument that Tsarist Russia of the 17th and 18th centuries was, despite its non-Western authoritarian overtones, quite aggressive in its attacks on traditional 'non-Enlightened' customs and practices.
[14] Kuehn, *Kant*, pp. 113-115
[15] *WN* V.i.f.8
[16] *WN* V.i.f.17

differences between Scotland and England. Living in the recently unified Britain, Smith grew up close to the heart of the emerging industrial revolution, seeing both the exotic goods and institutional apparatus of modern empire.[17]

In addition to one-upping Kant by seeing more than one city in his lifetime Smith also managed to travel extensively on the continent. He spent a few years in the French-speaking world, staying in Toulouse, Geneva and Paris. As Ian Ross notes, in addition to seeing the regional variations of the newly formed United Kingdom, Smith's time in France and Geneva allowed him to see "a range of regional economies in operation, and two distinct political systems: autocracy in France and republican oligarchy in Switzerland." [18] During his continental excursion Smith became personally acquainted with other contemporary celebrities, including Voltaire, Benjamin Franklin and of course, kindred grain price connoisseur Francois Quesnay. This was all a far cry from Kant's rather provincial station at the Albertina.

It is difficult to grasp the extent to which these biographical and geographical differences influenced the kinds of ideas Kant and Smith developed. It could be ventured that Smith's interest in economics is a product of living in an environment quite different from the relatively provincial Königsberg.[19] Likewise it could be suggested that Kant's fixation on the topics of metaphysics – and in particular, of the status of our knowledge of God, of an ahistorical 'Good', and of course the nature of experience itself – is the product of the relatively static environment that prevailed in eastern Prussia at the time.[20] In any case neither Königsberg nor Kant come to mind when one thinks of political economy or a

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[17] Ross I.S., *The Life of Adam Smith*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, pp. 29-39

[18] *Ibid.*, p. xxii

[19] See Fay C.R., *Adam Smith: And the Scotland of His Day*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 118-133, 146-161 for a more extensive analysis of Smith's interaction with prominent British and French economists and political activists and how these interactions shaped his ideas.

[20] Ernst Cassirer ((Haden J. (trans.), *Kant's Life and Thought*, London: Yale University Press, 1981, pp. 15-7) for example notes that at the Collegium Fridericianum Kant was "subjected" to a rigorous "spiritual discipline" and "definite religio-psychological technique" where he was "incessantly" forced to study his "opinions and convictions" and "feelings and will" to ensure his of the purity of his "heart." This "left on him a mark he could never fully efface from his life:" the realisation that "the value of life, when it is reckoned according to the sum of pleasure is less than nothing." This belief Cassirer argues is not an "isolated theorem of Kant's philosophy" but the "pervasive motto of his outlook on the world and his conduct of life" and thus "from the very beginning, the goal of his life was not "happiness" but self-sufficiency in thinking and independence of will."

theory of morality based on a largely psychological idiom as can be observed in Smith's two major works *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

This leads to the second reason one may be surprised that Kant expressed so much interest in Smith. Why would Kant – the philosopher who wanted to save metaphysics (the idea that we can have a kind of knowledge that is *a priori* to our empirical intuitions) – be interested in a thinker like Smith, a philosopher that wanted to explain everything within a strictly non-metaphysical and straightforward empiricism? Why would Kant – having begun formulating a philosophy that renewed Cartesian mind-body dualism by throwing out his dated substance ontology and recasting philosophy as epistemology "that has been purified by critique"[21] – be praising Smith, a writer who makes no reference to mind let alone the possibility or structure of cognition and a writer who saw thinking as a psychological activity congruous and contiguous with all other empirical phenomena?[22] The only way to answer this question is to look at the evidence Kant has left us in his written estate and published works.

Kant's References to The Wealth of Nations

Despite the immediate and obvious differences between Kant and Smith in both life and general philosophical outlook there is nonetheless some compelling textual evidence that Kant, as suggested in Herz's letter, was in fact familiar with Smith, had a decent grasp of his ideas, and possibly even used these ideas in his own work.

In addition to Herz's letter Kant refers to Adam Smith by name in two of his published works. In the 'Doctrine of Right' in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, discussing the nature of money, Kant quotes Smith directly. He writes

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[21] *CPR* Bxxiv
[22] See Thomas Pfau ("A Certain Mediocrity: Adam Smith's Moral Behaviourism" in Faflak J. & Sha R.C. (eds.), *Romanticism and the Emotions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 48-75) who argues that Smith is even a behaviourist of sorts who sees reason not as the activity of an individual epistemological subject but a way of describing the social reality created from non-cognitive action.

money is therefore (according to Adam Smith) that material thing the alienation of which is the means and at the same time the measure of the industry by which human beings and nations carry on trade with one another.[23]

This passage is taken from Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.[24] Kant offers little sophisticated analysis of Smith's work at this point. Nevertheless this passage does indicate that he had adopted one important part of Smith's economic theory, namely the labour theory of value. This suspicion seems to be confirmed when we see Kant also assert in this passage from the Doctrine of Right that metal coinage has "real value" because of the labour costs of its production. Kant argues

bank notes and promissory notes cannot be regarded as money, though they can substitute for it temporarily; *for they cost almost no industry to produce* [emphasis added] and their value is based solely on the opinion that they will continue as before to be converted into hard *cash*.[25]

Though Kant's understanding of Smith's economics appears rather limited, that he is able to directly quote one of Smith's works provides sufficient evidence that he had read or had access to the *Wealth of Nations*.

The evidence that Kant may have read or had access to Smith's works is further bolstered in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* where again Kant can be seen referring to Smith by name. Following a regular bout of misogyny, classifying both children and women as immature and thus "unable to defend their rights and pursue civil affairs for themselves", Kant speaks out against people (presumably only men) who "make [themselves] immature".[26] Liberation from "immaturity" and the ability to think for one's self is one of Kant's more famous war-cries as seen in his popular essay *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment*.[27] In keeping with this essay, in the *Anthropology* Kant wraps up

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[23] *MM* AK 6:289
[24] *WN* I.iv.11 – the actual quote reads: "It is in this manner that money has become in all civilised nations the universal instrument of commerce, by the intervention of which goods of all kinds are bought and sold, or exchanged for one another".
[25] *MM* AK 6:289
[26] *Anthropology* AK 7:209
[27] *Enlightenment* AK 8:35 – the opening tract of this essay is almost identical to the passage in the *Anthropology* and this time also seems to explicitly include the "entire fair sex" now as also having a duty to "emancipate themselves from other people's direction" as well.

his criticism of people who prefer paternalism to thinking for themselves, telling us that

[h]eads of state call themselves *fathers of the country*, because they understand better how to make their *subjects* happy than the subjects understand; but the people are condemned to permanent immaturity with regard to their own best interest. And when Adam Smith improperly says of these heads of state: "they are themselves, without exception, the greatest spendthrifts of all", he is firmly refuted by the (wise!) sumptuary laws issued in many countries.[28]

Given Kant's anti-paternalist bent, to see him speaking against Smith at this point is strange. Yet this passage contains barbs of sarcasm. One need only compare this passage from the *Anthropology* with his student's lecture notes from the same course (where Smith's name is again recorded) to see this passage in less censor-friendly form:

[i]t… pleases human beings terrifically to leave themselves to the care of others: his soul to the preacher, his body the doctor. Using their own reason is too laborious to them. They have thus often been dominated by those who crave dominance. Lord Bolingbroke thus says that a mass of human beings is always a mob over whom one person prevails. – If the regent makes the subjects immature, they are indignant. Denmark therefore did not do well when it introduced the order governing dress. Smith, in the book on national character, says just this.[29]

It is unclear what the "the book on national character" is, or what passage in Smith's works Kant is referring to here.[30] The only passage in Smith's work that discusses a king enacting sumptuary laws to regulate the dress of his subjects is found in the 'Effects of the Progress of Improvement upon the real Price of Manufactures' in the *Wealth of Nations*. And in this passage it is England rather than Denmark that is discussed. In this section Smith notes

in 1463, being the 3rd of Edward IV, it was enacted, that 'no servant in husbandry, nor common labourer, nor servant to any artificer inhabiting out of

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[28] *Anthropology* AK 7:209
[29] *Mrongovius Anthropology* AK 25: 1299
[30] Samuel Fleischacker ("Values Behind the Market: Kant's Response to the *Wealth of Nations*", *History of Political Thought*, volume 17, number 3, 1996, p.387 n. 24) suggests that while Kant here is talking about Adam Smith, the reference to "Danish sumptuary ordinances must come from another source".

a city or burgh, shall use or wear in their clothing any cloth above two shillings the broad yard'.[31]

Beyond the explicit references to Smith and the *Wealth of Nations* by name, Samuel Fleischacker also offers convincing evidence that Kant was an early adopter of Smith's ideas through his circle of friends in greater Germany. Fleischacker notes that even if Kant did not ever read a single line of any of Smith's books, Christian Jakob Kraus, "generally considered the most important expositor of Smith in Germany", was one of Kant's students, protégés and closest friends.[32] This makes it entirely possible that Kant could have been familiar with Smith's ideas through verbal transmission alone.

The Division of Labour in Kant and Smith

Fleischacker is also able to point us towards some passages where Kant appears to be using another of Smith's core ideas – that is, the division of labour. Fleischacker points us to a passage that uses both the actual phrase "division of labour" and uses this phrase in a manner identical to Smith. In a passage from the preface of the *Groundwork* Kant states

all trades, crafts, and arts have gained by the division of labour, namely when one person does not do everything but each limits himself to a certain task that differs markedly from others in the way it is to be handled, so as to be able to perform it most perfectly and with greater facility. Where work is not so differentiated and divided, where everyone is a jack-of-all-trades, there trades remain in the greatest barbarism. Whether pure philosophy in all its parts does not require its own special man might in itself be a subject not unworthy of consideration.[33]

Not only does Kant seem to be parroting Smith in the *Groundwork*, he also uses the concept of the division of labour to discuss educational improvement many years later in his *Conflict of the Faculties*.[34] There Kant writes

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[31] *WN* I.xi.o.9
[32] Fleischacker, "Kant's Response to the *Wealth of Nations*", pp. 380-2
[33] *Groundwork* AK 4:389. It should be noted that Kant also refers to the division of labour in his student's anthropology lecture notes. For example see *Anthropology Pillau* AK 25:845.
[34] Fleischacker, "Kant's Response to the *Wealth of Nations*", pp. 390-1

[w]hoever it was that first hit on the notion of a university and proposed that a public institution of this kind be established, it was not a bad idea to handle the entire content of learning (really, the thinkers devoted it) *like a factory*, so to speak – by a division of labour, so that for every branch of the sciences there would be a public teacher or *professor* appointed as its trustee.[35]

The general idea of the division of labour had emerged in the European imagination prior to the publication of the *Groundwork* through other authors such as Adam Ferguson, David Hume, and, of course, Bernard Mandeville.[36] However Fleischacker argues that the phrase "the division of labour" was not a part of the German lexicon when Kant published the *Groundwork*. This suggests that Kant may have become aware of the idea through direct experience with Smith's work rather than through general cultural dissemination.[37] Further, Fleischacker argues that there is no clear evidence Kant had read Adam Ferguson or Bernard Mandeville (or Anne-Roberts-Jacques Turgot, François Quesnay, Richard Cantillon, or any other early thinker who has a feasible claim to popularising the idea for that matter) in depth.[38] This claim may be questioned. Contrary to Fleischacker's suggestion that Smith was the only source for Kant's thoughts on the division of labour, it appears that Kant, at the very least, *may* have owned a 1768 German translation of Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*.[39] Further, it is intuitively difficult to believe that Kant was unaware of Mandeville's *Fable* given its notoriety. Mandeville was met with censure in Britain but was initially embraced as a libertine and freethinker on the continent. By the time the second translation of Mandeville's *Fable* was published in 1750, his theses "had become almost classical in France".[40] Whether through Mandeville's fame or notoriety or given Kant's intellectual leanings of the time (possessing a keen interest in both British and French[41] writers) it is difficult to assume that he could

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[35] *Conflict,* AK 7:17

[36] It has even been argued that the idea dates back to Plato. See Foley V., "The Division of Labour in Plato and Smith", *History of Political Economy*, volume 6, number 2, 1974, pp. 220-242.

[37] Fleischacker, "Kant's Response to the *Wealth of Nations*", p. 383 n. 12

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 382

[39] Arthur Warda's catalogue of some of Kant's literary estate (Warda, A., *Immanuel Kants Bücher*, Berlin: Verlag von Martin Breslauer, 1922) notes that it contained a copy of Ferguson's work. However, this catalogue is mixed up with another person's estate thus making it impossible to tell if Kant had definitely owned this book.

[40] Hundert, E.J., *The Enlightenment's Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 102-3

[41] Particularly David Hume and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

have avoided at the least some of the basic hypotheses of the *Fable*.[42] Despite these objections however, it is not unreasonable to accept Fleischacker's argument that – wherever or whenever Kant first heard of the division of labour – the description of the division of labour Kant provides in this passage is too specific and detailed to be attributable to anyone except Smith. Not only is the exact phrase "division of labour" used, Kant also details how this division increases productivity and efficiency. In Fleischacker's words

Smith's brilliant opening chapter adduces three reasons for why the division of labour improves efficiency so enormously: it increases the "dexterity" of labourers, saves the time "commonly lost in passing from one species of work to another" and leads to the invention of machines "which facilitate and abridge labour."[43]

These points correlate with the advantages Kant associated with the division of labour – that is, ""perfection" or "completeness" (*Vollkommenheit*) and "facility" (*Leichtigkeit*), which are not too far from the first two of Smith's points".[44]

If the above statements are not enough to convince the reader that Kant had a working knowledge of Smith's *Wealth of Nations* Fleischacker also points us to an early passage in this book which may be the source of Kant's claims that philosophy itself must be subjected to a division of labour in modern commercial society.[45] Compare the above quotes on the academic division with the following quote from Smith:

all the improvements in machinery, however, have by no means been the inventions of those who had occasion to use machines. Many improvements have been made by the ingenuity of the makers of the machines, when to make them became the business of a peculiar trade; and some by that of those who are called philosophers or men of speculation, whose trade it is, not to do anything, but to observe every thing; and who, upon that account, are often capable of combining together powers of the most distant and dissimilar objects. In the progress of society, philosophy and speculation becomes, like every other employment, the principal or sole trade and occupation of a particular class of citizens. Like every other employment too, it is subdivided

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[42] Kant, as a youth (and throughout the rest of his life) took a keen interest in battles amongst the European intellectual behemoths of the eighteenth century. See Kuehn, *Kant*, pp. 84-7.
[43] Fleischacker, "Kant's Response to the *Wealth of Nations*", p. 384 citing *WN* I.i.5-6
[44] *Ibid.,* p. 384, p. 384 n. 15
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 384

into a great number of different branches, each of which affords occupation to a peculiar tribe or class of philosophers; and this subdivision of employment in philosophy, as well as in every other business, improves dexterity, and saves time. Each individual become more expert in his own peculiar branch, more work is done upon the whole, and the quantity of science is considerably increased by it.[46]

This sum of evidence suggests that it was possible that Kant was at the very least aware of the basic propositions of Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. However, whether or not Kant did in fact have a working knowledge of his text does not help explain Herz's letter. It does not help explain Herz's letter because Kant's commentary on *The Wealth of Nations* is absolutely miniscule and largely unimportant compared to his collected writings. This indicates that Kant, despite being familiar with the book, probably did not see it as an important work. However even more importantly, Herz's letter was written five year before the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*. Thus it was also quite impossible for Kant to be referring to Smith the author of *The Wealth of Nations* as his 'favourite'. Given this chronological discrepancy it is only possible that Kant was praising Smith the author of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

Kant's References to The Theory of Moral Sentiments

The first English edition of *Moral Sentiments* was published in 1759. As Herz's letter was written in 1771 (five years before the *Wealth of Nations*) this means that discussion of the book is, unlike the *Wealth of Nations*, chronologically sound. Unfortunately – unlike Latin, French and of course German – there is no evidence Kant could read English (even despite Kant's closest friend being the English merchant Joseph Green).[47] Manfred Kuehn argues that it is "unlikely that Kant received any formal education in English. Though he could probably decipher what a certain passage was about, he could not really read it."[48] Fortunately however the first German edition of *Moral Sentiments* was translated from the

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[46] *WN* I.i.9

[47] In addition to being Kant's closest friends, Kuehn (*Kant*, p. 156) even argues that it was Green's obsession with following maxims to the point of absurdity that changed Kant from a flamboyant man of letters into the stereotypical old crank whose routine one can 'set their watch to'.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 50

fourth English edition in 1770.[49] This perfectly correlates with the mention of Smith in Herz's letter a few months later. It thus appears Kant and his associates had just read the book hot off the press and were responding to the novel approach to moral philosophy contained within the book.

While the chronological record provides a sound basis for considering that Kant was familiar with Smith's *Moral Sentiments*, there also exists some textual evidence in Kant's work proper which reinforce this belief. Samuel Fleischacker has already collected much of this evidence and I will repeat his findings here.

The Impartial Spectator in Kant's Moral Philosophy

Fleischacker begins his presentation of the evidence that Kant had read Smith's *Moral Sentiments* by pointing to a somewhat obscure 1877 book by German economist August Oncken titled *Adam Smith und Immanuel Kant*.[50] In this book Fleischacker tells us Oncken argued that there were "remarkable verbal and philosophy parallels between [Kant and Smith's] systems".[51] Oncken conjectured that because Kant knew the *Wealth of Nations* it was reasonable to assume that he had read *Moral Sentiments*. Furthermore, paraphrasing the parallels Oncken saw between Kant and Smith's understanding of "conscience and moral laws", Fleischacker writes

> both [authors] frequently compare conscience to a judge or court of law. Kant calls it the 'innerer Gerichtshof', Smith the 'inferiour tribunal'. In the second place, Smith moves from conscience to the role of general rules in morality, and winds up the latter discussion by arguing that moral laws 'are justly regarded as the laws of the Deity'. Kant, in the Doctrine of Virtue, closes a discussion of conscience or moral self-knowledge, as the faculty for scrutinising one's own ability to follow moral law, with a reference, in quotation marks, to the duty "of recognising all our duties *as if* (*instar*) they were divine commands.[52]

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[49] Lai C., *Adam Smith Across Nations: Translations and Receptions of the Wealth of Nations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. xvi

[50] Oncken A., *Adam Smith und Immanuel Kant*, Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1877

[51] Fleischacker S., "Philosophy in Moral Practice: Kant and Adam Smith", *Kant-Studien*, volume 82, number 3, 1991, p. 249

[52] *Ibid*., p. 253 citing *MM* AK 4:437 and Oncken, *Adam Smith und Immanuel Kant*, p. 92

In addition to Oncken's remarks Fleischacker notes that the opening page of Kant's *Groundwork* also contains a peculiar reference to a "rational and impartial spectator (*vernünftige und unparteiische Zuschauer*)".[53] While this phrase is interesting in and of itself, I believe the complete sentence this reference is found in is even more remarkable. Kant's complete sentence reads as follows

power, riches, honour, even health and that complete wellbeing and satisfaction with one's condition called *happiness*, produce boldness and thereby often arrogance as well unless a good will is present which corrects the influence of these on the mind and, in so doing, also corrects the whole principle of action and brings it in conformity with universal ends – *not to mention that an impartial rational spectator can take no delight in seeing the uninterrupted prosperity of a being graced with no feature of a pure and good will, so that a good will seems to constitute the indispensable condition even of worthiness to be happy* [emphasis added].[54]

Thus here in the opening tract of Kant's most well known work on moral philosophy it can be seen that he does not simply talk about 'universal ends' and 'categorical imperatives' as might be expected. Rather Kant can also be seen suggesting that there is "an impartial rational spectator" that approves of and agrees with acts motivated by a "good will". Or in other words, here Kant can be seen suggesting that an "impartial spectator" would – for some as yet unexplained reason – endorse the idea that what is good is that which follows from rationally proscribed rules. This mirrors Smith's own description of the impartial spectator. While Smith himself does not ever mention his impartial spectator being 'rational' let alone something that approves of maxims derived from something like Kant's categorical imperative, Smith's impartial spectator also places a premium on being able to follow rules.[55]

If one is still unconvinced that Kant was thinking about Smith when he wrote this line one need only look beyond the actual words of the concept being discussed. When Kant writes "an impartial rational spectator can take no delight in seeing the uninterrupted prosperity of a being graced with no feature of a pure and good will" he also makes it clear that this impartial spectator is a psychological

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[53] *Ibid.*, p. 252 citing *Groundwork* AK 4:393
[54] *Groundwork* AK 4:393
[55] *C.f. CPrR* AK 5:25-7 and *TMS* III.4.8-5.3

mechanism that disapproves of good deeds done from bad motives. The spectator does not coldly judge the rationality of the will (as would be usual in Kantian moral philosophy)[56] but rather "takes delight" in it when it acts from appropriate motives. Thus insofar as Kant's impartial spectator is a psychological mechanism it is also decidedly Smithian.[57]

Additional References to the Impartial Spectator

References to an impartial spectator are not just confined to Kant's *Groundwork*. Kant also makes numerous references to an impartial spectator in his *Handschriftlicher Nachlass*. Fleischacker points to three Reflections in Kant's *Nachlass*[58] which I shall cite in full here.

Reflection 6628, dated circa 1769-70, reads

the first investigation is: Which are the *principia prima dijudicationis moralis* (*later addition*: theoretical rules of adjudication), i.e., which are the highest maxims of morality and which is its highest law. 2. Which is the rule of application (*later addition*: for practical application of adjudicative rules) to an object of adjudication (*sympathy for others and an impartial spectator* [emphasis added]). 3. Through what do the moral conditions become *motiva*, i.e. on what rests their *vis movens* and thus their application to the subject? The latter are first the *motivum* essential bound up with morality, namely the worthiness to be happy.[59]

In these vague notes Kant is thinking about the motivations of moral agents. A particular problem that haunts Kant's moral philosophy is the link between the discovery of the moral law and the ability of human beings to act in accordance

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[56] As Kant describes his moral philosophy in the second *Critique*: "[t]he rule of judgement under laws of pure practical is this: ask yourself whether, if the action you propose were to take place by a law of the nature of which you were yourself a part, you could indeed regard it as possible through your will" (*CPrR* AK 5:69). The primary purpose of developing moral rules in this way is to "guard against *empiricism* in practical reason, which places the practical concepts of good and evil merely in experiential consequences" (*CPrR* AK 5:70), something Smith's moral philosophy does by reducing itself to empirical description of moral judgement.
[57] See *TMS* II.iii.intro.I for Smith's overview of his moral psychology and the impartial spectator.
[58] Fleischacker, "Philosophy in Moral Practice", p. 251
[59] *Nachlass* AK 19:117

with the law.[60] We can see Kant toying with the idea that Smith's impartial spectator and concept of imaginative sympathy (the core operative psychological process in Smith's moral philosophy) may be the motivational force for acting in accordance with the moral law.

Reflection 6864, dated crica 1776-1778, reads

the epigenesis of happiness (self-creation) out of freedom, which is restricted by the conditions of universal validity, is the ground of the moral feeling. *In Smith's system, why does the impartial judge (who is not one of the participants) adopt that which is universally good?* [Emphasis added] And why does he have any satisfaction in this?[61]

In this Reflection – like Reflection 6628 – Kant again appears to express the idea that Smith's impartial spectator is an accurate (or at least useful) description of human psychology and ponders why it is that it adopts that which is "universally [or 'rationally'] good". As just shown, Kant held these ideas at least until the publication of his *Groundwork*, where he still appears to suggest that Smith's impartial spectator produces the same kind of moral judgements that the *a priori* use of practical reason produces.

Finally, in Reflection 1355 (dated to the early 1770s) let all doubt that Kant was not familiar with Smith's moral philosophy be erased. In this reflection Kant even places Smith above Hume (the philosopher he credits for inspiring him to 'save' metaphysics)[62] as one of the greatest moral philosophers:

it is boasted that in Germany the taste for the fine arts has deepened. But where is the historical writer who can so finely deal with history and the driest philosophical matters with the understanding and deep insight of a Hume, or the moral knowledge of a man like Smith?[63]

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[60] See McCarthy R.R., "Kantian Moral Motivation and the Feeling of Respect", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, volume 31, number 3, 1993, pp. 421-35 for an excellent summary of the various criticisms and defences of this apparent dilemma in Kant's moral philosophy.
[61] *Nachlass* AK 19:185
[62] *Prolegomena* AK 4:260. And as John Zammito (*Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, London: Chicago University Press, 2002, p. 187) has pointed out, Benno Erdmann ("Kant und Hume um 1762", Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie, volume 1, 1888, p. 7) has argued that Kant was very much interested in "Hume the moral essayist" before he was "Hume the metaphysical skeptic".
[63] *Nachlass* AK 15: 592

As Fleischacker puts it, "so much for the documentary evidence."[64]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how Herz's passing reference to Kant's supposed interest in Smith can be backed up with substantial textual evidence which demonstrates that Kant both knew and approved of Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. I have argued that while Kant is familiar with both works, it is the latter work to which most of Kant's thoughts are directed. Unfortunately these allusions do not provide any obvious way to understand how Kant may have incorporated Smith's "moral knowledge of man" into his own works. However now that I have demonstrated there is biographical evidence to support the idea that Smith may have been an important influence on Kant's thinking I am in a position to explore the philosophical problems that come with trying to demonstrate this hypothesis; namely, how it is possible to reconcile Smith's historicism and empiricist psychology with Kant's transcendental idealism.

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[64] Fleischacker, "Philosophy in Moral Practice", p. 252

Chapter 2: Smith's Historicism and Kant's Anti-Historicism

In the previous chapter I argued that there is strong evidence that Kant was familiar with Smith's ideas. I also argued that Kant's primary interest in Smith appears to be in the musings of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, with Kant singling out Smith's moral philosophy for high praise and occasionally referring to an 'impartial spectator' while discussing his own moral philosophy. What greater role Smith's ideas play in Kant's philosophy remains unknown. Before trying to solve this problem by developing an exposition that explains how Smith's moral philosophy influences Kant's moral philosophy however, I need to tackle another important problem. This problem is the radically different nature of Kant and Smith's moral philosophy. Kant construes morality as the ahistorical conclusions ('imperatives') of reason. Morality for Smith on the other hand is a set of historically contingent practices that facilitate social harmony at any particular time and place. Thus insofar as Kant and Smith discuss morality, it appears they are talking about two quite distinct phenomena that unfortunately share the same noun phrase.

This basic incompatibility between the ways the two authors understand morality provides a serious problem for anyone who wants to try to argue that Kant had Smith in mind while developing his moral philosophy. Thus I will first make a brief sketch of Smith's thinking and show that he is a part of a turn towards anti-Kantian historicism and naturalism that would later become clearer in writers like Willard Quine and Thomas Kuhn. The goal of this somewhat unorthodox reading of Smith as an historicist is to tease out in the strongest manner possible the different ways both he and Kant conceptualise 'philosophy' and 'science',[65] and as a consequence, what they are talking about when they use the rather nebulous word 'morality'.

In this chapter I will first make the case that it is possible to consider Smith as an anti-Kantian historicist. Then in the following two chapters I will provide textual

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[65] These two phrases are used interchangeably by both Kant and Smith and thus will be so here.

evidence to support this interpretation. Only after identifying the ways Kant and Smith's moral philosophy are incompatible with each other will I be in a position to explain how Kant may have incorporated some of Smith's ideas into his own quite different philosophical project whilst avoiding the mistakes of previous interpretations.

On Historicism

I have just suggested that Smith is an 'historicist' and in this way differs from Kant. Using this word however is problematic, especially given Karl Popper's influential usage of this word. Andrew Reynolds has captured the essence of difficulties that come with using this word and I will cite him in full:

> [h]istoricism is a label that gets applied to a confusingly wide array of theses…For many people the term is likely to bring to mind the position criticised by Karl Popper in his books *The Poverty of Historicism* (1961) and *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1971). Popper's employment of the term has added to the confusion, since the position he identifies by that label is almost diametrically opposed to another usage well established much in advance of his own interest in the subject. Popper used the term to refer to the thesis that an important object of the historical and social sciences is to make predictions about future developments in political and social trends. But 'historicism' had already been associated with the ideas of the 18th century thinkers Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) and Johann Herder (1744-1803). This earlier version of historicism arose in opposition to the Enlightenment ideal of an ahistorical and universal rationality, the inspiration for which was drawn from the growing successes of the natural sciences.[66]

Reynolds continues, arguing that the most important idea historicists like Herder "drew from the growing successes of the natural sciences" was "that reason is not some Platonic essence we can formalise into a rigorous system of axioms and rules of inference binding on all rational agents for all times". Thus we must broach the possibility that "the 'modernist' passion for logical thought is just that, a fancy for one species of behaviour among many possible alternatives".[67]

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[66] Reynolds A., "What is Historicism?", *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, volume 13, number 3, 1999, p. 275

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 278. See also Zammito J., "Herder on Historicism and Naturalism", *Conference on Herder and Anthropology*, University of Oslo, May 2006 for a useful analysis of Herder's criticism of Enlightenment rationalism, particularly in so far as he celebrates Scottish philosophy and reacts against Kantian rationalism.

Being sceptical of claims about the universality and timelessness of reason is not all that is involved in this kind of historicism. This kind of historicism also involves a necessary commitment to a thorough naturalism. Richard Rorty describes this necessary commitment most clearly. Like Reynolds, Rorty describes the historicism that started in the eighteenth century with people like Herder and Vico as an attitude towards philosophy that tries "to undermine" our

confidence in 'the mind' as something about which one should have a 'philosophical' view, in 'knowledge' as something about which there ought to be a 'theory' and which has 'foundations',[68]

and an attitude towards philosophy that

reminds us that investigations of the foundations of knowledge or morality or language or society may be simply apologetics, attempts to eternalise a certain contemporary language-game, social practice, or self-image.[69]

Historicism as Rorty defines it is a "materialist" position which views "our notion of 'mind and matter' as a reflection of an unfortunate linguistic development".[70] When asking questions about 'mind' an historicist does not see in these questions difficult problems about whether consciousness is a mental or neural state or how these two states may relate to each other. Rather an historicist sees the very raising of this kind of question as a product of our "social practices, not important questions about the 'intrinsic property of the entities in question' or the 'logic of our language'".[71] By understanding philosophical questions about the nature of mind and knowledge as questions that arise from a particular set of infinitely contingent social, historical, and linguistic conditions, "rationality and epistemic authority" is explained "by reference to what society lets us say, rather than the latter by the former".[72] "If we are behaviourist in this sense", Rorty argues, "then it will not occur to us invoke either of the traditional Kantian distinctions [between the analytic and synthetic, and *a priori* and a posteriori]". Instead, if we

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[68] Rorty R., *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 7
[69] *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 87
[71] *Ibid.,* p. 122
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 174

wish to understand the kind of philosophical problems Kant found important we need to "understand the rules" of the particular "language game" he worked within.[73] As such, because this kind of historicism wants to reduce all pretensions of metaphysics down to particular contingent social, linguistic, or cultural practices it is also thoroughly and necessarily naturalist.[74]

Why is this argument about the nature of 'mind' – or for the historicist, debates about how the conversation about something called 'mind' managed to take root in our culture – important? It is important because "philosophy-as-epistemology" – as Rorty calls non-historicist approaches to the philosophy of mind – is the foundation of Kantian philosophy. If one does not accept Kant's philosophical dualism, concepts like the categorical imperative make little sense. Without a power of reason that is epistemically *a priori* to the causal world we experience – that is, epistemically prior to history – it is difficult to talk about moral decision making as anything more than the mechanical behaviour of just another animal species. To quote Rorty further

by linking epistemology to morality in the project of "destroying reason to make room for faith" (that is, destroying Newtonian determinism to make room for the common moral consciousness), he [Kant] revived the notion of a 'complete philosophical system', one in which morality was 'grounded' on something less controversial and more scientific. Whereas the ancient schools each had a view of human virtue designed to match their view of what the world was like, Newton had pre-empted views on the latter subject. With Kant, epistemology was able to step into metaphysics' role of guarantor of the presumptions of morality.[75]

Some Objections to Calling Smith an Historicist

There are two possible objections to calling Smith an historicist in the sense I have described above. The first objection is that Smith *is* an historicist in the sense Popper uses this term. This also is correct. Popper's old diatribes against

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[73] *Ibid.*, p. 174

[74] For a more complete account of the necessary of naturalism in historicism see Brandom R., "Vocabularies of Pragmatism: Synthesising Naturalism and Historicism" in Brandom R.B. (ed.), *Rorty and His Critics*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, pp. 156-82.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 138

historicists as seers predicting the future according to "inexorable laws"[76] and as people who hold "the view that the story of mankind has a plot, and that if we can succeed in unravelling this plot, we shall hold the key to the future"[77] cannot be dismissed entirely. They cannot be dismissed entirely because Smith's writing *does* contain a teleological element of the kind Popper criticises; Smith's writing does at times construe both the economy and moral behaviour as developing towards a divinely sanctioned equilibrium.[78]

The possibility that Smith's work can be subjected to Popper's critique has lead people like Terence Hutchinson to try to defend Smith from the charge that he was engaged in pseudoscience because of the teleological nature of his work. Hutchinson argues that Smith "might not be describable as an historicist in the fullest sense" because while he does speculate about the historical links in economic development he "does not claim to have discovered "laws" of economic development".[79] However such a defence is unnecessary because my goal in this thesis is not prove the validity of a particular kind of philosophy of science but only how one man's thinking influenced another's. What must be established is whether or not Smith was an historicist in the sense described above, not whether what he does is pseudoscience.

The second objection is that it is inappropriate to describe Smith as a Rortian postmodern historicist. This too is correct. Unlike the Rortian historicist Smith does not believe that truth entirely boils down to social and linguistic practice,[80] that questions about our 'human nature' cannot yield answers that are objective, or

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[76] Popper K.R., *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 241

[77] Popper K.R., "Prediction and Prophecy in the Social Sciences" in Gardiner P. (ed.), *Theories of History* New York: The Free Press, 1959, p. 279

[78] See Kleer R.A., "Final Causes in Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, volume 33, number 2, 1995, pp. 275-300 and Alvey J.E., "The Role of Teleology in Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations", *History of Economics Review*, number 31, 2000, pp. 14-29.

[79] Hutchinson T., "Adam Smith and the Wealth of Nations", *Journal of Law and Economics*, volume 19, number 3, 1976, p. 516

[80] Though quite interestingly he recognises the historical nature of language in his *Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages* – an appendix to his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. See also Berry C.J., "Adam Smith's Considerations on Language", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, volume 35, number 1, 1974, pp. 130-8.

that 'the good' is relative.[81] Furthermore, even though Smith is loth to talk about 'mind' or even a 'soul' he is happy to describe human beings through a psychological idiom that assumes a certain fixity of human nature. He does this because without Charles Darwin's theory of evolution he works on the assumption that our base psychology is static and that this – following David Hume – constitutes a "human nature" on which an objective, empirical, and most importantly ahistorical, science of morals can be developed.[82] However, despite Smith's commitment to an ahistorical concept of 'human nature' and his clear belief in an objective 'good' in the form of virtues and behaviours all 'wise' humans will find agreeable, Smith's philosophy still contains strong historicist tendencies that result from the rejection of the kind of mind-body dualism found in Kantian attitudes to philosophy.

Smith, like Rorty, does not entertain debates about how accurately our mind's eye reflects the 'world out there' and thus Smith, like Rorty, does not try to find moral rules by searching a Platonic-Cartesian mind-universe for the final solution to the questions 'what is moral?', 'what is just?' or 'what should I do?' Nor does Smith's moral philosophy draw upon what Kant calls "facts of reason"[83] or what John Mackie calls "values [that] are objectively prescriptive".[84] Indeed contra Kant but like Rorty, Smith's moral philosophy does not sit well alongside contemporary forms of ethical theory that are primarily concerned with finding the 'right' or 'proper' conduct of action through intuition pumps, hypothetical moral dilemmas and an endless reconfiguring of moral axioms.[85] Furthermore and

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[81] As shall be shown later, despite the fact that Smith describes morality as a kind of social practice, he still believes it can be measured against a set of virtues whose authority is not merely grounded in communal consensus. Noting this strange contradiction Charles Clark ("Adam Smith and Society as an Evolutionary Process", *Journal of Economic Issues*, volume 24, number 3, 1990, p. 825) has argued that "Smith has two research programs: a search for natural laws and the natural order, and a historical investigation of existing social phenomena – each which give a distinct vision of society. The second research program… has an implicit view of society as an evolutionary process".

[82] See Hume D., *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Oxford: The Claredon Press, 1896, p. xvi-xix and Hume D., Hume D,, *Enquires Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Oxford: The Claredon Press, 1963, pp. 218-9.

[83] *CPrR* AK 5:31

[84] Mackie J.L., *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, p. 24

[85] That is to say, Smith and Rorty are not interested in the kinds of rationalist morality that focus on the individual and are legalistic in nature (forms of deontology and utilitarianism) which Max Weber has attributed the to rise of bourgeois capitalist culture (see Schluchter W. (trans Roth G.), "*The Rise of Western Rationalism: Max Weber's Developmental History*", Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, pp. 50-58).

once again like Rorty, Smith's monist philosophy cannot accommodate the epistemological defence of the radical theory of freedom that is at the heart of Kant's practical moral philosophy.[86] In short, while Smith's philosophy cannot be described as a variety of Rortian postmodern historicism, it still – as a shall soon demonstrate in more detail – shares with this tradition some of its critical anti-Kantian positions. Thus, while the above objections have a basis, Smith's philosophy can still be described as a variety of historicism because he maintains that even talking about things like mind-body dualism and the ontological or epistemological status of a 'free will' are not worth discussing – or as Rorty would put it, treats these topics as an "unfortunate" development in the "vocabulary"[87] we use to talk about our being – and that moral philosophy is at its bottom an exercise in describing human behaviour in time and space without recourse to any metaphysics.

Kant's Anti-Historicism

The idea that our 'knowledge' is not a reflection in our mind's eye of an external and objective world but merely an historically contingent arrangement of cultural and linguistic practice (as in Rorty) or that morals are merely the product of our psychological reactions in a particular historical and social context (as in Smith) is offensive to Kant. Kant's moral oeuvre is almost without exception[88] built around the idea that good and bad and right and wrong are universal truths of cognition itself. Neither psychology nor culture influence the validity of these truths. Not only are these truths ahistorical. Kant also suggests that human beings *qua* beings with a faculty of reason are able to use their recognition of these truths to determine their wills in an equally ahistorical manner and as such, are radically free from the normal causal constraints of the world as we experience it.[89]

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[86] This is a type of freedom where a rational will acts 'intelligibly' prior to experience and where moral decision-making is something that happens outside the constraints of space-time experience. Kant argues this thesis in 'Possibility of the Causality through Freedom, as Reconciled with the Universal Law of Natural Necessity' in the Transcendental Logic in *CPR* AK A538/B566 – A542/B570.

[87] Rorty, *Mirror of Nature*, p. 22

[88] As I shall show in later chapters, Kant's early writings on moral philosophy are not always in agreement with his later rationalistic moral philosophy.

[89] This is perhaps the most controversial aspect of Kant's moral philosophy. See Allison H.E., *Idealism and Freedom: Essays on Kant's Theoretical and Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 109-28 for typical debates surrounding Kant's concept of freedom.

In his arguments for the universality of morality and freedom of the will, Kant's moral philosophy is in every respect the antithesis of any attempt to explain morality as an historically emergent phenomenon shaped by the forces of 'nature', no matter whether those forces be genetic mutation, language, geological formation, economic development, or social psychology.[90] Indeed for Kant any discipline which lacks the "apodeictic certainty" of mathematics"[91] is not really 'science'. Kant's insistence that "apodeictic certainty" be the touchstone for all 'real' scientific or philosophical knowledge was so strong that he was even willing to argue that

chemistry can be nothing more than a systematic art or experimental doctrine, but never a proper science, because its principles are merely empirical, and allow of no *a priori* presentation in intuition. Consequently, they do not in the least make the principles of chemical appearances conceivable with respect to their possibility, for they are not receptive to the application of mathematics.[92]

Contrary to the perceived failure of chemistry as a 'real' science, Kant saw Newton's *Principia* physics as the zenith of science because it describes the world almost exclusively with mathematics. In Newton's new mathematical descriptions, the universe became something that could be explained with the utmost precision and with non-contingent equations. It was the accuracy and universality of Newton's laws that inspired Kant to try to raise the science of morality to the same level. He sought to do this by changing metaphysics into a subject that would discover the timeless laws of cognition, thus grounding philosophical knowledge in something unaffected by the vicissitudes of time and space.[93] With this philosophical grounding Kant hoped that metaphysics (and thus also his moral theory) would be unaffected by any new discoveries from psychological insight,

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[90] Strictly speaking there is no logical contradiction between the idea of explaining morality as *it is* practiced with a naturalistic idiom and morality as it *should* be practiced through rational argument. As shall be shown later in the thesis, it is this lack of contradiction that allows us to look for an alternative way that Smith's philosophy may have influenced Kant.

[91] See *CPR* Axv – xvi, A25/B39 – B40, A46/B64 – A47/B65, A735/B763 – A740/B768. See also *CPrR* AK 5:13, 54 where Kant argues repetitively that despite Hume reducing most philosophy to empirical principals, he cannot do this for mathematics (thus why Kant wants to put morality on the same level).

[92] *Natural Science* AK 4:471

[93] While Kant acknowledges the empirical elements of Newton's method, it is clear he sees Newton and Kepler's laws as the best examples of how universal laws can be used to legitimise particular knowledge claims (*MM* AK 6:215-216).

introspective observation, or what would now be called neuroscience.[94] Just as Newton managed to create a formal derivation of Kepler's laws through mathematical inference rather than pure empirical observation, so too did Kant hope to formalise mind and morals into a set of arguments that are not dependent on observation and experience in the way they were for Descartes and Locke but which instead can be accepted by their *a priori* necessity, that is, by their transcendental demonstration.[95] Using this new philosophical programme Kant explicitly argued that in order to have the same confidence in the validity of moral philosophy as we do with Newtonian physics we must avoid doing what Smith does and explain morality as "mere sentiment" and a product of "psychology". [96]

Smith's Historicism

While both Smith and Kant accepted Newton's mechanistic conception of the world[97] they responded to it in different ways. This response is symptomatic of the underlying philosophical commitments that lead them to conceptualise morality in different ways. Kant, satisfied that Newton's description of the universe was complete, realised not only that he should try to provide the same kind of 'mathematical' basis for morality as Newton had done for physics, but also that Newton's description put the proposition that we have the power to choose between demonstrable and universal right and wrong under threat.[98] To defend the idea that we can make moral decisions understood as more than determined actions in a determined world Kant developed his epistemologically guaranteed moral theory as a way to talk about morality as something that is not dependent on physical forces and thus as something that is not linked to the Newtonian universe (though both problematically and paradoxically morality still affects this universe[99]). To do this he had to accept a form of dualism between the laws of the material world and the laws of the minds which mirror that world.

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[94] *CPR* B152-153
[95] *CPR* A94/B127
[96] *MM* AK 6:376 – 377; *Groundwork* AK 4:390 – 391
[97] See *LRBL* ii.132–7 and *Natural Science*, *passim.*
[98] I will describe this develop in Kant's thinking in detail in the tenth chapter of this thesis.
[99] For more on this problem see Carnois B., *Cohérence de la Doctrine Kantienne de la Liberté*, Éd. du Seuil: Paris, 1973, *passim.*

Smith too accepts the Newtonian description of the universe.[100] However rather than develop a kind of philosophical dualism that would allow him to continue discussing free moral choice Smith adopts a form of materialist monism. That is, Smith does not try to develop a concept of mind and morality based on epistemological distinctions between the mental and the material or a develop concept of the mind and morality as an ahistorical object *a priori* to experience.[101] Instead he develops a largely descriptive and mechanistic account of morality as a type of historically situated human practice that is *within and subject to* the laws of the Newtonian universe. As a consequence of this Smith is forced to argue that if there were no human societies operating, morality as we understand it would cease to exist. Smith makes absolutely clear the necessity of social interaction for moral beliefs to arise, writing

[w]ere it possible that a human creature could grow up to manhood in some solitary place, without any communication with his own species, he could no more think his own character, of the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct [that is, make moral judgments]… than the beauty or deformity of his own face…But bring him into society and he is immediately provided with the mirror which he wanted before. It is placed in the countenance of behaviour of those he lives with, which always mark when they enter into, and when they disapprove of his sentiments; and it is here that he first views the propriety or impropriety of his own passions, the beauty and deformity of his own mind[102]

Smith's human is not endowed with a Kantian mind that gives it access to moral knowledge or laws that are outside of or *a priori* to causal experience (or 'nature'). Furthermore moral practice in Smith, rather than being the exercise of a free will that can make decisions to honour the rules of an ahistorical power of rationality, is a behavioural reaction we possess that moderates our interactions with members

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[100] See Greene, J.C., *Darwin and the Modern World View*, Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge, 1973, p. 88. See also Montes L., "Newton's real influence on Adam Smith and its context", *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, volume 32, number 4, 2008, pp. 555-76 and Diemer A., "L'économie politique au miroir de la physique : Adam Smith et Isaac Newton", Revue d histoire des sciences, volume 64, number 1, 2001, pp. 5-26.

[101] One can interpret Kant as either making an epistemological or ontological claim about mind. See Ameriks K., "Recent Work on Kant's Theoretical Philosophy", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, volume 19, number 1, 1982, pp. 1-24. No matter which of these arguments one makes, in both cases there is still a commitment to a kind of dualism that has no place in Smith's philosophical framework.

[102] *TMS* III.I.3

of our own (and possibly other[103]) species. The only sense in which Smith has room for 'rationality' in this paradigm is in its instrumental sense – that is to say, rationality as the ability to plan how to acquire what we desire (such as the praise of others and avoiding their condemnation).

Another way to understand Smith's particular historicist approach is to compare his moral philosophy against more conventional prescriptive moral arguments. Many other moral philosophers, unlike Smith, concern themselves with hypothetical human subjects whose *factual or historical* existence is unimportant. In these paradigms the goal of moral philosophy is – as it is with Kantian moral philosophy – to try to come up with or discover some kind of logical argument whose conclusions are inescapable to all whom accepts its premises. By virtue of focusing on arguments about hypothetical moral agents these moral philosophies are distinctly non-historicist. For example Peter Singer, despite his interest in socio-biology,[104] still cannot resist the urge to try to offer rationalistic (in the prescriptive sense) arguments about why we *ought* to behave in a certain way. In his "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" Singer argues that it is *rational* for us to rescue a child drowning in a lake when there is little cost involved.[105] This kind of ahistorical imperative[106] cannot be included in Smith's conception of morality. The most we can say within Smith's conception of morality is that in our society other people and our own impartial spectators would judge us poorly if we chose not to save the child, and, given what we know about our social psychology, we are likely to save that child. In this conception of morality there is nothing innate within our society, our own conscience's judgement, or a universal faculty of reason that allows us to categorically declare like Singer does that we should save the child. Even knowing that the animal which is drowning is human, is a

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[103] Though Smith says nothing of our relationship with animals, because he does not argue that morality is built upon a unique power of reason in the way Kant does there is no reason why his psychological description of morality could not include feelings for other animal species.

[104] See Singer P., *The Expanding Circle: Ethics, Evolution, and Moral Progress*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981, *passim*.

[105] Singer P., "Famine, Affluence, and Morality", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, volume 1, number 3, 1972, pp. 231 – 232

[106] This is not an imperative in the Kantian sense that it something commanded by the very structure of reason itself. Rather Singer's imperative that we save the child rests on the "assumption that suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad" ("Famine, Affluence, and Morality", p. 231). Unlike Singer, Smith is not so much interested in what rationally follows from holding this position. Rather he is interested to know how it is that we have even developed a sense that this is bad in the first place.

particular gender, has a particular nationality, and is a particular age changes our moral deliberations. If the animal drowning was not human, was not female, was not our compatriot, or was not a child, our moral calculations would be readjusted. For Smith all this *contingent* information affects moral judgement.

Unlike Singer and Kant,[107] Smith would argue that is quite impossible to have moral judgement that is not affected by our contingent circumstances. Singer ultimately argues that we should be rationally compelled to offer assistance to countries that suffer major famines. However it can quite well be imagined that Smith would reply to Singer by arguing that 'because we greatly value the health of our own fingers over the lives of millions of distant foreigners, in moral *practice* we do not morally condemn each other for failing to donate money for famine relief in Bangladesh'. Indeed Smith makes this exact argument in his *Moral Sentiments*.[108] While we may see the logic in Singer's imperative, this logic is not reflected our moral judgement and standards, which are rooted in something murkier than deductive reason. In terms of modern philosophical debates, Smith's moral philosophy, because of its rejection of philosophical dualism and reduction of moral truths to socially contingent practices more resembles the theories of cognitive scientists like Joshua Greene,[109] Steven Pinker,[110] and Jonathon Haidt[111] than it does more 'traditional' moral philosophy of which Kant's is archetypical.

Historicism and Kantianism as a Broader Philosophical Dispute

That Kant wants to defend a concept of morality built on the *a priori* conditions that make moral thinking itself possible and that Smith wants to explain morality in a wholly naturalistic fashion by reducing it to social psychology is not just an internecine eighteenth century quarrel. This fork in thinking about the status and role of philosophy in general is symptomatic of a broader schism in Western

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[107] See for example *Groundwork* AK 4:420.
[108] See *TMS* III.3.4.
[109] Greene J.D., *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them*, London: Atlantic Books, 2015, *passim.*
[110] Pinker, S., *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, London: Penguin, 2011, *passim.*
[111] Haidt J., "The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology", *Science*, volume 316, issue 5827, 2007, pp. 998-1002

thinking that reached a crisis point in the later twentieth century seen most vividly in Quine's attacks on logical positivism and Wittgenstein's turn to linguistic pluralism.[112]

People like Quine argued that the method of natural science does not need a 'first philosophy' to legitimate its knowledge (or to be more accurate, argued that natural science without metaphysics to be the best and most fruitful way to understand our reality). This led them, like Smith, to adopt a kind of historicism. Though Quine did not self-identify as an historicist, he shared with Herder, Vico, and Smith the basic methodological commitments that make them all hostile to Kantian epistemology; namely they all recognise the contingent nature of human knowledge itself because the knowledge created by the procedures of natural science are infinitely revisable. Or as Raymond Weiss puts it, even though Quine himself was not "favourably disposed to historicism… the seeds of historicism are present in his theory of knowledge". They are present because, like Smith, "he is attentive to the provisional character of science" and also believes "that the final truth about nature is not accessible to man". Quine, like all other thinkers who are suspicious of Kantian epistemology and metaphysics, comes to this conclusion because he "denies that sense experience can provide an unchanging basis for science. There is no pure perception of the object as it is itself, for language has a decisive effect on how we see the world".[113] Unlike Kant, these thinkers do not believe there is an ahistorical basis against which we can measure the 'truth' of a statement or belief, including statements about what is right or wrong about a particular animal behaviour.

Darwinism as a Reflection of the Conflict between Smith and Kant

Even before the twentieth century's doubts about the nature of knowledge and mind John Dewey had already identified the fork in Western thinking that characterises the differences between Kant and Smith or Quine and the logical

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[112] For a complete account of the break down of the Descartian, Kantian, and logical positivist tradition embodied by people like Bertrand Russel in the face of a desire to explain philosophical questions in a more naturalistic and holistic manner see McCarthy M.H., *The Crisis of Philosophy*, New York: SUNY Press, 1989, *passim*.

[113] Weiss R.L., "Historicism and Science: Thoughts on Quine", *Dialectica*, volume 29, issue 2-3, 1975, p. 158

positivists. For Dewey it was Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* that provided the impetus for the growth of the philosophical historicism latent in the kind of philosophy Smith was doing one hundred years earlier.

Dewey argued that the *Origin of Species* "introduced a new intellectual temper" to Western thinking that is "easily overlooked" but which is of paramount importance to understanding the conflict between Kant and Smith's approaches. "Two thousand years" before Darwin, Dewey argued, "the furniture of our mind rested on the assumption of the superiority of the fixed and final" and philosophers "treated change and origin as signs of defect and unreality". The genius of the *Origin of Species*, Dewey continues, was to "introduce a mode of thinking that in the end was bound to transform the logic of knowledge, and hence the treatment of morals, politics, and religion".[114] The change which Darwin introduced to our thinking was to make it more difficult to talk about animals the way Aristotle did, as if they had just been placed on this planet by an instantaneous creation event or that they had always just been 'sitting around' and are creatures that can be defined into neat categories without any genetic admixture. To quote Cassirer quoting the Czech biologist and evolutionary theorist Emanuel Rádl, with Darwin

there appeared the magnificent thought "that one could not possibly conceive of the true nature of an animal by any analysis, be it ever so profound, or by any comparison with other forms, however comprehensive, because there lies hidden in the organism traces of the past that only historical research is able to reveal.[115]

This realisation that the human being is in a permanent state of flux had immediate consequences for Western thinking. After Darwin philosophers began to question people like Kant who supposed that there is a "true final term" or "a telos" under which all change can be understood, and that to "genuinely… know is to grasp" the "permanent". After Darwin philosophers began to question the idea that the job of "science" is to discover the "realities lying behind and beyond

[114] Dewey J., *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays in Contemporary Thought*, New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1910, pp. 1-2
[115] Cassirer E., *The Problem of Knowledge: Philosophy, Science, and History since Hegel*. (trans. Woglom W.H.,) New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950, p. 171

the processes of nature" and that the "search for these realities" is to be conducted "by means of rational forms transcending ordinary modes of perception and inference".[116] Instead, with the realisation that humanity itself is contingent rather than permanent, people like Vico, Herder, Smith and later Quine and Wittgenstein began to suppose that just as humanity itself is contingent, so too is the knowledge the human animal produces and, by extension, so too are their moral values.

Faced with the Darwinian realisation that both we and are our products are temporal rather than universal and eternal, Dewey concluded that we ultimately face "two alternative courses". We can, like Smith and Quine, try to "find the appropriate objects and organs of knowledge in the mutual interactions of changing things" or we can, like Aristotle and Kant, try to "to escape the infection of change" and "seek them [the appropriate objects and organs of knowledge] in some transcendent and supernal region".[117]

Kant and Darwin

Kant, caught up in the same fascination with analyticity that would latter capture Frege, Russell, and the early Wittgenstein, was not able to follow the path that would eventually lead to the transformation of thinking in philosophy that Dewey credits to the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* but which was already latent in Smith's thought. Indeed it may even be supposed that Kant, like Imre Lakatos, would have suggested that Darwin was a "lousy scientist".[118] It is possible to suggest that Kant may have made this kind of claim not because

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[116] Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin*, p. 6

[117] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7. Naturally Dewey contends that the later position is not tenable, arguing that "the Darwinian principle of natural selection cut straight under this [Kantian approach to] philosophy" by helping us see that "if all organic adaptations are due simply to constant variation and the elimination of those variations which are harmful in the struggle for existence that is brought by excessive reproduction, there is no call for a prior intelligent causal force to plan and preordain them" and consequently, that there is no need for a first philosophy to guarantee the eternal 'truth' of science or morality. In short Dewey argues "the influence of Darwin upon philosophy resides in his having conquered the phenomena of life for the principle of transition, and thereby freed the new logic for application to mind and morals and life. When he said of species what Galileo had said of the earth, *e pur se mouve*, he emancipated, once for all, *genetic and experimental ideas as an organon of asking questions and looking for explanations* [emphasis added]".

[118] This apparently was the opinion of one of Lakatos' students that he himself endorsed. See Grene M., "Imre Lakatos: Some Recollections" in Cohen R.S., Feyerabend P.K., & Wartofsky M.W. (eds.), *Essays in Memory of Imre Lakatos*, Dordrecht, The Netherlands: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1976, p. 211.

Darwinian evolutionary theory is unfalsifiable,[119] but because Darwin's theory cannot be reduced to a neat logical law that contains a kind of self enclosed, ahistorical, logic like 'force is proportional to the product of two masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them' and 'act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law'. This can be supposed because Kant in fact had explicit views about the ability of what would later be known as 'biology' to become a legitimate science. In the *Critique of Judgement* Kant argues that

it is absurd…to hope that perhaps some day another Newton might arise who would explain to us, in terms of natural laws unordered by any intention, how even a blade of grass is produced.

It is absurd to believe this because "it is quite certain that in terms of merely mechanical principles of nature we cannot even adequately become familiar with, much less explain, organised beings and how they are internally possible".[120] Though Kant here is referring the problem of life here, the fact that biology has not converged with mathematics in the same way he believed Newtonian physics had (that is, the fact that physics is deterministic while evolutionary biology is inherently stochastic, relying instead on large scale models to simulate complex environments rather than being reducible to mathematical formulas that allow for experiments that are easily replicated[121]) shows that Kant, even if he had lived to read *The Origin of Species*, may have still been willing to argue that biology is a second-rate science for the same reason he thought chemistry deficient.[122]

Smith and Darwin

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[119] As appears to be something one can infer from Karl Popper's *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. See Stamos D.N., "Popper, Falsifiability, and Evolutionary Biology", *Biology and Philosophy*, volume 11, issue 2, 1996, pp. 161-91.
[120] *CJ* AK 5:400
[121] See also Schuster P., "Is There a Newton of the Blade of Grass? The Complex Relation Between Mathematics, Physics and Biology", *Complexity*, volume 16, issue 6, 2011, pp. 5-9. See also Quenette P.Y. & Gerard J.F., "Why Biologists Do Not Think like Newtonian Physicists", *Oikos*, volume 68, number 2, 1993, p. 363.
[122] See McNulty M.B., "Kant on Chemistry and the Application of Mathematics in Natural Science", *Kantian Review*, volume 19, issue 3, 2014, pp. 393-418.

At first it may be tempting to lump Smith's philosophy in with Kant's as a kind of philosophy that is incompatible with the changes in Western thinking that Dewey sees crystallised in Darwin's theory. It may be tempting to see Smith in contrast to Darwin because he believes moral practice is developing in a teleological fashion to realise the plans of a designer god.[123] It may also be supposed that Smith, like Kant, would find Darwin's ideas disagreeable because he argues that there is a part of the human species (its 'human nature') that is not subject to historical contingency. All these suspicions may also be strengthened given that in *The Descent of Man* Darwin does in fact criticise Smith.[124] However, I argue that these points of difference and Darwin's explicit criticism of Smith do no warrant dismissing the idea that Smith's way of doing philosophy is incompatible with naturalist and historicist approaches to understanding humanity and its systems of morality. This dismissal is not warranted because Darwin does not criticise Smith for his belief in a teleological plan underpinning the development of human moral practice or his descriptions of a fixed human nature. Instead he criticises Smith for his apparent inability to see that sympathy for other beings is affected by what we now call 'kin altruism'.[125] What this criticism suggests is that Darwin, rather than seeing Smith as another misguided eighteenth century philosopher who had not been able to shake the Platonic and Kantian conviction that there is something permanent to the human species that gives it a unique moral position, may have seen in Smith a thinker who, despite his teleological and essentialist beliefs, was forward-thinking enough to understand the world through an evolutionary paradigm. In other words, Darwin may have tacitly approved of Smith's "conjectural"[126] method of explaining moral practice as something contingent upon social organisation, culture, and historical circumstance. Darwin could do this because, like Smith, he does not talk about rationalist prescriptions for

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[123] I will cover Smith's teleology in later chapters. For now it is important only to remember that there is more to Smith's historicism than teleology.

[124] Darwin C., *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, volume 1, London: John Murray, 1971, pp. 81 – 82

[125] This charge is perhaps unfair given that Smith argues in *TMS* VI.ii.I.2 "[a]fter himself, the members of his own family, those who usually live in the same house with him, his parents, his children, his brothers and sisters, are naturally the objects of his warmest affections. They are naturally and usually the persons upon whose happiness or misery his conduct must have the greatest influence. He is more habituated to sympathize with them. He knows better how every thing is likely to affect them, and his sympathy with them is more precise and determinate, than it can be with the greater part of other people. It approaches nearer, in short, to what he feels for himself".

[126] As Dugald Stewart (Hamilton W. (ed.), *Dugald Stewart: Collected Works*, volume 1, Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Company, 1854, p. 69) describes the method of Smith and his contemporaries.

behaviour like Kantian categorical imperatives when discussing how it is animals are compelled to be social creatures. These kinds of ahistorical concepts about what we ought to do or what type of person we ought to be have just as little place in Darwin's naturalistic paradigm as they do in Smith's *Moral Sentiments*. Instead, like Smith, Darwin talks about animal and human behaviour in terms of historical strategies for survival and replication.[127] Because Darwin and Smith share the same broad historicist and anti-Kantian outlook, we can imagine that Darwin, rather than criticise Smith, may have endorsed his decision to talk about human behaviour in terms of historical strategies that enable the "harmonious movement" and "continual motion of the industry of mankind"[128] and his decision to not talk about what makes us a 'good person'.

Insofar as Smith does not talk about metaphysics and knowledge as having an ahistorical basis, his philosophy is congruous with Darwin and Quine's naturalism and monism. Furthermore, as the result of this basic methodological starting point, Smith necessarily argues that morality is a product of complex environmental and historical contingency. Thus, if Smith was even aware of Kant's work it is quite easy to imagine him arguing that Kant's conception of morality is incorrect not because it fails to adequately consider some particular virtue or because it cannot help us solve some particular moral dilemma. Rather, it could be supposed that Smith would argue that Kant fundamentally misunderstands what morality is and that Kant does this because he takes Newton not as opportunity to naturalise and historicise moral philosophy, but as an opportunity to turn moral philosophy into epistemology.

Conclusion

My goal in this chapter has been to show that Smith's thought, while still burdened with an ahistorical concept of human nature and teleological outlook, shares with other decidedly anti-Kantian thinkers a kind of historicism that emphasises the continuity between human society and human thinking and the rest

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[127] As I shall argue in the fourth chapter, Smith sees morality as strategy for *social* survival and 'replication' insofar as the latter word can be used metaphorically to describe our continuing social existence.

[128] *TMS* IV.1.9

of 'nature' at large. This kind of historicist thinking downplays epistemological dualism and in doing so is led to describe morality as a product of social evolution rather than the discovery of ahistorical and universal concepts. I have argued that Smith, like Rorty and Quine, adheres to a certain kind of materialist monism that makes his moral philosophy edifying for people like Darwin who opened up the opportunity for philosophers to naturalise enquiry into the human condition and who are distinctly hostile to the Kantian project of trying to find an anchor for knowledge and truth in something outside of space and time. The purpose of making this argument has been to reveal the fundamental philosophical difficulties any interpreter of the Kant-Smith relationship must face when trying to understand why Kant would praise someone like Smith.

In the next two chapters I will present a closer reading of Smith to back up the claims I have been making about his historicism in this chapter. I will start with Smith's *History of Astronomy*, where I will argue that Smith – inline with the historicist inclinations I have briefly covered in this chapter – develops a Kuhnian philosophy of science. Afterwards I will argue that the historicist methodology Smith develops in his *Astronomy* informs the methodology of his *Moral Sentiments*, where he tries to naturalise and historicise philosophy in the same way he does science.

Chapter 3: Smith's Historicist Method as Outlined in the Astronomy

In the previous chapter I argued that Smith is a part of an historicist tradition of thinking that aims to explain all aspects of human intellectual life – including our understanding of morality – through a kind of naturalism. This historicist naturalism downplays the suggestion that we have a faculty of mind that provides a conduit to an ontologically or epistemologically distinct realm of ahistorical or universal truth in the way Kant does in his *Critiques*. In this way Smith preempts the intellectual turn in Western thinking initiated by people like Darwin and consolidated by people like Quine.

It is now my task in this chapter to justify some of the claims I made in the previous chapter about Smith being a key figure in this historicist tradition in more detail. I will do this by showing how Smith's philosophy of science understands scientific and philosophical knowledge as a phenomenon explainable through a theory of psychological aesthetics. In particular, I will argue that because Smith believes scientific truth is a matter of what we find aesthetically pleasing rather than – as in Kant – the synthesis of experience and sense data with the principles of a metaphysics of science, he can be described as an historicist. After developing my reading of Smith's methodology as applied to the history of science I will also demonstrate how he also uses this method to explain the phenomenon of morality in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and how this conception of morality is at odds with the way Kant conceptualises morality.

Smith's Historicist Philosophy of Science

My claim in the previous chapter that Smith is an historicist is not as controversial (or indeed novel) as it may initially appear. In 1972 Andrew Skinner had already

noticed the similarities between Smith's *History of Astronomy* and Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,[129] pointing out that

> [i]n dealing with the history of ideas in the field of astronomy Smith works in terms of the intellectual system as the characteristic output of philosophical effort, and treats individuals only in so far as they contributed to the formation and development of such systems…[T]his is a perspective on the history of ideas which has proved valuable, especially in the modern form given it to by Kuhn.[130]

Skinner, like myself, argues that Smith understood science as a set of intellectual patterns that developed under particular, historical, and thus contingent circumstances that resemble what Kuhn calls 'paradigms'. Or as Skinner phrases it, Smith's history of astronomy explains the evolution of physics theory – from the theory of eccentric spheres to the theory of concentric spheres, and then to the Copernican revolution and onto the Newtonian – as something brought about by the inability of these particular paradigms to account for anomalies "in terms of" their own particular scientific laws, not something brought about by the failure of these theories to conform to a particular metaphysic of physics or natural science in general.[131] Insofar as Smith's philosophy of science lacks a metaphysic that can be used to benchmark the truth or accuracy of any particular science it is a distinctly non-Kantian conception of science. Rather than view science as a body of knowledge that is guided and validated by universal rationality, Smith conceptualises science in a similar way to Kuhn and treats it as an historical activity that goes through cycles of 'normal science' followed by conceptual revolution when new discoveries lead to paradigm breakdown.[132] It is precisely because Smith shares with Kuhn this understanding of science as an historical practice that he argues that had there been "no other bodies discoverable in the heavens" Greek astronomical theory would have withstood "the examination of all ages".[133] Or put in other words, Smith believed that each theory of astronomy was

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[129] Here I follow the 'standard' assumption that Kuhn is an historicist much in the same way I described it in the previous chapter. See for example in Mouton J., "Scientific Realism and Realism in the Social Sciences in Synman J.J. (ed.), *Conceptions of Social Inquiry*, Pretoria: HSRC Press, 1997, pp. 285-8 for such a description.
[130] Skinner A.S., "Adam Smith: Philosophy and Science", *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, volume 19, issue 3, 1972, p. 318
[131] *Ibid.*, p. 312
[132] *Ibid.*, p. 318
[133] *Ibid.*, p. 312 citing *Astronomy* IV.4

'rational' inside its own what Rorty would call "vocabulary" or "language game"[134] because it successfully accounted for the known phenomena and objects *in its own particular historical juncture.*

Smith's conception of science as an historical practice and not as a series of incremental discoveries or refinements which are leading us to a final and complete picture of 'how the universe really works' leads him to put forth some of the same arguments Kuhn did. For example just as Kuhn argues that the education system and the particular behaviours of scientific communities play a pivotal rule in solidifying paradigms [135] so too does Smith talk about the importance of particular socio-economic conditions that needed to be in place before we were are able to change from thinking about the solar system like the Greeks did to the way contemporary science does.[136] In this conception of science, physics is not merely an ahistorical rational exercise – Aristotle did not 'get it wrong' because he was not as smart as us[137] – but something inexorably tied to our temporal social existence.

Unlike Kuhn however – and as I discussed in the previous chapter – Smith still holds onto the idea that there is a kind of ahistorical 'human nature' or a set of fixed laws of psychology that determine our behaviour through time and space. Smith argued that "the basic principles of human nature, established by induction, were constant through time", that these principles explain "a wide variety of facts or 'appearances'", and that these principles explain "social" phenomenon in a way that is "essentially similar to" the way "gravity" explains the movements of "the solar system".[138] However this does not mean that Smith commits himself to an ahistorical metaphysics of science in the way Kant does. For Smith neither gravity nor 'human nature' are guaranteed or underpinned by metaphysics. Instead Smith adopts a strategy of naturalising and historicising science by developing a 'science of scientific practice'; that is to say, Smith uses what we now call 'social science'

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[134] Rorty, *Mirror of Nature*, pp .355-6
[135] Kuhn, T.S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp. 46-7
[136] *Astronomy* III.2-3
[137] A point Kuhn also makes (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, pp. 118-9).
[138] Skinner, "Adam Smith: Philosophy and Science", p. 308

to explain the scientific practice of physicists rather than trying to develop a first philosophy to verify their claims. Central to this strategy is the use of psychology.

The Psychology that Drives Scientific Discovery

For Kant the most important question philosophy can ask is "what can we know?"[139] The *Critiques* are an attempt to answer this question by defining the limits and capabilities of cognition. Smith however, inline with his historicist tendencies, believes the most important question philosophy can ask is 'why do we want to know?' or more precisely 'why do we engage in scientific practice in the first place?' Smith's answer to this question is the same as the answer he gives in his other works. Just as rational self-interest propels economic activity and social anxiety encourages us to act morally, so too is scientific and philosophical [140] practice driven by the particular characteristics of human psychology. Specifically for Smith it is the sentiments of "Wonder, Surprise, and Admiration"[141] that create in us the desire to investigate and explain the world around us and ultimately allow us to develop a kind of psychological harmony and balance.

The psychology behind the above mentioned sentiments that drive philosophical and scientific practice is, as is typical for Smith, rather straightforward. He describes Wonder as "what is new and singular" and as that which "excites" us. It wells up within us when we see the "rarer phenomena of nature" like "meteors, comets, eclipses", strange "plants and animals", or when we encounter something "with which we have before been either little or not all accustomed". Surprise is "what is unexpected". We experience it when we see things "which we have seen often, but which we least of all expected to meet with in the place where we find them". Admiration is "what is great or beautiful". This sentiment is – mirroring

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[139] *CPR* A805/B833, *Natural Science* 4:469-70
[140] It should again be noted that these two terms had not bifurcated in Kant and Smith's own time.
[141] *Astronomy* Intro.1

Kant's own definition of 'The Sublime'[142] – something that we feel when looking at something like a "plain" or a "mountain".[143]

Smith is not interested in fleshing out the precise meanings and emotions attached to these words.[144] He was quite aware of the real difficulties met when we try to untangle the mind's web and thus suggests that we remember that these "sentiments, like all others when inspired by one and the same object, mutually support and enliven one another".[145] Thus more important than the precise nature and exact interrelation of these specific sentiments is their broader role in provoking our curiosity.

How the Sentiments Provoke Scientific Practice

The primary goal of Smith's philosophy of science is to explain the psychology behind scientific practice and in particular how our sentiments drive this behaviour. The starting point for Smith is our "imagination". Smith describes our imagination as something that constantly sorts and classifies objects into categories. When our imagination

can observe but one single quality that is common to a great variety of otherwise widely different objects, that single circumstance will be sufficient for it to connect them all together, to reduce them to one common class, and to call them by one general name. It is thus that all things endowed with a power of self-motion, beasts, birds, fish, insects, are classed under the general name of Animal.[146]

This process continues on and we refine our categories coming up with ever more detailed groups and classifications. However, eventually we discover something "quite new and singular" and "we feel ourselves incapable of" classifying our new object. Our "memory cannot, from all its stores, cast up any image that nearly

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[142] Not only does Kant use mountains to describe the feeling of the Sublime, he, exactly like Smith, also argues that John Milton most accurately described this sensation (c.f. *Observations* AK 2:208 and *Astronomy* Intro.5).

[143] *Astronomy* Intro.1-4

[144] Indeed, after mentioning 'Admiration' as a principle psychological force, he ceases to mention it again or how it may influence the evolution of our philosophical and science projects.

[145] *Astronomy* Intro.6

[146] *Ibid.* II.1

resembles this strange appearance".[147] When we hit this wall our inability to work out how to classify the new object that does not fit into our existing categories excites in us a sense of Wonder. To satisfy this Wonder, "that uncertain and anxious curiosity"[148] aroused by the discovery of a new object, we need to rearrange our conceptual schema to accommodate it. We will not be able to sleep well until we have eliminated this sense of Wonder.

Surprise is very much like Wonder. However it does not arise when we encounter some new object that we cannot classify. Rather, it arises when something we expect to see does not occur. Smith gives the morbid example of a mother whose children die. The loss of one child greatly rattles a mother. She expects the child to outlive her own self for we are accustomed to seeing parents die before their children. Thus she is Surprised. However "a parent who has lost several children immediately after one another, will be less affected with the death of the last than with that of the first" because such a phenomena now is merely an expected or common series of events. Despite Surprise's diminishing returns it operates like Wonder. When we are surprised we are thrown "into the most violent and convulsive emotions".[149] Our mind is agitated now at the sight of seeing some unusual series of events. Indeed Smith believes that Surprise has an even greater affect on our mind than Wonder. So much so he even argues that a strong sense of Surprise sometimes leads to various types of mental ailments. "Sometimes" surprise is able to

entirely disjoint the whole frame of the imagination [so] that it never after returns to its former tone and composure, but falls either into a frenzy or habitual lunacy; and such as almost always occasion a momentary loss of reason.[150]

Apart from this what might now seem like quaint folk psychology[151] the core hypothesis Smith is outlining here is that we engage in philosophical and scientific

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[147] *Ibid.* III.3
[148] *Ibid.* III.4
[149] *Ibid.* II.2-9
[150] *Ibid.* I.2
[151] By 'folk psychology' I mean a theory of psychology that "is deeply ingrained in our common-sense conception of ourselves as persons" and is a theory in which a persons is: "…supposed to be a rational (at least largely rational) *agent* – that is, a creature whose behaviour is systematically caused by and

investigation to cure our psychological discomfort. After Wonder and Surprise have thrown our imagination off kilter, our imagination attempts to restore its previous tranquillity. Smith argues that when we first see something "quite different from that to which the imagination has been accustomed" we "no longer [feel] the usual facility of passing from the event which goes before to that which comes after". Instead we experience "an order or law of succession to which [we have] not been accustomed, and which… [we] therefore find some difficulty in following, or attending to." Thus our imagination, after "hesitating",

> endeavours to find out something which may fill up the gap, which like a bridge, may so far at least unite those seemingly distant objects, as to render the passage of thought betwixt them smooth, and natural, and easy.

Only after we have some new explanatory device – the metaphorical "bridge" – will the "two objects which" hitherto "seemed" so "disjoined…flow smoothly and easily along" in our imagination.[152]

Smith's description of the sentiments that inspire us to pursue scientific investigation in order to soothe our imaginations may not satisfy those who demand more sophisticated explanations of human psychology. This however is besides the point. What is important here is not whether Smith's description is the most accurate description or most useful description of scientific practice. What is important is that we are able to see that for Smith philosophy and science are not primarily truth-seeking activities in the Kantian sense, but activities that human beings are compelled to engage in to achieve a sense of psychological wellbeing. Indeed Smith himself is quite straightforward about the matter. Elaborating his position Smith writes

> [p]hilosophy, by representing the invisible chains which bind together all these disjointed objects, endeavours to introduce order into this chaos of jarring and discordant appearances, to allay this tumult of the imagination, and

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explainable in terms of, his beliefs, desires, and related propositional attitudes" (Horgan T. and Woodward J., "Folk Psychology is Here to Stay", *The Philosophical Review*, volume 94, number 2, 1985, p. 197).
[152] *Astronomy* II.8

to restore it… to that tone of tranquillity and composure, which is both most agreeable in itself, and most suitable to its nature.[153]

Or even more directly: "the repose and tranquillity of the imagination is the ultimate end of philosophy",[154] not the eventual discovery of a final truth or perfect reflection of a material universe in our mind's eye.

Utility as a Part of Aesthetic Experience in Scientific Practice

While Smith devotes considerable time to explaining how Wonder and Surprise disturb the tranquillity of our imagination, his psychological profile of an enquiring mind does not stop with these sentiments. Having criticised the kind of metaphysical foundationalism Plato proposed[155] and which Rorty argued Kant continued to undertake, Smith (very much like Quine[156] would later do, but less anachronistically, following on from Hume[157]) instead argues that we also hold our beliefs because of their utility. Importantly however, Smith's concept of utility is neither purely instrumental nor is it purely a calculation of pleasure and pain. Rather Smith explains utility from the perspective of his psychological aesthetics, where it is "subordinate" to the "aesthetic sentiments of *wonder, surprise and admiration*".[158] What does it mean to argue that Smith makes utility "subordinate" to the sentiments? This means that Smith does not want to make utility itself an ersatz universal standard for science and thus wants to fully subsume utility into psychology.

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[153] *Ibid.* II.12

[154] *Ibid.* IV.13

[155] Smith (*Ancient Logics*, 3-6) criticises Plato's philosophy for developing a "fallacious experiment" that hopes to show "that a person might be led to discover himself, without any information, any general truth, of which he was before ignorant, merely by being asked a number of properly arranged and connected questions concerning it". Smith, expressing his naturalist tendencies, believes Plato made the mistake of trying to ground knowledge in a metaphysics because of "the nature of language", which gives the illusion that there are universal concepts behind our thought – a hypothesis Smith develops in *Languages* (21-32) when he argues that metaphysical thinking is an inevitable by-product of the evolution of language.

[156] In fact Quine was, also like Smith, a proponent of the idea of replacing all epistemology with psychology (Quine W.V.O, "Epistemology Naturalised" in Quine W.V., *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1969, pp. 75-83). It also worth noting that Quine, strictly speaking and differing from Smith, does not argue that "beliefs" exist (Quine W.V.O. *Word and Object*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT, 1960, p. 221).

[157] See Bitterman H.J., "Adam Smith's Empiricism and the Law of Nature: I", *Journal of Political Economy*, volume 48, number 4, 1940, pp. 494-507.

[158] Thomson H.F., "Adam Smith's Philosophy of Science", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, volume 79, 1965, p. 217

Because Smith makes utility just another part of his folk psychology that describes science and morality as practices rather than bodies of universal knowledge, his philosophy of science is not only hostile to Kantian philosophy of science but also any kind of empiricist methodology that makes utility alone a standard of truth. Furthermore, because Smith rejects the idea that utility is something that can stand above scientific practice and act as a measurement of it he often shies away from using the language of measurement or calculation. Instead he focuses on describing utility as an aesthetic feeling. As Thomas puts it

it is a striking feature of Smith's system of science that he more frequently refers to his own judgment as *aesthetic* than as strictly *rational*, and that as his final criterion of truth he is willing to accept neither the rational test of consistency nor the empirical standard of correspondence with observed facts.[159]

Not only does Smith believe that "*utility* should be regarded as only one among several features of *beauty*, from which it derives its value", he also criticises "those who would propose *utility* as the primary objective of scientific investigations or of ethical judgements".[160] In support of this argument Thomas points to the following passages from *Moral Sentiments*

[t]hat utility is one of the principal sources of beauty has been observed by everybody who has considered with any attention what constitutes the nature of beauty. The conveniency of a house gives pleasure to the spectator as well as its regularity, and he is as much hurt when he observes the contrary defect, as when he sees the correspondent windows of different forms, or the door not placed exactly in the middle of the building. That the fitness of any system or machine to produce the end for which it was intended, bestows a certain propriety and beauty upon the whole, and renders the very thought and contemplation of it agreeable, is so very obvious that nobody has overlooked it...[161]

It is in these passages to which Thomas refers that Smith makes his first mention of the "invisible hand".[162] Interestingly here Smith does not argue that free markets are good because they lead to increases in wealth. Rather he argues that

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[159] *Ibid.*, p. 219
[160] *Ibid.*, p. 217
[161] Thomson H., "Adam Smith's Philosophy of Science", p. 219 citing *TMS* IV.i.1
[162] *TMS* IV.i.10

free markets are something we find innately beautifully *because* of their superior utility (because they offer the most efficient distribution of goods and services). The 'invisible hand' then – at least in *Moral Sentiments* – is not just a mechanistic metaphor but also an aesthetic one. It describes the beauty of seeing wealth automatically distributed without an obvious directing intelligence. Since we are attracted to utility from an aesthetic perspective, we are attracted to systems that promote it including free markets. In Smith's words, the "love of system, the same regard to the beauty of order, of art and contrivance, frequently serves to recommend those institutions which tend to promote public welfare".[163]

Smith's discussion of the beauty of utility is not only limited to political economy. He describes the administration of justice in the same language. We value well-ordered justice systems not simply because we have a strong desire for justice.[164] We also value well-ordered justice systems because that order itself is aesthetically pleasing:

[t]he perfection of police, the extension of trade and manufactures, are noble and magnificent objects. The contemplation of them pleases us, and we are interested in whatever can tend to advance them. They make part of the great system of government, and the wheels of the political machine seem to move with more harmony and ease by means of them. We take pleasure in beholding the perfection of so beautiful and grand a system, and we are uneasy till we remove any obstruction that can in the least disturb or encumber the regularity of its motions.[165]

More tellingly, Smith even explicitly suggests that instrumental utility comes second place to a desire for perfection and order on the scales of aesthetic pleasure with his example of a watch. A watch, Smith argues, even if it is two minutes late will not cause us any inconvenience. We will still arrive on time at our meetings. Yet we will still feel annoyed about our watch constantly being two minutes behind. This is because what we enjoy in a watch is not the ability "to know precisely what time of day it is" but the "perfection of [a] machine which serves to

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[163] *TMS* IV.i11 as highlighted by Thompson, "Adam Smith's Philosophy of Science", p. 217.
[164] Indeed Smith argues that the most basic precondition of society is the existence of justice (*TMS* II.ii.3-7).
[165] *TMS* IV.i.11

attain [this information]".[166] It is simply a fortunate side effect that our love of perfect systems happens to coincide with utility (in this case, being able to get to meetings exactly on time).

Smith here is not simply waxing poetic. By talking about "magnificent objects" that "please us", that create "harmony", that "we take pleasure in beholding", and whose absence make us "uneasy"[167] he is similarly explaining the emergence of political and economic institutions in terms of a human psychology. This historicist approach precludes the possibility that there has been a rational plan to implement free markets or systems to administer justice. Rather, we have been 'pulled towards' these developments by their beauty in the same way our hunger encourages us to seek out food and drink. To understand why we have developed specific social institutions we need to understand the human species' psychology, and in particular, what objects that psychology finds aesthetically pleasing. Or as Skinner puts it

Smith was concerned to examine the psychological principles which dispose man to scientific work; principles which are subsequently employed in explaining why certain thought systems were accepted at particular points in time, and the causes of change in the content of such systems over time.[168]

Smith's psychological and thus historicist description I have just adumbrated and which he employs to discuss our love of functioning markets and the administration of justice is not just found in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.[169] This description is also found in his *History of Astronomy* where, as noted above, the sentiments of Wonder and Surprise and a sense of utility drive scientific progress. The example Smith uses to demonstrate this process is, as the title implies, the history of astronomy.

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[166] *TMS* IV.i.4
[167] *TMS* IV.i.11
[168] Skinner, "Adam Smith: Philosophy and Science", p. 307
[169] Smith's same theory of aesthetics in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* has been extensively documented by Charles Griswold (*Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 330-5).

Smith's Account of Scientific Progress as a Product of Psychological Aesthetics as Demonstrated by the History of Astronomy

In the *Astronomy* Smith argues that ancient theories of astronomy began to fall out of favour not because they failed to 'approximate reality' (though this was of course one of the reasons)[170] but primarily because the systems became too complex and too fantastical to describe their object of study, thus becoming aesthetically displeasing. By the time Girolamo Fracastoro brought the number of spheres in Aristotle's system up to seventy-two to account for new discoveries in the night's sky, Aristotle's "system had… become as intricate and complex as those appearances themselves, which it had been invented to render uniform and coherent".[171] Consequently, "the imagination…found itself but little relieved from that embarrassment, into which those appearances had thrown it, by so perplexed an account of things".[172]

Here Smith does not suggest that Aristotle's theory of celestial spheres was rejected simply because it somehow failed to correspond to some kind of truth about the world. Rather, Aristotle's system was rejected because it also failed to meet our aesthetic criteria of something that is beautiful, that is parsimonious, and which does not cause Surprise and Wonder to constantly jar our imagination into wanting to find new 'bridges' to explain the disparate phenomenon we encounter. Smith tells us that Aristotle's theory of planetary spheres was eventually rejected by the philosophical community because it was "too intricate and complex for the imagination to rest in it with complete tranquillity and satisfaction",[173] not because it was 'false'. Therefore even before Fracastoro's last hoorah for Aristotle's theory of celestial spheres, Ptolemy had developed his alternative theory of eccentric spheres.

Ptolemy's System

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[170] While I have been arguing, like Thomas, that Smith is suspicious of dualistic epistemology, he cannot escape the language of his day entirely and avoid talking about truth as a form of successful representation of an outside world in a mind's eye. See *Astronomy* IV.9.

[171] *Astronomy* IV.8

[172] *Astronomy* IV.8

[173] *Astronomy* IV.19

The problem with Aristotle's system was that it had to suppose that the speed of the planets, the sun, and the moon would arbitrarily increase and decrease in order to remain coherent.[174] Thus circles within circles (or 'epicycles') were added to the model of the solar system in what would become Ptolemy's system. These equalising cycles which were added to help mend the flaws in Aristotle's system became the dominant astronomical paradigm, allowing the ancients' imagination to finally gain a sense of order and precision in the movement of the heavens. In Smith's own words: "the motions of the heavenly bodies had appeared inconstant and irregular, both in their velocities and in their directions" and therefore "tended to embarrass and confound the imagination, whenever it attempted to trace them". All this changed with the advent of epicycles. The new system of eccentric spheres "allayed the confusion" brought on by Aristotle's system by "connect[ing] together those disjointed appearances, and… introduc[ing] harmony and order into the mind's conception of the movement of those bodies".[175]

For Smith, Ptolemy's system was a watershed moment in the history of astronomy. It managed to finally assuage our psychological tumult. While now discredited as an inaccurate model of the solar system, Smith sees Ptolemy's system as a great success within its own historical context. Indeed Smith argues that

nothing can more evidently show, how much the repose and tranquillity of the imagination is the ultimate end of philosophy than the invention of this Equalising Circle.[176]

Despite the epicycles Ptolemy's system was however, like Aristotle's system, still unable to completely meet the aesthetic demands of our imagination. Smith argues that while Ptolemy's system was "certainly better adapted" for predicting the movements of the heavens than Aristotle's system, and was also "more simple", it too "was still too intricate and complex for the imagination to rest in it with complete tranquillity and satisfaction".[177] Thus, finally, with our imagination

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[174] *Astronomy* IV.6
[175] *Astronomy* IV.13
[176] *Astronomy* IV.13
[177] *Astronomy* IV.20

constantly struggling to comprehend the abstruse epicycles that made up ancient astronomy, the West finally managed to produce Copernicus.[178]

Copernicus' System

Smith does not argue that Copernicus' system was more 'accurate' than the Ptolemaic system. [179] Rather the power of Copernicus' theory was that it was able to explain the motions of the planets "without the assistance of Epicycles connected together" and thus explain the solar system with "fewer movements".[180] Smith argues that Copernicus' "new account of things render[ed] the appearances of the heavens more completely coherent than had been done by any of the former systems" and it "did this" by creating "a more simple and intelligible as well as more beautiful machinery".[181]

This of course was not the end of astronomical progress. Even though Copernicus' system more successfully satisfied what Smith sees as our imagination's aesthetic requirements – that is, even though Copernicus' system was a more parsimonious and thus more elegant system – it was only the beginning of many major revisions and discoveries in the science. Smith argues that while the Copernican system provided a more graceful description of the heavens than the cumbersome theories of the ancients, the implications of accepting the Copernican conception of the heavens created even more psychological disturbance than what is created by mere complexity or lack of utility. Smith says of the Copernican system

[n]either did the beauty and simplicity of this system alone recommend it to the imagination; the novelty and unexpectedness of that view of nature, which it opened to the fancy, excited more wonder and surprise than the strangest of those appearances, which it had been invented to render natural and familiar,

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[178] Smith, sensitive to the historically contingent nature of knowledge, overcomes many prejudices of his time to realise that his history of astronomy is only a history of thinking "in these western parts of the world" (*Astronomy* II.12).

[179] Here Smith once again follows Kuhn who also argues that "Copernicus' more elaborate proposal was neither simpler nor more accurate than Ptolemy's system. Available observational tests… provided no basis for a choice between them. Under those circumstances one of the factors that led astronomers to Copernicus (and one that could not have led them to Aristarchus) was the recognised crisis that had been responsible for the innovation in the first place. Ptolemaic astronomy had failed to solves its problems; the time had come to give a competitor a chance" (*Scientific Revolutions*, pp. 75-6).

[180] *Astronomy* IV.30

[181] *Astronomy* IV.32

and these sentiments still more endeared it. For, though it is the end of Philosophy, to allay that wonder, which either the unusual or seemingly disjointed appearances of nature excite, yet she never triumphs so much, as when, in order to connect together a few, in themselves, perhaps, inconsiderable objects, she has, if I may say so, created another constitution of things, more natural indeed, and such as the imagination can more easily attend to, but more new, more contrary to common opinion and expectation, than any of those appearances themselves.[182]

While Copernicus' system provided a brilliantly elegant description of our universe, it also provoked our sense of Wonder and Surprise to new heights. Why were these sentiments provoked so violently by the Copernican system? The Copernican system produced what seemed at the time an almost nonsensical inference. This inference was that the planets must be rotating around the sun at incredible speeds. As Smith puts it

[n]othing now embarrassed the system of Copernicus, but the difficulty which the imagination felt in conceiving bodies so immensely ponderous as the Earth, and other Planets, revolving round the Sun with such incredible rapidity.[183]

Copernicus' system was (eventually) more accurate than its predecessors were. However the conclusions it forced us to accept were not at all conducive to a state of *ataraxia*. In Smith's history of astronomy Copernicus' system was problematic not because it caused consternation amongst the clergy by proposing a heliocentric model of the universe. Rather, in Smith's history of astronomy, Copernicus' model of the universe was resisted by philosophers and scientists because the thought of such massive objects moving at such blistering speeds without any obvious mechanism propelling them was incoherent and incompatible with all other frameworks through which we understood the nature of the physics. Given this problem, astronomers until Smith's own time faced the difficult challenge of trying to explain not the position of the planets but rather the speed at which they travelled. Accordingly Smith's philosophy of science suggests that after Copernicus, Europe's most inquisitive minds could not rest without constructing the necessary 'bridges' to restore a sense of calm and order to their imaginations.

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[182] *Astronomy* IV.33
[183] *Astronomy* IV.60

Descartes' System

After Johannes Kepler and Giovanni Cassini had finishing developing Copernicus' system by noting that the planets revolved around the sun not in perfect circles as in the Greeks' systems but in elliptical orbits as demonstrated by the satellites of Earth, Saturn, and Jupiter,[184] they were still unable to explain the motive force that was propelling the planets to move at such high speeds. "The imagination", Smith writes,

> [still] felt a gap or interval, betwixt the constant motion and the supposed inertness of the Planets, and had in this, as in all other cases, some general idea or apprehension that there must be a connecting chain of intermediate objects to link together these discordant qualities.[185]

Faced with this constantly vexing conclusion that the planets were moving at almost absurd speeds and without any obvious motive force, two figures would take up the challenge of trying to put the imagination back into a state of comfort. These two figures were René Descartes and Isaac Newton.

Smith tells us Descartes "was the first" to attempt to "ascertain…wherein this invisible chain"[186] that linked the planets together lie the cause of their high velocities. Descartes proposed that there was in fact no void in the universe and that "the whole of infinite space was full of matter". The planets were rolling and falling through space, propelled on by a giant soup of matter pushing them forwards. Smith describes this as if a planet is a "school of fish" that pushes through the ocean of the universe, creating "small vortices" of empty space that matter quickly falls into as the school passes.[187]

Smith lauds Descartes' model of the heavens. Importantly however he does not praise Descartes' model for somehow reflecting the 'truth' of the world, or for getting us closer to something Kant would call "apodeictic certainty" about the

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[184] *Astronomy* IV.53-7
[185] *Astronomy* IV.60
[186] *Astronomy* IV.61
[187] *Astronomy* IV.61-2

laws of physics.[188] Rather Smith praises Descartes' model of the heavens because it is a model that leaves our imagination all the 'bridges' it needs to ward off a sense that something is amiss and not quite right. In this context Smith writes

Descartes endeavoured to render familiar to the imagination, the great difficulty in the Copernican system, the rapid motion of the enormous bodies of the Planets. When the fancy had thus been taught to conceive of them as floating in an immense ocean of ether, it was quite agreeable to its usual habits to conceive, that they should follow the stream of this ocean, how rapid soever. This was an order of succession to which it had been long accustomed, and with which hit was, therefore, quite familiar.

Descartes "bestowed upon the system of Copernicus" a "most complete, and almost perfect coherence" with which the "imaginations of mankind could" take "pleasure" in and which could easily go "along with so harmonious an account of things". Indeed Smith believes Descartes' account "of the motions of the Heavens… joined together a greater number of the most discordant phenomena of nature than had been united by any other hypothesis".[189] Given Smith's praise, why then is Descartes more often than not thought of merely as the guy who came up with a coordinate system taught in primary school geometry rather than a groundbreaking astronomical theory? Smith's answer to this question is of course ultimately rooted in his historicist methodology.

Descartes' system, unlike the Copernican system, did not leave us with any big questions that constantly provoked our sense of Wonder and Surprise. In this sense Descartes' theory was quite successful. However like the slightly inaccurate watch that still gets us to the meeting on time, we are still prone to feel a sense of aesthetic displeasure if something is not perfect. Smith argues that Descartes did not believe it was "necessary… that [his model] describe [the movement of the planets] with geometrical accuracy" because he did not believe "that nature can be mathematically exact with regard to the figure of objects she produces".[190] This inaccuracy did not sit well for the learned few who were discontent if an astronomical system could not precisely measure the movements of the planets. Descartes' system, despite soothing our imagination by explaining how

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[188] *CPR* A47/B64 – A48/B65
[189] *Astronomy* IV.65
[190] *Astronomy* IV.64

Copernicus' planets could move at such high velocities, still could not accurately describe the irregular movements Cassini had discovered in the solar system.[191] Or in other words, whilst Descartes' theory overcame the major problem of the Copernican system by explaining the velocity of the planets in (what was then) was a fairly intuitive manner, our aesthetic appreciation for precision and utility encouraged further scientific development.

Newton's System

Ultimately it was Isaac Newton who provided the theory that not only quelled our sense of Wonder and Surprise by explaining how the planets moved at such high speed but also did so in a way that allowed us to observe with the utmost precision the movements of the planets.[192] In this way Newton's system covered the major aesthetic flaw in Descartes' system. Newton's system was, Smith argues, like a well-made watch. His system was able to account for "many… [of the] irregularities which Astronomers had observed in the Heavens". It was "a system whose parts [were] all more strictly connected together than those of any other philosophical hypothesis". Despite our initial temptation to recoil at the sight of intricate mathematical formulae, Newton's system was simpler and more parsimonious than all previous models. The "principles of union" which Newton's system "employ[ed]" were such that "the imagination [could not] find any difficulty in going along with"[193] it. Smith says in sum

> [t]he superior genius and sagacity of Sir Isaac Newton…made the most happy, and, we may now say, the great and most admirable improvement that was ever made in philosophy, when he discovered that he could join together the movements of the Planets by so familiar a principle of connection [gravity], *which completely removed all the difficulties the imagination had hitherto felt in attending to them* [emphasis added].[194]

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[191] *Astronomy* IV.67
[192] Kuhn argues that Newton's theory, despite its incredible precision, was difficult to swallow at first because it seemed to be taking a retrograde step by talking about 'invisible forces' like gravity in a community that largely followed Descartes' corpuscularism, (*Scientific Revolutions*, p. 105). Smith also argues that the corpuscular view of the universe initially made it difficult for Newtonianism to gain traction in scientific communities despite its incredible utility (*Astronomy* IV.76).
[193] *Astronomy* IV.68-76
[194] *Astronomy* IV.67

Smith's admiration of Newton is difficult to overstate. He suggests that Newton's system can be considered not only as a "mere invention of the imagination" whose purpose is to "connect together the otherwise disjointed and discordant phenomena of nature" which cause much aesthetic displeasure but also something that can be considered "*as if* [emphasis added]" it were a theory that shows us "the real chains which Nature makes use of to bind together her several operations".[195] Indeed it does this so well Smith asks

[c]an we wonder then…that it [Newton's theory] should now be considered, not as attempt to connect the imagination to the phenomena of the Heavens, but as the greatest discovery that ever was made by man, the discovery of an immense chain of the most important and *sublime truths* [emphasis added], all closely connected together, by one capital fact, of the reality of which we have daily experience?[196]

I have highlighted these phrases not to demonstrate Smith's praise of Newtonian physics. I have highlighted these phrases to point out that even though Smith thinks Newton's theory appears "as if" it has demonstrated "the real chains which Nature makes use of to bind together" the universe, Smith, true to his historicist method, still refrains from arguing Newton *has in fact* discovered a final truth about the constitution of the universe. Even though Newton's system appears so aesthetically perfect to Smith he still refrains from arguing that Newton's system has a timeless truth according to some representational epistemology;– viz. that Newton's system is 'true' because it accurately reflects in our mind 'how the world really is'. The strongest claim Smith makes is that Newton's system, more than any other, accounts for all our aesthetic desires and *only* in this sense may be the last (that is, the 'true' or 'correct') astronomical theory.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter I compared Smith to Kuhn, arguing that both conceptualise science as an historical practice and as such a practice driven by cultural, social, biological, economic, and psychological forces. Alternatively stated, I have argued that Smith has an historicist and naturalistic rather than

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[195] *Astronomy* IV.76
[196] *Astronomy* IV.76

metaphysical conception of scientific progress. I take Smith in the *Astronomy* seriously when he asks us to

examine…all the different systems of nature... [that] have successively been adopted by the learned and ingenious; and, *without regarding their absurdity or probability, their agreement or inconsistency with truth and reality* [emphasis added], let us consider them only in that particular point of view which belongs to our subject: and content ourselves with *inquiring how far each of them was fitted to soothe the imagination, and to render the theatre of nature a more coherent, and therefore a more magnificent spectacle* [emphasis added], than otherwise it would have appeared to be.[197]

Even though I argued that Smith is an historicist in a similar vein to Kuhn, I have also argued he has one important difference. This difference is Smith's non-historicist hypothesis that that there is a permanent 'human nature'. However I have argued that this commitment to the idea that there is an unchanging base psychology or human nature does not on its own prop up Smith's philosophy of science. Instead I have argued that Smith's human nature operates as a heuristic that helps explain science as a response to particular human sentiments and, most importantly, to show how scientific progress is driven by our desire for a sense for aesthetic satisfaction.

The purpose of providing this reading of Smith as a Kuhnian historicist has not been to provide a novel new interpretation of Smith's philosophy of science. The purpose has been to help draw a line between Smith and Kant by showing how Smith's philosophy of science is completely polar to the Kantian conception of science as the gradual refinement of body of knowledge or truth about how the world really is as determined or guaranteed by a particular metaphysical framework. In the following chapter I shall extend the reading I have provided in this chapter to show how the same historicist impulses in the *Astronomy* also inform Smith's *Moral Sentiments*.

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[197] *Astronomy* II.12

Chapter 4: Smith's Historicist Theory of Morality

In the previous chapters I argued that Kant and Smith were a part of a broader debate in Western intellectual history about how we should conceptualise the world. Kant presents the view that we can discover timeless laws that underwrite our knowledge of both morality and the nature of the universe. Smith on the other hand sought to relativise knowledge according to the needs of historical contingency, and in particular, according to our historically situated psychological needs. Thus we saw Smith argue in the *History of Astronomy* that the descriptive frameworks we employ to explain the world are a product of our desire for aesthetic pleasure and material necessity.

In this chapter I will show how the historicist method in Smith's *Astronomy* also informs his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* – the text from which Kant most likely borrowed certain aspects of Smith's approach. The goal of this demonstration is to further develop the contrast between Smith's historicist moral philosophy and Kant's metaphysical moral philosophy as presented in the following chapters and lay the groundwork for my critique of the previous interpretations of the Kant-Smith relationship in the second section of this thesis.

The Status of Moral Truth in Smith's Moral Sentiments

In his *The Role of Providence in the Social Order: An Essay in Intellectual History* Jacob Viner has argued that "in Smith's…system" there is an emphasis on "the divine origin of the moral sentiments" and he "attributes to them…much power to influence the patterns of social behaviour". In this way, Viner argues, "Smith tied himself implicitly at least to a static or non-evolutionary theory of social psychology". Viner believes he can make this claim because, as he tells us,

> I have found not even a casual reference in *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments* to the moral sentiments being influenced by changes in the physical or political environment or of their being different in different countries or at different stages in history. Here is apparently a genuine lack of harmony between the static character of human psychology as pictured in the

The Theory of Moral Sentiments and Smith's stress on patterned historical development in his treatment in his other writings, of economic history, of the evolution of religious thought, and many other social phenomena.[198]

Viner is able to make this claim because as was acknowledged in the previous chapter Smith's writings do contain an ahistorical concept of 'human nature'. This concept of human nature includes particular 'sentiments' that are seemingly 'just there' or have been implanted by a god.[199] Furthermore, there is textual evidence for Viner's claim that Smith is committed to some kind of ahistorical conception of morality (as opposed to his stronger historicist leanings in the *Astronomy*). For example at the end of *Moral Sentiments* Smith tells his readers

[a] system of natural philosophy may appear very plausible and be for a long time very generally received in the world, and *yet have no foundation in nature*, *nor any sort of resemblance to the truth* [emphasis added] .[200]

In this statement Smith appears to be contradicting his argument in the *Astronomy* that science is an historical practice whose legitimacy is measured against our aesthetic needs rather than its ability to accurately represent the world and in this way he also implies that there is a metaphysical concept of truth based on an empiricist epistemology.

Not only does Smith talk about "natural philosophy" needing a ground in a representational empiricist epistemology, he also argues this is the case for moral philosophy. Immediately following his claim that natural philosophy must have some "foundation in nature" Smith goes on to note that this requirement is even more so "with systems of moral philosophy".[201] Does this mean then that *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is *not* informed by the *Astronomy*? Does this mean that Smith's moral theory – contrary to what I have argued so far and in agreement with Viner's interpretation – is in fact a Kantian exercise that seeks to uncover some fixed laws of morality that are

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[198] Viner J., *The Role of Providence in the Social Order: An Essay in Intellectual History*, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1972, p. 84
[199] *TMS* II.iii.intro.6
[200] *TMS* VII.ii.4.14
[201] *TMS* VII.ii.4.14

not affected by historical contingency? To answer this question I will first turn

to the broader context in which Smith makes the above the statement.

The above quotation appears in Smith's critique of Mandeville[202] where he argues

that Mandeville's theory of morality cannot be 'true' because it failed to attract

widespread support. Smith's argument is that unlike astronomy or mathematics,

moral theories are subjected to an entire population's immediate and thorough

scrutiny because all members of human society have an intuitive understanding of

what is morally 'correct'.[203] Mandeville's 'false' theory – a theory "which once

made so much noise in the world" – could never live on like Descartes' equally

'false' theory of vortices (which was "regarded by a very ingenious nation

[France], for near a century together, as a most satisfactory account of the

revolutions of the heavenly bodies") because just as

when a traveller gives an account of some distant country, he may impose
upon our credulity the most groundless and absurd fictions as the most certain
matters of fact. But when a person pretends to inform us of what passes in our
neighbourhood, and of the affairs of the very parish which we live in, though
here too, if we are so careless as not to examine things with our own eyes, he
may deceive us in many respects, yet the greatest falsehoods which he
imposes upon us must bear some resemblance to the truth, and must even have
a considerable mixture of truth in them. An author who treats of natural
philosophy, and pretends to assign the causes of the great phenomena of the
universe, pretends to give an account of the affairs of a very distant country,
concerning which he may tell us what he pleases, and as long as his narration
keeps within the bounds of seeming possibility, he need not despair of gaining
our belief. But when he proposes to explain the origin of our desires and
affections, of our sentiments of appropriation and disapprobation, he pretends
to give an account, not only of the affairs of the very parish that we live in, but
of our own domestic concerns.[204]

While making this critique Smith does not once talk about Mandeville's moral

theory or Descartes' astronomy as being accepted because of their ability to

satisfy our aesthetic needs. He only discusses these theories in terms of their

ability to accurately represent the observable world in our mind's eye. Nowhere in

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[202] Itself a major inspiration for Smith's own work (see Infantino L., *Individualism in Modern Thought: From Adam Smith to Hayek*, New York: Routledge, 1998 pp. 9-40).
[203] See *TMS* III.2.20-23 where Smith argues that the more publicly accessible one's art is the more its acceptance becomes dependent on democratic opinion and thus by analogy, argues that physicists and mathematicians require less public approval than moral philosophers and particular types of poets.
[204] *TMS* VII.ii.4.13-4

his conversation with Mandeville does Smith play the role of distant observer documenting the evolving history of human morality driven by psychological reactions as he did with the history of science in the *Astronomy*. Rather Smith simply critiques Mandeville for being so thoroughly wrong that most human beings can see that what he says does not reflect what we experience with minimal effort.

Smith is not consistent however. A few pages before he engages Mandeville he can be seen developing a theory of morality through an historicist paradigm very much like the one he used in the *Astronomy*. In these pages Smith does not talk about moral *truth* but how morality operates as a *practice*. He argues that "the science" known as "Ethics" is a science that "does not admit of the most accurate precision". However, even though the study of morality cannot furnish fixed principles of morality it nonetheless (much like "[literary] criticism") remains "highly useful and agreeable". It is "agreeable" and "useful" because the value of the 'science of ethics' is not measured by its precision but by its efficacy in helping us inspire others to act in particular ways; the science of ethics

is of all others the most susceptible of the embellishments of eloquence, and by means of them of bestowing, if that be possible, a new importance upon the smallest rules of duty. Its precepts, when thus dressed and adorned, are capable of producing upon the flexibility of youth, the noblest and most lasting impressions, and as they fall in with the natural magnanimity of that generous age, they are able to inspire, for a time at least, the most heroic resolutions, and thus tend to both establish and conform the best and most useful habits of which the mind of man is susceptible.[205]

Here Smith has backed away from describing moral theory as 'true' or false' and instead has become interested in the question of moral motivation, and in particular, how certain aesthetic effects encourage particular behaviours. Furthermore, as a corollary of wanting to understand what motivates us Smith considers morality from an instrumental point of view, not in terms of its 'truth'. This switch to talking about morality in terms of its utility for achieving particular ends rather than in identifying universal truths follows the kind of reasoning Smith adopts in the *Astronomy*. Because Smith is not interested in working out what a

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[205] *TMS* VII.iv.6

final knowledge of the universe would look like or what universal principles of morality look like, he instead studies how our sentiments – wonder and surprise or appropriation and disapprobation – encourage scientific practice and moral behaviour (and later in *The Wealth of Nations*, how rational self-interest encourages economic behaviour).

That Smith talks about the motivations that drive us to act morally does not however make him radically different from Kant (nor for that matter does it refute Viner's suggestion that Smith's moral philosophy contains a "static" and "non-evolutionary" account of moral psychology). It does not make Smith any less Kantian because the question of moral motivation was also equally important to Kant, who wanted to know if people were acting from respect for the moral law (whether our will "determined" by the moral law) or simply in accordance with it (whether our will through the "covert impulse of self-love" is "the real determining cause of the will").[206] If all that distinguishes Smith and Kant is a debate about moral motivation there is not much mystery in why Kant would like Smith. We could simply assume that Kant largely agreed with Smith and that his moral philosophy does not have any fundamental methodological differences with Smith's *Moral Sentiments*.

As I argued in the second chapter however, this is not all that distinguishes Smith from Kant. Unlike Kant, not only does Smith avoid suggesting that we have a will that is capable of being determined by "the consciousness of the moral law"[207] without regard to our psychological motives, he goes further and argues that there is no Kantian moral law itself. Smith argues that the moral rules we are motivated to follow are themselves not metaphysical in nature (that is, they are not rules with an ontological or epistemic existence outside of human experience and history in the way Kant suggests they are[208]). Rather the

general maxims of morality are formed, like all other general maxims, from experience and induction. We observe in a great variety of particular cases

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[206] *Groundwork* AK 4:407
[207] *CPrR* AK 5:121
[208] See *Groundwork* AK 4:410 where Kant not only makes this argument, but also critiques the idea that moral philosophy can be built on concepts of "human nature" in the very same way Smith does.

what pleases or displeases our moral faculties, what these approve or disapprove of, and, by induction from this experience, we establish those general rules. But induction is always regarded as one of the operations of reason. From reason, therefore, we are very properly said to derive all those general maxims and ideas. It is by these, however, that we regulate the greater part of our moral judgements, which would be extremely uncertain and precarious if they depended altogether upon what is liable to so many variations as immediate sentiment and feeling, which the different states of health and humour are capable of altering so essentially. As our most solid judgements, therefore, with regard to right and wrong, are regulated by maxims and ideas derived from an induction of reason, virtue may very properly be said to consist in a conformity to reason, and so far this faculty may be considered as the source and principle of approbation and disapprobation. *But though reason is undoubtedly the source of the general rules of morality, and of all moral judgements which we form by means of them; it is altogether absurd and unintelligible to suppose that the first perceptions of right and wrong can be derived from reason* [emphasis added], even in those particular cases upon the experience of which the general rules are formed. These first perceptions, as well as all other experiments upon which any general rules are founded, cannot be the object of reason, but of immediate sense and feeling. *It is by finding a vast variety of instances that one tenor of conduct constantly pleases in a certain manner, and that another as constantly displeases the mind, that we form the general rules of morality* [emphasis added].[209]

Here Smith explicitly denies that there are 'first principles' of moral philosophy and argues that reason's role in the creation of moral rules is purely instrumental – that is to say, the rules are merely "induced" from experience. Reason only allows us to collate our collective experience into discernable patterns of what we find "pleasing" and "displeasing". Because reason here is reduced to a mere tool of the human species that helps it organise it behaviour in the same way hands are a mere tool to help it eat food or go to the toilet, it becomes nonsensical to talk about a moral law underwriting the maxims we call upon to moderate our conduct much in the same way he argues it is nonsensical to talk about science as the gradual discovery of how the universe is outside the mind's eye.

The side of effect of arguing that moral rules are developed through experiencing what behaviour receives approbation and what behaviour receives disapprobation is that Smith is drawn to talking about morality as an historical practice. He is drawn to talking about morality as an historical practice because morality

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[209] *TMS* VII.iii.2.6-7

understood as the rules developed through experiencing social interaction necessarily have to play out in space and time. We cannot *a priori* deduce what is or is not moral and as such, cannot describe any moral judgements as true or false in any ahistorical manner.

It is here the influence of the *Astronomy*'s methodology becomes explicit. Contrary to Viner's claims that Smith's moral philosophy is "static" and "non-evolutionary" because it is built on an underlying unchanging human nature, in *Moral Sentiments* Smith can also be seen talking about morality as the spontaneous product of our experience in dealing with other people. Moral principles, rather than a set of laws discovered and inscribed on stone tablets – rather than being found in "static" human nature – are something created in order to satisfy our own psychological desires[210] very much the same way science is something we pursue in order to appease our sense of wonder and surprise. Moreover, just as how astronomical theory can be revised in light of new historical discoveries that arouse our sense of aesthetic discord, so too can changing social configurations adjust what we believe constitutes appropriate or inappropriate behaviour. Or in other words, Smith's *Moral Sentiments* also contains an *historicist* and *evolutionary* account of morality insofar as he talks about the mechanics of moral psychology rather than the procedures by which we can justify moral statements.

The Dual-Nature of Smith's Moral Sentiments

So what exactly is going on in *Moral Sentiments*? Why does Smith on one hand speak of moral 'truths' as something hinging on a representational empiricist epistemology[211] but, on the other hand, explain morality as the historical practice of codifying behaviours that we find pleasing or displeasing? This strange dichotomy in Smith's thinking emerges because there is in Smith both a desire to uncover the 'natural laws' of morality (which leads him to talk about moral 'truth') and a desire to adhere to a naturalistic framework (which forces him to understand

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[210] See *TMS* III.4.1-12
[211] I.e. Mandeville's theory can be described as 'false' because it does not reflect what we see in reality – or rather, because it does not adhere to our 'common sense'.

morality as a product of spontaneous human interaction). Or to repeat Skinner again from the previous chapter: Smith both wants to have timeless laws of human nature that are analogous to role that gravity plays in Newton's system but also wants to avoid making any references to objects outside of or epistemologically *a priori* to the material universe. Thus he has to demonstrate these laws through historical analysis and interpretation, that is, discuss them hermeneutically.[212]

Skinner is not the only person who has picked up on this dichotomy in Smith's *Moral Sentiments*. Charles Clark also argues that Smith is forced to switch between two ways of talking about morality depending on whether he is discussing the *purpose* of morality or its *mechanisms*. On the one hand, Clark argues, Smith "adopts [a] view of society as an evolutionary process" that can be explained by the "efficient causes" (or the "mechanism of social forces").[213] On the other hand, in line with "the influence of Natural Theology on the Scottish school of moral philosophy", he adheres to a particular kind of natural law philosophy that supposes the existence of a divine order and creator god[214] that guides our historical development (primarily by having implanted in us an original human nature), thus providing a purpose and measure by which we can judge our particular behaviour and moral judgements.[215] However this interest in natural law did not encourage Smith to become a dogmatic moralist who simply asserted the primacy of a god's or reason's commands above and against our personal motivations. In line with the trends of eighteenth century British empiricism, Smith could not escape the urge to explain the social-psychology of morality as a mechanical process rather than treating moral practice as an ahistorical personal decision to obey or disobey a god or the commands of reason.

Understanding Smith by Comparison with Hegel

This dual nature in Smith's moral philosophy that leads him to speak in terms of both purpose (thus giving him the air of being a moral absolutist) and in social

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[212] Here I follow Rorty's definition of this term as something distinctly opposed to epistemology (*Mirror of Nature* pp. 315-322).

[213] Clark C.M.A., "Adam Smith and Society as an Evolutionary Process", *Journal of Economic Issues*, volume 24, number 3, 1990, p. 842

[214] Hence Smith interest in Stoic philosophy. See for example *TMS* VI.ii.3.4-6.

[215] Clark, "Adam Smith and Society as an Evolutionary Process", p. 829

interaction (thus giving him the air of being a moral relativist) is remarkably Hegelian. Firstly, Smith's approach can be described as Hegelian because rather than try to develop an *a priori* metaphysics like Kant did, he simply posits human nature as a divine object[216] and thus avoids the need to develop a philosophical dualism in order to justify it. In this way he is like Hegel who also arbitrarily supposes that there is a *Geist* that is worked out in human history which in turn also leads him to adopt a monist historicism replete with religious overtones.[217] Secondly, like Hegel, Smith also offers a non-metaphysical (in the Kantian sense of not being epistemically justified by reason) teleology according to which he can measure and judge our otherwise entirely contingent historical process.

Thirdly and finally, like Hegel, when Smith begins talking about the historical process that is guided by a final cause he falls back to talking about the mechanisms that drive moral practice rather than the study of the analyticity of concepts, cognition, or language.[218] In this way both Hegel and Smith offer an historicist description of morality as the evolutionary by-product of our social interaction and social development that is guided by a non-Kantian teleology.[219] This makes Smith on the one hand appear remarkably contemporary insofar as he is an historicist, but on the other hand, insofar as he talks about final causes, remarkably dogmatic. It is these historicist tendencies, not Smith's dogmatic tendencies, which pose the biggest problem for those who want to understand why Kant praised Smith.

The Economic Determinates of Morality in Smith's Moral Sentiments

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[216] See for example *TMS* III.2.31.

[217] See Testa, I. "Hegel's naturalism or Soul and body in the Encyclopaedia" in Stern D. (ed.), *Essays on Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, New York: SUNY Press, 2012, pp. 19-35, Wood A., *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 33-4, and Horstmann P.-R., "Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit as an Argument for a Monistic Ontology", *Inquiry*, volume 49, number 1, 2006, pp. 103-18.

[218] Here I follow Terry Pinkard's (*Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 17-88) reading of Hegel.

[219] Indeed none of this is a surprise given Smith's direct influence on Hegel, particularly in the way he conceptualised human society. See Henderson J.P. & David J.B., "Adam Smith's Influence on Hegel's Philosophical Writings", *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, volume 13, number 2, 1991, pp. 184-204.

As a part of wanting to explain the mechanical causes of moral practice rather than its purpose Smith often acknowledges that what behaviour we come to approve or disapprove of is linked to the particular historical nature of our society. In this sense Smith has a materialist, proto-Marxian conception of morality as something that evolves according to the particular economic configuration of each society. For example, Smith argues

[t]he different situations of different ages and countries are apt… to give different characters to the generality of those who live in them, and their sentiments concerning that particular degree of each quality, that is either blameable or praiseworthy, vary, according to the degree which is usual in their own country, and in their own times.[220]

Here we see that contra Viner's assertion that *Moral Sentiments* makes no reference to our moral sentiments being directly affected the time and place in which we live Smith in fact explicitly tells us quite the opposite. Elsewhere Smith argues

[t]he hardiness demanded by savages diminishes their humanity; and perhaps, the delicate sensibility required in civilised nations sometimes destroys the masculine firmness of character. In general, the style of manner which takes place in any nation, may commonly upon the whole be said to be *that which is most suitable to its situations* [emphasis added].[221]

While we may object to Smith's anachronistic colonial binaries of "humanity" and "savage" or the sexist connotations of using "masculinity" as a virtue, the key hypothesis here – that different cultures respect different moral virtues – clearly does not sit well with the suggestion that morality is a kind of knowledge that hinges upon a metaphysical or religious foundation. While we may often feel like our judgements are based on a higher authority – typically in Western narratives these higher authorities come in the form of a god's words, reason's conclusions, or science's findings – here Smith suggests our judgements are adaptive behavioural patterns, subject to change, that allow the smooth operation of particular human societies and cultures. Educating human beings about the universal laws and ideals of morality do not create these behavioural patterns as

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[220] *TMS* V.2.7
[221] *TMS* V.2.13

we imagine Kant or Plato would have hoped. Rather rules and ideas emerge in accordance to the historically contingent needs of a particular group of people. Smith further elaborates this historicist description of morality as follows

[e]very savage undergoes a sort of Spartan discipline, and by the necessity of his situation is inured to every sort of hardship. He is in continual danger: he is often exposed to the greatest extremities of hunger, and frequently dies of pure want. His circumstances not only habituate him to every sort of distress, but teach him to give way to none of the passions which that distress is apt to excite. He can expect from his countrymen no sympathy or indulgence for such weakness[222]

while

among civilized nations, the virtues which are founded upon humanity, are more cultivated than those which are founded upon self–denial and the command of the passions [as is the case with the savages][223]

because

the general security and happiness which prevail in ages of civility and politeness, afford little exercise to the contempt of danger, to patience in enduring labour, hunger, and pain. Poverty may easily be avoided, and the contempt of it therefore almost ceases to be a virtue. The abstinence from pleasure becomes less necessary, and the mind is more at liberty to unbend itself, and to indulge its natural inclinations in all those particular respects.[224]

One of the necessary consequences of Smith making morality dependent on the socio-economic conditions of any particular society is that Smith's conception of morality is relative in a way that Kant's own theory cannot possibly be. While Smith has a clear preference for the morals of a modern Western Europe and ancient Rome,[225] this preference is informed by his own Christian and Stoic beliefs[226] rather than anything that necessarily follows from his methodology. This is something Smith himself appears to recognise. For example, while Smith

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[222] *TMS* V.2.9
[223] *TMS* V.2.8
[224] *TMS* V.2.8
[225] *TMS* V.2.10
[226] Raphael D.D., *The Impartial Spectator: Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 8, 34, 40, 63

proclaims the universal abhorrence of infanticide,[227] he is also able to see past his own prejudices and acknowledges that this practice too, cannot be categorically condemned. "The murder of new-born infants", Smith tells us, "was a practice allowed of in almost all the states of Greece" and "whenever the circumstances of the parent rendered it inconvenient to bring up the child, to abandon it to hunger, or to wild beasts, [it] was regarded without blame or censure". That this was the case "ought not to surprise us so greatly" given the "state of [their] society" (that is, a state of relative scarcity).[228] Thus Smith, in spite of his strong Christian convictions that all life is sacred, ultimately accepted that his views cannot claim the kind of universalist respect he would like it to have.

Smith's sense of the relativity of morality – that is, the recognition that judgements of right and wrong or appropriate and inappropriate are tied to particular times and places – also informs the way he saw cultural practices in his own time. Commenting on the cultural practices of Europe Smith tells us

that degree of politeness, which would be highly esteemed, perhaps, would be thought effeminate adulation, in Russia, would be regarded as rudeness and barbarism at the court of France. That degree of order and frugality, which, in a Polish nobleman, would be considered as excessive parsimony, would be regarded as extravagance in a citizen of Amsterdam.[229]

Here Smith appears to be attributing the 'manliness' of Russian behaviour and the 'softer virtues' of the French court to the socio-economic condition of these countries. Likewise it appears that Smith wants to argue that the manners of the Polish magnates would be quite out of place in the Netherlands, a young republic without a similar aristocracy holding onto the reins of power.

These differences may seem trite and superficial. It may be tempting to question whether the different court manners of European monarchies and republics amount to something which can be called different 'moral practices'. However to raise this objection one must suppose, like Kant, that there is something called

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[227] Although prohibited in common Christian practice, infanticide was acceptable or at least tolerated in Stoic practice. See Colish M.L., *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, volume 1, Leiden, NL: Brill, 1985, p. 382.
[228] *TMS* V.2.15-16
[229] *TMS* V.2.7

morality that is beyond culture and history itself; a kind of body of knowledge that is fundamentally different from descriptions of human behaviour. However in Smith's monistic historicism there is no way to separate judgements of 'good' and 'bad' about murder from judgements about one's curtsy or handshake. These are *sui generis* actions, not 'moral' and 'non-moral' actions. There is no ontological difference between 'moral actions' and more trivial forms of social behaviour because Smith's account of morality is rooted in the mechanisms of social psychology. Smith's so-called 'impartial spectator' is unable to make distinctions between *a priori* and *a posteriori*, between the ideal and the real, between noumena and phenomena, or any other type of dualism that people like Kant use to distinguish moral acts from biological or psychological function.

Historicised Morality in The Wealth of Nations

The idea presented in *Moral Sentiments* that morality is somehow tied up with historically contingent phenomena like political economy also figures in *The Wealth of Nations*. In this work morality is also treated as a function of particular historical economic arrangements. Smith divides history into four economic stages, [230] each of which dictates its own particular social obligations and expectations. While *The Wealth of Nations* does not contain as much commentary on the traditional topics of morality, it still includes an analysis of human behaviour. Moreover, insofar as this book describes human behaviour it also attempts to explain morality as an historical practice hinging upon the economic structure of society.

One interesting example of this is Smith's supposed theory of friendship. Lisa Hill and Peter McCarthy for example have argued that Smith's philosophy offers a materialist account of how the capitalist organisation of the means of production affects friendship and social trust. For Hill and McCarthy, Smith sees the "the new voluntaristic friendship" of commercial society that replaces the unpredictable and emotionally charged relationships of feudal patronage as a force that stabilises

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[230] Meek R.L., "Smith, Turgot, and the "Four Stages" Theory, *History of Political Economy*, 1971, volume 3, issue 1, pp. 9-27

society and thus progresses the arts and sciences.[231] Smith celebrates this new form of friendship in commercial society "not for the sake of 'authentic' friendship, but because it brings on the congenial strangership so necessary for the functioning of expanding market societies".[232] Allan Silver too argues that Smith sees the arrival of commercial society as a catalyst for affecting positive changes in the nature of friendship. In Silver's own words, "[t]he Scots celebrate the liberation of friendship from instrumental concerns made possible by the advent of commercial society".[233] However against Hill and McCarthy, Silver argues that Smith sees the changing nature of friendship in commercial society not as something instrumental for the development of the market (which is a good in itself), but as something good in itself. Silver argues

Smith applauds the advent of sympathetic personal relationships not because, in their universalistic aspect, they weaken traditional or mercantile constraints on market exchanges, but because the new forms of friendship help shape a civil society free of exclusivistic relationships hostile or suspicious towards others.[234]

It does not matter which of these two interpretations is correct. Key here is that friendship – as an important and often (sadly) overlooked part of morality – is, through innumerable causal chains, linked to the mobility of wage labour and concentrations of capital. The nature of our relationships with others is not determined by the discovery of rational precepts or universalistic commands but by historically contingent economic arrangements.

Elsewhere in *The Wealth of Nations* Smith also argues that physical geography plays an important role in determining how our societies develop and thus also how we practice morality. Trying to understand why the Middle Kingdom had become what he calls a "stationary state",[235] Smith suggests that the country was restrained by "the nature of its soil, [and its] climate", which, being so productive and bountiful, encouraged high levels of autarky. Because China's vast natural

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[231] Hill L. & McCarthy P., "Hume, Smith, and Ferguson: Friendship in Commercial Society", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, volume 2, issue 4, pp. 35-36
[232] *Ibid.*, p. 46
[233] Silver A., "Friendship in Commercial Society: Eighteenth-Century Social Theory and Modern Sociology", *American Journal of Sociology*, volume 95, number 6, p. 1480
[234] *Ibid.*, pp. 1483-1484
[235] *WN* I.viii.24

resources had encouraged it to adopt "laws and institutions" that made the country hostile to "foreign commerce"[236] this encouraged the monopolisation of power into the hands of a very small elite which in turn ultimately led the country to adopt a series of manners and social mores that were conducive to this oligarchic structure and antithetical to the kind of commercial friendships or standards of morality found in commercial societies.[237]

Smith's naturalistic historicism is not just confined to these kind of broad economic and geographic materialist narratives. Returning again to *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* it can be seen how Smith's underlying methodology also leads him to explore more personal scenarios. Discussing how our moral judgements are shaped by our upbringing Smith writes

[t]hose who have been educated in what is really good company, not in what is commonly called such, who have been accustomed to see nothing in the persons whom they esteemed and lived with, but justice, modesty, humanity and good order; are more shocked with whatever seems to be inconsistent with the rules which those virtues prescribe. Those, on the contrary, who have had the misfortune to be brought up amidst violence, licentiousness, falsehood, and justice; lose, though not all sense of impropriety of such conduct, yet all sense of its dreadful enormity, or of the vengeance and punishment due to it. They have been familiarised with it from their infancy, custom has rendered it habitual to them, and they are very apt to regard it as, what is called, the way of the world, something which either may, or must be practiced, to hinder us from being the dupes of our own integrity.[238]

The underlying message of this account of the development of our moral judgement is the same as above. A child who grows up in a world of crime and domestic violence does not simply 'fail' to discover some rational precepts that a child who grows up in a wealthy middle class family does; the child who grows up surrounded by duplicity and violence has not failed to develop the 'right' or 'wrong' kind of moral judgement. Rather, this child has formed a different set of moral judgements particular to its own historical circumstance.

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[236] *WN* I.ix.15

[237] For example Smith tells us that the Chinese, like the Greeks, have little qualms about exposing their children *WN* I.viii.24-25.

[238] *TMS* V.2.2

Conclusion

At face value Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is an extended treatment on how particular experiences cause us to make particular judgements through a psychological concept he calls "sympathy" (the ability to imagine ourselves in another persons situation).[239] In his discussion of this moral psychology Smith often makes normative judgements about particular behaviour and evaluates of the accuracy of other moral theories. This gives him the appearance of being a natural law philosopher who would perhaps be partial to Kantian ethics. However, as I have shown, interpreting Smith in this way requires one to deliberately ignore his discussions of the historical forces that shape moral behaviour. Often Smith is so far from natural law theory and Kantian metaphysics that some people have even suggested he directly influenced Darwin.[240] Smith's belief in a divine providence guiding the development of human history may make this argument appear odd. After all, Darwinism is the antithesis of teleological descriptions of our world. Nonetheless, given that Smith and Darwin both treat morality as a behavioural practice that is adaptive to particular historical circumstances the suggestion is not completely outlandish. Smith and Darwin share what Dewey saw as a crucial moment in Western thinking: a shift away from dualist metaphysics, from Platonism and Kantianism, and from explaining things in terms of their purpose towards explaining things in terms of their function and embracing the belief that our knowledge is infinitely revisable and historically contingent.

In this chapter I have not discussed the finer mechanics of Smith's psychological approach in detail[241] because my goal here has not been to determine whether Smith's description of human moral practice is sound. Rather my goal has been to argue that Smith treats the morality as a *practice* rather than a *body of knowledge*. Treating morality as a practice is not in itself novel or visionary. However that Smith treats morality as a practice is important for this thesis because it demonstrates his commitment to the methodology of the *Astronomy*; a work

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[239] Indeed this concept is the first thing Smith defines in *Moral Sentiments* (*TMS* I.i.1.1-I.i.5.9).
[240] Ronald Coase ("The New Institutional Economics", *The American Economic Review*, volume 88, number 2, 1998, p. 73) for example has suggested "that Charles Darwin came to his theory of evolution as a result of reading… Adam Smith".
[241] These mechanics will be explained in the eighth chapter.

which, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, avoids looking to metaphysics in order to measure the 'truth' of science or moral beliefs. In so far as Smith's *Moral Sentiments* follows the methodology of the *Astronomy* he offers what I have defined as a naturalist, monist, and historicist approach to moral philosophy. This is important for the central question of this thesis (the question of why Kant heaped praise on Smith) because this methodology is thoroughly anti-Kantian.

Having outlined the latent historicism in Smith's moral philosophy, my goal in the next two chapters is to show how this fundamental feature of Smith's work is completely incompatible with Kant's critical moral philosophy.

Chapter 5: Kant's Anti-Historicist Theoretical Philosophy

In the previous chapters I argued that while Smith often talks about truth and knowledge in a traditional empiricist paradigm of accurate representations of the world gained through experience, he also is prone to talking about truth and knowledge as a product of an historical process – that is, as a product of social psychology, political economy, geography, and culture. Even though Smith argues that there is an immutable human nature that provides the basis for a 'science' of the human species' activities, he also argues that the particular forms of human institutions, knowledge, and indeed moral values are a part of an historical process that is accidental (though teleologically explainable by reference to a divine plan). I argued that this tendency to historicise knowledge was most prominent in the *Astronomy* where Smith appears remarkably Kuhnian, explaining scientific evolution not as the gradual refinement of a final truth about how the world really is, but rather as a set of beliefs that change according to our psychological needs. I then argued that his tendency to historicise knowledge by talking about natural science as a practice rather than a set of discoverable universal truths flows over into his *Moral Sentiments*, where Smith avoids outlining a set of principles of what is or is not 'moral' or what is 'legitimate' moral knowledge. Instead, I argued that he focuses on describing the historical process through which human beings form particular judgments about particular behaviours. This desire to explain morality as an historical process led Smith to explicitly reject metaphysics as a worthwhile pursuit and instead explain moral rules as the aggregate of experience in dealing with other people and our own conscience in a particular historical context.

The goal of this and the following chapter is to show in detail how Kant rejected the Smithian idea that the rules, standards, and judgements we develop through social interaction are only 'legitimate' insofar as they provide some kind of instrumental function in our psychology. I will do this by showing how Kant rejects the methodology Smith uses to explain morality on epistemological grounds, arguing that the kind of 'facts' about moral practice Smith develops do

not constitute genuine scientific or moral knowledge. This will be done by looking at Kant's critique of Locke and Hume's empiricism, which, I will argue, also inform Smith's methodology. In the following chapter I will go on to argue that not only does Kant have an epistemological dispute with Smith about what constitutes legitimate knowledge, but that this dispute forms the basis of another critique Kant has of Smith's philosophical tradition. This critique is that by treating morality as an historical practice people like Smith deny the possibility that we have a radical freedom of choice and, *a fortiori*, the ability to choose between right or wrong and ultimately the ability to talk about (to 'cognise') morality itself.

Kant's 'Pure' Philosophy

Kant repeatedly describes his philosophical enterprise as 'pure'. The phrase even forms the title of his first *Critique*. Kant demands again and again throughout his *Critiques* that we respect the purity of philosophy.[242] But what does it mean to be doing pure philosophy? This is Kant's own way of arguing that the central problem of philosophy is not describing human psychology, the movements of planets, or even finding out how our brain works.[243] The central problem of philosophy is to discover the principles of cognition[244] that need to be in place before we can even think about things like human behaviour or the trajectories of celestial bodies. Because human behaviour is the central object of study for Smith (and not the study of how we are able to cognise this behaviour in the first place), his investigations fall outside the scope of what Kant calls pure philosophy. A useful way to understand this criticism is to look at the ways Kant agrees and disagrees with Aristotle.

Kant and Aristotle

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[242] See for example *CPR* B20-2, A159-160/B198-9, A800-1/B828-9.

[243] As another kind of empirical investigation, neuroscience does not concern itself with answering the question of how it is we are even able to experience 'looking at brains' let alone how we are able to study them. See *Natural Science* AK 4:470-2.

[244] *Erkenntnis* – I have written this word as either 'knowledge' or 'cognition' according to euphony.

Kant's decision to define philosophy as the study of *a priori* principles and deny the possibility that Smith's hermeneutical methodology can ever provide legitimate knowledge follows a tradition of thinking that can be traced directly from Aristotle.[245] Kant believes the programme of modern philosophy is to carry on tackling the same problems Aristotle thought were important in his *Categories*, *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. These problems involve answering questions about the formal nature of the world, tellingly designated as 'first principles of knowledge'. Aristotle believed that wisdom or 'true' knowledge is found not in experience with particulars – in grappling with historical contingency, or with how our knowledge is constructed to satisfy our psychological needs – but in understanding the qualities and laws that must apply to all objects that make up our world. In this kind of division of knowledge the thinker who tries to understand the efficient causes of objects in experience Aristotle calls a mere "craftsman".[246] Because Smith refuses to ask questions about the metaphysical causes of the objects of experience – because he lacks a theoretical knowledge of why, for example, we can have faith in the continued operation of causality[247] – he is in Aristotle's view a craftsman, not a wise man.

Kant too would classify Smith as an Aristotelian "craftsman". However his reasons for not considering Smith a philosopher are somewhat more complex. Kant does not believe that philosophy must focus on ontology *à la* Aristotle.[248] Instead, he believes we must find the *a priori* necessary components of cognition that allow us to even engage in an activity called 'thinking'. Stated in another way, unlike Aristotle, Kant wants to work out how we can even talk about things like substance before we move on to talking about the *intrinsic nature* of such substance, let alone before we move on to talking about the extrinsic nature of objects like planets, asteroids, and of course human reactions to the judgements of

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[245] Kant credits Aristotle on the first page of the second section of the *Critique* (*CPR* Bviii) and, obviously also attributes the discovery of the "functions of the understanding" – or in Kant's own idiom – "the categories" to Aristotle (*CPR* A80-1/B105-6).

[246] Aristotle, (trans. Lawson-Tancred, H.) *Metaphysics*, London: Penguin, 2004, p. 5 (Book Alpha, 980a)

[247] Smith instead explains causality with Hume's associationism and thus, presumably, shares at least some his of scepticism about whether we can be sure of the validity (in the Kantian sense) of this law (*Astronomy* II.7).

[248] Though Kant does have an obvious interest in working out the nature of noumenal substances and souls. See *CPR* A273/B329 – A278/B335.

other people.[249] In the Transcendental Deduction of the first *Critique* Kant argues that we must first work out how an "original unity of apperception underlies the possibility of all cognition"[250] before we start to work out the universal qualities of objects in that cognition. Thus, while Kant broadly agrees with Aristotle about what philosophy should be doing (discovering first principles), even Aristotle's wise man in Kant's view is still a "craftsman" of sorts if this wise man treats knowledge as a set of ontological problems about matter and substance and assumes the *possibility* of thinking itself is unproblematic.

According to Kant's approach, even if a philosophical programme *does* decide to look at the question of the possibility of cognition (unlike Aristotle's programme[251]), this programme may be still engaged in "impure"[252] philosophy if the nature of cognition is studied from an empirical point of view. Studying cognition from an empirical point of view – that is, by working out how cognition operates by induction from experience – is still, in Kant's eyes, only explaining "our *possession* of pure cognition"[253] as a "contingent" fact.[254] Analysing how we think through an empiricist paradigm does not prove the "objective validity"[255] of the principles necessary for cognition (including moral cognition). Thus, as will be discussed next, even philosophy more recent than Aristotle's which actually does consider the structure of cognition and tries to provide us with a convincing account of how knowledge is possible can still fail Kant's purity test. Included amongst this more recent philosophy that Kant still considers 'impure' is the empiricism that informs Smith's methodology.

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[249] *CPR* B293
[250] *CPR* A118
[251] As Christopher Taylor notes, while "the *Posterior Analytics* gives a detailed account of the conditions necessary and sufficient for the achievement of *epistêmê* in the context of exact science… this appears to the modern eye as at best one kind of knowledge… among others… and perhaps even as some special cognitive state to be distinguished from knowledge… On the whole, he [Aristotle] does not seek to *argue* that knowledge is possible, but, assuming its possibility, he seeks to understand how it is realised in different fields of mental activity…" ("Aristotle's Epistemology" in Everson S (ed.) *Epistemology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 116).
[252] To borrow Robert Louden's term (*Kant's Impure Ethics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.3).
[253] *CPR* A87/B119
[254] *CPR* A94/B127, A110
[255] *CPR* A89/B122

Kant's Criticism of British Empiricism

In the historicist narrative Smith creates to explain the operation of our imagination and in his casting of human knowledge and morality as a consequence of historical evolution guided by the utilitarian desire to achieve a sense of aesthetic closure, there is an example of what Kant would consider to be 'impure' philosophy. Smith's historicism is not the only impurity in his philosophy however. Kant singles out the kind of philosophy in which Smith's thinking is immersed as greatest threat to the modern philosophical project. While Kant does not mention Smith in his criticism of impure philosophy, he does take particular aim at his predecessors and contemporaries who sought to explain knowledge and morality through an empiricist and psychological idiom.[256] The predecessors and contemporaries Kant had in mind would now generally be called members of the school of 'British empiricist philosophy'.

Kant was no stranger to the kind of British empiricist philosophy that produced an author like Smith.[257] Indeed Kant's first *Critique* is a direct reaction to the ideas thrown up by these thinkers. Several responses to the British empiricists are evident. John Locke, naturally, figures heavily throughout Kant's writing. He is called in for particular approbation in the Transcendental Deduction for "first opening up the path"[258] to understanding human cognition by being amongst the first modern philosophers to attempt to try to document the categories of human understanding.[259] Likewise, the Earl of Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson are acknowledged for their contributions to modern moral philosophy throughout Kant's books and lectures.[260] And perhaps most importantly for Kant's intellectual

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[256] As Patricia Kitcher (*Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 10-19) usefully warns however, this does not mean Kant dismisses psychology, as long as it is considered a study that "seeks to determine the necessary and universal elements of human cognition". This is quite different from the kinds of psychology the British empiricists were involved with.

[257] For perhaps one of the most extensive analyses of the origins of Smith's thought see Bitterman H.J., "Adam Smith's Empiricism and the Law of Nature: I", *Journal of Political Economy*, volume 48, number 4, 1940, pp. 487-520 and Bitterman H.J., "Adam Smith's Empiricism and the Law of Nature: II", *Journal of Political Economy*, volume 48, number 5, 1940, pp. 703-34.

[258] *CPR* A84/B116

[259] *CPR* A94/B127

[260] See for example his 'table' of moral philosophy in the second *Critique* (*CPrR* AK 5:40), his discussion of Hutcheson and Shaftesbury as an empiricist moral philosophers (*Groundwork* AK 4:442, *Mongovius* AK 29:621), and how these two authors have their legacy in John Locke (*Mongovius* AK 29:625-626).

flowering, it is well known that he possessed a special relationship with the work of Hume thanks to his constant praise[261] and famous declaration that it was Hume who had "awoken" him from his "dogmatic slumber" and subsequently inspired him to develop the critical philosophy.[262] Nevertheless, as Kant makes very clear in his Transcendental Deduction, this empiricist tradition from which he drew so much inspiration was one that should be abandoned.

Criticism of Locke

In the Transcendental Deduction, the problem that Kant – accepting Hume's arguments[263] – identifies in this empiricist tradition is that it collapses into an all-encompassing scepticism about the possibility of knowledge of what we can know 'for certain'.[264] Thus, while Kant agrees with Locke that the "special nature of our organs" allows us to have a direct and unproblematic sensing of things like "taste and colour", [265] he argues that Locke goes too far when he infers from this that all objects of cognition ultimately start from our sense organs' contact with the 'outside' world.[266] To have justified cognitions – or to have a sense of certainty in our knowledge – the objects of experience must not, like Locke supposes they do, create cognition. Rather the objects of cognition must have the possibility of their

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[261] For example, Kant tells us Hume in fact initiated Kant's critical philosophy by questioning the "rights of reason" (*CPrR* AK 5:50-57). We can read a similar sentiment in *The Blomberg Logic* where again Kant, although critical of Hume for having a "preponderant inclination to doubt everything", recommends to his students that Hume would "certainly be one of the best authors, and of those most worth of being read" (*Blomberg* AK 24: 217).

[262] One need only note the now almost absurd number of articles and essays on Kant's 'answer' to Hume. See for example Guyer P., "Kant's Answer to Hume?", *Philosophical Topics*, volume 31, number 1 & 2, 2003, pp. 127-64; Williams M.E., "Kant's Reply to Hume", *Kant-Studien*, volume 55, 1965, pp. 71-8; Schipper E.W., "Kant's Answer to Hume's Problem", *Kant-Studien*, volume 53, 1961, pp. 68-74; Kuehn M., "Kant's Conception of "Hume's Problem"", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, volume 21, number 2, 1983, pp. 175-93, Falkenstein L., "Hume's Answer to Kant", *Noûs*, volume 32, number 3, 1998, pp. 331-60.

[263] *CPR* B23, *Prolegomena* 4:257-8

[264] This emphasis on dubitably Rorty has argued comes from Descartes, who argues the consciousness is the only place where "there is no distinction between appearance and reality" and hence is the foundation of certainty in knowledge (Rorty R., *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979, pp. 54-55). After which all thinkers, including Locke and Kant, make certainty of the kind we have in mathematical equations the highest measure of all philosophy and science.

[265] *CPR* A28/29

[266] See Locke J., *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1996, pp.33-36.

presentation in cognition *a priori* determined by our pure intuitions[267] and the categories of understanding. [268] Or to rephrase this argument with a modern metaphor, the kinds of ontological properties Aristotle talks about which we assign to the objects of cognition – quantity, quality, relationship and modality – are functions ("categories") that need to exist in any kind of thought-machine before it can process the raw data that is fed into it. Raw sense data – what Kant calls the "manifold of experience"[269] – does not come delivered to our cognition already sorted and classified and neither does interaction with raw sense data allow us to develop these categories as Locke argues.[270] Rather our mind must *a priori* to the processing of raw data have a set of categories it can apply to this data enabling its cognition.

Because Locke tries to explain the apparatus of our mind as something developed through the interaction of a blank mind (the so called *tabula rasa*) with experience (both "inner" and "outer" experience[271]) rather than explaining it as the necessary *a priori* conditions of having that experience, Kant argues that Locke has created a "physiology of the human understanding"[272] or an "empirical psychology" of "inner sense".[273] This is problematic, Kant argues, because insofar as we treat the apparatus of our mind as contingently formed reactions to sensory experience Locke's "ideas" – which Kant equates to the categories of understanding[274] – provide no restraints on the kinds of things we are able to cognise. We may – as Locke does – start trying to demonstrate knowledge of all sorts of things that we are not justified to ask questions about. For example, Locke believes that the ideas we develop from sense experience can later be used to infer the existence of gods and souls.[275]

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[267] In Kant's model of the mind the "pure intuitions" fulfil the same role in our faculty of sense as the categories of understanding do in our faculty of concepts. Kant identifies two pure intuitions – space and time – as the necessarily and *a priori* intuitions required for sensibility to work. See *CPR* A19/B33-A49/B73.
[268] *CPR* A92/B125 – A94-B126
[269] *CPR* A20/B34
[270] See Locke, *Essay*, p. 38.
[271] See Locke, *Essay*, p. 39 and compare with Kant *CPR* A98-100.
[272] *CPR* Aix
[273] *CPR* A347/B405
[274] Kant explicitly tells us Locke's ideas and his own categories are the same in function. See *CPR* A94/B127.
[275] See for example Locke, *Essay*, pp. 275-284.

That Locke's model of the mind allows us to eventually even ask questions about the existence of gods based on ideas originally developed from sense experience Kant sees as a threat to certainty of knowledge and a threat to placing metaphysics on the same level as "*pure mathematics* and *universal natural science*"[276] – disciplines whose bodies of knowledge are reliable because they are limited by fundamental rules about what is and not is within their scope. In the Transcendental Logic Kant argues against Locke's suggestion that we can demonstrate a god's existence as a necessary logical conclusion of our ideas[277] in the following manner,

[i]f the empirically valid law of causality is to lead to the original being, then this being would likewise have to belong to the chain of objects of experience; but in that case this being would itself, like all appearances, be conditioned in turn. However, even if we were permitted to make the leap beyond the bounds of experience by means of the dynamical law of the reference of effects to their causes, with what concept can this provide us? By no means can it provide us with a concept of a supreme being, because experience never offers us the greatest of all possible effects.[278]

Because Locke's empirical deduction of the mind's apparatus did "not comprehend the quite peculiar nature" of objects like gods that operate outside the laws that make experience comprehensible (space, time, causality, and so forth) his attempts to prove these objects exists resulted in "nothing but futile attempts".[279] In Kant's words,

[t]he illustrious Locke, not having engaged in this contemplation [that "the principle" of "all *a priori* concepts" must "be cognised as *a priori* conditions for the possibility of experience"[280]], and encountering pure concepts of understanding in experience, also derived them from experience. Yet he proceeded so *inconsistently* that he dared to try using these concepts for cognitions that go far beyond any boundary of experience[281]…[which in the end do] not allow us to cognise any object at all.[282]

Kant's Criticism of Hume

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[276] *CPR* A94/B128
[277] Locke, *Essay*, pp. 275-283
[278] *CPR* A636-7/B664-5
[279] *CPR* A86/B119
[280] *CPR* A94/B126
[281] *CPR* A94/B127
[282] *CPR* B44

Kant identifies Hume (who builds on Locke empiricism[283]) as a thinker who saw the problems that come with trying to prove the existence of gods using the concepts that govern experience (in this case, causality). Kant praises Hume for arguing that our concepts should not be allowed to "go beyond the boundary of experience" like they do in Locke. Unfortunately however Hume

was [also] quite unable to explain how it is possible that concepts not in themselves combined in the understanding should nonetheless have to be thought by it as necessarily combined in the object. Nor did it occur to him that perhaps the understanding itself might, through these concepts, be the author of experience wherein we counter the understanding's objects. Thus, in his plight, he derived these concepts from experience (viz., from *habit*, a subjective necessity that arises in experience through repeated association and that ultimately is falsely regarded as objective).[284]

Thus, though Kant commends Hume for not making the same mistake as Locke by confining the limits of knowledge to experience,[285] Kant still has reservations about the idea of explaining the cognitive process in terms of empirical psychology.

Kant's major grievance with Hume's approach to the philosophy of mind is that it undermines the possibility that we can do anything called 'metaphysics' – the attempt to develop abstract laws about how the world works which have the same kind of "certainty" and "universality" as mathematics and geometry.[286] Against Hume's argument that mathematics is merely analytic *a priori* knowledge[287] (that is, things that are true because of their definition), Kant argues that mathematical and geometrical cognition, while *a priori*, is not analytic but "synthetic".[288] What Kant means by this is that it is possible to develop new knowledge from

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[283] Or rather in Hume's own opinion, fixes Locke's errors. See Hume, T*reatise*, p. 1.
[284] *CPR* A94/B127
[285] *CPR* A190/B234-5
[286] For Kant's clearest treatment on Hume's problems justifying mathematics see *Prolegomena* AK 4:270-273.
[287] Hume in fact made the more radical argument in his *Treatise (Treatise,* pp. 42-53) that mathematics was also affected by experience and in this sense foreshadowed John Sturt Mill's psychologism (see *System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1858, pp. 148-161). Kant was unfamiliar with both the *Treatise* and this argument (see Wolff R.P., "Kant's Debt to Hume via Beattie", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, volume 21, 1960, pp. 117-23).
[288] *CPR* A10/B14

mathematical and geometrical concepts that is not merely found in their definition. Kant gives the following example,

no geometric principles – e.g., the principle that in a triangle two sides together are greater than the third – are ever derived from universal concepts of *line* and *triangle*; rather, they are all derived from intuition, and are derived from it moreover *a priori*, with apodeictic certainty.[289]

Building on this point, Kant goes on to argue that we also have similar *a priori* synthetic knowledge that helps us organise sensory experience and develop theoretical knowledge ('scientific' knowledge of the world we experience). Kant again focuses on the concept of causality. Hume's empiricism leads him to the sceptical conclusion that something like causality rests on an unjustifiable belief that all objects we experience are subject to cause and effect.[290] Kant, not satisfied with this lingering doubt, argues that the concept of causality *is* justifiable. It is not justifiable insofar as it is something we develop through the association of ideas, but the concept of causality is justifiable if it can be shown that it is supplied necessarily and *a priori* by the understanding in order to make experience itself possible.[291] Thus just like knowing two sides of a triangle are greater than its third side is not dependent on any kind of experience, so too is knowing that one event follows another.[292]

Kant believes that by trying to argue that all functions of cognition are merely the product of developing ideas that ultimately begin with experience like Hume did, it would also be necessary to accept that

everything we call metaphysics would amount to no more than the delusion of a supposed rational insight into what in fact is merely borrowed from experience and has, through habit, acquired a seeming necessity.[293]

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[289] *CPR* A25/B39
[290] *CPR* A766-9/B794-7
[291] *CPR* A94/B127. See also Hume D., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993, p. 28.
[292] This is the crux of Kant's main argument in the first *Critique*, referred to as the "transcendental deduction". For Kant's complete argument see *CPR* A66-130/B92-169.
[293] *CPR* B20

Accepting Hume's arguments, Kant argues, would force us to also accept the "destruction of all pure philosophy"[294] and "give up entirely" the idea that something like causality is a "necessary" and "an absolutely universal rule" of cognition.[295] If however it can be shown that mathematics can produce knowledge without experience (*a priori* synthetic knowledge) and if it can also be demonstrated that a mind can produce concepts without experience, then we can, Kant argues, create an "objective"[296] basis for fundamental laws of experience like causality "completely *a priori* in the understanding" and, later, an objective basis for morality.[297] As Kant believes he has demonstrated that mathematics is both *a priori* and synthetic (and, *a fortiori*, so too is metaphysical knowledge), he believes he has demonstrated that all scientific knowledge must ultimately be underpinned by 'first principles' of cognition.

Kant's and the Methodology in Smith's Astronomy

What do the debates Kant prosecutes in the first *Critique* and the *Prolegomena* against British empiricism have to do with Smith? Simply put, the arguments and accusations Kant levels at Hume and Locke are equally applicable to Smith's own work. Indeed these arguments may have greater applicability to Smith's work given his stronger naturalistic bent[298] and his adoption of the anti-metaphysical empiricist methodology Hume promotes under the title of "science of man".[299]As Henry Bitterman has argued in his two articles on Smith's empiricism,[300] despite disagreements between the two,[301] both Smith and Hume express "considerable

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[294] *CPR* B20
[295] *CPR* A91/B123-4
[296] *CPR* A121-2
[297] Which Kant foreshadows in *CPR* A800/B828.
[298] Smith, unlike Locke, never starts trying to deduce supernatural beings from the properties of concepts and, unlike Hume, entirely avoids debates about the philosophy of mind. By sticking largely to description of psychological processes it can be said Smith is more naturalistic than his contemporaries.
[299] See Skinner A., "Natural History in the Age of Adam Smith", *Political Studies*, volume 15, issue 1, 1967, pp. 32-48.
[300] "Adam Smith's Empiricism: 1", *Journal of Political Economy*, pp. 703-20 and "Adam Smith's Empiricism: II", *Journal of Political Economy*", pp. 720-30). See also Salomon A., "Adam Smith as Sociologist", *Social Research*, volume 12, pp. 27 – 28.
[301] See for example *TMS* VII.iii.3.17. See also, Morrow G.R., "The Significance of the Doctrine of Sympathy in Hume and Adam Smith", *The Philosophical Review*, volume 32, number 1, 1923, pp. 60-78 and Macfie A.L. "Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments", *Journal of Political Economy*, volume 8, 1961, pp.14-25.

agreement on fundamental issues".[302] Smith's methodology "was essentially empirical, deriving its inspiration from Newton and Hume". Smith "believed that ethics and economics could be studied by scientific methods, that their laws were to be discovered by induction from sense data" and, like Hume, "denies the possibility of [synthetic] *a priori* knowledge".[303] While not ever mentioning Smith in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, it seems very likely that Kant would have also criticised Smith's work.

Kant's and Smith's Astronomy

The main criticism one can imagine Kant levelling at Smith's *Astronomy* is that, like Hume, he cannot see the necessity of *a priori* knowledge that allows for the cognition of things like the solar system in the first place. Alternatively stated – as in his criticism of Hume – one can imagine Kant telling Smith that something like astronomy is built on 'pure' principles of physics and insofar as astronomy is an experimental exercise, it needs to find data that matches up with these pure *a priori* laws rather than discover these laws through mere "induction from sense data". For example, a concept such as "in all communication of motion, action and reaction must always be equal to each other", Kant argues, is "thought" both "synthetically and yet *a priori*". It is not induced from habitual experience.[304]

The implication of Kant's argument that the fundamental laws of the natural world are provided *a priori* in our cognition is that he believes the scientific knowledge we develop can be measured against a non-historical criteria of truth. On this basis, because of Kant's conviction that the law of inertia[305] is a necessary part of theoretical cognition, any theory that suggests matter can gain motion by something other than "external relations in space" – for example, the idea that matter has some kind of "essentially internal determining" force – would, Kant argues, lead to "the death of all natural philosophy [science]".[306] To infer that the laws of motion are just what we have come to assume as correct as a matter of

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[302] Bitterman, "Adam Smith's Empiricism: I", p. 490
[303] *Ibid.*, p. 497
[304] *CPR* B18. See also *Natural Science* 4:321.
[305] Which though similar is not the same as Newton's first law.
[306] *Natural Science* AK 4:543-4

habit and thus as something that could cease to be true at any moment would undermine the "legitimacy" of "natural science" because "all *proper* natural science… requires a *pure* part, on which the apodictic certainty that reason seeks therein can be based".[307]

Smith does not argue that motion can be spontaneously generated and in this way is not responsible for trying to bring about the "death" of science. However, because Smith believes scientific practice and the knowledge it creates has no touchstone other than aesthetic edification (including both the sense of utility and the intrinsic beauty of order and parsimony) there is nothing in Smith's history of science which suggests that a theory of physics or astronomy could not emerge in which matter *is capable* of motion without having that force imparted onto it by another object. Indeed if such a theory were to arise and it proved highly useful and parsimonious it would on Smith's account be considered the new 'standard' of natural science. This kind of argument is unacceptable for Kant who believes legitimate scientific knowledge requires an external measure of truth lest we cease having any confidence in scientific practice. Thus, even though Kant may have been pleased when he read Smith argue in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* that mathematicians "have the most perfect assurance, both of the truth and importance of their discoveries", he would have found Smith's view that physicists and astronomers merely "approach" the "security and tranquillity" that mathematicians enjoy[308] entirely unacceptable.

Would Smith have a Real Argument with Kant?

It may be objected at this point that Smith's description of science as an historical practice does not in itself invalidate anything Kant says about science needing a metaphysics to provide a benchmark for truth. Because he takes up some more directly obvious epistemological arguments, it is arguable that Hume is in direct conflict with Kant over the question 'what can we know?' Smith on the other hand does not raise such kinds of epistemological questions. He avoids overtly epistemological arguments and instead merely offers an observational description

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[307] *Natural Science* AK 4:469
[308] *TMS* III.2.20

of how scientific knowledge appears to be formed in the historical process. It is entirely possible, then, that Kant's argument that legitimate science needs to adhere to the *a priori* laws of cognition can be accepted while *at the same time* arguing that in human history what we have actually done is come up with scientific theories which are disastrously wrong (if measured by Kant's metaphysics) and that we may continue to do so without end.

This objection however is besides the point because Kant *himself* steadfastly refuses to entertain the idea that scientific practice without a metaphysic is a "legitimate" science.[309] And, more importantly, insofar as the philosophy of science Smith presents in the *Astronomy* is distinctly and wilfully constructed without a metaphysic, it must be considered as a distinctly lacking description of science from Kant's point of view. This, I shall next demonstrate, is the same criticism Kant applies to Smith's moral philosophy.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Kant's criticism of the British empiricism that influences Smith's historicist philosophy of science makes it difficult to imagine why Kant would have praised Smith for a work like the *Astronomy*. Adding to this the fact that there is no historical evidence that indicates Kant was familiar with the *Astronomy* or its thesis makes it unlikely that it was this essay that caused Kant to tell Herz that Smith was his "favourite". The problem this thesis now faces is that if the interpretation I presented in the previous two chapters is correct and the *Astronomy*'s historicist methodology influences Smith's *Moral Sentiments*, the suggestion I presented in the first chapter that Kant was praising Smith's moral philosophy is undermined for the same reasons I have put forth in this chapter.

In the next and final chapter of this section I explore in more detail how Kant's anti-historicist moral philosophy rejects the historicist description of morality Smith develops in *Moral Sentiments*. Afterwards, having fully elucidated the

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[309] *Natural Science* 4:469-70

fundamental tensions between Kant and Smith's methodologies, I will move onto the second section of this thesis and explore how other scholars have tried to reconcile Kant's anti-historicist critical philosophy with Smith's historicist conception of moral philosophy.

Chapter 6: Kant's Anti-Historicist Theory of Morality

In the previous chapter I argued that Kant's philosophy of science is built on his unique critical philosophy which argues all theories of science need a set of *a priori* rules that constrain the scope of legitimate scientific knowledge. I demonstrated this by showing how Kant criticises Locke and Hume's empiricism for failing to impose limits on the scope of scientific knowledge and providing a foundation on which we can have absolute certainty in the universal validity of scientific laws. I then argued that because Smith follows the basic tenets of Hume's sceptical empiricism it must equally be assumed that Kant would not approve of works like the *History of Astronomy*, an essay wherein science is described as a practice, unrelated from any universal standard of truth.

In this chapter I will argue that Kant is hostile to Smith's historicist moral psychology for the same reasons he would have been hostile to the *Astronomy*. To do this I will first show how Kant objects to grounding a theory of morality in empirical psychology and how this objection is the product of his broader separation of knowledge into 'pure' or 'transcendental' knowledge and knowledge which is empirically conditioned. I will then show how Kant uses his distinction between the transcendental and the empirically conditioned to not only offer a moral philosophy that tries to provide rules about what is right and what is wrong, but also a way to argue for the possibility of an incompatibilist conception of free will. Finally, this chapter will then show how Kant's theory of free will leads him to reject Smith's historicist description of human morality because it cannot offer an account of moral decision-making Kant believes necessary for moral theory to be coherent.

Kant's 'Pure' Moral Theory

In the first *Critique* Kant's primary concern is to develop a *metaphysics* of knowledge rather than what he calls a "physiology"[310] of knowledge. The strategy Kant employs to defend his metaphysics in the first *Critique* is to try to work out what we can know both synthetically and *a priori* to experience and then argue that this kind of knowledge provides the basis for all possible cognition. In this way Kant argues that he has elaborated a kind of first principles of thinking which carries the same certainty that comes with mathematics and geometrical propositions and thus puts to rest any scepticism we may have about what we know. This strategy of working out the first principles of cognition itself is also the same strategy Kant employs to develop and defend his moral philosophy albeit with one important difference.

In the first *Critique* theoretical[311] cognition is limited by the concepts[312] that make experience possible. Hence questions about objects that violate the concepts that make experience possible – such as questions about gods, the soul, and freedom (from causality) – are invalid questions[313] and any knowledge we have about these objects from a theoretical perspective cannot be justified.[314] For example, if we were to talk about freedom from causality, it would be necessary to disregard one of the most important concepts of understanding that makes experience possible. As I argued in the last chapter, in Kant's philosophy of mind causality is an organising principle (concept) we apply to our sense data in order to make it comprehensible.[315] Without it (or rather, by contradicting it) "experience would not even be cognition, but would be a rhapsody of perceptions".[316] As soon as we

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[310] Kant's broad term to describe the kind of empirical philosophy of the mind Locke and Hume developed. See *CPR* A347/B405, A381.
[311] In Kant's own words "theoretical cognition is [a form of cognition] whereby I cognise *what is*, and practical cognition as one whereby I conceive *what ought to be*. Accordingly, the theoretical use of reason is the use whereby I cognise *a priori* (as necessary) that something is; and the practical use is the use whereby one cognises *a priori* what ought to occur" (*CPR* A633/B661).
[312] That is, the categories of understanding and the form of pure intuitions, which includes things like causality and space and time.
[313] *CPR* Bxxx
[314] *CPR* A90, A580/B608 – A642/B670
[315] See Kant's preliminary discussion at the beginning of the The Antinomy of Pure Reason where he argues that "speculative *knowledge* proper cannot concern any object at all other than an object of experience; and if we step beyond the boundary of experience, then the synthesis seeking cognitions that are new and independent of experience has no substratum of intuition on which it could be performed" but importantly also notes that this cannot be "dogmatically" taken to rule out "practical" or moral knowledge that also wants to transgress the limits of experience (*CPR* A471/B499).
[316] *CPR* A156/B195

talk about objects that ignore this organising principle we are no longer talking about objects of which we can have justified beliefs about because they "transcend"[317] the boundaries of experience. Practical (or 'moral') cognition on the other hand is not constrained by the same concepts that theoretical cognition needs *a priori* in order to make experience possible. Practical cognition makes use of a whole range of concepts that are "transcendent" (not *transcendental*) when used in theoretical cognition.[318] Yet when these concepts are used by practical cognition they are not only *not* transcendent but are in fact *a priori* and *necessary* for practical cognition to be possible. The most important of these concepts which are *transcendent* for theoretical cognition but which are *transcendental* (that is both *a priori* and necessary) for practical cognition is the concept of a will that has a "spontaneous"[319] power of causality, that is, a free will.

The Importance of Freedom in Kant's Moral Philosophy

According to Kant, moral philosophy seeks to discover the *a priori* laws which shape our answer to the question "*what ought I do?*" in the same way theoretical philosophy seeks to discover the *a priori* laws which shape our answer to the question "*what can I know?*"[320] The answer to this question "what ought I do?" does not need to be constrained by the concept of causality in the same way the answer to the question "what can I know?" does. [321] For example, when studying human volition from a theoretical perspective we must always assume that human beings are, at their bottom, driven by something like Dalton's atoms or Aristotle's *anima*. However, when we study human volition from a moral perspective we do not need to consider whether human beings are causally determined in the same way all other objects of experience are. Instead, in order to even ask the question

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[317] Kant's technical term for objects which we cannot justifiably cognise. See *CPR* A295-6/B351 where Kant states "let us call the principles whose application keeps altogether within the limits of possible experience *immanent principles*, and those that are to fly beyond these limits *transcendent principles*. But by transcendent principles I do not mean the *transcendental* use of misuse of the categories…Rather, I mean by them actual principles requiring us to tear down all those boundary posts and to claim an entirely new territory that recognises no demarcation at all".

[318] For example, Kant argues that "The ideas of *God* and *immorality*…are…conditions of the necessary object of a will determined by…[the moral] law" (*CPrR* AK 5:4). In other words Kant believes we need to be able to cognise an afterlife to understand moral decision making. For more on this argument see *CPrR* AK 5:122-32.

[319] CPR A488/B516

[320] *CPR* A805/B833

[321] *CPrR* AK 5:45-6

"what ought I do?" we must assume *a priori* that the moral agent in question has a power or ability to both ask and respond this question without the influence of physics, biology, or supernatural souls and spirits. [322] This transcendentally necessary power or ability to make moral decisions Kant calls "autonomy" or the "freedom of will". [323]

Free will is not something that can ever be inferred from theoretical cognition. It is for Kant quite impossible to ever prove the existence of free will through the methods of natural science or from any kind of induction from experience. The "concept of freedom" of the will – the power to "cause events spontaneously"[324] in an otherwise determined world – is a "pure rational concept". [325] This means "it is a concept such that no instance corresponding to it can be given in any possible experience, and of an object of which we cannot obtain any theoretical cognition". [326] However when used by practical reason this concept of a free will is transcendentally necessary in much the same way a concept of an all encompassing causality is for theoretical philosophy. Or as Kant states in full in the second *Critique*,

whatever needs to draw the evidence for its reality from experience must be dependent on the grounds of its possibility upon principles of experience, whereas pure but practical reason, by its very concept, cannot possibly be held to be dependent in this way. Moreover the moral law is given, as it is were, *as a fact of pure reason of which we are a priori conscious and which is apodictically certain* [emphasis added], though it be granted that no example of exact observance of it can be found in experience. Hence the objective reality of the moral law cannot be proved by any deduction [as Kant believes the categories of theoretical cognition can], by any efforts of theoretical reason, speculative or empirically supported, so that, even if one were willing to renounce its apodictic certainty, it could not be confirmed by experience and thus proved a posteriori; and it is nevertheless firmly established itself. [327]

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[322] See *Groundwork* 4:450-3 for the complete form of this argument. In this thesis I have used the phrase "perspective" instead of Kant's distinction of "intelligibility" and "unintelligibly" to make his argument clearer.
[323] *Groundwork* 4:450
[324] *CPR* A489/517
[325] *MM* AK 6:221
[326] *MM* AK 6:221
[327] *CPrR* 5:47

According to Kant, to talk about morality as if we have no real choice in what we do – to accept that human beings are entirely caught up in causal relationships like every other object of experience – is to not talk about morality, but merely describe "animal" behaviour where any discussion of "choice" is nothing more than a metaphor for what is *pathologically necessitated*.[328] Thus at the very core of Kant's moral philosophy is not merely an argument with Smith over what psychological mechanisms compel our behaviour but a total rejection of the idea that moral questions and theoretical questions are indistinguishable from each other and, subsequently, a rejection of any kind of moral philosophy that does not begin with the assumption that all moral questions can only be raised and answered by a moral agent who has a complete spontaneous power of causality to act according to its own reason and not merely act as a consequence of an infinite series of antecedent causes.

Because freedom of the will is necessary for moral decision-making Kant explicitly equates the two:

[t]he moral law is, in fact, a law of causality through freedom and hence a law of the possibility of a supersensible nature, just as the metaphysical law of events in the sensible world was a law of the causality of sensible nature.[329]

However Kant's argument that moral philosophy hinges on something altogether undiscoverable in experience does not mean Kant rejects Smith's suggestion that human beings and their decisions are objects of the phenomenal world determined by all sorts of psychological and social influences. Kant concedes for example that the practice of morality "still require[s] a judgement sharpened by experience" to make the decision of our will "effective *in concreto*".[330] Nevertheless Kant believes that, separate from the question of *moral practice*, there are 'true' principles of morality that can be explained without any necessary reference to experience and that these principles should tell us how moral rules would determine a *pure will*. This pure will is purely rational and formal, devoid of empirical content, and thus not subject to the laws the theoretical use of reason

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[328] *CPR* A534/B562
[329] *CPrR* 5:47
[330] *Groundwork* AK 4:389

needs to make cognition possible (like natural causality). Thus the principles which determine this pure and free will

must not be sought in the nature of the human being or in the circumstances of the world which [we are] placed, but *a priori* simply in concepts of pure reason; and that any other precept which is based on principles of mere experience – even if it is universal in a certain respect [like Smith's concept of human nature[331]] – insofar as it rests in the least part on empirical grounds, perhaps only in terms of a motive, can indeed be called a practical rule but never a moral law.[332]

Consequently, Kant believes it is "of the utmost necessity to work out for once a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything that may be only empirical".[333] The study of moral decision-making "must be independent of conditions that are pathological".[334] Moral philosophy needs to study how the will is determined "without any empirical motives".[335] According to Kant, we must not mistake the study of morals with the study of "the actions and conditions of human volition generally, which for the most part are drawn from psychology".[336] Any "practical precept that brings with it a material (hence empirical) condition must never be reckoned a practical law".[337] Moral philosophy "refers only to the will without regard to what is attained by its causality" and thus it must consider the will as "pure" will.[338] If we do derive our moral principles from "an implanted sense or who knows what tutelary nature whispers to" us, morality will still be based on something "in heaven or on earth" and thus rest on "contingent grounds"

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[331] Even though Smith does appear to adopt some quasi-metaphysical concepts like a concept of fixed human nature, this concept does not satisfy Kant. This does not satisfy Kant because Smith's concept of human nature is still a theoretical concept – a concept about something that can be observed or inferred from experience (even if it has religious roots). At the end of his *Groundwork* Kant argues that moral principles "derived from the special natural constitution of humanity" – that is "what is derived from certain feelings and propensities and even, if possible, from a special tendency that would be peculiar to human reason…would not have to hold necessarily for the will of every rational being" and thus are "not…objective principles on which we would be *directed* to act even though every propensity, inclination and natural tendency of ours were against it" (*Groundwork* 4:425). Not even the small concession Smith makes to metaphysics by arguing for the existence of a special human nature is enough to convince Kant that the kind of philosophy he is doing constitutes a philosophy of morality.
[332] *Groundwork* AK 4:389
[333] *Groundwork* AK 4:389
[334] *CPrR* AK 5:20
[335] *Groundwork* AK 4:390
[336] *Groundwork* AK 4:390-1
[337] *CPrR* AK 5:35
[338] *CPrR* AK 5:21

and, consequently, must also rest on grounds that rule out the possibility of a freedom of will.[339]

The Dangers of 'Impure' Moral Philosophy

Kant's primary argument with moral philosophy like Smith's is that it does not make a distinction between a moral or practical perspective and a theoretical perspective. As such, this is an epistemological dispute. Sometimes however Kant goes further. More than an epistemological dispute, Kant at times is so hostile to theories of morality that draw on experience that he even argues any confusion between practical questions about what a pure will would do and theoretical questions about what kind psychology guides our human decision-making is potentially dangerous to our moral development. Theories of morality that justify themselves by reference to specific patterns of human behaviour, psychology, biology, physics, or Mum's or God's commandments (all of which are forms of knowledge that can only be acquired in theoretical cognition) are not only *not* sources of moral knowledge but are also "highly prejudicial to the purity of morals".[340] The "inept" use of anything "empirical" to determine "the principle of morality" is so dangerous that

one cannot give too many or too frequent warnings against this laxity or even mean cast of mind, which seeks its principles among empirical motives and laws; for, human reason in its weariness gladly rests on this pillow and in a dream of sweet illusions (which allow it to embrace a cloud instead of Juno) it substitutes for morality a bastard patched up from limbs of quite diverse ancestry, which looks like whatever one wants to see in it.[341]

Kant gives us a similar exhortation in the second *Critique* when he tells us that any "determining grounds of the will" which are "empirical"

must without exception be separated from the supreme moral principle and never be incorporated with it as a condition, since this would destroy all moral worth just as any empirical admixture to geometrical principles would destroy all mathematical evidence.[342]

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[339] *Groundwork* AK 4:426
[340] *Groundwork* AK 4:425
[341] *Groundwork* AK 4:426
[342] *CPrR* AK 5:93

And again in the *Groundwork to a Future Metaphysics of Morals* where he says

[t]hat which mixes… pure principles with empirical ones does not even deserve the name of philosophy… much less does it deserve the name of a moral philosophy, since by the very mixture it even infringes upon the purity of morals themselves and proceeds contrary to its own end.[343]

In fact, Kant is so concerned about keeping moral philosophy a study of what a pure will would do that he even suggests moral schemas built on the contingency of experience can lead to the propagation of some kind of "evil":

a mixed doctrine of morals, put together from incentives of feeling and inclination and also of rational concepts, must make the mind waver between motives that cannot be brought under any principle…[this] can lead only contingently to what is good and can very often lead to what is evil.[344]

Although when in a less vitriolic mood, Kant appears happy just to equate empirical moral philosophy with bad wine:

[j]ust as a person cannot relish pure wine, if it is mixed with other drinks, so also in morality all other obstacles must be removed if its purity is to be discerned.[345]

Kant's "Hatred of Matter"

Because Kant wants to defend the thesis that questions about 'what ought I do?' are epistemically different from questions about 'what can I know?' he punctuates his works with incessant reminders that moral philosophy must not draw on what we experience and observe to answer moral questions. Thus while Kant does not outright reject the kind of project Smith was engaged in, he believes it is disingenuous to call the study of human psychology 'moral philosophy'[346] and has

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[343] *Groundwork* AK 4:390
[344] *Groundwork* AK 4:411 – c.f. *CPrR* AK 5:21-26, *Collins Morality* AK 27: 253-255, 276, and *Vigilantius Morality* AK 27:480
[345] *Collins Morality* AK 27:303
[346] Kant believes it is disingenuous to call the study of the human will through psychology 'morality' because he believes morality requires agents who are capable of making a choice in how their 'will' or 'practical power of reason' is determined. To be precise, Kant proposes that there are two things which can determine our will or practical reason: the power of reason or the inclinations given to us through

considerable reservations about the harm caused by the conflation of psychology with moral philosophy.

That moral philosophy must be built upon theory wholly independent of anything that can be derived from experience lead his contemporary and critic Georg Hamaan to describe Kant's intellectual legacy as one marked by a "gnostic love of form" and a "mystical hatred of matter". [347] Kant's criticism of empirically justified moral theory is not however simply a product of his "hatred of matter". Neither are Kant's objections to brands of moral philosophy that treat morality as an object of study that falls within the bounds of theoretical cognition simply epistemological quibbles about the possibility of moral knowledge. Nor for that matter does Kant want to cleanse moral philosophy of anything empirical simply because he believes that wholly abstract and rational rules provide a more accurate description of what the good is.[348] As argued above, fundamental to Kant's moral philosophy is a desire to defend a radical incompatibilist[349] account of freedom of the will. By making freedom of will the core of his moral philosophy Kant aimed to avoid making a farce of what Isaac Newton had so painfully sought to explain and which Kant eulogised:[350] the fundamental laws of natural science.

The problem Kant faced after his first *Critique* was the recognition that "experience lets us cognise only the law of appearances and hence the mechanism of nature, the direct opposite of freedom". [351] In order to develop a moral philosophy that would not depend on revising the laws of nature, Kant ultimately

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psychology. Though it may sound someone paradoxical, a purely rational being – like God (*CPrR* AK 5:32) – can only act according to reason. Likewise animals, insofar as they lack a power of reason, can act only according to inclination. Human beings on the other hand have a *choice* to have their will determined by one or the other and in this sense morality is neither animal nor divine, but a wholly human affair (*Groundwork* AK 4:412-3).

[347] Harmaan, J.G., (ed. Majetschak S.) *Vom Magus im Norden und der Verwegenheit des Geistes: Ein Hamann-Brevier*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1998 cited in Louden R., *Kant's Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.4

[348] As Kant tells us in the *Groundwork*, the good is not found in virtue or outcomes, but only in a will being determined by reason itself (*Groundwork* AK 4:426).

[349] Here I follow Simon Shengjian Xie's ("What is Kant: A Compatibilist Or An Incompatibilist? A New Interpretation of Kant's Solution to the Free Will Problem", *Kant-Studien*, volume 100, issue 1, 2009, pp. 53-76) reading of Kant's theory of freedom is a theory best described as 'incompatibilism' even though neither this term nor 'compatibilism' completely grasp Kant's position.

[350] Indeed in his earlier years Kant even suggests "The true method of metaphysics is basically the same as that introduced by Newton into natural science" (*Inquiry* AK 2:286). See also *Living Forces* AK 1:7; *Rotation of the Earth* AK 1:186; *Theory of the Heavens* AK 1:230.

[351] *CPrR* AK 5:29

tries to convince us that reason gives rational beings the ability to cognise their existence in two epistemologically (or on some accounts, ontologically[352]) distinct states, each subject to their own unique laws. A human being, whose will can be determined by both reason and psychological and physiological incentives,[353] must not think of itself as a being that is described completely through experience. Instead a human being must also

regard himself *as intelligence* (hence not from the side of his lower powers) as [sic] belonging not to the world of sense but to the world of understanding; hence he has two standpoints from which he can regard himself and cognise laws for the use of his powers and consequently for all his actions; *first*, insofar as he belongs to the world of sense, under laws of nature (heteronomy); *second*, as belonging to the intelligible world, under laws which, being independent of nature, are not empirical but grounded merely in reason.[354]

It is this line of argument that ultimately culminates in Kant arguing for 'the categorical imperative'; the only possible response our pure practical reason can give us when we ask ourselves 'what ought I do?'

Kant's Categorical Imperative

Kant's dualistic vision of human beings caught between two epistemological viewpoints leads to him to put forth the categorical imperative as the capstone of his moral theory. The most popular formulation of this imperative is "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it

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[352] Henry Allison calls the epistemological states "epistemic conditions" (See Allison H., "Transcendental Idealism: The 'Two Aspect' View" in Ouden B. & Moen M. (eds.), *New Essays on Kant*, New York: P. Lang, 1987, pp. 156-160). Paul Guyer, among others, rejects the argument that Kant is only making an epistemological distinction and argues that Kant postulates the existence of two ontologically distinct states (see Guyer P., *Kant*, New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 67-70 and Guyer P., *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 20-24). See also Ameriks K., "Kantian Idealism Today", *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, volume 9, number 3, 1992, pp. 329-342 and Robinson H., "Two Perspectives on Kant's Appearance and Things in Themselves", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, volume 32, number 3, 1994, pp. 411-41 both of whom offer their own interesting solutions to the problem of how things-in-themselves are related to cognition in Kant's critical philosophy. Whether or not Kant subscribes to a 'two object' or 'two aspect' view of the world, the central point remains that the kind of moral philosophy Smith was engaged in does not consider morality a distinct epistemic condition nor an object ontologically distinct from 'nature'.
[353] *CPR* A548/B576 – A552/B580
[354] *Groundwork* AK 4:452

will become a universal law".[355] The initial temptation is to assume that this is just some kind of rephrasing of the so-called 'Golden Rule'. This assumption is justified for both the Golden Rule and Kant's categorical imperative depend upon the law of non-contradiction. However, Kant's categorical imperative goes further. It rests not merely on logical non-contradiction but on the non-contradiction of *possibility*.[356] In other words, the categorical imperative is not simply a rule about logical contradiction, it is rule about how moral cognition must take place if it is to remain coherent. The categorical imperative, like Kant's theory of practical and theoretical reason, deals with a *model* of the mind rather than any *particular* brain or brains (which would be an empirical rather than transcendental investigation). Kant's categorical imperative does not make *psychological* assessments of 'I would not want this done to me', as is the case with the Golden Rule or the judgement of Smith's imagined internal spectator. Rather Kant's categorical imperative is concerned with being rationally coherent from the perspective of pure practical reason and not, like the Golden Rule, coherent in terms of whether or not our actions are hypocritical. Kant's categorical imperative asks only what a purely rational will would do in any given situation. Insofar as a will is purely rational, the categorical imperative tells us what is *possible* and *impossible* for it to will in the same way the categories of understanding determine what is *possible* and *impossible* for us to cognise from experience. This means Kant's argument for the categorical imperative is thus also a *transcendental argument* – the "categorical imperative or law of morality…is an *a priori* synthetic proposition"[357] – not an appeal to any kind of moral intuition. To help explain this I will look at the question Kant himself most famously focused on. This is the question of whether it is moral to lie.

Lying and the Categorical Imperative

The *Groundwork to a Future Metaphysics of Morals* contains Kant's classic exposition of lying. Kant admits that when we are "hard pressed" we may be tempted to "make a promise with the intention not to keep it". It "can undoubtedly

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[355] *Groundwork* AK 4:421
[356] *Groundwork* AK 4:420
[357] *Groundwork* AK 4:420

often be the case" that making a promise you cannot keep may be "prudent".[358] However making this false promise is always immoral because it fails the possibility test mentioned above. Kant asks

would I indeed be content that my maxim (to get myself out of difficulties by a false promise) should hold as a universal law (for myself as well as for others)? And could I indeed say to myself that everyone may make a false promise when he finds himself in a difficulty he can get out of in no other way?...I [would] soon become aware that I could indeed will the lie, but by no means a universal law to lie; for in accordance with such a law there would properly be no promises at all, since it would be futile to avow my will with regards to my future actions to others who would not believe this avowal…thus my maxim, as soon as it were made a universal law, would have to destroy it.[359]

As I just argued, care must be taken here not to misinterpret this statement as Kant offering a Golden Rule-like exhortation to not be hypocritical. The question the moral agent asks themselves is not whether "could I indeed will the lie?" but rather whether lying would make sense as a "universal law" – that is whether or not a purely rational will could will the lie. Thus Kant argues that it may be prudent for us to lie to someone so they or both of us feel better. And similarly, it should be said that it may also be prudent for us to tell the truth. However both of these acts of prudence, *qua* acts of prudence, depend on a psychological assessment,[360] not the validity of a transcendental law like the categorical imperative. By lying (or truth-telling) to make ourselves or others happy, to maintain social harmony, and so forth, we are not making a *moral* decision but rather are making a psychological or prudential calculation about an outcome of feelings. That we have avoided asking a question about the possibility of moral cognition (that is, whether moral cognition could be coherent if we were to adopt a certain course of action) signals that we are not dealing with *a priori* knowledge, and thus, by Kant's definition, that we are also not dealing with moral knowledge as he has defined it.

The contrast between Kant's anti-historicist conception of morality as something knowable through the study of moral cognition and theories of morality like

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[358] *Groundwork* AK 4:402-3
[359] *Groundwork* AK 4:403
[360] *CPR* A800/B828

Smith's that seek to explain morality in terms of psychology or rational calculation, can also be seen in Benjamin Constant's critique of Kant's moral philosophy and Kant's response to that critique.

Benjamin Constant's Criticism of the Categorical Imperative

Because Kant's categorical imperative ultimately rests on an epistemological argument rather than a question of 'moral intuition' he was led to advocate behaviour that appeared to his contemporaries not just illogical, but also *immoral*. This was particularly true for Henri-Benjamin Constant de Rebeque. In 1797 Constant accused Kant of creating a moral philosophy that was so divorced from our human concerns and social lives that if we were all to act as the categorical imperative commands we would bring about the destruction of society. Kant's insistence that the categorical imperative makes it a duty to never lie would, according to Constant, "if taken unconditionally and singly, make any society impossible".[361] As evidence for this suggestion Constant describes what is now known as the problem of the 'Inquiring Murderer'.[362] Constant argues that one outcome of adhering to the imperative to never lie is that we may eventually be compelled to commit heinous acts like willingly assisting the murder of innocents in order to keep on acting in a way Kant would call 'moral'. In his own words, Constant argues that for Kant "it would be a crime to lie to a murderer who asked us whether a friend of ours whom he is pursuing has taken refuge in our house".[363]

Kant offers two replies to this objection. Kant's first reply is extraordinary yet predictable. Kant defends his position by affirming Constant's suggestion that following the categorical imperative does indeed mean we should assist a murderer when he is trying to find his victim by only speaking truthfully with him. Kant maintains that according to the categorical imperative, under no circumstances is it morality justifiable to lie: "[t]o be *truthful* (honest) in all declarations… [is] a sacred command of reason prescrib[ed] unconditionally, one

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[361] *Right to Lie* AK 8:425
[362] See McCarty R., "The Right to Lie: Kantian Ethics and the Inquiring Murderer", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, volume 49, number 4, 2012, pp. 331-343.
[363] *Right to Lie* AK 8:425

not to be restricted by any conveniences".[364] Because of responses like this it is easy to see why Kant's moral absolutism is generally unpalatable for most people. Few would find the suggestion that knowingly helping someone avoid being murdered is a mere 'inconvenience'. However, one thing is clear: Kant was remarkably consistent, following his arguments to their logical conclusions.[365]

Kant's second reply is a defence based on his theoretical belief that all phenomenal events are determined thus reducing any responsibility for the *consequences* that may occur from being moral (from acting on maxims that conform to the categorical imperative). [366] After acknowledging that it is indeed moral not to lie to the murderer Kant adds

[i]t is still possible that, after you have honestly answered "yes" to the murderer's question as to whether his enemy is at home, the latter has nevertheless gone out unnoticed, so that he would not meet the murderer and the deed would not be done.[367]

Kant is able to make these arguments in good faith because of his theoretical conviction that the world of experience is determined by the laws of scientific causality. Whether someone is stabbed to death by a murderer or whether a tree falls on and fatally wounds them, from a theoretical point of view, both these occurrences are a part of the same process. Both these events are the result of innumerable antecedent causes over which we have no control and thus, in some sense, relieving some of the moral duty we have to lie in order to protect life. Or again in Kant's own words: "in telling the truth [the truth-teller] does not, strictly speaking, *do* the harm to the one who suffers by it; instead, an accident *causes* the harm".[368]

If Kant had answered Constant's criticism by arguing that there is some exception to the moral law based on particular contingencies he would not just be conceding

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[364] *Right to Lie* AK 8:427
[365] A virtue he himself explicitly prizes. Kant laments, "*[c]onsistency* is the great obligation of a philosopher and yet the most rarely found" (C*PrR* AK 5:24, see also *Herder Morality* AK 27:3).
[366] This caution about "not knowing what will happen" was already mentioned in the *Groundwork* (AK 4:402).
[367] *Right to Lie* AK 8:427
[368] *Right to Lie* AK 8:428

the absolute nature of the categorical law but undermining his entire philosophical edifice. On one hand, if the categorical imperative were no longer categorical it would cease to function as a law for the pure practical use of reason and would no longer be a description of the transcendental law that moral cognition needs to make coherent statements in reply to the question 'what should I do?' On the other hand, if Kant accepts Constant's argument that the truth-teller in this scenario has moral responsibility for the outcome of their truth-telling, he would be introducing a strictly moral concept (the idea that there is a spontaneous power to act in a way that is not determined by antecedent causes) into a scenario that must be explained theoretically. This may sound convoluted, and it is. So much so that in order to maintain this dualist perspective Kant is even forced to argue that our moral behaviour is hidden from us because we are not able to determine whether or not our actions are driven by a respect for duty or from a psychological or pathological motive.[369] For the purposes of this thesis however, we do not need to try and untangle this problem. The crucial point here is to demonstrate how extremely different Kant's conception of moral philosophy is from Smith's, not the internal consistency of Kant's argument.

Kant's Criticism of Historicist Moral Philosophy

The problem for those of us who want to find out what in Smith's work Kant could have adopted into his own philosophical system is that Kant unconditionally dismisses people who would like to explain morality empirically – whether that be through psychological observation, neuroscience,[370] or Frans de Waal's study of morality through analogy to primate behaviour.[371] The reason Kant dismisses people who would like to adumbrate a system of morality through empirical inference is rooted in the same concerns he has about people who want to empirically deduce the structure of theoretical cognition from experience. Kant

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[369] For Kant's extensive treatment on this issue see *Groundwork* AK 4:459-462.

[370] Including the kind of contemporary neuroscience that tries to explain morality exemplified by people like Greene J.D., et. al., "The Neural Bases of Cognitive Conflict and Control in Moral Judgment", Neuron, volume 44, 2004, pp. 389-400 and Haidt J., "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment", Psychological Review, volume 108, number 4, 2001, pp. 814-834.

[371] Flack J.C. & de Waal F.B.M., "'Any animal whatever'. Darwinian building blocks of morality in monkeys and apes", *Journal of Consciousness*, volume 7, number 1-2, 2000, pp. 1-29.

believes that moral knowledge is only legitimate if it is backed up by necessary *a priori* laws that segregate a transcendentally pure moral law from what Kant calls the "doctrine of happiness";[372] a doctrine that studies "the actions and conditions of human volition" which is "for the most part drawn from psychology".[373]

Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is paradigmatic of a moral philosophy that provides us with a doctrine of happiness drawn from psychology. To say that Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is a doctrine of happiness does not necessarily mean that Smith's moral philosophy is utilitarian[374] or promotes some kind of Epicureanism. Rather, it is to say that it is a non-transcendental theoretical (as opposed to practical or moral) account of human behaviour. In Smith's non-transcendental, naturalistic, and historicist account of human behaviour Kant believes that it is trivially true that human beings will seek only "happiness"; it is "unavoidable for human nature to wish for and seek happiness".[375] The 'moral choices' which arise for human beings when considered from their theoretical perspective are only choices about how to achieve one's goals. These choices are not questions about unconditional duties to abstract laws. Thus Kant calls these kinds of empirical accounts of human behaviour descriptions of the "animal power of choice (*arbitirum brutum*)". Unlike the study of a pure practical will, the study of this "animal power of choice" is the study of what is *mechanically* necessary.[376] As such, any philosophy describing this behaviour is only describing what is necessary in the same way a chemist may explain molecular bonding.

By deciding to talk about what is mechanically necessary rather than what is transcendentally necessary Smith's moral philosophy is strictly and inherently concerned with the contingencies of experience. This is the complete antithesis of Kant's description of moral philosophy as a science that does not care what happens in our Newtonian universe and as a science that only seeks to determine

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[372] *CPrR* AK 5:130
[373] *Groundwork* AK 4:390-1
[374] Though that certainly has been argued. See for example Witztum A. & Young J.T., "Utilitarianism and the role of utility in Adam Smith", *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, volume 20, issue 4, 2013, pp. 572-602 and Hollander S., "Ethical Utilitarianism and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: Adam Smith in Relation to Hume and Bentham", *Eastern Economic Journal*, volume 42, issue 4, 2016, pp. 557-80.
[375] *MM* AK 6:386
[376] *CPR* A534/B562

how a pure practical reason must necessarily answer questions about what it ought to do. To rephrase, in response to Hume's guillotine (the idea that you cannot derive an 'ought' from an 'is') Smith bites the bullet and naturalises and historicises morality as a behavioural and social practice. As Pack and Schliesser argue, Smith in effect "out Humes" Hume by taking his "proto-evolutionary explanations of social phenomena" and restating them entirely "in terms of [the] psychological and material causes that act on individuals" to eliminate Hume's lingering dependence on "rationalistic accounts" of these phenomena.[377] Kant on the other hand also accepts Hume's guillotine but instead of naturalising and historicising moral philosophy proceeds to elaborate a normative moral philosophy built on the new epistemological cleavage Hume had allowed him to open up in the first *Critique*. Thus Kant, in agreement with Hume, also acknowledges that the pursuit of happiness cannot provide us with 'oughts' beyond conditional statements about goal acquisition.[378] However, unlike Smith, Kant's response to this realisation is to try and rehabilitate metaphysics as epistemology so that it becomes possible to speak of a free will (and thus moral choices) without having to worry about how this will interacts with the world of experience.

Kant's Imperatives

Another way to understand the different ways Kant and Smith react to Hume's challenge is to note the way Kant divides up different types of imperatives. According to Kant's theoretical framework the strongest normative argument Hume and Smith's moral theories can make, by virtue of their deflation of reason into something analogous to instrumental self-interest, is to argue something along the lines of "if P wants X, then act like T". These kinds of statements are what Kant calls "hypothetical imperatives". These are imperatives that

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[377] Pack S.J. & Schliesser E., "Smith's Humean Criticism of Hume's Account of the Origin Justice", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, volume 44, number 1, 2006, p. 47
[378] *Groundwork* AK 4:450-2

say only that the action is good for some *possible* or *actual* purpose. In the first case it is a *problematically* practical principle, in the second an *assertorically* practical principle.[379]

These imperatives can be contrasted with categorical imperatives which

declare an action to be itself objectively necessary without reference to some purpose, that is, even apart from any other end, [and] holds as an *apodictically* practical principle.[380]

Hypothetical imperatives for Kant are morally uninteresting. They are morally uninteresting because they only describe banal facts about life within theoretically cognised experience and as such do not tell us anything about how we use our "autonomy of pure practical reason, that is, [our] freedom".[381] Thus Kant argues that "pure reason" and hence the moral law have "no regard for any empirical ends (all of which are comprehended under the general name happiness)".[382]

How Kan May Have Criticised Smith

As an empirical description of human behaviour Smith's moral theory is not, from Kant's point of view, necessarily incorrect. However, insofar as Smith's moral theory avoids talking about human beings "as intelligence" (as beings from a moral point of view) it also avoids talking about how a free will must respond to moral dilemmas. This is important because a theory of freedom of the will is, in Kant's view, indispensable to any 'true' or 'correct' moral theory. As Kant puts it,

[a]s a rational being, and thus a being belonging to the intelligible world, the human being can never think of the causality of his own will otherwise than under the idea of freedom; for, independence from the determining causes of the world of sense (which reason must always ascribe to itself) is freedom. With the idea of freedom the concept of *autonomy* is now inseparably combined, and with the concept of autonomy the universal principle of morality, which in idea is the ground of all actions of *rational beings*, just as the law of nature is the ground of all appearances…. We now see that when we think of ourselves as free we transfer ourselves into the world of

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[379] *Groundwork* AK 4:414
[380] *Groundwork* AK 4:414-5
[381] *CPrR* AK 5:33
[382] *Theory & Practice* AK 8:290

understanding as members of it and cognise autonomy of the will along with its consequence, morality.[383]

If we do not try to read explicitly normative statements into Smith and accept with Thomas Campbell[384] that Smith is only trying to explain human behaviour, we have no further reason to believe Smith is doing anything called 'moral philosophy' as defined by Kant. If there is no reason to believe there is any discussion at all of pure practical reason in Smith then his discussion of the human species in *Moral Sentiments* is – according to Kant's division of knowledge into the theoretical and the practical – only the study of the human will insofar as it is "under the laws of nature"[385] and Smith's description of the impartial spectator which we can use to judge the propriety of behaviour is, at its bottom, merely a description of the human animal as it operates under the laws of natural causality.

What this means for Kant is that morality in Smith's account lacks a distinct notion that we are ever making choices regardless of what our spectator tells us, regardless of social environment, or regardless of our historical contingency. Kant wants to offer us a theory of morality along the lines of what Sartre gave us. In this theory, moral action requires us to be able to make decisions that are more than the outcome of predetermined series of psychological, neural, chemical, physiological and environmental states. If a moral philosophy is only describing an historically determined process the phrase 'moral' itself becomes redundant – or in Sartre's case, talking about morals becomes an act of '*mauvaise foi*' or 'bad faith'[386] – and is easily replaced (as Smith does) with a phrase like "propriety".[387] And to talk about morality as "propriety" (that is, to talk about morality as the process where by we try to avoid being shamed, embarrassed, or outcast thus increasing our happiness) is, from Kant's point of view, to talk about something that describes the "direct opposite of freedom".[388]

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[383] *Groundwork* AK 4:453
[384] Campbell T.D., *Adam Smith's Science of Morals*, New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 61-2
[385] *Groundwork* AK 4:459
[386] Interestingly Stephen Darwall has argued that Smith, Kant and Sartre all share in common a moral philosophy which is concerned with the question of self-deception ("Self-Deception, Autonomy, and Moral Constitution" in McLaughlin B.P. (ed.), *Perspectives of Self-Deception*, London: University of California Press, 1988, p. 410, n. 13).
[387] As I will show in later chapters, this philosophy of prudence does in fact have a special place in Kant's philosophy system, though it is outside of his transcendental philosophy.
[388] *CPrR* AK 5:29

In sum, Kant does not directly criticise Smith or his moral philosophy. In fact, as it was argued in the first chapter, Kant appears only to praise Smith. However if what I have argued above is correct Kant does offer an indirect criticism of Smith for continuing down the same path taken by Hume when he tries to ground morality entirely within what Kant would call a theoretical perspective. To be sure, insofar as Kant discusses human behaviour from the theoretical perspective he demarcates in the first *Critique*, he has much in common with Hume and Smith. Moreover, when Kant considers what determines a will when it is treated as an object of experience he follows Hume and Smith arguing that all "material practical principles" (that this, principles which determine our will) are "without exception, of one and the same kind and come under the general principle of self-love or one's own happiness".[389] However, where Kant diverges from Hume and thus Smith is in his consideration of whether these behaviours are something we should call 'morality'.

The most evident point of departure between the approach taken by Kant as against that of Hume – and by extension Smith – arises in relation to his very particular conception of the character of morality. Kant argues that 'happiness'[390] is irrelevant to the moral worth of actions.[391] He argues that any moral theory which describes how we achieve our instrumental goals ignores the possibility that we can consider ourselves from another epistemological point of view (that of a free acting will). He also argues that while it is not demonstrable that we have a free will, it is just as important for moral cognition as the forms of space and time and the concept of causality are for theoretical cognition. Under these criteria Kant would dismiss Smith's moral theory because it is a theory that only describes how we go about trying to achieve our instrumental goals and because it is a theory that only considers the human subjects from a theoretical perspective. It does not assume people possess what Kant calls "moral autonomy" or freedom. As such, it may even be imagined that Kant saw Smith's *Moral Sentiments* as

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[389] *CPrR* AK 5:22
[390] Understood in the broadest sense of achieving that which interest us.
[391] *Groundwork* AK 4:397-8, 401

helping to spread "all sorts of corruption" [392] into moral philosophy as he does other strictly empirical moral theories.

Conclusion

Over the preceding chapters I have argued that despite biographical information which suggests Kant was at the very least interested in Smith's work, there is little room within Kant's critical philosophy for a philosophy that is as naturalistic, historicist, and anti-metaphysical as Smith's. I have argued that Smith conceptualises both science and morality as evolutionary social processes that tend towards spontaneously beneficial outcomes and that the closest Smith comes to dabbling in metaphysics is his teleological reading of progress in science and morality and his pre-Darwinian conception of human nature as a fixed natural object. Kant, on the other hand, develops an extensive epistemology which he uses to argue for not just the universality of scientific laws but also moral laws. The net result of this is that Kant indirectly denies that anything Smith does can be called 'moral philosophy and, worse still, even implies that attempting to call work like Smith's 'moral philosophy' is a potential threat to human freedom because it considers human beings as nothing more than pieces of "machinery" that are "driven by matter" and whose freedom to make moral choices is merely the "the freedom of a turnspit".[393]

With this deeply seated antagonism between Kant's critical philosophy and Smith's historicist philosophy in mind, the following chapters will offer a critique of the few authors who have picked up on Kant's curious lines of praise for Smith and attempted to argue that Kant's critical moral philosophy is influenced by Smith's historicist account of moral philosophy.

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[392] *Groundwork* AK 4:390
[393] *CPrR* AK 5:97

PART 2 – INTREPRETATIONS OF THE KANT-SMITH RELATIONSHIP

Chapter 7: Sen's Interpretation of the Kant-Smith Relationship

In the first part of this thesis I argued that the way Kant and Smith conceptualise philosophy – from the philosophy of science to moral philosophy – depends on fundamentally different methodologies and because of this it is difficult to understand why Kant would praise Smith's *Moral Sentiments*. Despite these difficulties a few authors have nonetheless ventured an explanation to the central question guiding this thesis, "why did Kant praise Smith?" The first of these explanations that I will discuss is the one developed by Amartya Sen who, in the process of developing his theory of justice, calls on both Smith and Kant to support his argument and by virtue of this also offers a potential answer to the above question.

The purpose of considering Sen's exposition, as well as others, is to see how the existing interpretations of the Kant-Smith relationship have failed to properly account for the problems I have highlighted in the previous section of this thesis. This will prepare the way for the third section, in which I will put forward my own interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship.

Sen's Critique of 'Transcendental' Jurisprudence

Amartya Sen developed his interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship over the course of a decade.[394] This interpretation comes as a part of his broader desire to offer a critique of the rationalistic account of justice Rawls advocates in his *Theory of Justice*. It is through his critique of Rawls' so-called Kantianism as well as his advocacy of a more pragmatic approach to a theory of justice that Sen ultimately comes to discuss the relationship between Smith and Kant.

'Transcendental' Institutionalism

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[394] Sen first develops his interpretation in speeches like the one he gave to the University of Washington law school ("Normative Evaluation and Legal Analogies", presented at the School of Law at Washington University in Saint Louis, online: http://law.wustl.edu/centeris/Papers/Norms/sen2.pdf [Accessed 15th July 2014] 2001) and then ten years later, in his *The Idea Of Justice*.

As Sen himself tells us, his criticism of Rawls rationalist deduction of justice is grounded in an acceptance of the arguments put forth by Hilary Putnam,[395] Antonio Gramsci, Piero Sraffa and Ludwig Wittgenstein.[396] What Sen means by this is that he, with the above authors, wants to get rid of the lingering desire to rationally deduce truths that appear "mathematical [in] nature" when doing moral philosophy or jurisprudence.[397] The tradition of doing philosophy in a way that cannot give up the search for "mathematical" certainty and purity in moral theory and jurisprudence[398] Sen calls "transcendental institutionalism".[399] If the language of "mathematical certainty" and "transcendental institutionalism" has not already given it away, Sen describes 'transcendentalist institutionalists'[400] as the kind of people who believe we can work out what "a perfectly just society"[401] may look like and from this formulation make judgements about our current historically contingent arrangements. Sen places thinkers like Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke, Rawls, and most importantly, Kant, under this title.[402]

Sen employs a variety of arguments to criticise this tradition. For example, it is not clear to Sen that we can even have a kind of impartial and objective language or logic that would facilitate straightforward communication if we were to place ourselves in something like Rawls' 'original position'. Instead, Sen's historicist[403]

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[395] Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, London: Penguin Books, 2009, pp. 40-1

[396] *Ibid.*, pp. 32-6

[397] *Ibid.*, p. 94

[398] By jurisprudence here I refer to its meaning as the theory of normative justice rather than that of legal systems.

[399] While obviously borrowed from Kant's vocabulary Sen's use of "transcendental" here is quite loose and the meaning he gives to this term is quite different from the meaning Kant gives it. For Kant the 'transcendental' is a condition which is *a priori* necessary for cognition. Sen on the other hand is not in the least bit interested in epistemology and indeed is moderately hostile to the very idea of trying to find truth in reflections about how objects match with mental states. Thus in Sen's hands the phrase comes to reflect the antithesis of the kind of theories of justice he prefers. These are theories of justice that belong to what Sen calls the "realisation-focused comparison" tradition. This is an historicist and anthropological tradition that is concerned not with finding out what 'pure' or 'perfect' justice may be like. Rather it is a tradition which wants to talk about "comparisons of societies that already exist or could feasibly emerge". Sen also conflates the "transcendent" with the "transcendental" in a way totally antithetical to what Kant argues in the first *Critique* (*Idea of Justice*, p. 99).

[400] I continue to put the phrase 'transcendental' in quotes because while Sen appears to have taken this phrase from Kant's critical philosophy he uses it as a general label for a kind of formal metaphysics rather than Kant's more technical use of the word to represent a particular epistemological argument.

[401] Sen, *Idea of Justice*, pp. 70-1, 89-90

[402] *Ibid.*, pp. 6,8, 95-7

[403] Here I follow what I have argued in the second chapter, that historicism is the argument that the standard of rationality changes over time and across particular cultures.

inclinations lead him to give a nod to Gramsci's suggestion that the way we communicate and think is always bound up with the particulars of our situation.[404] At other times Sen questions the 'transcendental' tradition's claim that it offers a sense of objectivity not available in other approaches. [405] However, beyond problems about the nature of our reasoning and claims to objectivity Sen sees a more 'practical' flaw in the tradition of Kant and Rawls:

[a] transcendental approach cannot, on its own, address questions about advancing justice and compare alternative proposals for having a more just society, short of the utopian proposal of taking an imagined jump to a perfectly just world. Indeed, the answers that a transcendental approach to justice gives – or can give – are quite distinct and distant from the type of concerns that engage people in discussion on justice and injustice in the world (for example, iniquities of hunger, poverty, illiteracy, torture, racism, female subjugation, arbitrary incarceration or medical exclusion as social features that need remedying).[406]

For Sen one of the most important questions political philosophers must answer is how to decide between the best of two *imperfect* societies (i.e. how to choose between different systems of wealth and material distribution or when we should sacrifice liberal freedoms for collective benefits) after it is acknowledged that achieving a state of perfect justice is not possible. [407] The 'transcendental' institutionalist approach is not useful for this task.

Sen's Criticism of Kantian 'Transcendental' Institutionalism

To overcome the flaws in the contractarianism that 'transcendental' institutionalism inevitably produces Sen argues for an alternative theory of justice that focuses on working out "what is to be chosen and which decisions should be taken" when faced with a more limited set of options rather than "just keep[ing ourselves] engrossed in an imagined and implausible world of unbeatable magnificence". This theory must accept the "inescapable plurality" of our points of view and the possibility that we may reach an "impasse" when working out what is just. This theory's conclusions and judgements must be revisable in a way

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[404] Sen, *Idea of Justice*, pp. 119–22
[405] *Ibid.,* p. 125
[406] *Ibid.,* p. 96
[407] *Ibid.,* p. 99

that allows us to ditch "inflexible" "exacting" and "highly demanding rules" that do "not give the idea of justice its due". It must accept the "permissibility of partial resolutions" rather than seek and all or nothing outcome. It must be receptive to alternative views beyond the views of members who are involved in making the original deliberations of what is just. And finally, this new theory of justice must be open to challenge from other systems of rationality. [408]

If we take stock now it can be seen that Rawls' and Kant's theory of justice and morality[409] run against Sen's specifications. In Kant's system the judgements of pure reason are absolute, exact, and without appeal. Kant takes pride in the fact that both his theory of morality and justice shut out all consideration for partial and human desires and consequently politics understood as the ongoing conflict of diverse and ultimately contingent interests. [410] Indeed Kant's position is so inflexible that, as I showed in the last chapter, he is quite happy to condone the murder of innocents in order to defend the idea of a perfect and certain moral law. Though Rawls' theory of justice is clearly more open than Kant's in that it allows the particularistic thinking of a society to affect rationally agreed outcomes, Sen sees in Rawls the same tendency he observes in Kant to privilege a particular kind of logic that may not lead to the kind of outcomes we *human beings* (as opposed to formal rational minds) would call 'just' or 'moral'. This also applies to Robert Nozick whose theory, Sen argues, like Kant and Rawls', also suffers from the general problem inherent in all 'transcendental' institutionalist approaches. Sen asks

what if the collectivity of what are taken to be 'just intuitions' generates terrible results for the people in that society? Nozick did recognise that there

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[408] *Ibid.,* pp. 106-11

[409] I have not explicitly discussed Kant's theory of justice, which he himself sees as a subset of moral philosophy ("the main division of the *doctrine of morals* as a whole" is divided into "the doctrine of virtue" and "the doctrine of right" *MM* AK 4:406). But this is not necessary as his theory of justice – his theory of what we are politically entitled to – rests on the same principles as his moral philosophy as discussed in the previous chapter. That is, it rests on his concept of freedom and the power of reason to provide us with absolute and timeless laws. For details on the specific *political* laws and rights Kant believes we can derive from his transcendental description of pure practical reason see Allen Rosen's *Kant's Theory of Justice* (London: Cornell University Press, 1993, *passim.*

[410] Kant defends a form of social contract theory the same way he does his moral philosophy, arguing that sovereigns cannot enact laws that "a whole people could not possibly give its consent to". This, as always for Kant, is not a question about what *human beings* would or would not give consent to, but a question of what a *purely rational being* would consent to (*Theory and Practice* AK 8:296-7).

could be a problem here. Indeed, he proceeded to make a possible exception to the case in which the system advocated by him, with complete priority of libertarian rights, would lead to what he called 'catastrophic moral horror'. The institutional requirements might well be dropped in those extreme cases. But once such an exception is made, it is not clear what remains of the basic priorities in this theory of justice, and the fundamental place that is given to the necessary institutions and rules within that theory. If catastrophic moral horrors are adequate for abandoning the reliance on the allegedly right institutions altogether, could it be the case that bad social consequences that are not absolutely catastrophic but still quite nasty might be adequate grounds for second-guessing the priority of institutions in less drastic ways?[411]

Sen's criticism of Rawls, Nozick, and other 'transcendental' institutionalists can be read as a kind of restatement of Benjamin Constant's original criticism of Kant's moral philosophy. Sen's criticism of the so-called transcendental institutionalist approach can be read as a restatement of Constant because his criticism does not rest on refuting the epistemological deduction Kant makes to come up with to justify his moral law. Rather, like Constant, Sen's criticism is based on a pragmatic concern about whether the results that come from adhering to Kantian moral laws accord to our own, human, goals. In this way Sen's argument can also be read as an extension of what Judith Shklar – and Simone Weil before her[412] – have previously argued.

Shklar and Weil insist that the 'good' – whether it be justice or liberty – should be built not just on the recognition that we all feel and abhor cruelty and humiliation in largely the same way but that we can also feel others' suffering and humiliation and take it up as our own rather than rely on first principles or epistemologically necessary rules to guide our conduct.[413] Sen follows this path with Shklar and Weil because while he still wants to keep room for reason in his philosophy of morality and justice he does not want to separate psychology from philosophy and thus make what Putnam calls a "fact/value dichotomy".[414] If we make this

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[411] Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, p. 85
[412] Prefiguring Sen and Shklar, Weil too maintains a scepticism towards epistemology and shares their desire to develop a political philosophy built on a particular kind of suffering she calls "*malheur*" (see Vetö M. (trans Dargan J.), *The Religious Metaphysics of Simone Weil*, New York: SUNY Press, 1994, pp. 78-80)
[413] Shklar J., "The Liberalism of Fear" in Young S.P. (ed.), *Political Liberalism: Variations on a Theme*, New York: SUNY Press, 2004, p. 157
[414] Putnam H., *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*, London: Harvard University Press, 2002, pp. 14-45. It is worth noting that Putnam also dedicates two essays in this volume to commending Sen for his attempts to bring ethics (values) back into economics.

distinction and maintain that there is an unbridgeable gulf between 'values' and 'facts' we can only philosophise about justice and morals in two ways. We can either reduce morality and justice into a description of a wholly mechanical process and in this way make it difficult for people to make judgments about it by raising the spectre of Hume's guillotine. Or we can retreat into rationalism and make it hard for us to talk about the problems we face in an imperfect world by eliminating contingent concerns from our judgements. Sen does not want to us to make this distinction. Thus he instead argues that

in celebrating reason, there is no particular ground for denying the far-reaching role of instinctive psychology and spontaneous responses. They can supplement each other, and in many cases an understanding of the broadening and liberating role of our feelings can constitute good subject matter for reasoning itself.[415]

This idea that human psychology – or perhaps more broadly, shared human experience – may have common elements upon which we can construct theories of justice and morality is antithetical to people like Kant and Rawls who see the contingency and thus uncertainty necessary in this approach as a threat to the overall validity and coherence of their theories.[416] Thus while Rawls has space for psychology[417] (he concedes that a theory of justice is "seriously defective if the principles of moral psychology are such that it fails to engender in human beings the requisite desire to act upon it")[418] he still hopes that his argument can "eventually be strictly deductive".[419] Kant of course is not so lenient, arguing that any kind of consideration of psychology is the "occasioning ground of all the errors of philosophers with respect to the supreme principle of morals".[420]

In sum, even though Kant and Rawls may be able to offer some very compelling arguments about perfect standards of justice or timeless and ideal principles that we can always lean on when we want moral guidance, Sen, like Smith, questions

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[415] Sen, *Idea of Justice*, pp. 49-50
[416] See Rawls J., *A Theory of Justice*, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005, pp. 12, 271-2, 489-90
[417] To be accurate, as I showed in the fifth chapter, Kant also has a psychology. It is however a transcendental psychology.
[418] Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, p. 455
[419] *Ibid.*, p. 121
[420] *CPrR* AK 5:64

whether these 'transcendental institutionalist' discoveries are actually useful precisely because we are non-ideal beings with our own particularities, with our own compassion and generosity, and our own selfish desires.[421] If we accept this point and foreclose discussion about perfectly just arrangements all that is left for us to do, Sen argues, is compare alternatives of imperfect models through a public discussion[422] or what Sen calls the "social choice framework for reasoning".[423] It is in making this proposal that Sen calls on Smith to support his alternative conception of justice.

Sen's Smithian Jurisprudence

In Smith's description of the imaginative dynamics at work when we judge behaviour he describes us as not simply wanting to work out whether what someone has done is right or wrong through rational analysis. Rather – to recapitulate – Smith describes the process as one where we imagine ourselves in another person's shoes, and make our judgements from that point of view:

we sometimes feel for another, a passion of which he himself seems to be altogether incapable; because, when we put ourselves in his case, that passion arises in our breast from the imagination, though it does not in his from the reality. We blush with impudence and rudeness of another, though he himself appears to have no sense of the impropriety of his own behaviour; because we

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[421] This is not to say that we should let these desires guide our reasoning, for Sen is clearly onboard with Rawls, Smith, and Kant on the value of impartiality (*Idea of Justice,* pp. 34-6). Where Sen departs with Rawls and Kant, but not Smith, is in his recognition that we cannot escape the restrictions placed on our reasoning by the contingencies of our personal history when making our judgements. Calling upon and endorsing the views of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, Sen writes "[w]hat Akbar called the 'path of reason' does not exclude taking note of the value of instinctive reactions, nor ignore the informative role that our mental reactions often play. And all this is quite consistent with not giving our unscrutinised instincts an unconditional say" (*Idea of Justice*, p. 51).

[422] The idea that political theory must always accept the contingencies of our current political reality is something Albert Hirschmann has also attributed to Niccolò Machiavelli, whose main battle was also against "the moralising precepts and rules that had been the mainstay of pre-Machiavellian political philosophy" (*The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 33). This is an older kind of political philosophy which I believe Kant and Rawls are trying to rescue.

[423] This framework enables contingent beings to make the most informed decisions about their circumstances and thus make successful comparative assessments of the possibilities open to them (Sen, *Idea of Justice*, p. 106). "Transcendental theory" on the other hand "simply addresses a different question from that of comparative assessment – a question that may be of considerable intellectual interest, but which is of no direct relevance to the problem of choice that has to be faced. What is needed instead is an agreement, based on public reasoning, on rankings of alternatives that can be realised" (Sen, *Idea* of Justice, p. 17).

cannot help feeling with that what confusion we ourselves should be covered, had we behaved in so absurd a manner.[424]

Furthermore, in Smith's philosophy the power of imagination can be turned inward upon ourselves. In the same way we can judge the behaviour of others through a sense of embarrassment or anger we feel towards them, so too can we judge our own behaviour by imagining the way other people would feel embarrassment or anger directed at ourselves.[425] The primary way we achieve this is through the impartial spectator.[426]

Sen endorses this approach to discussing morality in the *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and believes it is an important source he can call upon to help construct his alternative theory of justice. There are two reasons for this. First, Sen believes *Moral Sentiments* is an important source because Smith's description of moral psychology sits comfortably with his own goal of grounding justice on the mutual acknowledgement of the suffering we can inflict on each other and our ability to communicate this through public discussion rather than by metaphysical first principles. Second, Sen believes *Moral Sentiments* can make an important contribution to his theory of justice because Smith's work does not need to make a fact/value distinction like the one implicit in Kant and Rawls' theories. These two points come together and cause Sen to see in Smith a thinker who shares his own concerns about turning theories of justice and morality into exercises that largely focus on working out how to analyse concepts, the source of cognition, the logic of language, and so forth to ground themselves. Sen approves of Smith's alternative description of morality as practice because it recognises that "emotions" are "both important and influential"[427] in our decision-making. Sen also endorses Smith's distrust[428] of idealised systems that are of the kind Rawls and Kant propose. The result of this is that Sen believes Smith's moral philosophy is useful for theorists like himself who would like to discuss justice and morality as a problem of how to make choices between imperfect options rather than how to go about drafting a perfect social contract or moral law. Because Smith wants

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[424] *TMS* I.i.1.10
[425] *TMS* III.1.3
[426] *TMS* III.2.31-4
[427] Sen, *Idea of Justice*, pp. 49-50
[428] *TMS* VII.iii.2.5-9

to add more to the story about how we go about forming our judgements than just a comparison of our behaviour with Kantian transcendentally approved maxims or Rawlsian calculations of rational self-interest, Sen sees much to praise in Smith's approach. It is on this basis he argues that

a very large part of modern economics has increasingly fallen for the simplicity of ignoring all motivations other than the pursuit of self-interest, and brand-named 'rational choice theory and elevated this falsely alleged uniformity in human behaviour into the basic principle of rationality.[429]

Sen notes that human beings are more complicated and, as Smith observed,

have many different motivations, taking us well beyond the single-minded pursuit of our interest. There is nothing contrary to reason in our willingness to do things that are not entirely self-serving. Some of these motivations, like 'humanity, justice, generosity and public spirit', may even be very productive for society.[430]

To assume that human beings are Kantian transcendental rationalists, homo economicus, or Rawlsian veiled deliberators only distracts from working out how we can reconcile and cope with our lives as beings with history and as beings who can, because of this, come to quite different conclusions about what is reasonable and thus what is just or moral.

Sen's Democratic Theory of Justice

As a consequence of Sen's alternative theory of justice focusing on the contingent psychological, social, and historical settings of its moral subjects and his criticism of the rational procedures used to deduce laws of jurisprudence, he is led to advocate a theory of justice based on public discussion and the communication of viewpoints. Sen finds Smith's historicist description of imaginative sympathy and spectatorship a useful source that can help him build his alternative theory. Sen admires Smith's moral theory because it is the kind of theory that helps "broaden the discussion to avoid local parochialism of values, which might have the effect of ignoring some pertinent arguments, unfamiliar in a particular culture" and

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[429] Sen, *Idea of Justice*, p. 187
[430] *Ibid.*, p. 191

allows us to consider "not only the influence of vested interest, but also the impact of entrenched tradition and custom" upon "our sentiments". Or as Sen alternatively puts it, while transcendental institutionalists like Rawls and Kant "propose" that the "choice of principles of justice" should be decided by "rigidly" following "a unique institutional structure" that "proceeds to tell us, step by step, an *as if* history of the unfolding of justice" that "cannot easily accommodate the co-survival of competing principles that do not speak with one voice", Smith's moral philosophy allows us

to invoke a wide variety of viewpoints and outlooks based on diverse experience from far and near, rather than remaining content with encounters – actual or counterfactual – with others living in the same cultural and social milieu, and with the same kind of experiences, prejudices and convictions about what is reasonable and what is not, and even beliefs about what is feasible and what is not.[431]

The "tendency" for "some theorists to look for a single homogenous value in terms of which all values we can plausibility defend could be explained", Sen argues, was something "Adam Smith" had already "complained" about "more than two hundred years ago".[432]

The way to avoid reducing justice to a "single homogenous value", and thus avoid excluding minority voices that have different ideas about what constitutes just treatment, is, Sen argues, "through 'democracy' understood as "government by discussion"[433] and the use of "public reason".[434] Sen rejects the concept of democracy as simply "ballots and elections",[435] preferring to define democracy as the practice that, as above, helps us compromise in a world where we have no certainty about what the correct principles of morality and justice are. As Sen sees it, for "reasons both of incomplete individual evaluations and of incomplete congruence between different individuals' assessments, persistent incompleteness

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[431] *Ibid.*, pp. 44-6. See also pp. 406-7 where Sen attributes this argument to Smith.
[432] *Ibid.*, p. 394
[433] *Ibid.*, p. 324
[434] *Ibid.*, p. 326 – not to be confused with Kant's own use of the phrase, which he uses to delineate the ability of people who hold particular offices to make commentary about that office and matters pertaining to it (*Enlightenment* AK 8:36-7).
[435] *Ibid.,* p. 326. See also p. 343.

may be a hardy feature of judgements of social justice".[436] To be able to achieve a compromise and make comparative judgements about cases without a metaphysical or 'transcendental' standard against which we can benchmark our options, we need as many "voices"[437] involved in our public discussions as possible. These voices

come in not as arbitrators but as people whose reading and assessment help us to achieve a less partial understanding of the ethics and justice of a problem, compared with confining attention only to the voice of those who are directly involved (and telling all others to go mind their own business)[438]

For example it is possible that women's voices are excluded from public discussion. This creates problems for distributive justice in terms of access to education, healthcare, and political power. For Sen this problem is not caused by a lack of clarity in our reasoning. Rather this is a problem caused by lack of female voices within our public discussion. Sen provides the following example:

in a society that has a long-established tradition of relegating women to a subordinate position, the cultural norm of focusing on some alleged features of women's supposed inferiority may be so strong that it may require considerable independence of mind to interpret those features differently. If there are, for instance, very few women scientists in a society that does not encourage women to study science, the observed feature of paucity of successful women scientists may itself serve as a barrier to understanding that women may be really just as good at science, and that even with the same native talents and aptitudes to pursue the subject, women may rarely excel in science precisely because of a lack of opportunity or encouragement to undertake the appropriate education.[439]

Sen's argument for a democratic theory of justice then, rather than relying on some kind of rational deduction that determines right and wrong and good and bad, turns on a kind of Hayekian argument about the power and utility of information markets.[440] That is, Sen sees justice as something best developed with the input of diverse people, who may or may not have the same goals, customs, and values, and as something that is promoted by having clear and easy access to this

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[436] *Ibid.*, p. 105
[437] *Ibid.*, p. 82
[438] *Ibid.*, p. 131
[439] *Ibid.*, p. 162
[440] Which Hayek himself explicitly credits Adam Smith with first hypothesising (Hayek F.D., *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, London: Routledge, 2013, pp. 234-5).

information. Or in analogy to the way the economic market works, just as price signals and freedom of information help coordinate the economic activity of diverse people and interests, so too should a theory of justice be developed by broadening its deliberators' franchise. And contrariwise, just as fixing prices retards economic development, attempting to enforce definitive accounts of right and wrong impairs our concept of justice. [441]

Here Sen follows Hayek, using this idea not just as an argument about economic efficiency but also as an argument about the 'efficiency' of our social practices and institutions in achieving and maintaining justice. But more importantly for this thesis, both of these authors in turn follow Smith, whose 'invisible hand' is the original statement of the benefits of spontaneously organised systems (economic, moral, and judicial). The invisible hand – just as it is for Sen and Hayek – is not merely an economic mechanism. Rather – as one would expect from the author of *Moral Sentiments* – it is also a metaphor used to describe how our concepts of justice and morality are created from practices that involve historically contingent people with diverse interests, and which can accordingly be enriched by improving moral agents' access and ability to take on other people's conception of the good and the circumstances of their lives.[442]

Sen's Interpretation of Kant and Smith's Intellectual Relationship

Sen's interpretation of Kant and Smith's philosophies broadly agrees with the interpretation I have already argued for in the first section of this thesis. In this interpretation Smith represents an historicist philosophical tradition that rejects the

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[441] See Barry N.P., "The Road to Freedom: Hayek's Social and Economic Philosophy" in Birner J. & van Zijp R. (eds.), *Hayek, Co-ordination and Evolution: His Legacy in Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and the History of Ideas*, London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 143-4. It is important to note that Hayek, unlike Smith, *does not* become so anti-rationalistic that he wants to reduce our sense of morality and justice to something like sympathy (See Petsoulas C., *Hayek's Liberalism and Its Origins: His Idea of Spontaneous Order and the Scottish Enlightenment*, London: Routledge, 2001, pp.146-8). He does however, like Sen and Smith, think that our values are historically contingent rather than metaphysical discoveries.

[442] It should be noted that at times Sen and Smith, because of their commitment to naturalism, part ways with Hayek, who thinks it is a "category mistake" to make judgements about "affairs which nobody can change" (Hayek, LLL, p. 198). That is to say, there is nothing in Sen or Smith which indicates they believe it is erroneous to describe a famine as 'unjust'. Hayek makes these kinds of judgments because he still clings to the Kantian notion of the just as something different from psychological reactions and Aristotelian practical reason (See Hayek, *LLL*, pp. 201-4).

epistemology Kant presents in his *Critiques* and all the consequences this entails for the way we think about science and morals. For Kant morality is a body of knowledge that is akin to mathematical knowledge because it is both *a priori* and certain. Moral progress (and the progress of justice) thus hinges on discovering the metaphysical principles of our cognitive logic. For Smith morality (and justice) is not so much knowledge as it is a practice and is thus ontologically indistinct from our physical and psychological desires. Moral progress in this conceptual framework is contingent upon any given historical configuration of circumstance, and in particular, about whether or not we have interacted enough with other people's viewpoints to be able to accurately judge the circumstances in which they make their decisions. Sen takes this interpretation of Smith and Kant's differences as a way to leverage his own theory of justice over Rawls', who he criticises for the same reasons one may imagine Smith would criticise Kant. However if Sen agrees with what I have argued thus far in this thesis, what then is the importance of Sen's theory of justice for answering the question which this thesis seeks to answer? The importance of Sen's theory of justice is that he too was – as I was at the beginning of this thesis – tempted into offering an explanation about why Kant would have praised Smith's work despite recognising the significant differences in their respective philosophies. In hinting at an answer to this question, Sen provides one of the few interpretations of the philosophical relationship between Kant and Smith.

Impartiality as the Key Idea that Links Kant's Moral Philosophy to Smith's

In his *The Idea of Justice* Sen makes a small excursus in which he throws up the idea that Smith's moral philosophy had a formative effect on Kant's own moral philosophy:

> [t]he insistence on impartiality in contemporary moral and political philosophy reflects, to a great extent, a strong Kantian influence. Even though Smith's exposition of this idea is less remembered, there are substantial points of similarity between the Kantian and Smithian approaches. In fact, Smith's analysis of the 'impartial spectator' has some claim to being the pioneering idea in the enterprise of interpreting impartiality and formulating the demands of fairness which so engaged the world of the European Enlightenment. Smith's ideas were not only influential among Enlightenment thinkers such as

Condorcet who wrote on Smith. Immanuel Kant too knew *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*…and commented on it in a letter to Markus [sic] Herz in 1771… it [thus] seems quite likely that Kant was influenced by Smith.[443]

Unfortunately Sen does not follow up his claim that it was likely Smith had influenced Kant with any more explicit detail. Nevertheless, Sen singles out the important part of Smith's work that he shares in common with Kant: impartiality.

Sen argues that a necessary feature of any theory of justice is that it contains an element of impartiality.[444] Thus despite faulting Rawls' theory of justice for not giving enough weight to the diversity our experiences and ways of thinking,[445] Sen still thinks Rawls is on the right track because his theory of justice "addresses effectively the need to remove the influence of vested interests and personal slants of diverse individuals".[446] By wanting to remove "vested interests" and "personal slants" from his theory of justice Sen believes Rawls is largely on the same page as Smith, whose own theory made impartiality its "paramount" virtue.[447]

While Sen acknowledges "there are differences between the distinct approaches" Smith and Rawls take when developing their theories, he nonetheless believes there is an "overarching similarity among them [that] lies in the shared recognition of the need for reasoned encounter on an impartial basis".[448] Rawls himself disagrees with Sen's suggestion that he and Smith are both a part of the same general tradition of treating justice and morality as fairness. Rawls argues this because he believes Smith to be a utilitarian and that maximising happiness is incompatible with his theory of justice.[449] Sen disagrees with Rawls' self-assessment. Sen believes Rawls makes Smith out to be just a poor Humean utilitarian, not an author who as I have shown in the first part of this thesis has his own sophisticated account of morality as a practice driven by our particular psychological impulses.[450] This misreading, Sen argues, turns Rawls away from

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[443] Sen, *Idea of Justice*, p. 124
[444] *Ibid.,* pp. 116-7
[445] *Ibid.,* pp. 138-9
[446] *Ibid.,* p. 126
[447] *Ibid.,* pp. 137-8
[448] *Ibid.,* p. 46
[449] Rawls, *Theory of Justice,* p. 263
[450] Sen, *Idea of Justice,* p. 137

the fact that "Smith… invokes the device of what he calls the 'impartial spectator' to base judgements of justice on the demands of fairness".[451]

Sen's suggestion that Rawls and Smith share the same broad concern with impartiality helps unpack his interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship because Sen also reads Rawls' *Theory of Justice* as an extension of Kantian thought. Sen takes Rawls at his word when he suggests his theory of justice is simply a procedural recasting of Kant's philosophy. [452] Sen contends that

[t]he contractarian method of reasoning is broadly in the Kantian tradition, and has been very influential in contemporary political and moral philosophy – to a great extent led by Rawls. Justice as fairness, as a theory, is situated by Rawls broadly within that tradition, and he describes his theory…as an attempt 'to generalise and carry to a higher order of abstraction the traditional theory of social contract as represented by…Kant'.[453]

Thus insofar as Sen believes that both Rawls and Smith place impartiality at the core of their philosophy, and insofar as Rawls' theory is a recasting of Kant, Sen casts all three thinkers as a part of the same broader tradition of making impartiality the essential element of justice and morality despite their different approaches.

Evidence for Sen's Reading

Sen's reading of Kant, Rawls, and Smith as all belonging to the same tradition by virtue of their emphasis on impartiality is not without foundation. Sen's interpretation can be bolstered by looking at, for example, Kant's *Groundwork*. The first formulation of the categorical imperative in this work looks very much like the procedure that takes place behind Rawls' veil of ignorance. Kant asks us to imagine a person

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[451] *Ibid.,* p. 70

[452] For example Rawls says "[t]he notion of the veil of ignorance is implicit, I think, in Kant's ethics" (*Theory of Justice*, pp. 140-1). For Rawls fullest exposition see The Kantian Interpretation of Justice as Fairness in *Theory of Justice*, pp. 251-7.

[453] Sen, *Idea of Justice*, pp. 69-70

for whom things are going well while he sees that others (whom he could very well help) have to contend with great hardships [and who] thinks: what is it to me? Let each be happy as heaven wills or as he can make of himself; I shall take nothing from him nor even envy him; only I do not care to contribute anything to his welfare or to his assistance in need! Now, if such a way of thinking were to become a universal law the human race could admittedly very well subsist, no doubt even better than when everyone prates about sympathy and benevolence and even exerts himself to practice them occasionally, but on the other hand also cheats where he can, sells the right of human beings or otherwise infringes upon it. But although it is possible that a universal law of nature could very well subsist in accordance with such a maxim, it is impossible to **will** that such a principle hold everywhere as a law of nature. For, a will that decided this would conflict with itself, since many cases could occur in which one would need the love and sympathy of others and in which, by such a law a nature arisen from his own will, he would rob himself of all hope of the assistance he wishes for himself.[454]

Here Kant wants us – very much like deliberators in Rawls' original position – to consider whether or not we would like to be the person on the receiving end of any particular action, and not merely consider ourselves as the person who performs the act. Furthermore, like Smith, here Kant wants to us to imagine what it would be like to be another person affected by the kinds of decisions we make.[455] When Kant argues that moral rules "must hold not only for human beings but for all *rational beings as such*, not merely under contingent conditions and with exceptions but with *absolutely necessity*"[456] he can be read as making the point, as in Rawls, that what is just can only be determined through the use of reason which ensures impartiality and, just like as with Smith's inward looking impartial spectator, our judgements need to be made from a third-person perspective that bar us from making exceptions for ourselves. This underlying necessity to think of morality from a perspective that considers other people without regard to our own particulars underwrites not only every passage in Kant's work, but also Smith and Rawls'.

The Problem with Sen's Interpretation

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[454] *Groundwork* AK 4:423
[455] Indeed for Kant this concession is quite remarkable given how dangerously 'impure' it seems to ask us to consider our very material 'wishes'.
[456] *Groundwork* AK 4:408

It is no secret that Rawls enlists Kant as an authority to help defend his idea of justice as fairness.[457] This is not surprising for there are obvious parallels that can be drawn between Rawls' principles of justice as fairness and the idea of an 'original position' with Kant's categorical imperative. The most obvious of these similarities – and continuing on from what I have outlined above – is the fact that principles of 'just' distribution and categorical imperatives bracket off any influence the contingences our particular lives may exert upon our deliberations. As Rawls himself makes clear, the strength of our deliberations from an ignorant original position lies in the fact that we must ignore not only our "class position or social status" but also "the distribution of natural assets and abilities" such as "intelligence and strength".[458] Thus insofar as the principles of justice "do not presuppose that one has a particular desire or aim" they are "analogous to categorical imperatives":

[t]o act from principles of justice is to act from categorical imperatives in the sense that they apply to us whatever in particular our aims are. This simply reflects the fact that no such contingencies appear as premises in their derivation.[459]

Given such similarities and statements it is easy to see how Rawls would feel an affinity with Kant's moral philosophy. Moreover this feeling is somewhat justified for we do see in Kant's own writing some flourishes of rhetoric that rail against the very kinds of particulars Rawls wants to exclude by way of the veil of ignorance and the original position. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* for example Kant describes the "precarious position" of moral philosophy when we formulate it from our particular aims and contingencies in uncharacteristically poetic language:

[o]ne cannot give too many or too frequent warnings against this laxity [making moral judgements based on our particulars], or even mean cast of mind, which seeks its principle among empirical motives and laws; for, human reason in its weariness gladly rests on this pillow and in a dream of sweet illusions (which allow it to embrace a cloud instead of Juno) it

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[457] In "A Kantian Conception of Equality", *Cambridge Review*, issue 96, 1975, pp. 94-9 Rawls also reiterates the same general contention in *A Theory of Justice* that his concept of justice rests upon an idealised conception of human agency, which he believes to be at the core of Kantian theory.
[458] Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, p. 12
[459] *Ibid.*, pp. 253

substitutes for morality a bastard patched up from the limbs of quite diverse ancestry, which looks like whatever one wants to see in it but not like virtue for him who has once seen virtue in her true form.[460]

In the Mrongovius lecture notes, speaking against moral philosophy predicated on "moral feeling", Kant tells his students largely the same story, arguing

[a]ll rules derived from feeling are contingent and valid only for beings that have such a feeling. Feeling is a satisfaction that rests on the constitution of sense. So it would then be all one, if God had also framed in us a liking for vice, and then He might equally have done it in other creatures as well. Such laws are therefore merely arbitrary, and simply a childish game.[461]

There is a strong superficial similarity between Rawls and Kant's moral theories (and by virtue of this link a similarity between Kant and Smith's moral theories) insofar as both authors see our particular motives as having no place in correct judgement. However there is a problem with Sen's interpretation that these authors share a strong intellectual bond based on this similarity.

Contra what both Sen and Rawls himself argue, Rawls' theory of justice is *not* merely a procedural recasting of Kantian moral philosophy. In fact, Rawls' theory of justice may be even viewed as a kind of moral philosophy that Kant disavows for much the same reason he rejects Smith's moral philosophy. This reason is that Rawls' theory of justice is not a transcendental theory of justice. The guidelines drawn up behind Rawls' veil of ignorance in the original position are not derived from pure reason. Because these guidelines are not derived from pure reason they are not categorical imperatives that command a pure will's unconditional respect, nor do they allow us to exercise moral autonomy. Rather the rules of justice created in Rawls' procedure are merely what Kant calls (as discussed in the previous chapter) *hypothetical imperatives* that help us achieve our contingent and particular desires and goals and thus, as I argued in the previous chapter, are devoid of moral content in Kant's eyes.

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[460] *Groundwork* 4:425-6
[461] *Mrongovius Morality* AK: 29:625

Rawls himself appears to be aware of this critique. Hedging against the possibility of the above argument being levelled against him Rawls provides two responses. On one front Rawls argues that "I do not wish to argue here for this interpretation [that the theory of justice as fairness is Kantian] *on the basis of Kant's text* [emphasis added]". Rather, he argues, his interpretation that his theory is "Kantian" is "perhaps…best taken" merely as the "suggestion" that his theory belongs to "the contractarian tradition in Kant and Rousseau".[462] On the other front, Rawls admits that he has "departed from Kant's views in several respects", namely that his procedure is a "collective" one and that "justice as fairness is a theory of human justice and among its premises are the elementary facts about persons and their place in nature".[463] Nonetheless, despite these hedges, Rawls still thinks his theory is broadly 'Kantian' because Kant's theory of morality contains three concepts he believes central to his own thesis. Oliver Johnson – whose critique of Rawls' Kantianism I fully endorse[464] and will cite at length here – lists these three concepts as "autonomy, the categorical imperative, and rationality".[465]

The Problem with Rawls' Interpretation of Kant

Let us first look at the concept of autonomy. As I argued in the previous chapter and as Johnson summarises, "the main idea" Kant

is attempting to elucidate by this term is fairly clear. It is with the will that he is concerned when he speaks of autonomy – or its counterpart – heteronomy – and his argument turns on the diverse nature of two kinds of motives that can lead men to act. He describes the situation in which we are motivated to act by desire or inclination as heteronomy of the will; we perform the act in question because we want to gain the object to which the action leads. Autonomy of the

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[462] Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, pp. 251-2

[463] *Ibid.*, p. 257

[464] There is a long running debate over just how Kantian Rawls' theory is (see for example DeLue S.M., "Aristotle, Kant and Rawls on Moral Motivation in a Just Society", *The American Political Science Review*, volume 74, number 2, 1980, pp. 385-93; Grcic J..M., "Kant and Rawls: Contrasting Conceptions of Moral Theory", *Journal of Value Inquiry*, volume 17, 1983, pp. 234-40; Budde K., "Rawls on Kant: Is Rawls a Kantian or Kant a Rawlsian?", *European Journal of Political Theory*, volume 6, issue 3, 2007, pp. 339-358; Darwall S.L., "A Defense of the Kantian Interpretation", *Ethics*, volume 86, number 2, 1976, pp. 164-70). I fall on Johnson's side of the argument because he understands the full implications of Kant's epistemology in his moral philosophy and avoids the mistake of conflating Kant's moral theory with the Golden Rule as I discussed in the previous chapter.

[465] Johnson O.A., "The Kantian Interpretation", *Ethics*, volume 85, number 1, 1974, p. 58

will, on the other hand, describes action in which our motive (maxim) is respect for the moral law. In such action our wants and inclinations play no role; in acting autonomously we do what we believe to be our duty because we believe it to be our duty and *for no other reason whatsoever* [emphasis added].[466]

That our will must act out of respect for the moral law and nothing is else why Kant – even in the face of Constant's criticisms – maintains that even human life itself may not be an important desideratum for moral judgement. Rawls on the other hand argues that his deliberators "choose autonomy" because the veil of ignorance "precludes" them "from taking… heteronomous factors" like the "things they happen to want… into consideration". However this is only part of the story. Even though Rawls' deliberators are not making decisions based on their own particular lives because they have been deprived of that information, the decisions they come to behind the veil of ignorance *are still driven by self-interest, not respect for the moral law*. That is, the basic starting point of each moral agent in Rawls' original position is a calculation about how to best maximise their own personal chance of living the best kind of life. Or as Johnson puts it, the "inference Rawls invites us to make is that since decisions motivated by specific, contingent wants constitute heteronomy, decisions in which these can play no part must be autonomous". However, this inference is flawed because it is not just specific contingent wants that make our motives heteronomous but all wants and desires, including wants and desires with restricted information such as is the case behind the veil of ignorance. In short, Rawls' "understanding of autonomy is not consonant with that of Kant; rather, action he calls autonomous Kant would without hesitation label as heteronomous".[467]

As he does with autonomy, Rawls also misreads Kant's categorical imperative. Rawls argues that "the principles of justice are also categorical imperatives in Kant's sense". He argues this because he believes principles of justice do not "suppose that one has a particular desire or aim" and thus they are not "hypothetical imperatives" (which "by contrast do assume" we have a particular desire or aim). Unlike a hypothetical imperative Rawls argues that the "argument

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[466] *Ibid.*, p. 61
[467] Johnson, "The Kantian Interpretation", pp. 60-2

for" the "principle of justice...does not assume that the parties [in the original position] have particular ends". It "only [assumes] *that they desire certain primary goods* [emphasis added]". Furthermore, that the veiled deliberators "have a desire for certain goods is derived... from only the most general assumptions about rationality and *the conditions of human life* [emphasis added]... [Thus,] to act from the principles of justice is to act from categorical imperatives." [468]

The problem for Rawls here is that in Kant's eyes even the desire for 'primary goods' – no matter how much Rawls believes this is just a "general assumption about rationality" – dilutes the purity of the moral law and thus the entire edifice of Kantian moral philosophy. While Rawls may view himself as a modern, updated, form of Kant insofar as he drops the more controversial parts of Kant's metaphysics, Kant himself cannot bend his categorical imperative to include the kinds of contingent information Rawls needs to make his original position. To again reiterate what I argued in the previous chapter, the moral law is built on pure reason. That is to say, the categorical imperative tells us only what a wholly rational mind would do. This kind of formal rationality cannot have a concept of "primary goods" lest we cease talking about epistemology and begin talking about psychology and thus topics unrelated to moral philosophy as Kant defines it. Johnson summarises this point as follows,

[t]he reason why Kant calls them [the imperatives] hypothetical – as opposed to categorical – is that they presuppose the desire for some end, whether specific or general. But the categorical imperative commands absolutely, without reference to any end...For Rawls to give the imperatives he has described the label "categorical" is, thus, to apply a misnomer. [469]

Because Rawls' understands categorical imperatives as still, at their bottom, built around helping people achieve particular self-interested ends rather than develop a respect for the moral law, his conception of categorical imperative – in line with my reading of Kant's moral philosophy in the previous chapter – is in fact "radically opposed to Kant's". [470]

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[468] Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, p. 253
[469] Johnson, "The Kantian Interpretation", p. 63
[470] *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3. Again, see Darwall, "*A Defence of the Kantian Position*", pp. 164-70 for a rebuttal of the idea that there is a "profound conflict" between Kant and Rawls' philosophy.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, Johnson argues that "Rawls" also "believes that his description of rationality as it functions in his contract theory is an interpretation of the Kantian conception of moral reason".[471] In Rawls' own words, Kant

begins with the idea that moral principles are the object of rational choice. They define the moral law that men can rationally will to govern their conduct in an ethical commonwealth. Moral philosophy becomes the study of the conception and outcome of a suitably defined rational decision. This idea has immediate consequences. For once we think of moral principles as legislation for a kingdom of ends, it is clear that these principles must not only be acceptable to all but public as well. Finally Kant supposes that this moral legislation is to be agreed to under conditions that characterise men as free and equal rational beings. The description of the original position is an attempt to interpret this conception.[472]

The problem with this reading of Kant is that what Rawls refers to as 'reason' is something quite alien to Kant's own definition of the term. As I argued in the previous two chapters, reason in Kant's philosophy plays a special role in *a priori* theoretical and practical cognition. In practical or moral cognition – the primary concern of this thesis – this role is one that helps us answer the question 'what ought I do?' Further breaking this down, practical reason can be employed in one of two ways. It can be used to answer the hypothetical question 'what ought I do in order to achieve a particular end?' – a merely "prudential" or "pragmatic"[473] question – or it can be used to answer the moral question 'what ought I do?' and nothing more. The answer to the latter question, Kant argues, is the categorical imperative – the only possible answer a wholly rational mind can come up with in response.

Despite Rawls' overtures he clearly has something quite different in mind than what pure practical reason commands when he speaks about 'reason' and as such, something quite different from the categorical imperative. As Johnson points out, Rawls defines 'reason' as a concept that "must be interpreted as far as possible in the narrow sense, standard in economic theory, of taking the most effective means

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[471] *Ibid.*, p. 63
[472] Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, pp. 251-2
[473] *CPR* A800-6/B828-34

to given ends".[474] Rawls' approach elsewhere in *A Theory of Justice* would appear to support this claim:

I have assumed thought that the person in the original position is rational. In choosing between principles each tries as best he can to advance his interests… A rational person is thought to have a coherent set of preferences between the options open to him. He ranks these options according to how well they further purposes; he follows the plan which will satisfy more of these desires rather than less.

In other words, Rawls' concept of reason is wholly instrumental, whereas for Kant "reason's proper function must be to produce a will good in itself and not one good merely as a means, for to the former reason is absolutely essential".[475] That Rawls' concept of reason – insofar as it operates in the original position – is wholly instrumental (in Kant's terminology, only produces "hypothetical imperatives") is both obvious and necessary. It would be quite hard to make sense of Rawls' original position if it were assumed that its deliberators were some kind of formal concept of mind developing categorical imperatives. Indeed that Rawls' theory of justice is, in the end, about sorting out competing claims to material distribution means he cannot even broach the topic of moral cognition let alone the question of human freedom in the way Kant wants to. Johnson neatly summarises this point:

[t]hat Kant's conception of moral or practical reason is not only different from, but opposed to, the account offered by Rawls is apparent. For Rawls' paradigm example of the moral use of reason Kant would deny to have anything to do with morality at all. And Kant's description of the proper moral function of reason is nowhere echoed in Rawls's theory. Rather than being consonant with each other these two conceptions of the role of reason in the moral life stand, in relation to each other, very near the limits of incompatibility.[476]

What This Means for Sen's Interpretation

That Rawls' reads the Kantian categorical imperative not as the law of pure practical reason but as a hypothetical imperative raises questions about Sen's

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[474] Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, p. 14
[475] Johnson, "The Kantian Interpretation", p. 65
[476] *Ibid.*, p. 66

interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship. The key argument of Sen's interpretation is that Smith, like Rawls, develops a moral theory built around a concept of impartiality. As Rawls can be read as a recasting of Kant's moral philosophy, Sen argues syllogistically that Kant shares with Smith an important concern with impartiality. While Kant no doubt values impartiality it cannot be argued that it is a primary concern in his moral philosophy. If impartiality was all that was at stake, Rawls' description of his own theory as a procedural recasting of Kant's categorical imperative would not face so many problems. The problem for Rawls' and thus Sen's interpretation of Kant is that impartiality is a mere by-product of Kant's critical philosophy, whose primary concern is developing a rational deduction of the formal structure of moral cognition and demonstrating the practical possibility of a radical freedom of the will. Furthermore, that Rawls has an instrumental concept of reason also calls into question Sen's rhetorical distinction of his own and Smith's work from Kant and Rawls' so-called 'transcendental institutionalism'. If my reading of Kant and Smith in the first part of this thesis is correct, Rawls' theory of justice has much more in common with Sen and Smith's than it does with Kant's. Rawls, like Sen and Smith, views rationality as the ability to make choices between alternatives, not a function in the formal structure of cognition. Rawls' object of study is, like Sen and Smith, at its bottom a study of human beings and their psychology; and Rawls, like Sen and Smith, is interested in working out how particular social arrangements can arranged in order to maximise human goals, not how a rational mind may be able to achieve a freedom from causal experience. Thus while Sen portrays Kant and Rawls as abstract idealists, the fact that Rawls – like Sen and Smith – is largely committed to a naturalistic methodology complete with a wholly instrumental concept of reason makes his theory almost as hostile to Kant's moral philosophy as Smith's is. This basic methodological similarity between Rawls, Sen, and Smith is why Sen is able to associate his own theory of justice with the other authors. However, because Kant is quite antagonistic to the way they go about doing philosophy (that is, they ignore metaphysics and concern themselves with the psychology of historically situated human beings) he cannot be so easily included amongst them as Sen suggests. Here it is best to quote Kant at length, where we can see him explicitly refute the kind of philosophy Smith, Sen, and Rawls all create when they try to work out the rules and procedures we should

follow in order to promote justice and morality based on calculations of rational self-interest:

[t]o be happy is necessarily the demand of every rational but finite being and therefore an unavoidable determining ground of its faculty of desire. For, satisfaction with one's whole existence is not, as it were, an original possession and a beatitude, which would presuppose a consciousness of one's independent self-sufficiency, but is instead a problem imposed upon him by his finite nature itself, because he is needy and this need is directed to the matter of his faculty of desire, that is, something related to a subjective feeling of pleasure or displeasure underlying it by which is determined what he needs in order to be satisfied with his condition. But just because this material determining ground can be cognised only empirically by the subject, it is impossible to regard this problem as law, since a law, as objective, must contain the *very same determining ground* of the will in all cases and for all rational beings. For, although the concept of happiness *everywhere* underlies the practical relations of *objects* to the faculty of desire, it is still only the general name for subjective determining grounds, and it determines nothing specific about it although this is all that matters in this practical problem and without such determination the problem cannot be solved at all. That is to say, in what each has to put his happiness comes down to the particular feeling of pleasure and displeasure in each and, even within one and the same subject, to needs that differ as this feeling changes; and a law that is *subjectively necessary* (as a law of nature) 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 because, in the desire for happiness, it is not the form of lawfulness that counts but simply the matter, namely whether I am to expect satisfaction from following the law, and how much. Principles of self-love can indeed contain universal rules of skill (for finding means to one's purposes), but in that case they are only theoretical principles (such as, e.g., how someone who would like to eat bread has to construct a mill). But practical precepts based on them can never be universal because the determining ground of the faculty of desire is based on the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which can never be assumed to be universally directed to the same objects.

But suppose that finite rational beings were thoroughly agreed with respect to what they had to take as objects of their feelings of pleasure and pain and even with respect to the means they must use to obtain the first and avoid the other; even then they could by no means pass off the *principle of self-love as a practical law*; for, this unanimity itself would still be only contingent. The determining ground would still be only subjectively valid and merely empirical and would not have that necessity which is thought in every law, namely objective necessity from *a priori* grounds[477]

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[477] *CPrR* 5:26

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how in developing his alternative theory of justice Sen develops an interesting interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship that is conscious of at least some of the basic methodological differences I have elaborated in the first section of this thesis. In developing his theory of justice I have also shown how the two strands of thought represented by Kant and Smith still inform contemporary political philosophy. In particular, I have shown how these strands of thought sit behind Sen and Rawls' competing conceptions of justice as rational deduction and as a practice. Most importantly however, I have shown how Sen argues that insofar as Rawls, Kant, and Smith's theories privilege and value impartiality they share a common intellectual lineage, and that it is because of this "it was quite likely Kant was influenced by Smith". While intuitive, I have argued that this interpretation is not entirely satisfactory. I have argued this because this interpretation relies on conflating Kant and Rawls' philosophies in order to paint all three authors as belonging to a single tradition. In doing so however I believe both Sen and Rawls overlook the fact that Kant's moral philosophy, at its heart, is a philosophy designed to demonstrate the freedom of the will, not merely an elaborate procedure through which we can generate useful rules about things like just distribution.

In the following chapter I will look at the second interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship as developed by Samuel Fleischacker. I will show how he improves on Sen's interpretation by carrying out a more specialised analysis and direct comparison of Kant and Smith's work. By analysing the problems within Fleischacker's analysis it is my hope that I will clear the way for my own, hopefully superior interpretation, in the third section of this thesis.

Chapter 8: Fleischacker's Interpretation of the Kant-Smith Relationship

In the last chapter I argued that Sen, in the process of developing his theory of justice, presents an interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship that depends on reading Kant's moral philosophy as a philosophy as analogous to Rawls' theory of justice. I then argued that this interpretation is flawed because Rawls' conception of reason, while similar to Sen's and Smith's, is a conception of reason that Kant thoroughly rejects as something incompatible with his critical project. The purpose of discussing Sen's interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship was to highlight the difficulties that arise when trying to paint Kant as a moral philosopher whose theory is compatible with writers like Smith (and to a lesser extent, Sen) who follow a naturalist and historicist methodology.

In this chapter I will discuss a second interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship which avoids some of the pitfalls of Sen's interpretation. This second interpretation is Samuel Fleischacker's interpretation as elaborated in his article "Philosophy in Moral Practice: Kant and Adam Smith"[478] and partially restated by Knud Haakonssen in his *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy*. As with my critique of Sen, the purpose of this chapter is to reinforce my argument that any interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship that supposes Kant's critical moral philosophy was influenced by Smith must overlook some of the acute methodological differences I described in the first section of this thesis. Having made this point, I will move on to the third and final section of my thesis where I

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[478] Fleischacker has two other publications that discuss Kant and Smith. The first publication is a book titled *A Third Concept of Liberty: Judgement and Freedom in Kant and Adam Smith*. Because this is a syncretic work that tries to develop an original theory of judgement that draws on both Kant and Smith rather than an interpretation of their intellectual relationship I will not discuss it in this thesis. The second publication is the essay "Values Behind the Market: Kant's Response to The Wealth of Nations". This work is primarily concerned with elucidating Kant's political economy and thus not of primary importance to this thesis. The final section of the article is however noteworthy for it foreshadows the argument I make in the final two chapters of this thesis, albeit with some important differences. Specifically Fleischacker argues that Kant sometimes appears to argue that "freedom [in the critical sense of the word]...can be developed empirically" and that he has a "rich empirical account of how social institutions can shape freedom", and that his description of this "works much as Smith's does" ("Values Behind the Market", pp. 402-5).

will provide my original interpretation of the relationship that is conscious of the methodological differences these previous interpretations have ignored.

The Kant-Smith Relationship as a Matter of Rule Following

In the first chapter of this thesis I presented Fleischacker's in-depth summary of the historical evidence that Kant had engaged with Smith's work. After presenting this evidence Fleischacker offers an interpretation of the intellectual relationship between Kant and Smith, hoping to "to show…what we can gain by reading Kant's *Groundwork* in the light of [the] *TMS*".[479] Fleischacker goes about this task by arguing that Smith – contrary to thinkers like Hume and Kant – is not particularly interested in "moral epistemology" and indeed is "practically unique amongst eighteenth century…thinkers"[480] in the extent to which he is concerned with moral practice; that is, with the psychological mechanisms that form our moral judgements and the social dynamics that foster or discourage particular moral judgements. Despite this, Fleischacker does not necessarily believe there is nothing to be said of an intellectual relationship between Kant and Smith's work. Somewhat similar to Sen's strategy, Fleischacker seeks to argue that even though "Kant grounds his moral rules differently from Smith" this "does not mean they serve a different purpose".[481]

Rule Following in Smith's Moral Philosophy

Fleischacker argues that the primary purpose of moral rules in Smith's philosophy is to help us overcome our "self-deceit"[482] when we pass judgement. What does this mean? It means rather than wondering about the foundations of practical reason or the possibility of moral cognitivism, Smith is concerned with the ways in which we overcome our own partiality and stop giving ourselves privileged and biased exceptions to behaviour which we would condemn in others. Or in other words, Smith is primarily concerned with the way that we become "too caught up in the passions moving us *to* action to see our situation fairly", and how

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[479] Fleischacker, "Philosophy and Moral Practice", p. 249
[480] *Ibid.*, p. 256
[481] *Ibid.*, p. 263
[482] *Ibid.,* p. 256

"afterwards we are too afraid of facing the real structure of our character to admit to our real motivations".[483]

Fleischacker argues that the failure to recognise our own partiality and thus ultimately "evade our [moral] responsibilities"[484] is not a moral problem for Smith the way it is for Kant. Unlike Kant, Smith does not see being partial and evading our responsibilities as a case of following maxims that do not conform to the moral law and thus as a lapse from freedom.[485] Rather Smith views this problem as one of moral practice. Smith conceptualises the problem of morality differently because his account is underpinned by a description of human psychology that is "anxious" to avoid the "censure" of others.[486] Treating morality as essentially a social interaction with other human beings, Smith sees evading our responsibilities and not being able to make impartial judgements not as something that is inherently 'wrong' (Smith is loathe to use such normative language) or something that threatens our moral freedom, but as something that threatens our wellbeing. The ultimate task of the moral philosopher then is to describe the ways we avoid each other's censure by exercising appropriate moral judgement.[487]

According to Fleischacker, Smith argues that the way we do this is through the psychological processes he describes as 'sympathy' and 'spectatorship'; the ability to consider our conduct from the perspective of an internal and imagined spectator. This impartial spectator however suffers a fatal flaw. As Fleischacker points out, our impartial spectators are flawed because they are in our own "conscience"[488] and thus we cannot be confident that they will give us the power to overcome our partial judgements whilst in the throes of powerful "passions".[489] If for example we are being drawn along by anger after finding out that the ice cream shop is out of our favourite flavour, it may be difficult to discern the

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[483] *Ibid.*

[484] *Ibid.*, p. 269

[485] *Ibid.,* p. 265

[486] *TMS* III.1.5

[487] Fleischacker, "Philosophy and Moral Practice", pp. 259-60

[488] Here I follow Fleischacker ("Philosophy and Moral Practice", pp. 259-60) when he writes "[t]he internal judge can… equivalently be called the "impartial spectator," or simply, as the facility that tells or reminds us what we ought to do, "conscience.""

[489] Which for Smith can be both bodily functions like the sensation of hunger (*TMS* I.ii.1.1-11), but more commonly emotions like resentment (*TMS* I.ii.3.1) and love (*TMS* I.ii.4.2).

moral[490] difference between expressing our disappointment through a quiet sigh and yelling at the staff. In the midst of our anger, yelling at the staff may appear to both our selves and our impartial spectators as an appropriate response. Why then do we sometimes fail react in a way that those around us would deem appropriate? We fail because, as Fleischacker argues, "even the impartial spectator does not entirely suffice…to combat the temptations of self-deceit"[491] and because "our faculties of moral judgement tend to be tainted by self-love".[492] However, despite the fallible nature of our impartial spectator, all is not lost.

Because "the spectator within ourselves is so heavily biased in our own favour,"[493] Fleischacker notes that Smith also argues that we have developed the ability[494] to formulate moral rules that act as a safeguard against the failure of our imaginative conscience to be adequately impartial. Through "a process that looks suspiciously like gossip (what "every body is saying") – through "our observations on the behaviour of our neighbours" – we "naturally come to form general rules about human conduct".[495] These rules are developed in our "cool hours"[496] when we are not being driven by our passions. However just because they are developed when our humours are balanced does not mean they are the product of careful rational deduction in the manner of Singer or Rawls. Rather we develop these rules through our lived experience, including not only what we see, hear, and feel in our daily life but also, in true Rortian fashion, through what we learn and experience from novels and plays or indeed any part of the human experience.[497] Returning to our ice cream scenario, even if we are angry, a

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[490] Morality is for Smith a matter of propriety rather than right. Hence I can talk about the morality of our public expressions.
[491] Fleischacker, "Philosophy in Moral Practice", p. 260
[492] *Ibid.,* p. 261
[493] *Ibid.,* p. 259
[494] Or in Smith's terminology, "God" or "nature" has "implanted" in us the ability (*TMS* II.ii.3.4-5).
[495] Fleischacker, "Philosophy in Moral Practice", p. 260
[496] *TMS* II.ii.3.7
[497] In *TMS* II.ii.3.5 Smith argues that the moral rules we develop to guide our conduct are not just developed from our personal encounters with others, but can also be learnt by studying the sentiments of other people through forms of fiction such as plays. Rorty makes a similar argument in his *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*: "Fiction like that of Dickens, Olive Schreiner, or Richard Wright gives us the details about kinds of suffering being endured by people to whom we had previously not attended. Fiction like that of Choderlos de Laclos, Henry Hames, or Nabokov gives us the details about what sorts of cruelty we ourselves are capable of, and thereby lets us redescribe ourselves. That is why the novel, the movie, and the TV programme have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress" (*Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. xvi).

majority of human beings will have developed a "fixed rule in our mind" [498] that getting angry with other people when they are not necessarily to blame for the situation will be perceived as an act of immaturity and will arouse sympathy in neither a flesh and bone spectator nor an imagined impartial spectator.[499] In the heat of the moment our own imagined spectator may be blind to the impropriety of yelling at the staff of the ice cream shop. Luckily however the rules which we have created in our more reflective moments come in to play and remind us how a more impartial judge of our behaviour may look upon our situation. In this way we are able to avoid the problems that come with acting as we please without regard for others. Or as Fleischacker quoting Smith explains, these rules

come to be "of great use in correcting the misrepresentations of self-love concerning what is fit and proper to be done" in each particular situation we find ourselves. Revulsion at (or the approval of) the behaviour of others, in specific circumstances, translates into a rule against (or for) such conduct in all similar circumstances, and these rules give our internal spectator a way of preventing the misinterpretation of our circumstances that passion alone might have urged.[500]

The importance that Smith attributes to moral rules Fleischacker sees as the main point of contact and similarity between Kant and Smith's moral philosophies. He argues that both Smith's empirically formed moral rules and the maxims deduced from Kant's categorical imperative serve to "remind [us] that those rules, which [we] most often affirm in their application to others, also and necessarily apply to [ourselves]". Because both Smith's rules and Kant's maxims "function as a remedy for self-deceit",[501] both offer a theory of moral philosophy which, in terms of practice, are remarkably similar.

Textual Evidence for Fleischacker's Reading

Fleischacker points to three passages in Smith's work to support his interpretation that "Smith clearly looks forward to Kant" when he conceptualises human beings

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[498] Fleischacker, "Philosophy in Moral Practice", p. 260 quoting Smith *TMS* III.4.12
[499] For Smith the only time we would be able to sympathise with the person who cannot get their ice cream is if we were aware of a staff member having the intent to deliberately make the product unavailable. See *TMS* II.i.4.2-4.
[500] Fleischacker, "Philosophy in Moral Practice", p. 261 quoting *TMS* III.4.12
[501] *Ibid.,* p. 263

as beings caught in a struggle between their 'animal' passions and their 'rational'[502] minds or consciences and the importance moral rules play in allowing conscience to defeat decisions driven by unruly passions. The first of these passages reads

[w]hen I endeavour to examine my own conduct, when I endeavour to pass sentence upon it…it is evident that…I divide myself, as it were, into two persons; and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of. The first is the spectator…The second is the agent, the person whom I properly call myself[503]

In this passage Smith conceptualises the moral subject in a similar fashion to Kant. Smith conceptualises the moral subject as a being split into two distinct perspectives or 'selves' that are in conflict with each other. One perspective or self is driven by 'passion', 'emotion' or 'sentiment'. The other 'higher level' self can reflect on the low self's behaviour and make judgements about it. This second self is the rational self.

The second passage reads

[i]t is not the soft power of humanity, it is not that feeble spark of benevolence which Nature has lighted up in the human heart, that is thus capable of counteracting the strongest impulse of self-love. It is a stronger power, a more forcible motive, which exerts itself upon such occasions. It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct. It is he who, whenever we are about to act so as to affect the happiness of others, calls to us, with a voice capable of astonishing the most presumptuous of our passions, that we are but one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it…It is from him only that we learn the real littleness of ourselves, and of whatever relates to ourselves, and the natural misrepresentations of self-love can be corrected only by the eye of this impartial spectator.[504]

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[502] Fleischacker ("Philosophy in Moral Practice", p. 266) recognises what Sen and Rawls do not, arguing that "when he [Smith] calls conscience "reason", however, and speaks of a role, albeit a limited one, for reason in our moral thought, he is not using "reason" in the Kantian sense. "Reason", he says, is the "judging faculty", the faculty by which by which we "judge of the propriety and impropriety of desires and affections"".

[503] Fleischacker, "Philosophy in Moral Practice", p. 260 quoting *TMS* III.1.6.

[504] *Ibid.*, p. 260 quoting TMS III.3.4

This second passage exhibits, like Kant, the clear priority of "reason" over the "passions", with the latter being equated to "self-love" and the former with some kind of normative moral faculty.

The third passage is the most important and forms the crux of Fleischacker's interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship. This passage reads

[o]ur continual observations upon the conduct of others, insensibly leads us to form to ourselves certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done or to be avoided. Some of their actions shock all our natural sentiments. We hear every body about us express the like detestation against them…We resolve never to be guilty of the like…We thus naturally lay down ourselves a general rule, that all such actions are to be avoided, as tending to render us odious, contemptible, or punishable…Other actions, on the contrary call forth our appropriation, and we hear every body around us express the same favourable opinion concerning them…We become ambitious of performing the like; and thus naturally lay down to ourselves a rule of another kind, that every opportunity of acting in this manner is carefully to be sought after.[505]

With these passages in mind, Fleischacker argues

when Smith talks of reverence for law as that which best restrains self passions, and of regard for conscience as something "capable of astonishing the most presumptuous of our passions"…he foreshadows Kant's analysis of reverence as the feeling that defeats all other feelings[506]

Or in other words, the "law" – or the rules of morality – in both Smith and Kant serve the same function of defeating the inherent partiality that comes from our 'passionate' or 'phenomenonal' self.

Fleischacker does not provide a similar level of textual evidence to show how Kant also views the problem of morality the same way Smith does. However he presumably had passages like the following in mind while developing his interpretation. In the second *Critique* for example Kant is observed arguing that

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[505] *Ibid.*, quoting *TMS* III.4.7
[506] *Ibid.*, p. 262

the propensity to make oneself as having subjective determining grounds of choice into the objective determining ground of the will in general can be called *self-love*; and if self-love makes itself lawgiving, and the unconditional practical principle, it can be called *self-deceit*.[507]

Only the

representation of the moral law deprives self-love of its influence and self-conceit of its illusion, and thereby the hindrance to pure practical reason is lessened and the representation of the superiority of its objective law to the impulses of sensibility is produced and hence, by removal of the counterweight, the relative weightiness of the law (with regard to a will affected by impulses) in the judgement of reason.[508]

And again later on in the second *Critique*:

[w]hen we can bring any flattering thought of merit into our action, then the incentive is already somewhat mixed with self-love and thus has some assistance from the side of sensibility. But to put everything below the holiness of duty alone and become aware that one *can* do it because our own reason recognises this as its command and says that one *ought* to do it: this is, as it were, to raise oneself altogether above the sensible world, and this consciousness of the law as also an incentive is inseparably combined with consciousness of a power *ruling over sensibility*.[509]

In all these passages Kant appears to be describing our moral psychology in a way that is remarkably similar to Smith, emphasising the importance of overcoming self-deceit, the fragility of human nature, and the power of rules to help us act morally.

Haakonssen's Interpretation of the Kant-Smith Relationship

Insofar as we focus on these points Fleischacker's interpretation is compelling. And not only is Fleischacker's interpretation compelling. It is reinforced by Knud Haakonssen, who makes a similar (though less developed) argument to Fleischacker and is thus worth summarising. Hedging his reading by telling us that "the extent to which these snippets from the transcendental workshop [the

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[507] *CPrR* AK 5:74
[508] *CPrR* AK 5:75-6
[509] *CPrR* AK 5:159

notes Kant left behind as discussed in the first chapter] provide evidence of a more general Smithian influence on Kant's ethics must be left for specialised investigation",[510] Haakonssen nonetheless proceeds to put forth an interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship that follows Fleischacker's (and indeed Sen's) lead by also arguing that Smith's concern with impartial moral rules is mirrored in Kant's moral philosophy. Haakonssen argues that "Kant focused on two concepts" in Smith's work, "sympathy and the spectator". In regards to sympathy Haakonssen argues that Kant "probably saw Smith as a continuer of Hutcheson and Hume". However in regards to the idea of spectatorship, Haakonssen argues that Smith's work can be "associated with some central Kantian ideas". [511]

The central Kantian idea that Haakonssen refers to is the inherent impartiality of maxims derived from the categorical imperative. Haakonssen argues Smith's emphasis on "impartiality" in the spectator's judgements and the moral rules we develop from experience is "similar" to Kant's "universality" in that both require "individuals in relevantly similar circumstances" to also judge "similarly if the judgement and the will are to be considered moral". Here "in this perspective", Haakonssen argues, "we can see Smith's impartial spectator as a significant step towards Kant's notion of the autonomous will that creates the moral life by willing in accordance with specifiable and necessary criteria". Even though "Smith had no idea of a 'noumenal' self…as a member of a transcendent realm of freedom" and "accounts for the formation of the impartial spectator in empirical terms as a matter of social and psychological processes" he "nevertheless…makes his own division of the person, into the empirical self of immediate desires and actions and the ideal impartial spectator harboured in our conscience beyond the sway of desires and the necessity of action". In doing so "one has to allow that he [Smith] also makes a conceptual point that has some similarity to Kant's transcendental argument". Because Smith conceives of human nature as torn between its "desires" and what it knows through spectatorship, Haakonssen believes that "for Smith", like Kant, "the truly moral person is independent of partial and interested concerns in a given situation, including his or her own

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[510] Haakonssen K., *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 150
[511] *Ibid.*, p. 149

concerns". Again like Kant, Smith also sees "adherence to general moral rules" and the "duty" to follow them as a key element of moral theory". Furthermore, Haakonssen contends that for Smith "in following rules there is a "crucial demand for us…to be impartial, which means doing the right thing for its own sake, not for the sake of a particular person".[512] In short, like Fleischacker, Haakonssen also argues that Kant and Smith, despite their different methodologies, both divide the moral subject into a wild animal self and a calm rational moral self and see the ability to follow impartial moral rules as the primary mechanism through which the moral self governs the whole moral subject.

How Fleischacker's Interpretation Avoids the Problems in Sen's Interpretation

At this point it can be noted that Fleischacker and Haakonssen's shared interpretation can appear similar to Sen's insofar as it focuses in on the fact that both Kant and Smith's moral theories value impartiality and find an important place for 'reason' in our moral deliberations. So what then makes Fleischacker and Haakonssen's interpretation superior to Sen's? Their interpretation is superior because they are more sensitive to the divergent methodologies that underpin Kant and Smith's moral philosophies and the effect this has on the way Kant and Smith conceptualise the moral subject and, consequently, the way they conceptualise moral deliberation.

Sensitive to Kant and Smith's methodological differences Fleischacker acknowledges that Kant's two-fold conception of the human moral subject is a "necessary consequence of the structure of experience" (as argued in the first *Critique*) while Smith's conception of the human moral subject is wholly empirical.[513] Because he recognises this difference, Fleischacker does not try to argue that the categorical imperative is merely a recasting of the psychological processes Smith uses to describe moral interaction or vice versa, as Sen tends to. Unlike Sen, Fleischacker acknowledges that

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[512] *Ibid.*, pp. 151-2
[513] *Fleischacker*, "Philosophy and Moral Practice", p. 263

when he [Smith] calls conscience "reason"…and speaks of a role, albeit a limited one, for reason in our moral thought, he is not using "reason" in the Kantian sense. "Reason" he [Smith] says, is "the judging faculty", the faculty by which we "judge of the propriety or impropriety of desires and affections".[514]

When Kant speaks of 'reason' he speaks about a particular *a priori* cognitive apparatus. Reason in Kant's moral philosophy is not *instrumental*, as Sen and Rawls' assume it to be. It is *transcendental*. As Fleischacker correctly observes,

[o]ne might say that the entire point of the first *Critique* is to show the freedom of reason. Reason demands that empirical phenomena be fitted under the category of cause-and-effect, but precisely *in* that demand recognises that it cannot place its own workings, its own very establishment of causal determinism, under that determinist framework… in the second *Critique* he tells us that practical reason has primacy over speculative reason, which implies that our very pursuit of empirical science and its principles depends originally on our freedom… in this way, Kant argues himself entirely out of the empiricist approach to moral thought.

Smith, on the other hand, because he has a naturalistic and historicist methodology has to *necessarily* develop a concept of reason that is quite different from Kant's. As a consequence he grounds his moral theory *entirely* within an empiricist approach that can say nothing of a freedom of a will. In Fleischacker's own words,

[w]e have only to look at Smith's proposed genealogy for the internal spectator, as a necessary consequence of our natural and necessary desires for approbation, to see that he has no room for the possibility of free choice, or for the absolute good which, according to Kant, can only be posited on the assumption of free choice.[515]

While Fleischacker may be overstating his case by eliminating the possibility that Smith may have a *weak compatibilist* conception of free will, he is nonetheless aware of the importance of the difference between Smith and Kant's moral philosophy on this topic and thus is not willing to make the same claim as Sen that Kant's moral theory is a direct extension of Smith's. Fleischacker limits his argument to suggesting that "even though they ground rules differently"[516] the "categorical imperative, like Smith's conscience and moral rules, seems to

[514] *Ibid.*, p. 266
[515] *Ibid.*, pp. 267-8
[516] *Ibid.*, p. 263

function as a remedy for self-deceit". [517] Thus insofar as Kant "disagrees with Smith, he does so not over the need for moral philosophy to defeat self-deceit, but over the adequacy of Smith's own mechanism for the battle". [518]

Some Problems with Fleischacker's Reading

While Fleischacker's interpretation is well researched and argued, this reading still has to face some of the other objections I made against Sen's interpretation. It is indeed true that both Kant and Smith are concerned with defeating self-deceit, conceptualise the moral subject as caught between two competing selves, and give moral rules a pivotal role in determining our conduct. Nonetheless I believe this interpretation still overlooks the fundamental problem that Kant, as I demonstrated in the sixth chapter, outright rejects any moral theory based on self-interest or in his own words, "happiness". [519]

To briefly restate my interpretation of the antagonisms between Smith and Kant's moral philosophies, Smith's theory of morality – like Sen's, Singer's, or Rawls' – is a theory which hangs on particular social and historical arrangements. Its moral subjects are existing human beings with particular wants and desires, as opposed to formal and abstract reason itself. As a consequence of this the answer to the question 'what is good?' can only be found in an account of experience or an account of how human beings live their lives. For example, Rawls can only tell us what is just through an assessment of how goods in a particular society are distributed; Singer can only tell us what is good according to how other people's well-being is affected by our actions; and Smith can only tell us what is moral through an assessment of how people act in any given society and culture.

Even though theories like Smith's appear mainly 'descriptive' and those of Singer and Rawls 'perspective' or 'rationalistic', they all share in common the basic

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[517] *Ibid.*, p. 264

[518] *Ibid.*

[519] As Kant makes clear in his criticism of Christian Garve, any maxim of action which has as its end anything except the "unconditional observance of a categorically commanding law of free choice (i.e., of duty)" is only a maxim to "pursue an end… which is called happiness in general" and as such only that which is "conditionally good, as compared to with what is a lesser or greater good" rather than that which is "good in itself"(*Theory & Practice* AK 8:282).

assumption that morality is a problem that should be discussed as what Kant calls a "technical"[520] problem. What Kant means by this is that when the above authors ask the question 'what is good and just' they ask a hypothetical question that takes the form 'what should I do *in order to achieve* X?' They do not provide us with categorical duties which must take the form 'you *must* X'. The former question assumes both a particular historical and social condition and further, that the good is a particular end that is *contingent* on that historical and social condition. Because of this inherent contingency they (from Kant's point of view) ignore the possibility that we have a transcendental freedom of will and as such, tell us nothing about the moral law nor our ability to act in accordance with it. The later statement on the other hand, from Kant's point of view, does not make any particular reference to our experience and hence is the only way we can talk about morality as something not ultimately reducible to *particular* inclinations of a person or group of people.[521] It is thus also something on which a concept of the will as the power to act rationally (as opposed to merely following our appetites) can be grounded. To quote directly from Kant again,

the genuine moral incentive of pure practical reason is… nothing other than the pure moral law itself insofar as it lets us discover the sublimity of our own supersensible existence and subjectively effects respect for the higher vocation of human beings, who are at the same time conscious of their sensible existence and of the dependence, connected with it, on their pathologically affected nature.[522]

Thus, contra Fleischacker, I argue that the most that can be said is that it is possible (though not necessary) that Kant and Smith's moral rules lead to the same kinds of outcomes (not compulsively lying for example). However it cannot said with confidence that their moral rules "serve the same purpose". The rules which Smith's moral agents create through experience and which later act as rudders for prudent action in the heat of the moment serve the particular contingent end of securing our happiness by avoiding the scorn of others (from both other people and our own conscience). Even something like avoiding "self-deceit" is for Smith, in the end, merely something that helps us improve our

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[520] *Groundwork* AK 4:416
[521] *MM* AK 6:221
[522] *CPrR* AK 5:88

happiness by helping us act with propriety. Kant's rules on the other hand can be interpreted as serving quite a different purpose. Kant's critical conception of morality does not care for anyone's happiness (that is to say, his morality does not care about how someone achieves a particular end). It may well, for example, be imagined that the categorical imperative has nothing to say about yelling in an ice cream shop. Rather, the rules of morality in Kant's theory serve as a way for humanity to exercise its 'higher' capabilities and transcend the sticky web of the causal universe as we cognise it in experience.[523] Because morality is essentially a matter of freedom rather than happiness for Kant, acting morally can, in true Sartrean style, be a quite *unhappy* thing.[524]

Smith's 'Moral Aristocracy'

At this point one might object that, like Hutcheson, Smith rejects psychological egoism and is not, as I suggested above, someone merely concerned with the answer to the hypothetical question 'what should I do in order to be happy?' It can be argued that Smith's theory of morality is not simply a theory of how we seek out happiness by avoiding the ire of our own conscience, our friends, and our society. It can be argued, like Jerry Muller has, that Smith does not subscribe to a form of psychological egoism because of his "insistence that there [is] a higher moral rung than action based on desire for the approval of others". This higher rung is the "desire" for "virtue for its own sake". As Muller reads Smith, most "of those around us" achieve only a "lower standard" of morality which consists in avoiding the scorn of others. However, there are a rare few sages who are also able to measure their conduct against a "higher standard" of "moral perfection". These sages are even able to "challenge public opinion and to ignore the approval of the actual people around who are less well informed or less noble in their

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[523] As Philippa Foot notes, that we as empirical beings would *even want to* hang onto this transcendental freedom and thus be 'moral beings' in Kant's eyes is not something Kant himself considers ("Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives", *The Philosophical Review*, volume 81, number 3, 1972, pp. 305-316).

[524] For example, as we saw in the sixth chapter, Kant argues that it may be necessary to sacrifice innocents in order to hang onto transcendental freedom.

judgements".[525] This reading of Smith's moral philosophy is also one Fleischacker appears to endorse when he argues

[d]uty, the regard for rules…forms the apex of Smith's system of moral judgement, directing "reason" or "conscience", which in turn encourages or restrains our immediate selfish and benevolent passions. And it is this placement of duty, and this conception of rules, that comes so startlingly close to Kant.[526]

Like Muller, Fleischacker believes that Smith's moral philosophy contains a second 'higher' element in the form of a respect for "duty". This is important to Fleischacker's interpretation because by arguing that Smith has a second level of morality based on duty he can shift his description of Smith away from that of the naturalist and historicist thinker I described in the first section of this thesis to emphasising the parts of Smith's moral philosophy where he seems to fall back onto a quasi-metaphysics based on his religious convictions (in particular, Stoicism[527]). Fleischacker argues this in order to draw out the superficial similarities this 'higher' order moral thinking shares with Kant's critical philosophy. However, even though Kant conceptualises the human moral subject as caught between lower and higher influences, this does not mean he, like Smith, develops a moral hierarchy. Fleischacker, well versed in the arguments of the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*, heads off this possible interpretation, noting

Kant most explicitly seems to be criticising Smith on the subject of whether upright people constitute some sort of aristocracy. Rawls rightly says that Kant has no room for a moral aristocracy. Smith definitely does have such room. The mechanism of approbation that shapes moral character takes note only of remarkable acts, not the behaviour of the everyday…For Kant, this is a moral flaw in Smith's system, a moment of unfaithfulness to the ideal of humility.[528]

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[525] Muller J., *Adam Smith in His Time and Ours: Designing the Decent Society*, Princeton NJ: Prince University Press, 1993, pp. 107-108

[526] Fleischacker, "Philosophy and Moral Practice", p. 261. See also Griswold C.L., *Adam Smith and the Virtues of the Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 130-35 for a similar interpretation which argues that because Smith believes we "have a natural incentive to be virtuous" he also "has an important place in his moral system for the notion of "duty"".

[527] See Forman-Barzilai F., *Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy: Cosmopolitanism and Moral Theory*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, *passim*., Clarke P.H., "Adam Smith, Stoicism, and Religion in the 18th Century", *History of the Human Sciences*, volume 13, number 4, 2000, pp. 49-72, and Jones H.B., "Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic Ethic, and Adam Smith", *Journal of Business Ethics*, volume 95, number 1, 2010, pp. 89-96.

[528] Fleischacker, "Philosophy and Moral Practice", p. 265

While this interpretation of Kant's moral philosophy is in accordance with the one I developed in the first part of this thesis, here I also argue that contra Fleischacker there *are* times when Kant *does* appear to talk about something that resembles Smith's 'moral aristocracy'. And it is here, I believe, Fleischacker misses an opportunity to look into another thread that links Kant and Smith's moral philosophy in a way that avoids the problem of Kant's anti-historicist methodology categorically rejecting Smith's moral psychology. This is the idea that rather than Kant's critical philosophy (with its maxims derived from the categorical imperative and thorough anti-historicism), it is in Kant's loose virtue ethics in which we can begin to see how Smith's moral philosophy left an indelible mark on Kant's broader philosophical corpus. It is this idea that I will pursue in the final part of this thesis.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have briefly outlined Fleischacker's interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship. This interpretation is more sophisticated than Sen's and avoids committing the same mistake Sen makes when he assumes that Kant's moral philosophy is merely a kind of what he calls 'transcendental institutionalism' – a system that tries to create institutions or procedures which foster the creation of particular outcomes – rather than a moral philosophy that focuses on the possibility of freedom from causal reality. Nonetheless I have argued that Fleischacker, like Sen, still believes the locus of Smith's influence on Kant is in Kant's critical moral philosophy, whether that be in impartiality or moral rules. Insofar as Fleischacker believes the heart of Smith's influence on Kant's thinking is found in his critical moral philosophy, I have argued that one has to willingly ignore Kant's endless admonishment of moral philosophy that is historically grounded, including Smith's. As a result, while Fleischacker's interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship is compelling I believe it can be improved upon by avoiding the temptation to try to make direct correlations between the categorical imperative and Smith's impartial spectator.

To get around the problems that arise when trying to argue that Smith's moral philosophy has somehow influenced Kant's critical moral philosophy, in the following and final part of this thesis I will argue that Smith's influence on Kant's philosophy is not found in his critical philosophy, but in another less discussed project in Kant's broader philosophical programme. This less discussed project is what I will call Kant's 'pre-critical' moral philosophy.

PART 3 – RECONCILING KANT AND SMITH'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Chapter 9: Kant's 'Virtue Ethics'

In the previous two sections of this thesis I argued that any interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship which focuses on the idea that Smith's moral psychology has parallels in Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative is going to run up against the problem that Kant's critical philosophy − which includes his moral philosophy as elaborated in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique* − is fundamentally at odds with any philosophical programme that tries to naturalise or historicise inquiry in the way Smith hopes to do, particularly in his *Astronomy* and *Moral Sentiments*. In the last chapter however I hinted at the idea that there is something peculiar that sits alongside Kant's discussion of categorical imperatives and freedom of the will. In the process of pointing out some of the difficulties any interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship will face, Fleischacker argues that Kant's critical moral philosophy has no room for a "moral aristocracy" like Smith's does. While I agree with this statement overall, I part company with Fleischacker's analysis insofar as this argument is applied to more than Kant's *critical* moral philosophy. I disagree with Fleischacker's argument because I believe that Kant does in fact have a 'virtue ethics' and as such, does in fact make space for a "moral aristocracy". This virtue ethics however sits outside the core of Kant's critical philosophy.

My task in this chapter is to raise the idea that Kant, in addition to his more famous description of moral philosophy in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*, also sketches out a less 'critical' kind of moral philosophy that loosely resembles what today would be called 'virtue ethics'. By showing that Kant has a virtue ethics I aim to demonstrate that there is another part to Kant's broader philosophical project that is less strictly focused on epistemological purity. I suggest that it is here that Smith's influence upon Kant's thinking can be observed. and that this account causes fewer interpretative problems than in trying to relate Kant's critical moral philosophy to Smith's historicist moral psychology.

Kant on Virtue and Moral Character

In the previous chapter I noted that Fleischacker argues that Kant does not have a moral aristocracy. Fleischacker explicitly endorses Rawls' argument that

Kant's basic moral conception is that of an aristocracy of everyone, each a free and equal person. It is not an aristocracy of nature, or of social class, or an aristocracy of intellect and beauty, or of unusual achievement. *Nor is it, one might carelessly think, an aristocracy of moral character and moral worth* [emphasis added].[529]

Fleischacker continues by pointing out that Smith, adopting a Platonic and Aristotelian perspective, considers "virtue" as "excellence". Accordingly, Smith argues excellence cannot consist in the "the common degree of the moral". By contrast, Kant argues "for be a man never so virtuous, all the goodness he can ever perform is still his simple duty; and to do his duty is nothing more than to do what is in the common moral order and hence in no way deserving of wonder".[530]

While Fleischacker is correct when he argues that Kant does not conceptualise virtue as "excellence" like Smith, Plato, or Aristotle, and while it is most definitely true that Kant does not have an aristocracy based on personal moral worth, Kant does – like the virtue ethicists – have a limited concept of *moral character*. This is important to note because insofar as Kant has a concept of moral character he can, like Smith, admit the existence of some kind of limited moral hierarchy.

Kant's 'Virtue Ethics' in The Doctrine of Virtue

Kant's fullest treatment of the matter is found in the Doctrine of Virtue in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. In the Doctrine of Virtue Kant defines virtue as

the strength of a human being's maxims in fulfilling his duty. – Strength of any kind can be recognised only by the obstacles it can overcome, and in the

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[529] Fleischacker, *Philosophy in Mora*l Practice, p. 265 citing an unpublished lecture by Rawls.
[530] *Ibid.*, citing Kant, *Religion* (trans Greene T.M. & Hudson H.H., New York: Harper and Row, 1960, p. 44) and *TMS* I.i.5.5.

case of virtue these obstacles are natural inclinations, which can come into conflict with the human being's moral resolution.[531]

He also defines virtue as

the moral strength of a *human being's* will in fulfilling his *duty*, a moral *constraint* through his own lawgiving reason, insofar as this constitutes itself an authority *executing* the law.[532]

It is the "resolve to withstand…what opposes the moral disposition *within us*".[533]

Unlike Kant's discussion of morality in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique* where the conversation is largely restricted to the transcendental basis of morality,[534] here Kant discusses a potentially *empirical* element of morality; namely, the strength of a *human being's will* (as opposed to a pure will) to overcome its phenomenal nature. In doing so Kant comes close to Smith, who also describes some virtues in similar terms. Smith writes

[v]irtue is excellence, something uncommonly great and beautiful, which rises far above what is vulgar and ordinary. The amiable virtues consist in that degree of sensibility which surprises by its exquisite and unexpected delicacy and tenderness. The awful and respectable, in that *degree of self–command which astonishes by its amazing superiority over the most ungovernable passions of human nature* [emphasis added].[535]

By talking about morality as something *human beings have to struggle for* rather than talking about morality in terms of transcendental duties, Kant turns morality into a topic of *practice* rather than a question about the formal structure of practical reason or rationalist persuasion. It is for this reason he talks about the possibility of educating ourselves in order to improve our moral characters.

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[531] *MM* AK 6:394

[532] *MM* AK 6:405

[533] *MM* AK 6:380

[534] For example, Kant opens the *Groundwork* (AK 4:393-4) arguing that while "[u]nderstanding, wit, judgement and the like, whatever such *talents* of mind may be called, or courage, resolution, and perseverance in one's plans, as qualities of *temperament*, are undoubtedly good" they have "no inner unconditional worth but always presume a good will, which limits the esteem one otherwise rightly has for them and does not permit their being taken as absolutely good".

[535] *TMS* I.i.5.6

As opposed to the short discussion of moral motivation in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique* as simple matter of spontaneous choice,[536] in the Doctrine of Virtue Kant devotes considerable space to discussing the ways moral practice can be reformed and improved upon in the human species. For example, he talks about the ways teachers can train their students to make moral decisions based on the recognition of the priority of the moral law rather than by calculating the happiness which results from performing our "bitter duties".[537] Elsewhere Kant talks about the need to "not only" teach "the concept of virtue but also how to put into practice and cultivate the *capacity for* as well as the will to virtue".[538] Even more startling, while talking about strategies to cultivate virtue (defined as the strength of the human will to act out of respect for duty) Kant even appears to make wholesale use of Smith's own metaphors. In very much the same language of Smith's *Moral Sentiments*, Kant argues that we have a "duty" to use and develop our ability to partake in "*Sympathetic joy* and *sadness* (*sympathia moralis*)…[or the] sensible feelings of pleasure or displeasure at another's state of joy or pain" which "Nature has already implanted in human beings".[539] Not only does Kant talk about a need to develop our sympathetic ability (an ability to understand how others feel), he makes the Smithian step of also arguing that we have a "duty…to cultivate our conscience, to sharpen our attentiveness to the voice of the inner judge and use every means to obtain a hearing for it".[540] Or in other words, Kant appears to argue that we have a duty to use and develop something quite similar to Smith's impartial spectator.

Moral Hierarchy in Kant's Critical Moral Philosophy

Because Kant defines virtue as the strength of our will or the ability to listen to our conscience or impartial spectator rather than cave in to our passions, he also allows for the possibility of a vague moral hierarchy. Morality in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique* is strictly a formal question about how a will follows maxims derived from the categorical imperative without regard for any contingent

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[536] *CPrR* AK 5:36, *Groundwork* AK 4:395-6
[537] *MM* AK 6:377
[538] *MM* AK 6:412
[539] *MM* AK 6:456
[540] *MM* AK 6:401

factors or consequences whatsoever. There is no possibility of moral rank and distinction. However, here in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, by talking about morality in terms of moral character – in terms of our personal ability to suppress our 'animal instincts' and listen to our impartial spectator – there is the possibility that we can be graded and measured according to our relative strengths and, as such, admit some kind of moral ranking. Because our moral *worth* is always absolutely equal before the moral law, Rawls and Fleischacker cannot be faulted for saying that Kant does not have a moral aristocracy. However, it can also be argued that Kant has a moral aristocracy insofar as he discusses moral character rather than the moral law itself. That is to say, here in the Doctrine of Virtue Kant argues that within the human species itself some are better able to keep their will more pure than others despite the fact that we all have the same will qua rational beings and the same moral worth qua rational beings.

This debate about whether or not Kant has a moral aristocracy may seem to be of limited importance. However, because it makes us aware of another part of Kant's moral philosophy (his discussion of the ability of *human beings* to exercise freedom), it has some important implications for this thesis. That Kant wants to discuss virtue signals that there is more going on in his moral philosophy than an attempt to document the structure of pure practical reason, demonstrate an epistemological proof of freedom of will, and formulate a law that all rational minds are compelled to follow in order to exercise this freedom. It is here in Kant's discussion of moral character rather than the possibility of the freedom of the will or the categorical imperative that we can begin to see another place Smith may have influenced Kant's moral philosophy, namely, Kant's description of moral practice.

Some Caveats in Kant's Virtue Ethics as Explained in the Doctrine of Virtue

Before I continue to argue that Kant has a virtue ethics and that it is here we should look for Smith's influence, I need to address some important criticisms that can be raised against this interpretation. In proximity to the passages cited above, Kant continually prefaces his discussions of virtue by pointing out that it is a secondary concern. In the above quotations Kant describes the duty to cultivate

our virtue as only an "indirect" or "conditional" duty.[541] This means, as Allen Wood puts it, we do not have categorical duties to

maximise our own perfection or the happiness of others… rather, they are duties to include all the instances of our own perfection and the happiness of others among our ends, but they allow us to set our own priorities among these instances and to pursue some rather than others if they fit better into our lives. Thus they are *wide* duties, duties that determine us to make something our end but leave us with latitude (or "play room") regarding how far we promote the obligatory ends and which actions we take toward them. Such actions are meritorious; their omission is not blameworthy unless it proceeds from a refusal to adopt the kind of end at all.[542]

In other words, in Kant's moral philosophy virtue is nice to have, and indeed necessary to strive for, but it is not itself 'moral'. Being virtuous is merely the *capacity* to be moral. Kant himself makes this quite clear, noting that encouraging people to be virtuous is indeed "a great step… taken *toward* morality" but it is not in itself "a moral step".[543] More problematic however, not only is virtue merely instrumental for being moral rather than a measure of morality itself, Kant even appears quite suspicious about virtue and assessments of moral character. This suspicion of virtue and moral character comes from his suspicion (that I have already discussed in the sixth chapter of this thesis) of all forms of moral philosophy that describe morality in empirical terms.

Kant's suspicion of virtue ethics is based on his conviction that our moral character, as something only observable in experience – whether that be "outer" or "inner sense"[544] – cannot ever really tell us much about whether our actions are the product of a will which is freely following the moral law or are the product of a will being driven by our psychology or by our "technical"[545] (instrumental) use of reason to acquire a particular end. In other words, we cannot be sure if someone's virtue is just a simulacrum of morality, including our own. Even if we believe ourselves to be acting out of respect for the moral law, because our will is in some sense noumenal – whether epistemologically or ontologically – it is

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[541] *MM* AK 6:380, 405
[542] Wood A., *Kantian Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 169
[543] *Perpetual Peace* AK 8:376
[544] Kant's terminology for "the actuality of myself and of my state" that "is directly evident through consciousness" (*CPR* A38/B55).
[545] *Groundwork* AK 4:416

impossible for us to ever really be sure about what causes are actually determining our will. [546] Because our will exists in some sense outside the theoretical perspective or state – because it is a part of our transcendental psychology and thus not wholly explicable in terms of phenomenonal experience – we cannot inspect the nature of our will to see if it is in fact 'pure'.

That we cannot cognise what is determining our will with any certainty leads Kant to express doubts about analyses of character as a useful exercise and argue that "even the best" human beings have a fundamental "propensity to evil". This is not simply evidenced by "the multitude of woeful examples that the experience of human *deeds* parades before us", but also, for reasons which "remain inexplicable to us", we create maxims which "incorporate" the desires of our instrumental reason rather than maxims that are in accordance with the categorical imperative.[547] Simply put, Kant displays a decided sense that humans cannot ever be genuinely moral beings.[548]

As with my critique of Sen and Fleischacker, I believe the ramifications of Kant's commitment to transcendental justifications of knowledge and morality cannot simply be ignored as a part of an arcane philosophical debate that does not affect the nitty-gritty of moral practice. Because Kant postulates the entire transcendental apparatus of reason and the subsequent division of our knowledge into epistemological viewpoints, he is committed to a conception of moral practice that is incommensurable with Smith's. And this is necessarily so. If our moral selves were cognisable, if we could determine whether or not we are truly moral (that is, if we could determine if we are actually doing 'good' because of a commitment to duty rather than the benefits we can reap from being good), and if we could determine whether our virtuous behaviour has been created to help us

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[546] This complex and fraught topic about our "intelligible" and "empirical" characters is discussed at length in Allison H.E., *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 29-53.

[547] *Religion* AK 6:29-43

[548] This also suggests that Kant was aware of what would later be Phillippa Foot's 'bindingness problem' (the recognition that there seems to be no "binding force" that explains why we should "take the fact that we ought to have certain ends as in itself reason to adopt them" (Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives", p. 315) and treats it not as a sign that his critical moral philosophy has somehow misrepresented what it means to be moral, but rather as a sign that human beings are morally deficient beings.

follow the moral law rather than win friends and their praise by merely appearing to be virtuous, our moral selves would be an object of our experience. As an object of experience, our moral selves would also be inextricably entwined by the forces of biology, physics, and so forth, and thus quite unable to act with the kind of transcendental freedom we necessarily assume we have when we consider ourselves from a practical epistemological point of view.

Why Kant's Virtue Ethics is not Like Smith's

Kant's suspicions about the true nature of virtuous behaviour feeds into a further difference between his own and Smith's conception of virtue and moral character. Smith believes virtue can be directly equated with the good and is something that can be cultivated through social and historical processes. As stated above, Kant explicitly denies that virtue is the good. Not only does Kant disagree with Smith on this point. He also disagrees with Smith's suggestion that virtue and moral character are historical objects. Consider again the discussion in the fourth chapter of this thesis. Smith associates different sets of virtues with different cultures and societies, and even has a hierarchy of "civilisation" which measures the progress of the development of virtue.[549] As I noted above in my discussion of the Doctrine of Virtue, Kant does discuss the idea that moral character is something that can be changed through education. Nevertheless, his critical impulse also leads him to reject the idea that moral character is something entirely dependent on causal phenomena. Kant rejects Smith's historicist graduation of virtue, arguing

virtue is not to be defined and valued merely as an *aptitude* and as… a long-standing *habit* of morally good actions *acquired by practice* [my emphasis].[550]

If virtue is just a matter of habit and exposure in the way it is for Smith – if virtue is a set of behaviours and beliefs developed through time and from experience – then the choice to be virtuous may well be determined by antecedent causes (for example, by what our parents, our genes, or our culture have done to us). If this is

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[549] *TMS* V.2.1-16
[550] *MM* AK 6:383

the case, there is nothing we can say about a free will making a choice to respect the moral law and as such, there is nothing we can say about morality itself.

This is the vital sticking point for Kant. Because Kant's moral theory needs to defend an incompatibilist account of moral freedom he cannot conceptualise the good as something existing in experience, nor for that matter, can he define moral character as something wholly determined by and cognisable in experience. To do so we would have to conceptualise the human being as

> a marionette or an automaton like Vaucanson's, built and wound up by the supreme artist; self-consciousness would indeed make him a thinking automaton, but the consciousness of his own spontaneity, if taken for freedom, would be a mere delusion inasmuch as it deserves to be called freedom only comparatively, because the proximate determining causes for its motion and a long series of their determining causes are indeed internal but the last and highest is found entirely in an alien hand.[551]

Thus Kant argues that for morality to be possible, we must considers ourselves "as a thing in itself" who can view "our existence *insofar as it does not stand under conditions of time*" and who are *"determinable only through laws"* which we give ourselves "by reason" and thus view our "intelligible existence as nothing but the consequence and never as the determined ground of our causality as a *noumenon*".[552]

Because of this view of our moral character as timeless Kant ultimately makes its reform or improvement an almost religious experience in the sense that it requires an *ahistorical* revolution of our noumenal self:

> [s]o long as the foundation of the maxims of the human being remains impure, [its character] cannot be effected through gradual *reform* but must rather be effected through a *revolution* in [its] disposition (a transition to the maxim of holiness of disposition). And so a "new man" can come about only through a kind of rebirth, as it were a new creation (John, 3:5 compare with Genesis, 1:2) and a change of heart.[553]

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[551] *CPrR* AK 5:101
[552] *CPrR*: AK 5:97-8
[553] *Religion* AK 6:47

While Kant does expound a theory of virtue, it is not a theory of virtue that is historically grounded like Smith's. Smith's sage is both wise but also *experienced*. In this sense Smith has a fully formed virtue ethics because it makes character development the focus of our attention. Because of Kant's epistemological[554] commitment to an ahistorical concept of moral character he cannot go down the same path as Smith and provide a fully realised theory of virtue ethics. Even the educational strategies Kant proposes must also be read not as the slow habituation towards virtue, but as some kind of strategy of encouraging the moral subject to commit to a "revolution" of its timeless moral character. Given the essentially hidden nature of moral character, virtue takes a backseat in Kant's critical moral philosophy. To quote Robert Louden, for Kant "virtue is posterior to the supreme principle of morality. Virtue remains conceptually subordinate to the moral law".[555]

Kant's Nascent Virtue Ethics

Given the limited scope of Kant's virtue ethics it is not surprising that neither Sen nor Fleischacker pursue the possibility that Kant's discussion of moral character is of much interest for anyone who would like to discuss Smith's influence upon Kant. However the decision to neglect Kant's virtue ethics is premature. Curiously, Kant has a second account of virtue quite unlike the limited one explored above. This is the account of virtue he presents in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*.

The *Observations*, published in 1764 – well before the first *Critique* (1781), the *Groundwork* (1785), and the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) – receives little attention from scholars.[556] However, chronologically, the thoughts and ideas in this book are much more likely to accurately reflect Kant's thinking at the time he first came to read Smith circa 1770. It is entirely possible that by the time Kant wrote his *Critiques*, the *Groundwork*, and the *Metaphysics of Morals* he had

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[554] This argument remains valid even if one accepts an ontological reading of Kant's transcendental ideal like the one Karl Ameriks ("Kantian Idealism Today", pp. 329-342) argues for.
[555] Louden R., "Kant's Virtue Ethics", *Philosophy*, volume 61, number 238, 1986, p. 484
[556] See however Shell S.M., "Kant as Propagator: Reflections on Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, volume 35, number 3, pp. 455-68.

changed his mind about Smith's work. Conversely, that Kant was praising Smith after writing the *Observations* but not after the first *Critique* signals that it is possible he found Smith's moral theory agreeable with his earlier work, rather than the later. It is thus quite possible that Kant's admiration for Smith comes from the recognition that they shared a similar point of view about the nature of morality that Kant formulated before his epistemological revolution; a revolution that repudiates the historicist and non-metaphysical approach to morality Smith gives in his *Moral Sentiments*. The remainder of this chapter will explore this possibility.

Virtue Ethics in Kant's Observations

Kant's *Observations* may be unrecognisable to many of those only familiar with his published critical philosophy. In this book Kant analyses a range of topics through popular and even poetic descriptions of various sentiments. In addition to extensive and, to a modern reader, disturbing commentaries on the beauty of Arabs, the stupidity of Africans, and the haughtiness of Spaniards,[557] Kant also talks about friendship, valour, sex, and most importantly, morality, in terms of the emotions which they provoke in us.[558] Though fleeting and given only in rough summation, we can also discern in this work what appears to be a prototypical theory of virtue ethics.

The *Observations*' brief discussion of morality bears the usual marks of Kantian philosophy, prefacing its conversation with warnings about the ways "true virtue" can be confused with actions that are virtuous only in appearance not intent ("one certainly cannot call that frame of mind virtuous that is a source of actions of the sort to which virtue would lead but on grounds that only contingently agree with it")[559] and admonishments that "true virtue can only be grafted upon principles".[560] However there is another conspicuous text parallel to these familiar pronouncements. In this text Kant does not discuss practical reason, the categorical imperative, our duty to follow rules, or virtue as a synonym for our

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[557] *Observations* AK 2:244-54
[558] *Observations* AK 2:211-34
[559] *Observations* AK 2:215
[560] *Observations* AK 2:217

will's strength to follow rules. Instead Kant talks about morality in terms of moral character, with virtue defined as the highest moral good, and rule-following as merely a means to achieving this good. In doing this Kant also comes strikingly close to mimicking Smith's own description of morality as presented in *Moral Sentiments* while avoiding many of the questions that are raised when trying to understand how Kant's critical philosophy works with Smith's philosophical naturalism.

A Comparison of Kant's Early Virtue Ethics with Smith's

Firstly, in the *Observations*, Kant (unlike in his critical moral philosophy but like Smith) does not argue that the moral subject is some kind of noumenal rational will that either does or does not act out of respect for the moral law. Rather, he argues that the moral subject is entirely an empirical given with a particular psychological machinery that leads it to be attracted to and thus promote particular types of virtuous behaviour. A comparison of accounts by Kant and Smith shows considerable similarities. Kant observes that

[i]n recognition of the weakness of human nature and the little power that the universal moral feeling exercise over most hearts, providence has placed such helpful drives in us as a supplement for virtue, which move some to beautiful actions even without principles while at the same time being able to give others, who are ruled by these principles, a greater impetus and a stronger impulse thereto.[561]

By comparison, Smith suggests that

Nature…has endowed him [the moral subject], not only with a desire of being approved of, but with a desire of being what ought to be approved of; or of being what he himself approves of in other men. The first desire could only have made him wish to appear to be fit for society. The second was necessary in order to render him anxious to be really fit. The first could only have prompted him to the affectation of virtue, and to the concealment of vice. The second was necessary in order to inspire him with the real love of virtue, and with the real abhorrence of vice.[562]

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[561] *Observations* AK 2:217
[562] *TMS* II.2.7

Secondly, Kant proposes a conception of the moral subject as some kind of empirical subject with a "human nature" that drives it to emulate, praise, and aspire to virtue, and hence, again rather like Smith, also sees moral rules not as maxims derived from the *a priori* structure of practical reason but as a set of reminders developed from internal reflection upon our conscience. Kant notes in this context that "true virtue can only be grafted upon principles" and immediately proceeds to add

[t]hese principles are not speculative rules, but the consciousness of a feeling that lives in every human breast [emphasis added] and that extends much further than to the special grounds of sympathy and complaisance.[563]

Or in other words, Kant agrees with Smith when the latter argues that

[i]f we examine the different shades and gradations of weakness and self–command, as we meet with them in common life, we shall very easily satisfy ourselves that this control of our passive feelings must be acquired, not from the abstruse syllogisms of a quibbling dialectic, but from that great discipline which Nature has established for the acquisition of this and of every other virtue; a regard to the sentiments of the real or supposed spectator of our conduct.[564]

Though Kant lacks Smith's more developed concept of the impartial spectator, he still agrees with Smith that mere sympathy alone is not enough to keep us on the straight and narrow. Instead we also need to develop a set of principles to guide us in our moral interactions. Furthermore, these principles are a product of experience, not metaphysical analysis, which Kant, once again like Smith, explicitly rejects as a waste of time.

Thirdly, in the *Observations* Kant does not simply appear to be following Hume's utilitarian description of moral psychology but additionally, like Smith, argues that the good has some kind of aesthetic element that we value in and of itself. Summarising his brief discussion of morality Kant writes

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[563] *Observations* AK 2:217
[564] *TMS* III.3.21

I believe that I can bring all this together if I say this ["the moral feeling that lives in every human breast"] is *the feeling of the beauty and the dignity of human nature.*[565]

The highest good is not determined solely by utilitarian calculation nor is it rationally deduced. The highest good is identified by the feeling of sublimity and beauty it arouses within us. This feeling is aroused when we see someone who appears to act not from purely selfish motives but out of admiration for virtue itself and in this way goes beyond what normal moral subjects are capable of. Or as Kant puts it

[o]nly when one subordinates one's own particular inclination to such an enlarged one can our kindly drives be proportionately applied and bring about the noble attitude that is the beauty of virtue.[566]

This observation once again bears a remarkable similarity to Smith's own prose:

[t]he man of the most perfect virtue, the man whom we naturally love and revere the most, is he who joins, to the most perfect command of his own original and selfish feelings, the most exquisite sensibility both to the original and sympathetic feelings of others. The man who, to all the soft, the amiable, and the gentle virtues, joins all the great, the awful, and the respectable, must surely be the natural and proper object of our highest love and admiration.[567]

It should be said that the textual evidence here is somewhat sparse. However this is unavoidable given the limited extent to which Kant discusses morality before the publication of his first *Critique*. Despite the relative paucity of material to work with, there is I believe something interesting going on here in Kant's early career, prior to his first encounter with Smith's work. The loose and rough discussion of virtue found in the *Observations*, though not providing a systematic discussion or analysis of moral philosophy, provides substantial evidence that at this time Kant had a fundamentally different conception of morality than the one he would later become famous for. This is important because insofar as my task is to develop the best interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship, looking at Kant's earlier writings provides a way for me to avoid the incessant problems that arise

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[565] *Observations* AK 2:217
[566] *Observations* AK 2:217
[567] *TMS* III.3.35. See also *TMS* IV.I.5.

when trying to reconcile Kant's ahistorical transcendentalism with Smith's quite thorough historicist naturalism which sits stubbornly behind Sen and Fleischacker's interpretations.

How This Interpretation is an Improvement over Fleischacker's

One of the major problems with Fleischacker's interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship is the way Kant treats moral philosophy as an epistemological matter, the way Kant defines the moral subject as some kind of non-historical subject, and how the ultimate concern of Kant's moral philosophy is a demonstration of the autonomy of the will. This is something Fleischacker himself recognises, noting that

Kant [in his critical philosophy] replaces Smith's mechanism of approbation and internationalisation… with *no* mechanism, with an insistence that morality not only needs no mechanism but cannot exist unless it is rooted in an unexplained and inexplicable freedom.[568]

This problem however can be ameliorated if one reads the Kant-Smith relationship using the *Observations* as an exemplar of Kant's moral philosophy. To better understand the interpretative significance of using this text and its concept of the moral subject, it is worthwhile reconsidering the question of whether Kant has a moral aristocracy.

In his article Fleischacker argues that "Kant most explicitly seems to be criticising Smith on the subject of whether upright people constitute some kind of aristocracy"[569] and that his own philosophy has no room for any kind of moral aristocracy. When viewing Kant's moral theory through the lens of his critical philosophy it is hard to argue against this. However if the *Observations* is used as a guide to understanding Kant's moral philosophy a different conclusion may be reached.

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[568] Fleischacker, "Philosophy in Moral Practice", p. 268
[569] *Ibid.,* p. 265

Rawls and Fleischacker define moral aristocracy as a hierarchy of moral subjects who are distinguished by "beauty" and "unusual achievement". I read this as them arguing that there are no moral sages in Kant's moral philosophy, as there are in Smith's. Insofar as they refer to Kant's critical moral philosophy I believe they cannot be faulted for this interpretation. However, reference to the *Observations* suggests that this reading may be problematic. In the *Observations* the acquisition of virtue is the *summum bonum* and those few who possess it are the object of our admiration as our moral superiors. Without the universality of reason there is no intrinsic ultimate worth in each person qua rational being. Our worth is directly correlated with our virtue, which itself is linked to our ability to follow moral rules in same way Smith's moral subjects are. This is to say there are two classes of people in Kant's *Observations*. There are those who simply go along with what accords with virtue as a matter of self-preservation, and those who act from a 'higher level' respect for the beauty of virtue itself. As Kant himself argues, only that which "rests on principles" is "genuine virtue" and only "one who… [follows] principles" can properly be called "a righteous person".[570] It is "only when one subordinates one's own particular inclination to" moral principles that we "bring about the noble attitude that is the beauty of virtue".[571] Yet most of us are driven by a simple and "crude self-interest"[572] to save face:

[t]he opinion others may have of our value and their judgements of our actions is a motivation of great weight, which can coax us into many sacrifices, and what a good part of humanity would have done neither out of an immediately arising emotion of goodheartedness nor out of principles happens often enough merely for the sake of outer appearance, out of a delusion that is very useful although in itself very facile, as if the judgements of others determined the worth of ourselves and our actions. What happens from this impulse is not in the least virtuous, for which reason everyone who wants to be taken for virtuous takes good care to conceal the motivation of lust for honour.[573]

Smith argues something similar in *Moral Sentiments*, where he notes that it is the desire to avoid the scorn and censure, and instead gain the approval of others which drives all but a few of us to act in a way that appears virtuous:

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[570] *Observations* AK 2:218
[571] *Observations* AK 2:217
[572] *Observations* AK 2:217-8
[573] *Observations* AK 2:218

[t]wo different models, two different pictures, are held out to us, according to which we may fashion our own character and behaviour; the one more gaudy and glittering in its colouring; the other more correct and more exquisitely beautiful in its outline: the one forcing itself upon the notice of every wandering eye; the other, attracting the attention of scarce any body but the most studious and careful observer. They are the wise and the virtuous chiefly, a select, though, I am afraid, but a small party, who are the real and steady admirers of wisdom and virtue. The great mob of mankind are the admirers and worshippers, and, what may seem more extraordinary, most frequently the disinterested admirers and worshippers, of wealth and greatness.[574]

The idea that there are moral sages is what leads Fleischacker to argue that Smith has a moral aristocracy. However insofar as Kant drops his critical moral philosophy with its kingdom of ends, autonomy of reason, and the categorical imperative, and replaces it with an account of human nature he too, like Smith, may also has a moral aristocracy. It is possible that in both Kant and Smith there are moral patricians and moral plebeians.

The Importance of Kant Also Having a Moral Aristocracy for Fleischacker's Interpretation

That Kant also has a moral aristocracy is important because it signals that Kant is concerned with moral practice rather than moral metaphysics, and in particular, with the way moral rules help us maintain our composure, and for a "select few", feel the beauty of the good. If attention is confined to Kant's *Observations* I agree with Fleischacker that moral rules for Kant "serve the same purpose" as they do in Smith's *Moral Sentiments* where they are the "means by which the self" can "beat down its own pride and distorted vision".[575] However, I believe Fleischacker errs when he tries to interpret Smith's influence on Kant's moral philosophy by using Kant's critical moral philosophy as embodied by the *Groundwork* and the *Critiques*. By using these texts Fleischacker is forced to try and grapple with the problem of Kant's critical moral philosophy being an ahistorical philosophy of freedom rather than a moral psychology. Drawing attention to the *Observations* avoids not only the problems of reconciling Kant and Smith's radically different

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[574] *TMS* I.iii.3.2
[575] Fleischacker, "Philosophy in Moral Practice", p. 263

methodologies, but also salvages the most important insight from Fleischacker's work: the importance of moral rules for both Kant and Smith's moral philosophy.

Fleischacker makes it a particular point to argue that "regard for rules…forms the apex of Smith's system of moral judgement, directing "reason" or "conscience", which in turn encourages or restrains our immediately selfish and benevolent passions" and that this "regard for rules" is built upon a particular feeling of ""reverence" and "awe"".[576] The problem for Fleischacker's interpretation is that it is not clear that this kind of control over emotions and reverence for those who can exercise this power is a moral *end* in Kant's critical philosophy. Because of this it is quite possible that Kant would have criticised Smith's moral psychology as merely a non-moral description of the human organism masquerading as 'true' moral philosophy (that is, moral philosophy that demonstrates the possibility of there being a free will in the first place). Attention to the *Observations* evades this problem. Rather than arguing as Fleischacker does that Kant "shares the direction of his work, if not its destination, with the moral philosophy of Adam Smith,"[577] the argument I have sort to present in this chapter makes it possible to propose that Kant's moral philosophy in the *Observations* both follows the "direction" *and* the "destination" of Smith's moral philosophy. Using the *Observations* as a point of comparison means that it is possible to assert that Smith not merely appears similar to Kant, but in fact speaks for the Kant of the *Observations* when he argues for the primacy of moral character over moral knowledge:

[t]he man who acts according to the rules of perfect prudence, of strict justice, and of proper benevolence, may be said to be perfectly virtuous. But the *most perfect knowledge of those rules will not alone enable him to act in this manner* [emphasis added]: his own passions are very apt to mislead him; sometimes to drive him and sometimes to seduce him to violate all the rules which he himself, in all his sober and cool hours, approves of. *The most perfect knowledge, if it is not supported by the most perfect self–command, will not always enable him to do his duty* [emphasis added].[578]

Conclusion

[576] *Ibid.*, p. 261 and also citing *TMS* III.4.12
[577] *Ibid.*, p. 269
[578] *TMS* VI.iii.1

In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate that there is another side to Kant's moral philosophy in the form of his virtue ethics and that looking at this is useful for interpreting the Kant-Smith relationship. I argued that looking at Kant's virtue ethics as elaborated in the Doctrine of Virtue in the *Metaphysics of Morals* is an interpretive dead end because it is informed by the basic tenets of Kant's critical philosophy. This turns Kant's virtue ethics into something that at heart is difficult to reconcile with Smith's historicist account of moral character. I then argued that there is a second account of virtue in Kant's earlier work *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* which is not only better chronologically suited for understanding the Kant-Smith relationship, but philosophically too. I argued that the account of virtue ethics in this earlier work shows none of Kant's usual epistemological concerns, and further, mirrors Smith's own methodology (and even metaphors), focusing on moral practice and moral psychology. Finally this chapter argued that Fleischacker's interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship is on the right track by focusing on the role of rules as an instrument that enables human beings to have control over their passions, but could be improved if it chose to focus on Kant's pre-critical moral philosophy as presented in works like the *Observations* rather than his 'mature' critical philosophy.

Having now made the case that it is better to look at Kant's pre-critical philosophy for Smith's influence, the next chapter is going to explore the possibility that the metaphysical scepticism embodied in early works like the *Observations* was a permanent part of Kant's thinking at the time he was reading Smith, that this is why he was so attracted to Smith's naturalistic description of moral philosophy, and that this scepticism was not, contra Herz' belief, merely a belief lapse from the 'true' path of philosophy he would later pursue in his critical philosophy. To develop this interpretation the next chapter will provide an interpretation of the younger Kant's philosophical project after which I hope the reader will be able to see how it is this philosophical project (rather than his critical philosophical project) in which Kant shares the most affinity with the kind of philosophy Smith was conducting in his *Astronomy*, *Moral Sentiments* and even *Wealth of Nations*.

Chapter 10: The Pre-Critical Kant

In the previous chapters I rejected Fleischacker's interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship, arguing that it suffers the same problems as other interpretations, namely, that it cannot escape the fact that the goal of Kant's moral philosophy is to define moral knowledge, not explain moral practice. However I also argued that there is another side to Kant's thinking. This other side is his youthful description of morality in the *Observations* as an aesthetic appreciation for virtue and the people who possess it. I argued that this youthful description of morality shares remarkable similarities with Smith's own account of morality in *Moral Sentiments* all-the-while avoiding the nagging questions that necessarily arise for any interpreter who wants to link Smith's naturalistic and historicist description of morality with Kant's mature critical moral theory.

In this chapter my goal is to continue developing the interpretation of the Kant-Smith relationship I began in the previous chapter. I will do this by moving beyond the study of Kant's *Observations* and offer a reading of Kant's broader thinking in the years immediately prior to his encounter with Smith's work;– the years that are said to constitute Kant's 'pre-critical' philosophy. I hope that this reading will further develop a picture of Kant not as the historical giant who gave us the categorical imperative and really got us started with the study of epistemology but as a philosopher who was, very much like Smith, deeply interested in his rapidly changing world and the way morality as a practice plays out in that world. To do this I will first try to define what the 'pre-critical Kant' really means. Second, I will briefly chart Kant's early career as a physicist-philosopher. Third, I will show how the failure of Kant's pre-critical project led him to embrace a kind of Humean empiricist scepticism shortly before he read Smith's *Moral Sentiments* that would have made him receptive to the historicist description of morality presented in Smith's work.

What Is Kant's 'Pre-Critical' Philosophy?

What exactly constitutes Kant's 'pre-critical' phase is contested. For example, Martin Schonfeld has argued that this was a phase in which Kant was engaged in an unsuccessful project to reconcile Newtonian physics with his own non-transcendental metaphysical beliefs.[579] Manfred Kuehn on the other hand has argued that the very idea of dividing Kant's intellectual development into phases is highly problematic because it overlooks the continuity in Kant's thinking throughout his career.[580] Despite these disagreements about what exactly constitutes Kant's pre-critical philosophy I nonetheless believe there are some uncontroversial things that can be said about Kant's philosophy prior to the publication of his first *Critique*. To understand what Kant's pre-critical philosophy was all about I first want to look at the overarching concerns that drove Kant's critical philosophy so that I can place Kant's pre-critical philosophy in context.

Kant's Critical Philosophy

Kant's critical philosophy was more than a compartmentalised philosophical project in its own right. For example, as I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, Kant's dispute with Smith's moral philosophy and physics is not merely a dispute about whose description of morality and physics is more accurate or more useful. Rather, Kant's dispute with Smith was over how we should actually define the limits and scope of things like moral philosophy and physics themselves. Furthermore, this dispute was not just confined to Kant's arguments with the kind of philosophy Smith proposed. The very structure of our modern Western academic disciplines is the product of Kant's critical philosophy. As George Ross describes Kant's impact,

> Kant was the demarcator *par excellence*… and… [the] history of the division of the sciences in Germany, and then in the rest of the world, cannot be fully understood without reference to his work.[581]

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[579] Schonfeld M., *The Philosophy of the Young Kant: The Precritical Project*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, *passim.*
[580] Kuehn M., *Kant*, pp. 175-187
[581] Ross. G.M., "Science and Philosophy" in Olby R.C., Cantor G.N., Christie J.R.R., & Hodge M.J.S (eds.), *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 811

What Ross means here is that the arguments of Kant's critical philosophy, working from the existing momentum of the Enlightenment, fractured early modern philosophy into the highly specialised disciplines that are now taken as given within the Western academy as the various schools of the arts and science. Before the appearance of Kant's first *Critique* the boundaries between what is now usually called science, the arts, and theology were less distinct. After the first *Critique* however these disciplines were divided up according to those understood to be hermeneutical and those conceived of as having claims to objectivity by reference to an external criteria of truth. In practice this division means that in the post-Kantian world natural science no longer attempts to develop knowledge of the supernatural, empirical psychology no longer has warrant to provide ethical doctrine, and speculative reason can no longer be used to postulate knowledge purely through its own deductions without reference to experience (in the 'rationalist' manner of Leibniz, Spinoza and Descartes).[582] These disciplines can no longer cover such ground because to do so would violate the rules of epistemology that Kant systematised in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.

As for philosophy itself, having been barred from directly engaging with its traditional topics like physics, theology, and so forth, it took on a new role as the arbiter of all arts and sciences. As Kant puts it, philosophy is a "special system" that "constitutes a science of its own kind" that helps us know the "limitations" of various forms of knowledge" and "guards against the uncertainty [that] arises from mixing" the laws of disciplines like physics and theology.[583] In the wake of the first *Critique* philosophy has to be a discipline of first principles. These first principles are not, as they traditionally were, principles of ontology – which provide "merely rules for the exposition of appearances" and thus do not tell us anything about "synthetic a prior cognitions"[584] – but epistemological principles; that is, principles of how we actually think in the first place.

This moment when philosophy transformed itself into the study of the formal structure of thinking, and of which Kant's philosophy forms the apex, Rorty

[582] *CPR* A469/B497 – A471/B499
[583] *Natural Science* AK 4:472-3
[584] *CPR* A247/B303

describes as the point in time when philosophy "became self-conscious and self-confident" in its role "as a foundational science, an armchair discipline capable of discovering the "formal" characteristics of any areas of human life".[585] By making it impossible to talk about monads and vortexes when doing physics or talking about religious souls when writing about psychology, Kant forced philosophy's retreat and transformation into what is now recognised as the 'Anglo-American' tradition of philosophy as little more than the philosophy-of-science.[586] Unlike the logical positivism of the Anglo-American tradition however, Kant did not simply hope his transformation of the way we do philosophy would be a way to separate the 'truth' of science from the 'nonsense' of art.[587] Rather, by helping solidify these kinds of distinctions Kant also wanted to open up space to talk about what he thought were important questions about religion, human progress, and morality without having to worry about how naturalist and historicist descriptions of these phenomena may reduce the questions to explanations of how the electrons in our brains move around or stories about class struggle. Unlike philosophy-as-philosophy-of-science, Kant hoped that his critical philosophy would allow us to continue to talk about human beings as more than sheer natural and historical process in the manner to which Smith is inclined. When Kant's critical philosophy implores us to avoid 'mixing' the principles of natural science with those of morality and theology he is not trying to make questions of God and freedom nonsensical topics. Rather he is seeking to keep the question of God and freedom safe from the hypotheses of natural science or social science by, to use Kant's own jargon, making the principles of morality *autonomous* from and not *homogenous* with the laws of natural science and social science.[588] This goal is most famously announced in the preface to the first *Critique* when Kant declares "I…had to annul *knowledge* in order to make room for faith".[589] Or to restate this is in a way that is more accurate to his actual argument, Kant does not "annul" knowledge but rather denies the possibility of certain claims to knowledge in the

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[585] Rorty R., *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 138-9
[586] To continue Rorty's historiography (*Mirror of Nature*, pp. 134, 324).
[587] Kant believes that what he describes as natural science and mathematics are unproblematic sciences that are not to be tampered with. If, for example, we "insert" into these sciences "anthropological…prejudices…we do not augment sciences, but corrupt them" (*CPR* B viii).
[588] *CPR* A137/B176, A550/B578 – A558/B286, B427, B201/A162 n. 30
[589] *CPR* Bxxx

hope that people like Richard Dawkins do not mistakenly try to use the laws of science to answer theological questions. In terms of this thesis, Kant hoped that people would not use the laws of psychology or biology to try to answer ethical questions.

Even though Kant has a reasonable claim to being at least partially responsible for the dramatic shifts in the way the West segments its intellectual endeavours and the bodies of knowledge it produces, it is important that one does not infer from this history that Kant was always the "all-crushing"[590] philosopher who destroyed the idea that armchair philosophy can contribute something meaningful to natural or social science. Kant the critical philosopher did not simply appear as if from the ether to herald in a new age in which all forms of enquiry were chained to the constraints of a strict new epistemological division and where moral theory can – as George Moore had hoped[591] – only be discussed in terms of rational deductions about what one ought to do rather than what happens or what is. Kant was fifty-seven years old when he published the first *Critique*, and thus, unsurprisingly, had already established a reputation within German academic circles. At this time Kant's reputation was not for being an important moral theorist nor was it for being the instigator of the epistemological revolution that helped kick off modern philosophy. Kant's reputation was for his youthful attempts to bring Isaac Newton's theories into the existing Wolffian metaphysical paradigm that reigned in Germany. Or in other words, Kant had a reputation for doing the kind of philosophy which his own critical philosophy would later strike down as the kind of "dogmatic"[592] metaphysics responsible for blurring the disciplinary boundaries he meticulously sort to cement in the first *Critique*.

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[590] This is the term Moses Mendelssohn used to describe Kant's destructive influence on the Leibnizian-Wolffian metaphysics which was ascendant in Germany during Kant's youth (see Kuehn M., *Kant*, p. 318). It must be noted that the term "Leibnizian-Wolffian philosophy" glosses over many nuances of Kant, Leibniz, and Wolff's thought (see Rutherford D., "Idealism Declined: Leibniz and Christian Wolff" in Lodge P., *Leibniz and his Correspondents*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 214-37). Nonetheless I still believe it remains a useful shorthand to describe German metaphysics before the publication of Kant's first critique.

[591] That Moore is opposed to Kant's arguments in his critical works where he argues that the good is found in the structure of cognition (*Principia Ethica*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1903, pp. 126-7) does not detract from the point that both authors argue that there is something called an 'ethical value' that cannot be reduced into the language of natural science.

[592] *CPR* Bxxxv

In sharp contrast to the kind of philosophy Kant was doing during and after the publication of his first *Critique*, the kind of philosophy Kant was doing in his early career was overwhelming focused on topics of physical geography, chemistry, physics, and in particular, Newton's *Principa Mathematica*.[593] These interests are reflected in the titles and topics of Kant's pre-*Critique* published works. Amongst the works we can count: *Thoughts on the True Estimation of the Living Forces* (1749) – a book discussing whether bodies have essential force with particular reference to Leibniz and Descartes; *Whether the Earth has Changed in Its Revolutions* (1754) and *On the Question whether the Earth is Aging from a Physical Point of View* (1754) – two essays discussing the physical nature of planet Earth; *Universal Natural History and Theory of Heavens treated in accordance with Newtonian Principles* (1755) – a book which developed a nebular hypothesis of the formation of the solar system; *Concise Outlines of Some Reflections on Fire* (1755) – Kant's magister thesis; *On the Causes of Terrestrial Convulsions* (1756), *History and Natural Description of the Earth of 1755* (1756), and *Further Considerations of Terrestrial Convulsions* (1756) – a series of papers in response to the Lisbon earthquake of 1755; and *New Remarks towards the Elucidation of the Theory of Winds* (1756) and *Whether the West Winds in our Regions are Humid because they pass over a Large Sea* (1757) – two lecture announcements for his courses on physical geography.

As this lists testifies, prior to the publication of the first *Critique*, from 1749 (when Kant published his first work) until 1763 (when he published his *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God*), Kant's attention appears to be almost exclusively concerned with topics of what is now called 'natural science'.[594] Indeed it was not until the publication of his

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[593] Kant's interest in this book was a result of the influence of his professors (in particular, Johann Gottfried Teske and Martin Knutzen) at the University of Königsberg who introduced Kant to Newton's radical new physics. For a detailed account of the influence of Kant's professors on his intellectual development see Kuehn M., "Kant's Teachers in the Exact Sciences" in Watkins E. (ed.), *Kant and the Sciences*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 11-30.

[594] The only works not listed above that deal with topics other geography, physics, and chemistry, are Kant's *Principiorum primorum cognitionis metaphysicae nova dilucidatio* (*New Explanations of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition*) and *The False Subtlety of the Four Syllogistic Figures*, published in 1755 and 1762 respectively.

Observations in 1764 that Kant first began raising questions about the nature and character of morality. However, to suggest that the Kant of this period was a 'natural scientist' rather than a 'philosopher' would be anachronistic. The idea that philosophy and natural science are distinct intellectual disciplines is a kind of thinking that, as argued above, only emerged in the post-*Critique* Western world.[595] Thus, despite Kant's concentrated concern with physics and physical geography,[596] a large amount of his pre-critical work still touches upon questions of ontology while talking about physics.[597] Quite unlike the Scots, Kant did not herald Newton as yet one more reason to abandon metaphysics and begin developing a completely empirical and experimental account of the world.[598] Instead Kant redoubled his attempts to reconcile traditional metaphysics with the new Newtonian science. This attempt to reconcile the new developments in physics with traditional metaphysics was Kant's pre-critical project. Martin Schönfeld describes this pre-critical project as one which

discarded Leibnizian and Cartesian approaches for the sake of Newtonian physics. The latter involves a model of nature whose mechanistic and deterministic presuppositions threaten to undermine the metaphysical *desiderata* of purpose, freedom and God. Unwilling to accept a deterministic world-machine without provisions, Kant had to articulate new accounts of purpose, freedom and God that would supplement and qualify the Newtonian model of nature. This endeavour of a comprehensive philosophy of nature, with its complex tasks of constructing new justifications of metaphysical *desiderata* and of revising Newton when necessary, became the pre-critical project – Kant's central philosophical venture before his turn to the *Critique of Pure Reason*.[599]

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[595] For a broad historical survey of philosophy and natural science in this period see Lefèvre W. (ed.), *Between Leibniz, Newton and Kant: Philosophy and Science in the Eighteenth Century*, Springer, 2001, *passim.*

[596] In fact Kant lectured on physical geography from his youth until his old age, teaching it longer than any other subject at the University of Königsberg (Louden R., *Kant's Impure Ethics*, p. 5).

[597] See for example Kant's attempt to reconcile Descartes theory of motion with Leibniz's in the *Living Forces.*

[598] Greene J.C., *Darwin and the Modern World View*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973, p. 88 argues for example that "the idea of creating a social science by applying the methods of natural science to the study of man and society is nearly as old as modern science itself. Adam Smith took Newton's conception of nature as a law-bound system of matter in motion as his model when he represented society as a collection of individuals pursuing their self-interest in an economic order governed by laws of supply and demand".

[599] Schönfeld M., *The Philosophy of the Young Kant: the Precritical Project*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 96-97

The fusion of traditional metaphysics with physics that Kant pursued in his pre-critical period is at odds with his later critical project. Rather than demanding the strict separation of scientific and metaphysical principles by epistemological necessity (by demanding that we do not 'mix' the laws that govern the world of experience with the laws of cognition) the pre-critical Kant actively sought to bring together teleology, theology, and a theory of the freedom of will with a modified version of Newtonian physics.[600]

As history demonstrates, this pre-critical project was not successful. Kant was unable to reconcile what he later termed 'dogmatic metaphysics' with the fundamental propositions of Newtonian physics. Kant expressed the difficulties he had encountered in a letter penned on the 31st of December 1765 to Johann Heinrich Lambert:

[f]or a number of years I have carried on my philosophical reflections on every earthly subject, and after many capsizings, on which occasions I always looked for the source of my error or tried to get some insight into the nature of my blunder, I have finally reached the point where I feel secure about the method that has to be followed if one wants to escape the cognitive fantasy that has us constantly expecting to reach a conclusion, yet just as constantly makes us retrace our steps, a fantasy from which the devastating disunity among supposed philosophers also arises; for we lack a common standard with which to procure agreement from them...I have, however, departed so widely from my original plan that I now want to postpone this book a little while, for I regard it as the culmination of my whole project. My problem is this: I noticed in my work that, though I had plenty of examples of erroneous judgments to illustrate my theses concerning mistaken procedures, I lacked examples to show in concerto what the proper procedure should be.[601]

Kant had not however reached a point where he felt secure with the method to continue his pre-critical project and no book subsequently materialised. He had reached an impasse. He realised that there was no way for metaphysics and theology to survive the new paradigm shift towards mathematical and

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[600] In the *Universal Natural History* he brings together physics and teleology, in the *New Elucidation* he tries to reconcile freedom of the will with physics, and in the *Only Possible Argument* he tries to find a place for God in Newton's universe (Schönfeld., *The Philosophy of the Young Kant*, p. 98).
[601] *Correspondence* AK 10:55-6

experimental models of nature that Newton's *Principia Mathematica* had spurred along.[602]

The failure of Kant's pre-critical project would become manifest one year after his letter to Lambert when Kant published his notorious[603] work *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*. It is at this point in Kant's career that I believe Kant became most receptive to Smith's historicist theory of morality which he would later praise a few years later in his letter to Herz.

Kant's Scepticism after the Collapse of the Pre-Critical Project

By 1766 Kant "was no longer interested"[604] in the debates which preoccupied his youth; debates about how Leibnizian monads can work with Newtonian space[605] or how a concept of free will can make any sense in Newton's entirely mechanical world.[606] He was instead "becoming increasingly interested in a critique of philosophical reasoning itself".[607] This change in focus to questions about the nature of thinking itself coupled with his failure to bring together Newtonian physics with traditional rationalist metaphysics ultimately led Kant to write the *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*. This book not only signalled the end of Kant's pre-critical project of trying to reconcile metaphysics with Newtonian physics but also showcased a newfound scepticism spurred on by the realisation that he had to give up the metaphysics he held so dear in his earlier years.[608] And it is this idea that in 1766 – a few years before his letter to Herz but also before he had published the first *Critique* (which only came out much later in 1781) – that Kant had made a sceptical turn away from metaphysics which is most interesting for those who wish to understand his intellectual relationship with Smith's *Moral Sentiments*.

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[602] Schönfeld, *The Philosophy of the Young Kant*, pp. 160-1
[603] The book is notorious for the admonishment it received from Kant's colleagues, who saw his radical scepticism as a threat to the then still dominant scholastic metaphysics. See Kant's letter to Mendelssohn in *Correspondence* AK 10:69-72.
[604] Kuhn, *Kant*, p. 170
[605] See for example *Monadology* AK 1:475-87.
[606] A topic which would of course reappear in the critical philosophy.
[607] Kuhn, *Kant*, p. 170
[608] Manfred Kuehn (*Kant*, pp. 174-5) suggests "[i]t would be tempting to see in [the] conclusions [of *The Dreams*] the first, even if incompletely expressed, theoretical consequences of Kant's revolution and rebirth, and perhaps that is precisely what they are". The revolution and rebirth to which Kuehn refers is Kant's critique of traditional metaphysics which ultimately lead Kant to develop the transcendental philosophy.

Kant's Scepticism in the Dreams

In the *Dreams* Kant presents a commentary on what he saw as the terminal problems of metaphysics at the time. Unwilling to attack the metaphysics and metaphysicians he was so invested in during his early career head-on, Kant goes about his critique by launching an uncharacteristically sarcastic attack[609] on the Swedish scientist, philosopher and mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg.[610] Swedenborg himself is not the main target of Kant's criticism. Swedenborg is merely a foil for Kant's criticism of the Wolffian metaphysics which had let him down in the previous years. Kant used the eccentric Swedenborg as a foil because his thinking, Kant implies, exhibits the same problems in reasoning as the more respectable philosophers of the German academy.

From Kant's point of view, the essential problem in both Swedenborg's and philosophers' thinking is that they allow speculative reason to make claims about the existence and the nature of objects and forces which cannot be cognised through experience. By allowing speculative reason to run wild Kant argues that Swedenborg (and by association philosophers in general) makes all sorts of ontological claims about the immaterial world that use "large quantities of surreptitious concepts" which are "conjured out of nothing"[611] and which need to be dismissed as "lazy philosophy".[612] In less rhetorical terms, Kant notes that

> no matter how clear and intuitive the representations of the spirit-world [and by association, metaphysical objects] may be this would not suffice to make me as a human being conscious of them; for in so far as even the representation of *oneself* (that is to say, of the soul) as a spirit has been acquired by means of inferences, it is not in the case of any human being an intuitive empirical concept.[613]

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[609] Quite uncharacteristically for Kant, he goes so far as to cast scatological dilemmas in his criticism of philosophers (Kuehn, *Kant*, pp. 172-3).

[610] *Dreams* AK 2:361-5

[611] *Dreams* AK 2:342. Kant specifically accuses the bastions of German philosophy Christian August Crusius and Christian Wolff of committing these crimes against philosophy and science.

[612] *Dreams* AK 2:331

[613] *Dreams* AK 2:338

What Kant is arguing here is that we have no knowledge of things outside of experience through the direct use of any of our intuitions or abstract reasoning,[614] and by inference, that we can have no knowledge of a pre-experiential self resting under our phenomenal self. [615] This is a direct rejection of arguments like Descartes' *as je pense, donc je suis* [*dubito, ergo cogito, ergo sum*].

Kant also extends his critique to metaphysical proofs of God. Offering a classic statement of sceptical doubt Kant writes[616]

the possibility of the existence of immaterial beings can...be supposed without fear of its being disproved, but also without hope of proving it by reason.[617]

Kant's scepticism in the *Dreams* was not merely confined to invisible and unintuitable objects in theology and metaphysics. Kant's scepticism also extended to the theories of physics themselves:

[i]t is experience alone which enables us to perceive that those things which exist in the world, and which we call *material*, possess such a force [the force of repulsion]; but experience does not ever enable us to understand the possibility of such a force. Now, suppose that I posited the existence of substance which were of a different kind: they are present in space but they possess forces which differ from the *motive force* of which the effects is impenetrability. If I supposed that such substances existed, it would be altogether impossible for me to think of them *in concreto* as displaying activity, unless it bore analogy with my empirical representations.[618]

In the *Dreams* Kant thus rejects physics informed by rationalist metaphysics and as a result, only expresses confidence in Newton's theory of gravity. Kant celebrates Newton's theory because the postulation of a force like gravity avoids the metaphysical pitfalls of needing the postulate things like gods (as in Descartes) or monads (as in Leibniz) as a set of objects resting behind everything. To attribute motive force to something like Leibniz's monads merely throws up a

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[614] In the first *Critique* this line of argument is refined into his criticism of rational psychology in the Paralogisms of Pure Reason (*CPR* A341/B399 – A405/B433).

[615] In the first *Critique* Kant comes out explicitly against Moses Mendelssohn for trying to prove the existence of a soul (*CPR* B414-426).

[616] See Forster M., *Kant and Skepticism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008, *passim*. See also Laursen J., *The Politics of Skepticism in the Ancients, Montaigne, Hume, and Kant*, Leiden ; New York : E.J. Brill, 1992, pp. 194-195

[617] *Dreams* AK 2:323

[618] *Dreams* AK 2:323

whole new set of questions about the existence of said objects which are entirely beyond the limits of our cognition. Newton's theory on the other hand, in Kant's view, faces no such metaphysical hurdles. Newton's theory does not need to explain where gravity comes from. Its 'existence' is only postulated insofar as it makes coherent the movement of the objects we can cognise. That is to say, even though human beings have no intuitive empirical understanding of what Newton calls gravity[619] – even though "experience does not ever enable us to understand the possibility" of something like gravity – when inferring its existence we are not postulating objects which break the systematic unity of empirical cognition and thus forcing our reason to exceed its "limits".[620] Newton's theory of gravity thus fits comfortably with our existing intuitions about motion and space. If we do not acknowledge that the scope of cognition is limited to the phenomenal realm as with Newtonian physics, Kant argues that it would be possible to postulate anything to explain our world and we would ultimately end up being unable to distinguish Swedenborg's religious mysticism from the science of physics. In Kant's own words we could haphazardly "invent activities and causal laws as one feels inclined"[621] and these laws would be created in a "wholly arbitrary" fashion and would – like proofs of a god's existence – "admit neither proof nor refutation".[622]

Because of these criticisms of metaphysics Kant's philosophical position in the *Dreams* may be described as a restatement of sorts of the kinds of arguments Locke and Hume made. Kant follows Locke's empiricism in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,[623] arguing that knowledge is what we have when our mind successfully mirrors what we see in experience.[624] However, he supplements this empiricism with Hume's scepticism about our ability to dig

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[619] *Dreams* AK 2:369-72
[620] *Dreams* AK 2:322. See also *Dreams* AK 2:368 where Kant argues "metaphysics is a science of the *limits of human reason*".
[621] *Dreams* AK 2:371
[622] *Dreams* AK 2:370
[623] Locke J., *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Hackett Publishing: Indianapolis, 1996, pp. 133-49, 224-8
[624] *Dreams* AK 2:370

under the laws of experience and find their 'true' nature.[625] In the *Dreams* Kant argues that at most we can only hold onto what matches up with our accumulated experience. This forces us to remain agonistic about questions of freedom of the will, of gods, and importantly for this thesis, of concepts of the good detached from human psychology and sentiment. Kant's Humean empiricist scepticism is best captured in the following passage:

[i]t is impossible for reason ever to understand how something can be a cause, or have a force; such relationships can only be derived from experience…That my will moves my arm is no more intelligible to me than someone's claiming that my will could halt the moon in its orbit. The only difference between the two cases is this: I experience the former, whereas my senses have never encountered the latter.[626]

In short, Kant insists at this point that any philosophy which seeks to explain nature by "appeal to immaterial principles" is "to be avoided at all costs if the causes of phenomena in the world, which are based upon the laws of the motion of mere matter and which are uniquely and alone capable of intelligibility, are to be known in their full extent".[627]

The Difference between the Scepticism in the Dreams and the First Critique

As I have already discussed in the fifth chapter of this thesis, Kant also makes the above Humean arguments about our inability to get beneath the surface of experience to understand how its laws operate in the first *Critique*.[628] Unlike the first *Critique* however, here in the *Dreams* Kant's scepticism lacks the "positive"[629] argument found in his critical philosophy. This "positive" argument is the argument for the validity of *a priori* synthetic propositions and intuitions. Because the Kant of 1766 had yet to argue for the validity of *a priori* synthetic propositions and thus establish the critical philosophy, he ends his criticism of

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[625] This argument of Hume's that we cannot understand things like the laws of causality through experience would of course latter become the catalyst for Kant to begin arguing that causality is grounded by the categories of understanding in his critical philosophy (*Prolegomena* AK 4:260).

[626] *Dreams* AK 2:370

[627] *Dreams* AK 2:331

[628] See for example Wayne Waxman's extensive analysis in *Kant and the Empiricists: Understanding Understanding*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 18-85.

[629] The phrase Kant uses (B85, Bxxix) to describe the arguments he later makes in the Analytic of Principles.

reason and metaphysics in the *Dreams* by adopting a form of empiricist scepticism. Throwing his lot in entirely with Hume and Newtonianism, Kant made the same inference Smith (at this point still unknown to Kant) did and, in his own words, decided to study exclusively the "mechanical causes" of phenomena, ignoring "the influence of incorporeal beings" and "immaterial forces" and thus, "while sometimes failing" to hit the "mark", adopt a philosophical methodology that is "generally successful" and which "alone" is the "method" of "science".[630]

Kant's declarations in the *Dreams* are not just an endorsement of an empiricist method against continental rationalism. Again like Smith, Kant also hints that he is toying with a coherence[631] or perhaps even proto-pragmatic justification of knowledge.[632] Arguing against one of the key hypotheses in the first *Critique* that knowledge is justified by an abstract power of reason rather than any uniquely *human* faculty,[633] Kant laments

if they [rationalist philosophers] should eventually, God willing, awake completely, that is to say, if they should eventually open their eyes to a view which does not exclude agreement with the understanding of other human beings, then none of them would see anything which did not, in the light of their proofs, appear obvious and certain to everybody else as well. And the philosophers will all inhabit a common world together at the same time, such as mathematicians have long possessed.[634]

Thus Kant considers that if philosophers and scientists proceed with business as usual and continue asking questions which cannot be tested or which depend on elaborate and abstract arguments that try to demonstrate some kind of correspondence between those arguments and experience, and if they do not instead focus on finding agreement between their hypotheses and scientific investigations as well as with "other human beings", they will ensure their

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[630] *Dreams* AK 2:331

[631] See Rasmussen D.C., *The Pragmatic Enlightenment: Recovering the Liberalism of Hume, Smith, Montesquieu, and Voltaire*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 165.

[632] For example, asking rhetorically how one should treat the accounts of people who report religious experience Kant suggests that the best solution is "to not trouble one's self with such impertinent or idle questions and hold onto the *useful*". A little further on he rejoins "[b]ut because this plan is reasonable… profound scholars have at all times, by a majority of votes, rejected it" (*Dreams* AK 2:318). In other words, here Kant indicates he is not as much interested in the 'truth' of our beliefs but their usefulness; a position broached by Smith in the *Astronomy*.

[633] *CPR* A695/B723

[634] *Dreams* AK 2:342

projects will always fail as a collective discipline. This is the opposite of mathematics and Newtonian physics, which already tread a "secure path".[635]

This sceptical empiricism is completely at odds with the first *Critique*, where Kant argues that agreement with other humans is not only irrelevant but also completely antithetical to the idea that knowledge is justified by its correspondence to the *a priori* structure of formal reason. Rather than "ground" themselves in "experience and common sense" – rather than search for agreement between experience, our broader scientific knowledge, and with our fellow human beings – Kant believes philosophers and scientists have used the "silken wings"[636] of their speculative powers to ask "all kind of futile questions"[637] about "the nature of spirits, freedom, predestination, the future state, and such like". [638] These "futile questions" ironically re-emerge in his critical philosophy and actually form its foundations. However, in the *Dreams*, Kant, hoping to lay metaphysics-as-ontology (both *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*) [639] to rest, closes by recommending that philosophers avoid dealing with topics that resemble something like what Plato and theologians were interested in and instead, just as he hinted at in Herz's letter, focus on the more "pragmatic"[640] concerns of trying to live the good life:

human reason has not been endowed with wings which would enable it to fly so high as to cleave the clouds which veil form our eyes the mysteries of the other world. And to those who are eager for knowledge of such things and who attempt to inform themselves with such importunity about mysteries of this kind, one can give this simple but very natural advice: it would probably be best *if they had the good grace to wait with patience until they arrived there*. But since our fate in that future world will probably very much depend on how we have comported ourselves at our posts in his world I will conclude with the advice *Voltaire* gave to his honest *Candide* after so many futile

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[635] *CPR* Bx
[636] *Dreams* AK 2:368
[637] *Dreams* AK 2:353
[638] *Dreams* AK 2:369
[639] See *CPR* A82/B108 where Kant continues to define metaphysics as ontology.
[640] Kant variously defines the pragmatic use of reason as using reason to achieve "merely technical ends" (*MM* AK 6:354) or as using reason to secure our "welfare" (*Groundwork* AK 4:417). Here I use "pragmatic" rather than "moral" to make it clear that what Kant recommends at the end of the *Dreams* is not that we become moral in the critical sense of using our reason to overcome causal reality but rather in the more colloquial sense of living a life filled with what our communities, religions, states, and families would consider 'good deeds'.

scholastic disputes: *let us attend to our happiness, and go into the garden and work.*[641]

Kant's Pre-Critical 'Popular Philosophy'

Kant's departing chide in the *Dreams* that philosophers should simply go tend to their moral garden and stop trying to discover the nature of reality through the speculative use of reason was not just advice he offered to his philosophical opponents. It is a recommendation Kant himself took up wholeheartedly. With the collapse of the pre-critical project and the onset of his scepticism Kant did not return to the questions of physics and geography which had occupied most of his youth. Believing that Newtonian physics without the interference of metaphysics was an unproblematic science,[642] Kant's attention was instead diverted to *Popularphilosophie*; a movement John Zammito describes as the attempt to create a philosophy "*for* the people". This is at odds not only with contemporary philosophy-as-the philosophy-of-science but also with Kant's yet to be developed critical philosophy. This was a movement that sort to "redefine philosophy's mission away from the traditional preoccupation with logic and metaphysics, with theoretical knowledge and its certainty, to a new ethical and socio-political agency for change and progress".[643]

The easiest way to view this quite 'un-Kantian' direction in Kant's thought during the time he was writing the *Dreams* is to look at his announcement for his 1765 lectures on moral philosophy. Because this is one of the few sources we have of Kant's thinking in this period outside the *Dreams*, because it appears to be wholly antithetical to Kant's critical moral philosophy, and because it exhibits so many similarities with the British empiricist tradition in which Smith developed, it is worth quoting extensively. In the announcement Kant declares

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[641] *Dreams* AK 2:373

[642] Though Kant sometimes modifies Newton for his own purpose (c.f. AK 1.156 and *CPR* A174/B216) he does not believe there is anything wrong with Newton's methodology per se. See Calinger R., "Kant and Newtonian Science: The Pre-Critical Period", *Isis*, volume 70, number 3, 1979, pp. 348-362 (especially 355-59). See also Massimi M., "Philosophy of natural science from Newton to Kant", *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, volume 44, number 3, 2013, pp. 393-395.

[643] Zammito, J. *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp. 8-9

[m]oral philosophy has this special fate: that it takes on the semblance of being a science and enjoys some reputation for being thoroughly grounded, and it does this with even greater ease than metaphysics, *and that in spite of the fact that it is neither a science nor thoroughly grounded* [emphasis added]. The reason why it presents this appearance and enjoys this reputation is as follows. The distinction between good and evil in actions, and the judgement of moral rightness, *can be known, easily and accurately, by the human heart through what is called sentiment, and that without the elaborate necessity of proofs* [emphasis added]. In ethics, a question is often settled in advance of any reasons which have been adduced – and that is something which does not happen in metaphysics. It will not, therefore, come as a surprise that no one raises any special difficulties about admitting grounds, which only have some semblance of validity. For this reason, there is nothing more common than the title of a moral philosopher, and nothing more rare than the entitlement to such a name.

He proposes "[f]or the time being" to

lecture on *universal practical philosophy* and the *doctrine of virtue*, basing both of them on *Baumgarten. The attempts of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Hume, although incomplete and defective, have nonetheless penetrated furthest in the search for the fundamental principles of all morality* [emphasis added]. Their efforts will be given the precision and the completeness which they lack. *In the doctrine of virtue I shall always begin by considering historically and philosophically what happens before specifying what ought to happen* [emphasis added]. *In so doing, I shall make clear what method ought to be adopted in the study of man* [emphasis added]. And by *man* here I do not only mean *man* as he is distorted by the mutable form which is conferred upon him by the contingencies of his condition, and who, as such, has nearly always been misunderstood by philosophers. *I rather mean the unchanging nature of man* [emphasis added], and his distinctive position with the creation. My purpose will be to establish which perfection is appropriate to him in the state of *wise* innocence. It is also my purpose to establish what, by contrast, the rule of man's behaviour is when, transcending the two types of limit, he strives to attain the highest level of physical or moral excellence, although falling short of that attainment to a greater or lesser degree. This method of moral enquiry is an admirable discovery of our times, which, when viewed in the full extent of its programme, was entirely unknown to the ancients.[644]

The importance of this announcement, particularly the sections I have emphasised, cannot be overstated. It demonstrates that just prior to Kant's contact with Smith's *Moral Sentiments* he was already explicitly arguing that morality can have no basis in rationalist deductions of the kind which his categorical imperative would later try to perform. He asserts here that morality is a product of our "sentiments"

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[644] *Announcement* AK 2:311-2

and that we all have easy access to this through our own human conscience without any need for reason. Kant, in keeping with ideas from Hume and Hutcheson,[645] proposes that the study of morality must primarily be historically grounded and descriptive rather than prescriptive, and that the study of an "unchanging… nature of man" is the key to any moral philosophy. In other words, the view of morality Kant presents here thoroughly accords with Smith's methodology as I described it in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

Conclusion

At this point it can be seen how easily Smith's moral philosophy fits in with Kant's own conception of morality immediately prior to his encounter with *Moral Sentiments*. While Kant's thinking in 1765 has the seeds of what would later become the critical philosophy, the overwhelming tendency in Kant's thought was towards a kind of empiricism that was remarkably 'British' in character. Kant, like Smith, did not have time for incompatibilist theories of freedom of the will like the ones he would present in the *Groundwork* and second *Critique*. Nor was he interested in a metaphysics of science. Instead Kant frames his goals as wanting to perform an historicist analysis of morality as a function of an immutable human nature and the kinds of sentiments it creates.

By recognising that Kant was not always a critical philosopher it becomes possible to get around the problem interpreters of the Kant-Smith relationship such   as   Sen, Haakonssen, and Fleischacker necessarily run up against when they try to link Smith's mechanical description of moral rules as social practice with Kant's philosophy of morality as the freedom from causality. This can be accomplished by noting that at the point in time when Kant praised Smith's moral philosophy, Kant had not yet developed his critical framework – a framework which completely disqualifies a description of morality as social practice from being called moral theory. Indeed, at the time Kant read Smith's *Moral Sentiments* he was almost on the same page as him in terms of methodology. Given the scarcity

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[645] Kant's allusion to Baumgarten in this notice should be taken with a grain of salt. Kant uses his textbook because of institutional requirements. See Kuhn, *Kant*, pp. 108-9.

of Kant's work in this period it is difficult to say with confidence when exactly Kant abandoned his empirical scepticism to begin the critical project. [646] Nonetheless the supposition that Kant was still an empirical sceptic of some sort around the time he read Smith has both chronological consistency and textual support.

Rather than end this thesis now by arguing that admiration Kant expressed in his letter to Herz merely reflects the fact that for a brief moment in his career Kant had embraced a philosophical methodology like Smith's and that it is thus unsurprising to see him praise Smith, there remains one more mystery to solve. In the above lecture announcement Kant concludes by telling his audience that he is going to improve the kind of moral philosophy people like Hume were doing by explaining a "method of moral enquiry" that is the most "admirable discovery of our times". This "method of moral enquiry" which Kant had "discovered" was that developed by Rousseau. And as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, it is Rousseau's work which provides a link indicating how Kant's youthful admiration of Smith's methodology and moral philosophy was carried over into his critical philosophy.

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[646] Though Kuhn (*Kant*, p. 186) argues that Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770 marks the point in time when "Kant's thought underwent a radical change" and when he "came to believe to that reason and sensation cannot be understood as continuous", and thus marks "the start of Kant's search for fixed points in *human nature*, and the beginning of his search for them in pure reason".

Chapter 11: Rousseau, Smith, and Kant

The evidence I have presented in the previous two chapters shows it is incorrect to assume that Kant's thought was consistent and critical throughout his long career. In the ninth chapter I argued that in 1764 Kant had a theory of virtue ethics quite different from the one contained in his critical philosophy. In the tenth chapter I argued that by 1766 Kant had adopted a thoroughgoing empirical scepticism that is at odds with the philosophy he would later articulate in books like the *Groundwork* and the *Critiques*. In these preceding chapters I have, in short, endeavoured to put to rest the idea that Smith's moral philosophy influenced Kant's *critical* philosophy.

The goal of this chapter is to now explore another way Smith's thinking may have influenced Kant's *pre-critical* moral philosophy. In particular I will argue that Kant's pre-critical philosophy was influenced by Rousseau's historicist moral philosophy and that this approach to describing morality is the same method Smith employs in his *Moral Sentiments*. The starting point for this line of argument is Kant's announcement for his 1765 lectures on moral philosophy where he claims he has discovered a new "method of moral enquiry."

Rousseau's Historicist Moral Philosophy

In Kant's advertisement for his 1765 moral philosophy lectures he gives pride of place to British empiricist philosophers who have "penetrated furthest in the search for the fundamental principles of all morality". However it is also evident that Kant nonetheless still believes their method is "incomplete and defective". In this period Kant agrees with his British contemporaries that an empirical analysis of morality is the best that can be hoped for; that is, he sees little point in being troubled with attempting to develop a metaphysics of morals. However Kant also believes their analysis is flawed because they only study humanity in its present state but not in its 'true' condition. Kant believes they have only studied "man as he is distorted by the mutable form which is conferred upon him by the

contingencies of his condition" and thus the human condition has "nearly always been misunderstood by philosophers". To rectify this Kant proposes that he will instead study the "unchanging nature of man".

Given Kant's empiricist bent at this point in his career it may be tempting to think that this study of the "unchanging nature of man" would be something akin to Hume's 'science of man', which reduces morality to the laws of natural science and psychology. However, Kant had something else in mind. Rather than adopt a Humean research programme Kant instead tells us he has learnt of a new "method of moral enquiry" quite unlike anything that has been known hitherto that improves on "the attempts of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Hume". This new method, I will argue, is Rousseau's historicist account of morality.

Previous Commentary on Rousseau's Influence

The idea that Kant had a special relationship with Rousseau is not original. For example, Robert Louden has argued that the *Lectures on Pedagogy* reflect Kant's shared belief with Rousseau that being able to exercise a freedom of decision making is beneficial to a child's education.[647] Yet this does not tell us much about what the pre-critical Kant had in mind for his lectures on moral philosophy. Furthermore, the *Pedagogy* was Kant's last published work; published in 1803. This is well after Kant had turned his moral philosophy to the study of the formal structure of cognition.

Frederick Van de Pitte follows up a similar line of thought to Louden. Like Louden, Van de Pitte argues that Rousseau conceptualises humanity as morally free and this belief flows through into Kant's own moral philosophy. Van de Pitte believes we can read this influence most easily in Rousseau's *Social Contract*. He argues that in this book Rousseau describes morality the same way Kant does and points to Rousseau's argument that it is "moral liberty… alone that makes him [a moral agent] truly master of himself; for the mere impulse of appetite is slavery,

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[647] Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics*, pp. 36-7

while obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is freedom"[648] as evidence for this.

This is the same argument we saw Kant make in his critical moral philosophy in the sixth chapter of this thesis. Both Kant and Rousseau conceptualise freedom not as the freedom to do as one pleases but as the ability to operate in accordance with a different set of laws than those that drive our physical and psychological selves. In other words it seems Kant takes up Rousseau's argument that freedom is found in rule-following and sets up a contrast between merely living under the laws which natural science hopes to explain (that is, the laws of theoretical cognition) and the laws of the moral world as we know them by virtue of our faculty of reason. "It is here," Van de Pitte suggests, "that we encounter Rousseau's principle of self-legislation or, as Kant calls its, *Autonomie*".

Not only is Rousseau's principle of self-legislation transformed into Kant's concept of autonomy. Van de Pitte also notes that Kant draws similar conclusions to Rousseau from this particular formulation of freedom as the ability to choose which laws our will follows. For both Kant and Rousseau this ability to choose to act according to laws or rules also gives humanity a particular dignity that is an end in itself. Rousseau, for instance argues in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* "it is never right to harm a human soul for the advantage of others" and "man is too noble a being to serve simply as the instrument for others, and he must not be used for what suits them without consulting also what suits himself". While Kant argues in the *Groundwork* that "so act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only."[649] From these parallels Van de Pitte ultimately argues that "what was for Rousseau a principle of political order is thus developed by Kant into a moral and metaphysical doctrine which is essential to his Critical Philosophy".[650]

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[648] Van de Pitte F.P., *Kant as Philosophical Anthropologist*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971, p. 52 quoting Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book I, Chapter VIII.
[649] *Ibid.*, p. 55 quoting Rousseau *New Heloise* Part IV letter 22 and Part V letter 2 and Kant *Groundwork* AK 4:428.
[650] *Ibid.*, pp. 53-4

Van de Pitte's interpretation is compelling. And it is quite possible that the Kant of the 1780s had Rousseau's *Social Contract* and *Héloïse* in mind while writing his *Groundwork*.[651] However as with Louden, this still does not explain what the pre-critical Kant found so interesting in Rousseau. The young Kant of the 1750s was arguing for a standard compatibilist and rationalist account of freedom[652] while the later Kant of the *Dreams* and *Observations* – most likely under the influence of Hume[653] – had become sceptical of the very idea that reason might play a role in determining our will.[654] It was not until many years later with the publication of the first *Critique*[655] that Kant would even broach the kind of "autonomy" Van de Pitte identifies in Rousseau's *Social Contract* and *Héloïse*. Therefore, a novel argument is required to explain the pre-critical Kant's interest in Rousseau's philosophy.

Kant's Written Estate Which Discusses Rousseau

What evidence exists then that can tell us something about what Kant thought of Rousseau during his pre-critical career? None of Kant's published works in this period provide any explicit detail nor are there any extant notes from the advertised lecture on moral philosophy that might tell us what he thought about Rousseau. There are however some margin notes and loose papers attached to Kant's *Observations* that suggest it is Rousseau to whom Kant refers in his announcement for lectures on moral philosophy.

In the margins of his personal copy of his *Observations*, Kant writes that it was Rousseau who had made him see that in his quest to create a unitary science that

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[651] In Kant's *Conjectural Beginnings of Human History* (AK 8:116) he appears to endorse Van de Pitte's argument that it was Rousseau's *Social Contract* played a large role in how he conceptualised human society as a moral order built on the recognition of humanity's capacity for freedom. This work however was published well after the first *Critique* where Kant had again come back to metaphysics.

[652] See for example *New Elucidation* AK 1:396-405.

[653] See Forster M., *Kant and Skepticism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 105 and Beck L.W., "A Prussian Hume and Scottish Kant" in *Essays on Kant and Hume*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1978, pp. 111-29.

[654] In the *Dreams* (AK 2:370) Kant lists "freedom" as a topic which leads philosophy astray. Later he also tells us that "reason only governs the drawing of comparisons in respect to *identity* and *contradiction*. If something is a cause, then *something* is posited by something *else*; there is not, however, any connection between the two things here which is based on agreement".

[655] See for example *CPR* A538/B566 – A541/B569.

reconciles metaphysics with Newtonian physics he had lost sight of the moral obligations that come with being a philosopher:

I am myself by inclination an investigator. I feel a complete thirst for knowledge and an eager unrest to go further in it as well as satisfaction at every acquisition. There was a time when I believed that this alone could constitute the honour of mankind, and I had contempt for the rabble who know nothing. *Rousseau* brought me around. This blinding superiority disappeared, I learnt to honour human beings, and I would find myself far more useless than the common labourer if I did not believe that this consideration could impart to all others a value in establishing the rights of humanity[656]

So powerful was Rousseau's effect on Kant that he even questions whether he is under a spell. Kant notes to himself "I must read Rousseau so long as that the beauty of his expression no longer disturbs me, and only then can I investigate him with reason". [657] These notes of praise confirm the *Dreams'* final admonishment to leave the ivory tower and tend to our moral garden[658] was more than a once off outburst of frustration after the failure of the pre-critical project. However they reveal little about how Rousseau's work influenced Kant at this point in his life.

Fortunately there are also two sets of loose notes attached to Kant's personal copy of the *Observations* that provide more concrete information about what Kant saw in Rousseau's work at the time he published his announcement. In the first note Kant compares Rousseau to Newton:

Newton saw for the first time order and regularity combined with great simplicity, where before him was found disorder and barely paired multiplicity; and since then comets run in geometrical courses. *Rousseau discovered for the first time beneath the multiplicity of forms human beings have taken on their deeply buried nature and the hidden law by the*

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[656] *Nachlass* AK 20:44
[657] *Nachlass* AK 20:30
[658] Foreshadowing the very same words Kant would later relay to Herz in his letter in which he first professes his interest in Smith, Rousseau also argues that moral metaphysicians, ignoring the historically contingent forces that shape moral reasoning, have instead created theories "so metaphysical that there are very few people among us capable of understanding them, let alone discovering them for themselves. In fact, all these scholarly men's definitions, otherwise in perpetual contradiction to each other, have one thing in common: that it is impossible to understand natural law and hence to obey it" (Rousseau J.-J., (trans. Cranston M.) *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, London: Penguin Books, 1984, p. 69 – hereafter '*Second Discourse*').

observation of which providence is justified [emphasis added]. Before that the objection of Alphonsus and Manes still held. After Newton and Rousseau, God is justified and Pope's theorem is true.[659]

What this note suggests is that just as gravity allowed Newton to develop a comprehensive theory of physics, so too does Kant believe Rousseau had identified some kind of "law" that would explain human moral life. Importantly, as the analogy to Newton demonstrates, the "law" which Kant has in mind is not the "moral law" of the critical philosophy (the "law" which Kant speaks of is not a law found through epistemological deduction). Rather it is a law that underpins human 'nature'. This suggests that what Kant had in mind was some kind of mechanism that is explained empirically; that is to say, something that must be cognised in accordance with experience rather than something discovered through rational deduction (whether that be dogmatic or critical).[660]

It is not surprising that Kant speaks in this way for this fits quite comfortably with the sceptical empiricism he adhered to at this point in his career. Furthermore, there is evidence in Kant's lecture notes published before the first *Critique* that reinforce this interpretation that it was Rousseau's mechanical description of human morality that appealed to Kant's sensibilities.[661] Thus it is this material that needs to be examined in order to understand why Kant believed Rousseau was the Newton of human nature, what "law" Rousseau had discovered, and ultimately how this discovery constitutes a new "method" for doing moral philosophy.

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[659] *Nachlass* AK 20:58-9. Here Kant refers to Alexander Pope's line "what is, is right" from his *An Essay on Man*. The point Kant tries to make is that there is a natural harmony in the world, as proven by Newtonian physics and Rousseau's philosophical ruminations.

[660] Paul Guyer ("Freedom as the foundation of morality: Kant's early efforts" in Shell S.M. & Velkley R(eds.), *Kant's Observations and Remarks: A Critical Guide*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp.77-98) alternatively argues that even though Kant attempts to build a moral philosophy on a kind of aesthetics at this point in his career there are the germs of what Kant would later develop into the categorical imperative. See also Frierson P., "Two concepts of universality in Kant's moral theory" in Shell & Velkley, *Kant's Observations and Remarks*, pp. 57-76 where he argues that at this point in his career Kant was trying to develop a universal concept of morality based on sentiments in a way similar to the British moral philosophers and Rousseau.

[661] In fact these notes are also the only other place we can observe Kant discussing Rousseau during his critical period.

Rousseau in Kant's Anthropology Lecture Notes

In the student lecture notes from Kant's anthropology course during the 1777-8 academic year Kant is recorded as arguing that because human beings "fear" each other and the "violence" they can inflict on each other, they are compelled to "lay aside their freedom and assume a social constraint" so that they may protect their property and persons. After each person has agreed to particular restraints on their "natural" freedoms, people begin "to make stone boundaries" to mark out their property.[662] As a "consequence of this" modern "agriculture" emerges and with it a "division of labours" after humanity realises that there "cannot" be "any great progress" when "each… works on his [own] particular" task. This social state with its clearly demarcated property, code of laws, and division of labour Kant calls the "civil condition" and it is "Rousseau's book…titled…the inequality of human beings…that shows…what is terrible and unbearable in" this condition".[663]

The passage from Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* Kant has in mind while presenting this lecture is likely to be the following:

[f]or so long as they [humanity] applied themselves only to work that one person could accomplish alone and to arts that did not require the collaboration of several hands, they lived as free, healthy, good and happy men so far as they could be according to their nature and they continued to enjoy among themselves the sweetness of independent intercourse; but from the instant one man needed the help of another, and it was found to be useful for one man to have provisions enough for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, work became necessary and vast forests were transformed into pleasant fields which had to be watered with the sweat of men, and where slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and flourish with the crops… Metallurgy and agriculture were the two arts whose invention produced this great revolution. For the poet it is gold and silver, but for the philosopher it is iron and wheat which first civilised men and ruined the human race.[664]

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[662] Compare with Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 109 where he argues "the first man who, having enclosed a piece of land, thought of saying "this is mine" and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society".

[663] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:845-6

[664] Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 116

This was not the first time Kant presented Rousseau's historical narrative. There is a second set of anthropology lecture notes published a few years earlier during the 1775-6 academic year that repeat and expand on the same themes as the 1777-8 notes. In these lecture notes Kant is recorded telling his students that it is "Rousseau" who has produced the "most distinguished works" which have explained the character of humanity.[665] Then, following this opening claim, Kant argues that because of their "desires, jealousy, mistrust, violence, [and] propensity for enmity against those outside the family", humanity, while living together out of necessity, is constantly at war with itself. This constant antagonism within the human species serves two purposes. On one hand it serves God's purpose "that human beings should populate the entire world"[666] as a result of warfare and the desire to escape the domination of other humans. On the other hand, humanity's intrinsic antisocial nature also compels it to develop systems of property, law, – and most importantly for my reading – morality.

Moral Historicism in Kant's Anthropology

The 1775-6 notes repeat the narrative Kant outlines in his 1777-8 lecture notes insofar as they describe the development of property and the division of labour as an historical process driven by human behaviour. Only this time however they explicitly argue that once we have established a "civil constitution" only then do the "concepts of justice and morality" form.[667]

Kant argues that the "concepts of morality" form historically because like Rousseau he divides humanity into two states. One state is the hypothetical[668] pre-social state. In this state Kant argues that humanity is "negatively good, i.e. innocent". What Kant means by this is that humanity in the pre-social state can be neither bad nor good. Humanity in the pre-social state "has no duties, since [it] has no concepts of such; [it] knows no law, hence [it] also cannot inexcusably violate it, and consequently he cannot be vicious." And by the same token, because humanity knows no concept of right and wrong or good and bad, neither can

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[665] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:675
[666] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:679
[667] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:680
[668] Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 68

humanity be "virtuous".[669] In short, Kant believes humanity in the hypothetical pre-social state condition is essentially *amoral*.

The other state which follows from this is the so-called "civil" state or constitution. In this second more advanced state the "concept of morality" arises because everyone "stands in relation to the other" such that over time "everyone becomes [a matter] of greater importance to the other one" and "the judgement of others" comes to have a "great influence" over us.[670] This leads to the development of what Kant calls the "constraint of propriety". This is a constraint we impose upon ourselves as we become concerned with the judgement of others, particularly "with regard to taste, modesty, refinement, courtesy and decorum". In order to fit in and avoid being ostracised humans "compel themselves among one another with regard to the rest" so that their manners and behaviours conform with larger group behaviours and expectations and likewise "refrain from much because it does not agree with the opinion of others". Overtime this concern for propriety eventually evolves into what Kant calls the "moral constraint". Similar to the constraint of propriety, "the moral constraint" forms through "every human being fearing the moral judgement of the other", compelling us "to perform actions of uprightness and of the pure moral life" for just as humanity makes judgements about peoples' clothes and manners, so too does it have "a right…to pass judgement about the moral conduct" of other "human beings".[671]

Because these are lecture notes they are light on more specific detail. Nevertheless there are some interesting points that can be taken from them. First, contrary to Fleischacker's argument (which I presented in the first chapter) that it was from Smith whom Kant took the idea of the division of labour, these notes show that it is more likely that Kant takes this idea from Rousseau. Second, it can be seen that Kant takes on Rousseau's description of morality as something that evolves out of humanity's vanity and desire to be approved of by other people. Rousseau argues that "each man, prior to laws, was the sole judge and avenger of the offences he

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[669] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:687. A possibility Rousseau also suggests in *Second Discourse*, p. 98.
[670] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:680
[671] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:692

had received" [672] and "since they [humanity] had no intercourse with one another… [they] had in consequence no experience of vanity, consideration ,esteem or contempt"[673] that would encourage them to judge each other. Thus "morality" only "began to be introduced into human actions" after civil society was established and "each began to look at…others and to want to be looked at himself and public esteem came to be prized".[674] Third, what these notes show is that before the publication of Kant's first *Critique* it is Rousseau's *Discourse* rather than *Social Contract* that appears to attract Kant's attention. In addition, because the *Discourse* offers an historical and mechanical account of moral progress (or rather, regress), this goes some way towards explaining why Kant believes Rousseau had done for moral philosophy what Newton had done for physics insofar as Rousseau reconceptualises morality as a problem of science rather than of metaphysics or religion. In particular it seems that Kant saw Rousseau in this way because the latter explained moral decay as being due to mechanical social and historical processes [675] rather than being a product of individuals' ahistorical decision-making.[676] Fourth, the anthropology lecture notes signal that Kant had also adopted from Rousseau the view that humanity's moral status can be investigated as an historical object rather than a purely metaphysical one. This also goes some way to explaining why Kant saw Rousseau's work as following on from what "Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Hume" had done by placing an empirical description of human nature in a broader historical process. It is this fourth point that is of particular interest for it reveals most strongly how Kant conceptualised morality differently than he later would in his critical philosophy.

Morality as an Historical Project

Because Kant makes a distinction between a pre-social and a social humanity he presents a moral philosophy diametrically opposed to the kind he would later

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[672] Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 115

[673] *Ibid.*, p. 102

[674] *Ibid.*, p. 115

[675] See Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 91 where he argues that scarcity breeds need and thus vice, and that scarcity is the product of property.

[676] Rousseau explicitly argues that morality is an emergent product of human society in *Second Discourse*, p. 115.

develop in his critical philosophy. In the historical narrative Kant presents in the anthropology lecture notes, morality is neither a product of an ahistorical power of will nor is moral knowledge something we can infer from a study of the formal structure of cognition. Morality is conceived of as an explicitly historical phenomenon that is entirely contingent upon humanity's social condition and base psychology.[677] In particular, Kant makes the Rousseauian point that humanity's moral condition is a product of the scarcity that results from the institution of property. He argues that "the natural human being" always "keeps his word" and "does not steal" from those whom he lives with. "Nothing tempts" the human being in the pre-social condition because "what one has every other person can also have". It is only after a system of property has been developed and a "civil state" has emerged that "vices" like "disloyalty, deception, theft, and so forth" arise.[678] It is

[i]n the civil state, [that] the human being sacrifices many of his natural advantages, he sacrifices his freedom in many ways… He becomes subject to the temptation of vices, he gets inclinations from the knowledge of needs, which seduce him into many passions, *he comes to know the moral law, and feels the incentive to transgress duties* [emphasis added]*,* and since his activity has been aroused, thus evil will grow in just the same way as will the good.[679]

The upshot of this historical (albeit hypothetical) distinction between pre-civil and civil humanity is that Kant is also necessarily committed to a moral hierarchy. The kind of social psychology that compels us to act in certain ways in the civil condition Kant describes as only a half-hearted goodness. Thus Kant agrees with Rousseau that "if we stop with the civil constitution we have now" where morality is merely a simulacrum of virtue in order to avoid the scorn of others "then it

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[677] Which follows Rousseau, who argues "although it may be proper for Socrates and other minds of that class to acquire virtue through reason, the human race would long since have ceased to exist if its preservation had depended only on the reasoning of the individuals who compose it". For Rousseau it is the feeling of pity that prevents us from "robbing a weak child or a sick old man of his hard-won sustenance…it is pity which, in place of that noble maxim of rational justice 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you', inspires all men with this other maxim of natural goodness, much less perfect but perhaps more useful: 'Do good to yourself with as little possible harm to others.*' In a word, it is to this natural feeling, rather than to subtle arguments, that we must look for the origin of that repugnance which every man would feel against doing evil* [emphasis added]" (*Second Discourse*, pp. 101-2).

[678] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:688. *C.f.* Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, pp. 97-8.

[679] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:688

would be better to return to the estate of wildness"[680] because in our present "civil constitution…we have nevertheless lost more than we have gained".[681]

Kant does not believe that Rousseau argues that the state of nature is *always* superior to a civil constitution. Rather, he believes Rousseau has shown

only that our present constitution is less well suited to human nature than the crude condition in which we were previously, and if we did not have hope of going further, he advises that one should turn around and go back into the estate of nature.[682]

In other words, Kant leaves open the possibility that one day the civil constitution will allow us to realise a more genuine kind of morality that is superior even to the moral innocence of the pres-social condition. I will return to this again in a moment. For now it is important to note that as I argued in the ninth chapter, in the *Observations* Kant has two tiers of morality. There is the kind of morality that acts as the grease that allows society to keep ticking over and there is morality understood as ideal virtue. This same bifurcation of morality into propriety and virtue persists in Kant's anthropology lecture notes, signalling that the moral philosophy he outlines in his lecture notes is a continuation of the kind moral philosophy he alluded to in the earlier part of his pre-critical career.

Human Perfectibility as a Teleological Ideal

Because Kant, like Rousseau, has a concept of morality as both a necessary practice of modern society but also as virtue, he also adopts Rousseau's idea that humanity has a kind of perfection that is realised as an historical enterprise.[683] Mirroring the language of the announcement and *Observations*, in his anthropology lectures Kant is recorded arguing that "human nature" takes on many "appearances in different ages" and that these appearances only show how it is "constituted" at a particular "time" and "under" particular "circumstances". These particular appearances themselves "do not allow us to cognise what kinds

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[680] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:847
[681] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:692
[682] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:846
[683] Rousseau, *Second Discourse,* pp. 88-9, 100

of germs lie hidden in the soul of the human being". Thus it is the task of this part of the anthropology [684] to study the different historical "circumstances" from different periods of time "and infer from them what nature's goal for humanity is".[685]

This is not a task Kant's pre-critical anthropology pursues from scratch because "Rousseau" already "shows in general that in us lie the germs for cultivation toward our vocation", that "we have need of a civil constitution on this account in order to fulfil the end of nature" and "achieve the entire end of the human being". [686] This too is a restatement of Kant's declared goals for his lectures on moral philosophy in 1765 where he argues that "[m]y purpose will be to establish which perfection is appropriate to [humanity] in [its] state of wise innocence" and thereby reveal "the unchanging nature of man".

What these statements show is that Kant views 'human nature' not as a Humean bundle of psychological impulses (which Kant treats as the "appearance" or the "distorted" form "conferred" by "the contingencies of his [humanity's] condition") but as an ideal moral form (a form that is "hidden" from casual observation) that can be inferred from a conjectural study of the history of the human species. This kind of teleological thinking, and in particular, the issue of how this kind of thinking reconciles with Kant's epistemological commitments in both his pre-critical and critical career, may both be open to debate. [687] However Kant's philosophical consistency is not particularly important for this thesis. What is important is that it appears from 1765 until the late 1770s Kant had adopted a moral philosophy heavily influenced by Rousseau's historicist narrative.

Where Kant Disagrees with Rousseau

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[684] The anthropology consists of many other parts that have seemingly little to do with Rousseau, morality, history or any kind of statement of methodology.

[685] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:838

[686] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:838

[687] Kant eventually recognises the problematic nature of this kind of teleological thinking and offers a transcendental defence of it in his third *Critique*, particularly as it is applied to biology. See *CJ* AK 5:372-377.

While it is difficult to overstate Kant's admiration for Rousseau, he does not adopt wholesale Rousseau's historicist moral philosophy as outlined in the *Discourse* into his own pre-critical moral philosophy. Even though Kant is highly favourable towards Rousseau's historicist analysis of morality at this point in his career, he rejects Rousseau's regressive moral narrative and replaces it with a progressive one. This difference in thought is signalled in the second note from Kant's copy of the *Observations* where he writes

Rousseau. He proceeds synthetically and begins from the natural human being; I proceed analytically, beginning from the civilised human being.[688]

What does Kant mean here? Analytic knowledge for Kant is axiomatic or "Euclidean", whereas that which is synthetic can be "expanded" into knowledge of that which is not contained in the predicate of a concept.[689] In other words in this note Kant believes that Rousseau erred when he took as his starting point the idea that there is a *homme naturel* and expanded this out into a story about humanity's eventual transformation into a social being and its consequent ruination. Against Rousseau, Kant instead argues that humanity by *definition* is social in nature. Noting this difference in starting point Ernst Cassirer argues that

[b]ecause of this basic methodological conviction [that knowledge must always be bound to the limits of possible experience] Kant must refuse to follow Rousseau wherever the latter proceeds in purely deductive fashion, where he treats the assumed "state of nature" as an established fact from which to draw conclusions...and in this sense our only datum is civilised man, not the Rousseauian savage who wanders alone in the forests… [Kant's starting point is different from Rousseau's because] in the concept of man civilisation constitutes no secondary or accidental characteristic but marks man's essential nature, his specific character. He who would study animals must start with them in their wild state; but he who would know man must observe him in his creative power and his creative achievement, that is, in his civilisation.[690]

Thus while it appears Kant was wholly enamoured with Rousseau's style of writing and believes his moral philosophy to be an improvement on the prior work

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[688] *Nachlass* AK 20:14
[689] *CPR* A6-9/B10-13
[690] Cassirer E., (trans Gutmann J., Kristeller P.O., & Randall J.H.) *Rousseau-Kant-Goethe: Two Essays*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1945, p. 22

of the British philosophers, in keeping with the sceptical empiricism outlined in the *Dreams* Kant remained unconvinced by accounts of 'original states' of human beings. Rather the pre-critical Kant of the 1760s and 1770s required – with his British contemporaries – an explanation of the human moral condition that matches up with what we observe. Such an explanation cannot rely on religious or hypothetical suppositions like a fall from paradise and redemption by a supernatural god or supposing that the human species was once in an original and pre-social condition.

This methodical conviction combined with the fact that Kant had no critical architectonic on which to hang a new metaphysical concept of the good compelled him to avoid making claims about an original goodness or sin innate to the human species or assumptions about any ideal pre-social state of being. Kant revises Rousseau's narrative in a way that downplays the latter's romanticism for pre-social life and pessimism about humanity's moral condition. He replaces this narrative with a Whig history that emphasises moral progress driven by an invisible hand which promotes the development of an impartial spectator and 'genuine' morality understood as something more than trying to fit in with others. In other words, in Kant's anthropology lecture notes and announcement it can be seen that despite explicit references to Rousseau, the moral philosophy Kant presents is in fact a modified version Smith's moral philosophy. That Kant would do this is unsurprising given that Smith himself views Rousseau's *Discourse* as the basis of his own historicist moral philosophy.

Smith's Revision of Rousseau's Discourse

Besides *Moral Sentiments* and *Wealth of Nations* the only other piece of writing Smith made publicly available during his life time was a letter to the short-lived *Edinburgh Review* in 1756.[691] The letter is a survey of what Smith sees as the current state of learning in Europe and an attempt to marshal Scottish thinkers to make use of Hume's science of man as a way to "systematise" moral

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[691] The *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* – which includes his essay on astronomy – was published posthumously along with the student notes that make up his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, and *Correspondence*.

knowledge.[692] The one text Smith singles out for attention in this letter is none other than Rousseau's *Discourse*.

In his letter, discussing the decline of English moral philosophy Smith refers to Locke, Mandeville, Lord Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson as thinkers who

have all of them, according to their different and inconsistent systems, endeavoured at least to be, in some measure, original; and to add something to that stock of observations with which the world had been furnished before them.

Unfortunately however, as Smith sees it, "this branch of the English philosophy…seems now to be entirely neglected by the English themselves". All is not lost however as this particular kind of philosophy "has of late been transported into France" where "some traces of it" may be found "in the Encyclopaedia", the work "by Mr. De Pouilly", and "above all, in the late *Discourse* upon the origin and foundation of inequality amongst mankind by Mr. Rousseau of Geneva".[693] Smith is refreshingly straightforward about his opinion of this work. He writes,

[w]homever reads this last work [the *Discourse*] with attention, will observe, that the second volume of the Fables of the Bees has given occasion to the system of Mr. Rousseau, in whom however the principles of the English author are softened, improved, and embellished, and stript of all that tendency to corruption and licentiousness which has disgraced them in their original author.[694]

Smith however is not altogether taken by Rousseau. He also writes that "it would be to no purpose to give an analysis of either [part of the *Discourse*]; for none could give any just idea of a work which consists almost entirely of rhetoric and description". Smith then finishes his letter by providing five pages of translated passages from the book to "present" to the "readers" a "specimen of his eloquence".[695] Despite this rebuke, Smith still describes Rousseau as the most

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[692] Lomonaco J., "Adam Smith's "Letter to the Authors of the *Edinburgh Review*"", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, volume 63, number 4, 2002, pp. 673-5
[693] *Letter* 10
[694] *Letter* 11
[695] *Letter* 12

important author to carry on the tradition of English philosophy and spends considerable space translating the most important passages from the *Discourse*. This suggests that Smith sees in Rousseau an important font for his own ideas.

Following up the possibility that Smith sees Rousseau as an important resource for his own ideas, Pierre Force claims that

[i]t is clear from the order of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* that sympathy is the cornerstone of Smith's system. It is also widely acknowledged that pity has a central role in Rousseau's philosophy. It is the foundation of all natural virtues. One of the first critics to have noticed the centrality of pity in Rousseau's system is Adam Smith himself [in the *Edinburgh Review*].[696]

Force argues that Smith is attracted to Rousseau's account of pity because he also uses a similar concept (the concept of sympathy) in order to combat Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* and show that there is more to human psychology than self-interest.[697] Neither Rousseau nor Smith dismiss Mandeville's "selfish hypothesis"[698] outright. Instead, in order to critique Mandeville, both authors actually adopt Mandeville's selfish hypothesis and "complicate it by introducing the principle of pity" in the case of Rousseau, or sympathy in the case of Smith.[699] In other words, both Rousseau and Smith recognise the importance of self-interest in determining human behaviour but they reject the idea that it is the sole mechanic that determines human behaviour.[700]

The way both authors go about showing that there is more to human nature than purely self-interested behaviour is, Force argues, to "historicise" Mandeville's narrative. They do this to show how the selfish hypothesis only holds in descriptions of contemporary society, thus also showing that the hypothesis holds only contingently rather than absolutely. Rousseau believes that

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[696] Force P., *Self-Interest before Adam Smith: a Genealogy of Economic Science*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 18
[697] *Ibid.*, p. 15
[698] This phrase, Force notes, is Hume's term for "the idea that all human conduct can be explained in terms of self-interest" (*Self-Interest before Adam Smith*, p. 5).
[699] Force, *Self-Interest before Adam Smith*, p. 42
[700] *Ibid.*, pp. 24-34.

the main mistake of philosophers like "Hobbes and others" (for "others", read Mandeville) is that, having to explain "a fact of the state of Nature…they did not think of carrying themselves back beyond the Centuries of Society". As a result, they mistakenly assumed that self-interest had been the engine of human behaviour since the birth of humanity.[701]

Thus Rousseau argues that Mandeville's description of a purely selfish society "does not account for the nature of man in his original state" (where "pity…takes the place of laws, mores, and virtue" and compels us to "without reflection" come "to the aid of those we see suffering"[702]) even though it does "explain the behaviour of man in civilised society". Likewise, Force notes that in his *Moral Sentiments* Smith too concedes Mandeville's point, arguing that

"how destructive soever" Mandeville's system may appear "it could never have imposed upon so great a number of persons, nor have occasioned so general an alarm among those who are friends of better principles, had it not in some respects bordered upon the truth".[703]

However, like Rousseau, Smith also seeks to head off the selfish hypothesis by arguing that this behaviour is the product of the particular "legal and economic system of modern commercial society".[704]

Where Smith's critique of Mandeville differs from Rousseau's is not in the way he historicises morality or in the argument that the selfish hypothesis is only contingently true. Smith differs with Rousseau over what Eric Schliesser calls "Rousseau's agrarian republican self sufficient ideal".[705] This is an ideal that – like Mandeville's *Fable* – construes contemporary society as lacking any redeeming moral features. Smith himself telegraphs this difference in his letter:

Dr. Mandeville represents the primitive state of mankind as the most wretched and miserable that can be imagined; Mr. Rousseau, on the contrary, paints it as the happiest and most suitable to his nature. Both of them however suppose, that there is in man no powerful instinct which necessarily determines him to seek society for its own sake: but according to the one, the misery of his

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[701] *Ibid.*, p. 43
[702] Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 101
[703] Force, *Self-Interest before Adam Smith*, p .43 quoting *TMS* VII.ii.4.14
[704] *Ibid.*, p. 47
[705] Schliesser E., "Adam Smith's benevolent and self-interested conception of philosophy" in Montes L. & Schliesser E. (eds.), *New Voices on Adam Smith*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 347

original state compelled him to have recourse to this otherwise disagreeable remedy; according to the other, some unfortunate accidents having given birth to the unnatural passion of ambition and vain desire of superiority, to which he had before been a stranger, produced the same fatal effect.[706]

In place of Rousseau's pessimistic and regressive description of contemporary society as wanting in virtue, Smith, while accepting Rousseau's criticisms of contemporary society,[707] argues that society in fact has many redeeming moral qualities. In particular, as Schliesser puts it, while Rousseau sees "genuine freedom" as "independence in the form of self-sufficiency" and thus as something that is "impossible…in commercial society", Smith "follows Hume's suggestion of advocating a different form of independence…that emphasises our mutual *interdependence*".[708] I believe the most visible way Smith prosecutes this case is with his invisible hand metaphor.

Smith's Invisible Hand as a Response to Rousseau

While both Smith and Rousseau historicise morality to show that self-interested behaviour is the product of different historical and social circumstances, Smith does not accept Rousseau's claim that the current civil condition is a moral regression from humanity's original pre-social condition. Rather, Smith sees humanity's social behaviour as a necessary condition for moral progress. As I argued in the fourth chapter of this thesis Smith views the development of moral rules as the product of human sociality. Moral rules develop by experiencing what behaviour receives the approbation and disapprobation of others. These rules are later called upon to keep our behaviour in check when we are in possession of powerful passions that may lead us to act in ways that we would not approve of in our cooler moments. The respect for these rules – what Smith (like Kant) calls "duty" – does not reflect any special virtue in the person who follows them. Indeed

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[706] *Letter* 11

[707] See Rasmussen D.C*., The Problems and Promise of Commercial Society: Adam Smith's Response to Rousseau*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008, pp. 51-90. See also Hanley R.P., "Commerce and Corruption: Rousseau's Diagnosis and Adam Smith's Cure", *European Journal of Political Theory*, volume 7, number 2, 2008, pp. 137-58.

[708] Schliesser, "Adam Smith's conception of philosophy", p. 346

[t]here is scare any man…who by discipline, education, and example, may not be so impressed with regard to general rules, act upon almost every occasion with tolerable decency, and through the whole of his life to avoid any considerable degree of blame.[709]

However, that "the coarse clay of which the bulk of mankind are formed"[710] is generally confined to following rules rather than acting from a respect for virtue itself does not for Smith represent some kind of regression from Rousseau's agrarian ideal. On the contrary, that humanity is primarily driven by concern for others' judgements (including our own internal impartial spectator's judgement) for Smith is a stepping stone to realising Nature's[711] plan.

The rules we are compelled to follow, Smith writes, "were plainly intended to be the governing principles of human nature" and "are to be regarded as the commands and laws of the Deity, promulgated by those vicegerents [the impartial spectator] which he has thus set up within us."[712] Though we may follow these rules only to avoid condemnation and receive the praise of others (including our own conscience), by following these rules we unconsciously promote a system that ultimately benefits us even though we had no immediate interest or intention of doing so. As Smith puts it,

by acting according to the dictates of our moral faculties [in this case, our impartial spectator and the rules we created to buttress it], we necessarily pursue the most effectual means for promoting the happiness of mankind, and may therefore be said, in some sense, to co–operate with the Deity, and to advance as far as in our power the plan of Providence. By acting other ways, on the contrary, we seem to obstruct, in some measure, the scheme which the Author of nature has established for the happiness and perfection of the world.[713]

This is the same mechanism Smith uses to explain economic development and the evolution of jurisprudence. In *Moral Sentiments* Smith argues that economic

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[709] *TMS* III.5.1
[710] *TMS* III.5.1
[711] Smith also describes 'Nature' as 'God', 'Providence', 'the Author', 'the Deity' and so forth; as do Kant and Rousseau.
[712] *TMS* III.5.6
[713] TMS III.5.7

progress could not have come about without the kind of vanity and admiration of wealth that fuels most of humankind.[714] However he also writes

it is well that nature imposes upon us in this manner [to admire wealth and greatness more than virtue]. It is this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind. It is this which first prompted them to cultivate the ground, to build houses, to found cities and commonwealths, and to invent and improve all the sciences and arts, which ennoble and embellish human life; which have entirely changed the whole face of the globe, have turned the rude forests of nature into agreeable and fertile plains, and made the trackless and barren ocean a new fund of subsistence, and the great high road of communication to the different nations of the earth.[715]

Through the use of his invisible hand metaphor Smith tries to show how, contra Rousseau, our apparently banal, superficial, and even self-serving behaviour unintentionally promotes rather than denigrates our moral progress. And, as I will argue in the next chapter, this revision of Rousseau's narrative to one where unintentional good is created from our morally unexceptional behaviour, and the idea that this process can be understood teleologically as a part of a divine plan, is the same revision Kant makes to Rousseau's narrative in his pre-critical philosophy. As such, Rousseau's role in both Smith and Kant's thought is the bridge that allows us to understand why Kant praised Smith in his letter to Herz.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to show that Kant's pre-critical moral philosophy, while neither clearly articled nor completely formulated, nonetheless is essentially Rousseauian in nature. This interpretation is all but confirmed by Kant's own continual and explicit testimony that it is Rousseau from whom he takes his cue. I have then shown that Smith, while not as partial to Rousseau's historicist moral philosophy as Kant, also sees the *Discourse* as a part of a broader philosophical foundation upon which he also builds his own moral philosophy. Having now established these two foundations, in the final chapter of this thesis I will argue that Kant also adopts Smith's revisions of Rousseau's moral philosophy thereby

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[714] *TMS* I.iii.3.1-7
[715] *TMS* IV.1.10

answering the central question guiding this thesis – that is, "why did Kant like Smith?"

Chapter 12: Kant's Cosmopolis

In the previous chapter I provided textual evidence which demonstrates that Kant's pre-critical moral philosophy is, at its heart, an historicist moral philosophy taken from Rousseau's *Discourse*. I then showed that Smith also saw Rousseau's work as providing the intellectual foundation for his own account of morality as an historical and social practice. Now in this chapter I will show how Kant applies something similar to Smith's revision of Rousseau to his own pre-critical historicist moral philosophy.

Kant's Invisible Hand

Both Rousseau and Kant argue that while other animals are born teleologically complete, humanity is born incomplete.[716] As such both authors also argue that humanity's 'purpose' needs to be realised historically. According to Kant this purpose is the perfection of the civil constitution, of the arts and sciences, and consequently, of our moral condition.[717] Kant credits Rousseau for identifying these perfections.[718] However, while Rousseau views humanity as hopelessly incapable of achieving its perfection, Kant, like Smith, sees our current moral struggles as the mechanism through which "Nature's purpose" for "the human being" is realised.[719] Contra Rousseau, Kant argues that

> although the human being in the civil state sacrifices many advantages of nature…many means are…furnished to replace such advantages. Therefore nature's purpose was the civil society, and the human being is determined to make himself perfectly happy and good as a member of the entire society.[720]

Like Smith, Kant sees humanity's moral progress as intimately tied up with its mutual interdependence, not with the independence embodied by Rousseau's agrarian pre-social ideal. Against Rousseau, Kant argues that as a social being

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[716] See Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, pp. 87-8 and *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:839.
[717] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:843, 845-6
[718] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:847
[719] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:677
[720] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:690

a single…human being cannot…make himself perfect until the whole of society is perfect. When such a [political] state will be attained, in which everything will be instituted in accordance with complete rules of justice and of morality, this will then be a condition under which everyone will be able to make himself more perfect.[721]

Because Kant argues that humanity's moral condition is tied up with its social condition he also argues that moral progress is in some sense out of our hands. In accordance with my argument that at this point in Kant's career he was fundamentally opposed to the kind of moral philosophy he would later advocate during the critical part of his career, he accepts a fairly comprehensive non-metaphysical world view.[722] Holding this view means Kant believes that humanity does not have the capacity to act in ways that do not adhere to Newtonian causality. Thus to be able to talk about moral progress through this particular methodological framework Kant is forced to explain moral progress as something dependent on social progress. Unwilling to accept that this progress is actually regress, Kant sets out to demonstrate how, despite our individual incompetence and intentions, we are compelled to realise our perfection understood as a divine plan. Kant uses his own invisible hand metaphor to make this case.

How Kant Uses the Invisible Hand Metaphor to Modify His Pre-Critical Rousseauian Moral Philosophy

Kant argues that if humanity remained "under the care of nature" in an original, pre-social state, and if nature "had offered it everything voluntarily", then humanity "would have remained in a state of stupidity". To prevent this Kant argues that "Providence…has willed that we should live in a world where we are able to obtain something for ourselves only through effort". It is only through "the

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[721] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:690-1

[722] In the fourth chapter I argued that Smith's teleological outlook, somewhat like Hegel's, does not necessitate a commitment to any metaphysical beliefs of the kind Kant develops in his critical philosophy and indeed can be compatible with his naturalism. Here this argument also applies to Kant, who only later in the third *Critique* tries to develop an argument to justify the kind of teleological beliefs he presents in his anthropology (*CJ* AK 5:359-434).

hardships of life" that "the incentive to the full development of" our "talents" emerges.[723]

This hardship is not voluntarily chosen. Rather, as per Kant's scepticism at this point in his career, humanity's hardship is a product of its innate "evil", which "is nothing other than animality combined with freedom, to the extant, namely, that freedom is not brought under any [moral] law".[724] The freedom Kant speaks of here in his pre-critical career is not the defining power of will he argues for in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*. Here Kant's concept of freedom is, as I discussed in the fifth chapter, a compatibilist one; it is a concept of freedom that does not suppose a power of will that can operate without regard to theoretical causality. Or in other words, while humanity has the ability to choose (they have a power of freedom), insofar as they are animals they can only choose among the options given to them by their normal psychological motives (their "animality"). Precisely because humanity lacks an incompatibilist freedom of will Kant has to explain moral progress as an historical and social evolution beyond our individual control.

In the 1777-8 lecture notes Kant argues that the "chief success" of this particular kind of "evil" understood as a freedom only to act accordingly to our psychological impulses "was the beginning of civil societies".[725] Likewise in the 1775-6 notes he also argues that "it pleased Providence to draw good out of the root of evil" [726] because this created the civil constitution, replete with its inequality and tendency to make humanity selfish and vain. Though our current society is in many ways a retrograde development from pre-social moral innocence, it contains the necessary mechanisms which spur on human moral progress. The division of property leads to wealth inequality and envy that "increases our needs".[727] However it is from this inequality that "all the arts and sciences originate".[728] Even more importantly, Kant also sees these changes in the

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[723] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:844
[724] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:844
[725] *Pillau Anthropology* AK 25:844-5
[726] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:691
[727] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:682
[728] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:692

structure of our societies as the catalyst for changing our behaviour and ultimately the development of morality.

As I detailed in the previous chapter, in Kant's anthropology lectures he describes morality as the product of our social interaction. Kant argues that in the civil constitution there first develops "the constraint of propriety" and later "the moral constraint...which consists in every human being fearing the moral judgement of the other". Despite the obvious parallels, this account of morality as something built on a concern for the judgement of others does not come from Smith's *Moral Sentiments* but rather Rousseau's earlier account of this phenomenon in his *Discourse*. [729] We can see this because Kant does not use Smith's more sophisticated account of sympathy in order to explain the psychological process we go through when dealing with other people. However, even though Kant does not appear to adopt Smith's account of sympathy, he does take one of Smith's more important points to modify his own Rousseauian conception of morality as a socially emergent phenomenon. What I did not show in the previous chapter is that after explaining the historical development of the so-called "moral constraint" Kant adds a third development to this narrative. This third development is the ability to judge ourselves by measuring our behaviour against our own conscience.

Kant and Conscience

Kant is unwilling to argue that morality is the mere fear of being judged by other people. Even though the "moral constraint...makes up for the shortcomings of civil constraint and of the constraint of propriety", because it is "based on the opinions of others" it is "only an external constraint". As soon as the opinions of others no longer matter to us or as soon as we can hide what we are doing we no longer have any incentive to do the right thing. In order to make up for this Kant argues that nature has "given to" humanity a "predisposition" to "morally sentence himself" in the same way we sentence "the other". This final constraint

is the constraint of one's conscience, and indeed of one's own, where every individual, in accordance with the moral law, passes judgement about his

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[729] Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, pp. 114-5

moral conduct through his conscience, and also acts likewise. This is the kingdom of God on earth.[730]

Though there is no record of Kant mentioning Smith or his impartial spectator in these lecture notes, the parallels to his work are both striking and difficult to ignore. In line with Fleischacker's interpretation, here Kant suggests that the apex of moral behaviour is found not in acting with mere propriety, or even out of concern for other people's judgements. Rather, the apex of morality is found in our ability to be motivated by our "conscience" which is "our supreme judge". Only if humanity can develop to the point where we are able to sentence ourselves in the same way we do in Smith's account of our imagined impartial spectator can we say we have surpassed our moral condition as it would be in a state of pre-social moral innocence.

Unfortunately, and in agreement with Rousseau, Kant does not believe that humanity has managed to come under this final constraint. In our current situation our "conscience is not yet well cultivated" and people "still drug their conscience".[731] Rather than adopt Rousseau's pessimism however, Kant believes we have reason to hope that this is something humanity will one day achieve. "Should it not", Kant wonders,

be possible that the human race should attain this degree of perfection in the civil constitution? For it seems that every created being would have to achieve the perfection for which it was made; therefore the human race must also actually attain this degree of perfection…even if it…takes centuries.[732]

Kant is hopeful about humanity's prospects because he believes there is a "universal arrangement of nature" which as a "rule" we must "search" for to determine the "purpose" of humanity's behaviour and social condition.[733] Kant believes he has found this purpose when he claims to have discovered – to quote again from the 1765 moral philosophy lecture announcement – not

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[730] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:693
[731] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:693
[732] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:693. This is an argument I have highlighted as existing in his *Observations* and the announcement for his lectures on moral philosophy in 1765.
[733] *Friedländer Anthropology* AK 25:679

man as he is distorted by the mutable form which is conferred upon him by the contingencies of his condition, and who, as such, has nearly always been misunderstood by philosophers...[but] rather...the unchanging nature of man and his distinctive position with the creation.

As is made clear in Kant's later lecture notes, the "unchanging nature of man" to which he refers here is the constraint of conscience. The constraint of conscience is humanity's defining characteristic and what separates it from the rest of creation. And it is this final constraint that allows us to be truly moral insofar as it allows us to realise "the kingdom of God on earth". Importantly however, this is not something which we have lost upon entering the social condition. Rather the constraint of conscience is something that will be realised historically, "even if it takes centuries". Even more importantly, this final constraint of conscience is developed historically through amoral or immoral behaviour, and the process Kant uses to describe the unintentional realisation of our unchanging moral nature neatly replicates Smith's divine teleology.

Smith's Divine Teleology

In *Moral Sentiments* Smith discusses why it is the case that we judge people by *what happens* rather than what they *intend* to do. While exploring this question Smith notes that even though "everybody agrees to the general maxim that [if] the event does not depend on the agent it ought to have no influence upon our sentiments with regard to the merit or propriety of his conduct",[734] we still cannot help blame people for what occurs. For example, if someone is managing a horse and it "accidentally takes fright" and ends up "riding down his neighbour's slave…we are apt to think that he ought not to have rode such a horse" in the first place[735] (though, strangely, we do not think to ask why someone owns people as a commodity!) At first this particular "irregularity in human sentiments…appears…absurd and unreasonable". However "every part of nature, when attentively surveyed…demonstrates the providential care of its Author". "Nature", Smith continues,

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[734] *TMS* II.iii.3.1
[735] *TMS* II.iii.2.9

when she implanted the seeds of this irregularity [the fact that we still blame people for what occurs even though they did not intend to create the particular outcome] in the human breast, seems, as upon all other occasions, to have intended the happiness and perfection of the species.

That we judge people by outcome rather than by intent is "necessary for the rule of justice". If we judged people by intent rather than outcome "every court of judicature" would be a "real inquisition" whose task is to police thought itself. Thus while it is perhaps unfortunate that we judge people for what they accidentally do rather than what they intend to do, this – contra "the world" that "complains" that this particular characteristic of our judgement "is to the great discouragement of virtue" – allows us to "admire the wisdom and goodness of God even in the weakness and folly of man".[736]

Too often, Smith argues, we are inclined to believe the final cause of things like our systems of justice is our own "enlightened reason" and our moral progress a result of "the wisdom of man". "In reality" however it "is the wisdom of God" that has constructed us in such a way so that our behaviour and judgements guide us to create not only functioning but also superior social institutions. [737] Methodologically excluding the possibility that there exists some kind of causality of reason of the kind that the critical Kant attributes to a holy will, Smith equates "nature" with "God" and thus tries to explain the spontaneous ordering of institutions like our justice system as a part of its original design. Using a watch-maker analogy Smith explains that

the wheels of a watch are all admirably adjusted to the end for which it was made, the pointing of the hour. All their various motions conspire in the nicest manner to produce this effect. If they were endowed with a desire and intention to produce it, they could not do it better. Yet we never ascribe any such desire or intention to them, but to the watch-maker, and we know that they are put into motion by a spring, *which intends the effect it produces as little as they do* [emphasis added].[738]

While "we never fail to distinguish...the efficient from the final cause" of a watch, "in accounting for those of the mind we are apt to confound these two different

[736] *TMS* II.iii.3.2
[737] *TMS* II.ii.3.5
[738] *TMS* II.ii.3.5

things with one another".[739] Like a watch, human behaviour is merely a "spring". The efficient cause of our institutions – whether they are systems of justice and morality or commercial economies – is humanity's behaviour, but these institutions are not the *final cause* of human reason and behaviour.

At this point in his career, Kant was partial to this kind religio-mechanical description of moral development and thus, unsurprisingly, also revises Rousseau's narrative from one that conceptualises humanity as having upset God or nature's plan to one in which this plan is being slowly and unintentionally realised through humanity's social evolution. To do this Kant not only uses Smith's *mechanical* description of the invisible hand[740] to revise Rousseau's moral philosophy, he also treats the invisible hand the same way Smith does in the *Astronomy* and *Moral Sentiments*; that is to say, Kant treats Smith's organising principle not just as a mechanism but as what Smith calls "the invisible hand of Jupiter"[741] – the work of a divine logos.

Kant's Smithian Cosmopolitanism

In this and the previous chapter I have shown how Kant's pre-critical historicist moral philosophy continues from his lectures on moral philosophy in 1765 into his lectures on anthropology in the 1770s. One question I have not addressed is why Kant's teaching of his modified Rousseauian method shifted from his course on morality to his course on anthropology. The most obvious explanation for this shift is that with the imminent arrival of his critical philosophy Kant knew he would no longer be able to talk about Rousseau's historicist method as 'moral philosophy'. Thus in order to continue lecturing on the topics of his historicist moral philosophy the name of the course was changed to "anthropology".[742]

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[739] *TMS* II.ii.3.5

[740] A mechanism from which many economists and philosophers try to eliminate the religious aspects Smith loads into it. For more on thesis debate see Kleer R.A., "Final Causes in Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, volume 33, number 2, 1995, pp. 275-300.

[741] *Astronomy* III.2. Though as Alec Macfie notes, in the *Astronomy* the use of this phrase is quite different from that in *Moral Sentiments* and *Wealth of Nations* ("The Invisible Hand of Jupiter", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, volume 32, number 4, 1971, pp. 595-6).

[742] See *CPR* A550/B578.

This does not however resolve the philosophical tensions between these two projects. For reasons which I have explained throughout this thesis (particularly in the fifth, sixth and tenth chapters), Kant's continual teaching of an historicist moral philosophy under the name 'anthropology' side-by-side with his critical moral philosophy has been cause of much intellectual confusion for many Kant scholars. I will now briefly touch on this debate. This not undertaken to offer my own theory about how we can reconcile Kant's pre-critical historicist moral philosophy (*viz.* anthropology) with his critical moral philosophy. Rather, I give a brief overview of this debate because insofar as Kant's anthropology is a continuation of his pre-critical moral philosophy, the debate has generated some pertinent interpretations about the role of Smithian teleology Kant's early career works.

Kant's Anthropology and its Relationship to his Critical Philosophy

One of the more out-of-place publications arising within Kant's critical era is a book titled *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View* (1792). This book is the published form of Kant's lectures on anthropology, replicating everything contained in the anthropology lectures from the 1770s, including its references to Rousseau,[743] its historicist description of moral development (including the invisible hand mechanism),[744] and the idea that present day "evil" is a part of nature's hidden plan.[745]

There is no scholarly consensus about how Kant's ideas in the *Anthropology* reconcile with Kant's critical era epistemological commitments. One reason for this is because, as Louden observes, "nowhere is the [anthropological] project carried out systematically or in detail".[746] It is difficult to work out just where the boundaries of the discipline begin and end. Thus the status of the anthropology in Kant's work is eminently contestable and subject to multiple interpretations. Henry Paton sees the anthropology course as merely a kind of empirical

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[743] *Anthropology* AK 7:326
[744] *Anthropology* AK 7:322-5
[745] *Anthropology* AK 7:331-3
[746] Louden R., "The Second Part of Morals" in Jacobs B. & Kain P. (ed.) *Essays on Kant's Anthropology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 79

psychology designed to help us instrumentally, but not morally.[747] Riccardo Pozzo goes one step further and argues that Kant's anthropology was just an extracurricular course comparable to adult night school with no broader relationship to his 'serious' work.[748] Against these more dismissive interpretations, Louden, attempting to cover Kant against Aristotelian critique, aims to demonstrate that Kant's critical writings, "when supplemented by those found in the writings…on anthropology and history" produce "an extremely rich and detailed applied ethics for human beings".[749] All the same, Louden also concludes his study by noting the unresolved hostility between Kant's anthropology and moral philosophy.[750] Holly Wilson develops a similar interpretation to Louden. She argues that Kant's anthropology serves as a guide to bring out our "predispositions" towards morality (understood in Kant's critical sense).[751] Gisela Munzel focuses less on the therapeutic aspects of Kant's anthropology and more on understanding how Kantian autonomy can be reconciled with the empiricism of the anthropology, sketching out an interpretation of Kant's broader philosophical project as one in which the anthropology acts as a study of how human beings are lead to adopt maxims and thus demonstrating the freedom of their will in "actuality".[752] Patrick Frierson supplements Munzel's interpretation by arguing that our (human) spontaneous will is radically corrupt[753] and the role of anthropology is to study the "helps and hindrances"[754] that, rather than determine our autonomy,[755] determine whether our empirical selves adopt good or evil maxims.[756]

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[747] Paton H.J., *The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971, pp. 32-3. See also Kirchmann J.H., von, *Erläuterungen zu Kant's Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, Berlin: Geimann, 1869, pp. 1-4.

[748] Pozzo R., "The Nature of Kant's Anthropology Lectures at Königsberg" in Gerhardt V., Horstmann R.P., and Schumacher R. (eds.) *Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung – Akten des IX. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 2001, pp. 416-23

[749] Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics*, p. 108

[750] Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics*, pp. 180-2

[751] Wilson H.L., *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology: Its Origin, Meaning, and Critical Significance*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006, pp. 73-92

[752] Munzel, *Kant's Concept of Moral Character: The "Critical" Link of Morality, Anthropology, and Reflective Judgement*, pp. 57-70

[753] Frierson (*Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 135) argues "the will itself is corrupt and thus needs help, but it is *freely* corrupt".

[754] Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology*, p. 67

[755] And in this way appears to follow Henry Allison's 'incorporation thesis'. See Allison H., *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, p.40

[756] Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology*, pp. 122-135

Each of these interpretations comes with their own problems. Paton and Pozzo's readings ignore Kant's statements in the *Groundwork* that describe the anthropology as a part of his broader critical moral philosophy project.[757] The more sympathetic interpretations offered in recent years face a problem Kant himself could not resolve. This problem is how the historicism of the anthropology reconciles with transcendental idealism. For example, Frierson's view that Kant's anthropology is a study which identifies how we adopt particular maxims of action and thus a subject that helps us become moral still leaves unresolved the question of how we can really know whether or not our maxims have been adopted by a moral will or are just something which has been accidentally conditioned through natural causality. In other words, this account leaves unresolved Kant's great concern that we have adopted seemingly good maxims to serve our own self-interest rather than out of our duty to obey the moral law.[758]

In this debate there is however one author who I have not mentioned but who provides a particularly interesting interpretation of the Kant's anthropology that is apposite to the central concern of this thesis. This author is Reinhold Brandt, who in his work "The Guiding Idea of Kant's Anthropology and the Vocation of the Human Being", explains how Kant's anthropology (and thus his pre-critical moral philosophy) employs an explanatory device remarkably similar to Smith's invisible hand.

Brandt's Interpretation of Kant's Anthropology

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[757] *Groundwork* AK 4:388-9

[758] Kant explains with an example in the *Groundwork* (AK 4:397) "… it certainly conforms to duty that a shopkeeper not overcharge an inexperienced customer, and where there is a good deal of trade a prudent merchant does not overcharge but keeps a fixed general price for everyone, so that a child can buy from him as well as everyone else. People are thus served *honestly*; but this is not nearly enough for us to believe that the merchant acted in this way from duty and basic principles of honesty; his advantage required it; it cannot be assumed here that he had, besides, an immediate inclination towards his customers, so as from love, as it were, to give no one preference over another in the matter of price. Thus the action was done neither from duty nor from immediate inclination but merely for purposes of self-interest."

Brandt believes one of the main reasons Kant scholars have become so entangled when trying to discern the relationship between Kant's anthropology and his critical philosophy is because of a particular line at the beginning of Kant's *Anthropology*. The preface of this book informs readers that the book will discuss "what free-acting beings make of themselves".[759] Brandt however argues that we can disregard the *Anthropology's* preface because it is philologically suspect.[760] Suspicious of the origin and authorship of the preface and pointing out that Kant's *Anthropology* does not in fact have any discussion of "free-acting beings", Brandt instead argues that the *Anthropology* "is primarily" a study of "an aggregate of historical forces". Insofar as it has anything to do with the critical philosophy, it can at best only be described as "a sort of summation of the...themes of Kant's philosophy...from an empirical-pragmatic perspective"; in this work the "human being is analysed entirely empirically and as immanent to the world" and human behaviour is understood not as random acts of spontaneity but as something "we can rely upon...like clockwork".[761]

Dismissing the idea that Kant's anthropology is somehow integral to Kant's critical moral philosophy Brandt, in line with the Friedländer lecture notes, argues that the anthropology is the empirical study of humanity's "*Bestimmung*" or "destiny".[762] Destiny, Brandt continues, is a teleological concept of "the vocation of humanity as a whole". "In the wake of Rousseau's idea of *perfectibilité de l'homme*" Brandt argues that Kant wants to find out what the "purpose" of humanity is. However, Kant deviates from Rousseau when he argues against the idea that this purpose is found in individual perfectibility. Instead Kant "establishes a fundamentally new approach and problematic". "The relevant whole" for Kant

is neither all of creation, nor the individual – rather it is the human species…
For Plato and Aristotle, the human being was primarily a citizen of a *polis* during his lifetime; the Stoics brought to Hellenism an expansion of the *polis* into the *kosmopolis* and saw the human being as citizen of the world, as

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759 Brandt R., (Kain P. & Fisher J. (trans.)) "The Guiding Idea of Kant's Anthropology and the Vocation of the Human Being" in Jacobs B. & Kain P. (eds.), *Essays on Kant's Anthropology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 86 citing *Anthropology* AK 7:119
760 *Ibid.,* pp. 86-7
761 *Ibid.*, p. 92
762 *Ibid.*, p. 93

citizen of an unlimited *societas generis humani*. Kant, going beyond this, conceives of the history of humanity as a "system" and the individuals as members and citizens not only of the *kosmopolis* contemporary to them, but as members and citizens of the human species in its *historical dimension as well* [emphasis added].[763]

It is only within this whole that humans can "realise their nature, namely autonomy".[764]

Contrary to the narrative of the critical moral philosophy which discusses autonomy as a state that is either "on or off" according to one's ability to use their power of reason, Kant's anthropology analyses moral autonomy through a cosmopolitan historicist framework.[765] It takes for granted the fact that human beings are mechanical automatons. Whether they achieve what the critical philosophy identifies as morality (autonomy of the will) can only be imagined in terms of how humanity operates as an historical species. The individual human, as an object in nature, cannot by itself hope to achieve the high standard of morality commanded by the categorical imperative. Thus, Brandt argues, rather than relying on moral heroes, Kant's anthropology is underpinned by a "neo-Stoic/Christian tradition" that sees humanity driven by "Nature" towards a particular logos. The mechanism which "Nature" uses to drive the human species towards becoming autonomous *despite* individual humans' moral failures "is a variation on the 'invisible hand'". Kant's anthropology

is built upon a revised Stoic foundation. We must regard the *pronoia*-directed nature as a purposively organised *totum*, in which each part serves every other. Ultimately, everything serves the end…of human morality, in such a way that it becomes a *res sacra*, as the ancient Stoics insisted… The ideal of ethical autonomy proscribes an anthropological grounding of ethics. However, if we imagine the world in which the free agent is supposed to act as a closed inferno with the "*Lasciate ogni speranza*" inscription over the entrance, then obedience toward ethical duty is as absurd as the labours of Sisyphus. Reason would become schizophrenic because it would demand, *qua* reason, something irrational. Therefore, the world in which humans act ethically must not be infernal and the function of evil must not be fiendish; rather, nature determines evil as a means to the good, nature conspires with evil – although only nature can do this – in pursuit of moral ends… [O]ur egoistic,

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[763] *Ibid.*, p. 98
[764] *Ibid.*, pp. 96-100
[765] Samuel Fleischacker briefly raises this idea in "Values Behind the Market", p. 403

inclination-determined actions are embedded in a whole in which they promote the end of humanity. Kant's commitment to teleology necessarily leads to a celebration of evil as a means to the good… An invisible hand guides us to something we do not choose.[766]

In short, Brandt argues that Kant's anthropology "offers us the norm-free observation of human beings in terms of their real, yet hidden motives" and that "David Hume could have also assayed such a topic, since free action does not play a role here".[767] I add to this interpretation that it is not only David Hume who could have been the author of this topic. Adam Smith too could have authored this topic and, as I have shown, *did indeed* write on this topic.

Brandt is apparently unaware of Kant's direct interaction with *Moral Sentiments*. Hence he does not make the conceptual link between Kant, Rousseau, and Smith's work. However such a link has been demonstrated in this thesis. As a result, it can now be supposed that having both read and praised Smith's *Moral Sentiments*, it is no mere coincidence that Kant's pre-critical moral philosophy also conceptualises humanity as a species that, considered historically and cosmologically, is unintentionally led by a divine logos towards its predetermined moral destiny. In sum, I argue that the teleology Kant relies on in his pre-critical moral philosophy is directly inspired by his youthful embrace of Smith's work and that it is for this reason that he told Markus Herz that Adam Smith was his "favourite".

Conclusion

In this final chapter I have attempted to demonstrate that what Kant took from Smith was not – as is argued in previous interpretations of their relationship – some kind inspiration for his categorical imperative. I have also argued that Smith was not even the source of Kant's broader historicist methodology, which originally came from Rousseau's *Discourse*. Instead, I have argued that what Kant took from Smith is a particular teleology that would allow him to modify Rousseau's pessimistic historicist moral philosophy into a one that can explain moral progress as something driven unintentionally by the trials and tribulations

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[766] Brandt, "The Guiding Idea", pp. 101-2
[767] *Ibid.,* p. 86. See also pp. 92-3

of the human species. By borrowing Smith's idea that it is a divine logos and its invisible hand rather than the human individual who is the primary moral agent in history he was able to reject Rousseau's pessimistic account while still maintaining his commitment to a basic Newtonian worldview. Even though Kant may have later removed Smith's ideas from his critical moral philosophy, before his critical turn Smith's historicist cosmology provided Kant with a novel way to demonstrate that morality is more than a contingent historical practice designed to lubricate human sociality and for this reason greatly praised his work.

Conclusion

The Argument of this Thesis Recapitulated

In 1771 Markus Herz wrote a letter to Immanuel Kant in which he reveals that Kant had praised Adam Smith. Textual and biographical evidence reveals that Kant's praise was directed towards Smith's *Moral Sentiments*. The idea that Kant would celebrate a work that describes morality as a socially and historically contingent practice is surprising because Kant and Smith's broader philosophical projects − from their philosophy of science to their moral philosophy − are exemplars of the two methodological poles that mark modern Western thinking. Kant's in-depth treatment of epistemology in the first *Critique* (and as subsequently applied to all his most famous works) is emblematic of a tradition stemming back to Plato. This is a tradition that seeks to provide a benchmark prior to or above human historical experience against which knowledge can be measured and evaluated. Conversely, Smith's deep suspicion of metaphysical principles and narrow focus on human psychology as it plays out in social and historical processes pre-figures the Darwinian turn that encouraged the naturalisation of philosophy itself. Smith conceptualises philosophy as an activity that the human species uses to help it achieve its own particular contingent aims, not something that the species uses to understand another world outside or epistemologically prior to anything in space-time.

The existing interpretations of the Kant-Smith relationship attempt to draw a connection between Smith's 'rules of conscience' and the imperatives of Kant's practical reason. However, because such interpretations have to bridge the gap between Kant's anti-historicist transcendental idealism and Smith's empirical historicism they are forced to argue either that Kant's concept of reason is purely instrumental the way it is for John Rawls or that Kant's moral rules are ultimately designed to improve lives rather than demonstrate the possibility of a radical freedom over the causality which determines those lives. Neither of these solutions is satisfactory. Kant repeats *ad nauseam* his contention that the

instrumental use of reason as employed in something like Rawls *Theory of Justice* is the antithesis of moral philosophy. He also argues as a corollary of this that all forms of philosophy that suppose morality is something that provides a guide (including rules for behaviour) which can help improve our lives must not to be confused with 'genuine' moral philosophy. Kant believes the primary task of genuine moral philosophy is to demonstrate that the power of reason can determine our actions in a way which cannot be explained by the laws of causality that structure theoretical cognition, not provide rules for behaviour which can help us gain the approval of others or even our own conscience (as Smith describes in *Moral Sentiments*).

This thesis has sought to overcome the above apparent incommensurability between Kant and Smith's moral philosophies by showing that Kant's thinking was not consistent throughout his career. The thesis does this by demonstrating that at the time Kant read Smith he exhibited deep sympathies with the kind of empirical scepticism espoused by David Hume and the historicist method in Rousseau's *Discourse* (the latter he would even use as the foundation for his lectures on moral philosophy prior to the publication of the first *Critique*). It was then argued that these sympathies led Kant to develop his own empirical and historicist conception of morality as something that emerges from and is dependent on humanity's social condition, not something knowable through abstract reasoning.

That the young Kant developed his own historicist theory of morality goes a long way to explaining why Kant would praise Smith. It demonstrates that at this point in Kant's career he shared a broad methodological affinity with him. However, pointing out this broad affinity does not explain what in particular Kant found so praiseworthy in Smith's work. Smith's original contributions to moral philosophy – including his analysis of social moral psychology and the effects of the division of labour on our behaviour – are all present in a more primitive form in Rousseau's *Discourse*. It is from Rousseau's' *Discourse* that Kant borrowed these what may traditionally be thought of as Smith's key ideas.

In order to account for the fact that Kant had already taken many of the concepts traditionally associated with Smith from Rousseau, this thesis has argued that what Kant sees as Smith's most valuable contribution is not the theoretical foundation of his pre-critical moral philosophy but rather the revisions he makes to Rousseau's *Discourse*. Following Smith, Kant changes Rousseau's narrative from a regressive story about humanity's moral decline to a progressive one wherein the 'evil' of human nature ultimately works to implement a divine logos. Unhappy with Rousseau's pessimistic narrative, both Kant and Smith instead argue that humanity's moral flaws do not merely represent a fall from grace as we enter into the social condition, but instead are the mechanism for humanity's continued social and economic development. In this way Kant and Smith both understand human progress as an unintended consequence of what on the surface appears only as 'evil' or in Smith's case, self-interest. The key point that Kant takes from Smith is neither his theory's rules nor his social psychology but rather his use of the invisible hand metaphor to explain the human historical condition in a progressive and teleological manner.

The Broader Importance of This Argument for Kant's Political Philosophy

One of the most significant upshots of solving the mystery of Smith's influence on Kant's thinking is that it encourages a reconsideration of Kant's critical era essays on political philosophy. While this thesis has drawn a strong line between Kant's critical moral philosophy and his pre-critical historicist moral philosophy, such a line cannot be drawn in Kant's political philosophy. The study of politics for Kant, as a study of the world (as the study of objects in theoretical cognition), does not need to be purified the way a theory of knowledge or morality does. As a result, the Smithian ideas Kant advocated as moral philosophy in his early career (but which were banished from his critical moral philosophy) reappear in this part of his work where epistemological purity is not paramount. In particular, Smith's ideas resurface in Kant's critical career when he maps out his theory of international order.

It is easy to suppose that Kant's political philosophy is essentially prescriptive. Kant spends considerable time discussing the rights of both states and people[768] and even maps out a proposal for an international commonwealth that will ensure world peace. Kant argues that this commonwealth would be "a peaceful, even if not friendly, thoroughgoing community of all nations on the earth". This community is a "permanent congress of states" which settles its "disputes in a civil way, as if by lawsuit, rather than in a barbaric way, namely by war". Kant believes that this congress is designed to protect the rights of each state and the individuals within them to "engage in commerce" without being treated "as an enemy" (what Kant calls "cosmopolitan right"). Although Kant argues that this order is not built on any "ethical principle", he nonetheless believes that "a state of nature among nations, like a state of nature among individual human beings, is a condition that one ought leave in order to enter a lawful condition".[769] In other words while practical reason does not *unconditionally* compel either ourselves or states to enter into a civil condition in the same way it compels moral agents to adhere to the categorical imperative, Kant believes we nonetheless have a non-moral duty to do so.[770]

In this framework Kant's proposal resembles a Rawlsian pact insofar as it is a rational plan designed to maximise the benefits of each participant. Indeed the idea that Rawls shares an intellectual tradition with Kant's political philosophy is a common argument.[771] The problem with this reading is that alongside the doctrine of cosmopolitan right and theory for an ideal international political community Kant also maintains a philosophy of history that suggests the realisation of such a community is out of our hands.[772] Rather than arguing that

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[768] Indeed The Doctrine of Right, which makes up half of *The Metaphysics of Morals*, exclusively discusses these topics.

[769] *MM* AK 6:30-2

[770] For Arthur Ripstein (*Freedom and Force: Kant's Legal and Political Philosophy*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, *passim*.) this duty comes from Kant's principle of right. He is not however able to explain how this duty to enter the civil condition is an extension of Kant's moral philosophy and as such, this duty must be considered a non-moral one.

[771] See for example Kuper A., "Rawlsian Global Justice: Beyond the Law of Peoples to a Cosmopolitan Law of Persons", *Political Theory*, volume 28, number 5, 2000, pp. 640-74 and Berrnstein A.R., "Kant, Rawls, and Cosmopolitanism: Toward Perpetual Peace and the Law of People", Annual Review of Law and Ethics, volume 17, issue 3, 2009, pp. 3-52.

[772] A possibility Smith and Fine ("Kantian Cosmopolitanism Today: John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas on Immanuel Kant's Foedus Pacificum", *King's Law Journal*, volume 15, number 1, 2004, p. 9) raise in their attempt to link Rawls and Kant, but not one they pursue.

we should all commit to a Rawlsian pact that would compel all states and citizens to come to a rational agreement about how to best protect our competing interests, Kant instead argues that his political ideal may be realised by an historical and evolutionary process. Kant argues this because the study of anything in theoretical cognition, including politics, needs to submit to the laws of Newtonian causality. It is for this reason that in the *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*[773] – a work ostensibly about his political philosophy – Kant declares in the very first line

[w]*hatever concept one may form of the freedom of the will* [emphasis added]...its appearances, the human actions, are determined just as much as every other natural occurrence in accordance with universal laws of nature.[774]

By excluding a discussion of ahistorical rational decision making from political philosophy Kant appears not only to be laying the groundwork for people like Hegel and Marx[775] but also repeating the arguments he made in his anthropology and moral philosophy lectures earlier in his career. Rather than spend time discussing what rational beings would do, Kant instead argues that history is driven by the "antagonism" within human "society".[776] He argues that

through wars, through the over-strained and never ceasing process of armament for them, through the condition of need that due to this finally every state even in the midst of peace must feel internally, toward at first imperfect attempts, but finally after many devastations, reversals and even thoroughgoing exhaustion of their powers, nature drives them [states] to what reason could have told them even without much sad experience: namely, to go beyond a lawless condition of savages and enter into a federation of nations.[777]

More striking however are his closing words in his *Perpetual Peace*. Continuing his theme of discussing the ways that conflict within the human species propel its progress, he argues "[j]ust as nature wisely separates states" so that each is continually seeking the domination "by cunning or force" of all others,

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seem to raise in their attempt to link Rawls and Kant but not something they pursue.

[773] These claims are repeated in *Perpetual Peace* AK 8:360-9.

[774] *Universal History* AK 8:17

[775] As Allen Wood (*Kant's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 244-9) suggests.

[776] *Universal History* AK 8:20

[777] *Universal History* AK 8:24

so on the other hand it also unites nations [in a way] that the concept of cosmopolitan right would not have secured against violence and war, and does so by means of their mutual self-interest. It is the *spirit of commerce*, which cannot coexist with war and which sooner or later takes hold of every nation. In other words, since the *power of money* may well be the most reliable of all the powers subordinate to that of a state, states find themselves compelled (admittedly not through incentives of morality) to promote honourable peace and, whenever war threatens to break out anywhere in the world, to prevent it by mediation, just as if they were in a permanent league for this purpose… In this way nature guarantees perpetual peace through the mechanism of human inclination itself.[778]

That Kant late in his career argues that it is war and the "spirit of commerce" driven by a "self-interest" arranged by "nature" rather than the power of reason that secures peace is not surprising if we have reason to believe he was influenced Smith's ideas. Having secured his theory of morality against psychology by making it a question of epistemology, Kant freed himself to continue offering the historicist interpretations of political evolution using the mechanistic and teleological strategies that defined his late pre-critical moral philosophy.

Though Kant's political philosophy still offers ideal forms of political organisation like his peaceful commonwealth, these ideals do not inform his account of political practice. Very much in line with his pre-critical philosophy, Kant argues that only "angels" would be capable of rationally agreeing to establish a peaceful commonwealth. Human beings, "with their self-seeking inclinations, would not be capable of [creating] such a sublime" arrangement. Thus the problem of international peace for Kant is not a "problem [about] the moral improvement of human beings", who can never be as wholly rational as an angel may be. Rather, like Smith, Kant sees the possibility of peace as something that needs to be teleologically inferred from the mechanisms of nature, including even amoral human behaviours such as self-interest and the desire for domination of others.

There remain questions about how the critical era Kant can justify using historicist narratives in his political philosophy. For example, there remain

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[778] *Perpetual Peace* AK 8:368

questions about how Kant deals with the teleology inherent in the notion of a 'divine' or 'natural' plan given his own very definite refutation of this kind of teleology in the first *Critique*.[779] Regardless of what way Kant ultimately justifies using this kind of teleology in his political philosophy, what this thesis has shown is that it is perhaps no mere coincidence that Kant uses an invisible hand metaphor to explain political practice. By identifying the possible ways Smith's ideas may have influenced Kant's pre-critical conception of morality-as-practice this thesis encourages any future readings of Kant's critical era works that do not strictly concern themselves with questions of epistemology (works like *Perpetual Peace*) to not dismiss Kant's claims about psychology and history as oddities and secondary to his more 'respectable' metaphysics. Instead, this thesis encourages future readings of Kant's political and social theory to acknowledge importance his historicist tendencies when describing moral and political practice, and the centrality of Smith's invisible hand metaphor as an explanatory device in these descriptions.

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[779] See *CPR* A620/B648-A630/B658 for Kant's extensive criticism of what he calls "physicotheological" arguments. One possible answer to this is that Kant uses his third *Critique* to argue that things like divine plans can operate as heuristics when cognising complex systems. See *CJ* AK 5:354-404 and *Perpetual Peace* AK 8:362.

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