

Updated August 2019



Reason Suppresses Feelings? Or Moses Mendelssohn's Influence on Kant's Project of Three Critiques by [Douglas R McGaughey](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

Originally Presented at Stellenbosch University  
in Stellenbosch, South Africa,  
24 April 2017  
Revised 27 June 2018

## Reason Suppresses Feelings?<sup>1</sup> Or Moses Mendelssohn's Influence on Kant's Project of Three Critiques

**Abstract.:** A common claim is that the proper functioning of reason requires the suppression of feelings because feelings are a debilitating, merely subjective pathology that cloud and/or distort clear thinking. Frequently, as well, it is claimed that Enlightenment reason's suppression of feelings is exemplified by Kant. This paper proposes to the contrary that a more appropriate understanding of the role of feelings (not emotions, generally) for Kant's Critical Idealism, rather than being a pathological hindrance to reason, as well as an understanding of the centrality of the third *Critique* is served by examining Section VII of Mendelssohn's *Morning Hours – Lectures on the Existence of God*. The feelings of awe and respect are positive and ubiquitous to theoretical and practical reason as they, not by their content but by their function, motivate creativity and the assumption of moral accountability for the decisions driving, and the actions deriving from, such creativity.

---

<sup>1</sup> These reflections were inspired in part by Birgit Recki's „Der Kanon der reinen Vernunft (A795/B823-A832/B859); '[...] nichts mehr, als zwei Glaubensartikel?'" in G. Mohr and M. Willaschek, *Immanuel Kant.: Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Berlin, 1998): 597-616; as well as Recki's *Ästhetik der Sitten. Der Affinität von ästhetischem Gefühl und praktischer Vernunft bei Kant* (Frankfurt a.M., 2001). I owe special thanks to James R. Cochrane for his, as always, careful reading and constructive suggestions. Gratitude is also owed to an anonymous reader for *Kant-Studien* who pointed out my glaring oversight of Kant's announcement of the second *Critique* in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. The *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* was published in April of 1785 and projects a "critique of practical reason" whereas Mendelssohn's *Morning Hours – Lectures on God's Existence* was published first in October of that year. This does not mean that Mendelssohn's reflections on the three-fold structure of reason were ignored or played no role in Kant's subsequent reflections. Johann Georg Hamann reported to Jacobi that Kant already planned a rebuttal to Mendelssohn's *Morning Hours* in a letter to Jacobi of 23.10.1785. See Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi.: *Werke*. Hrsg. v. Friedrich Roth u. Friedrich Köppen. Bd. 4/3. Abt. Leipzig 1819 (Darmstadt.: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976). That rebuttal appears to be Kant's, 1786, *Some Remarks on L. H. Jakob's Examination of Mendelssohn's Morning Hours* AA VIII, 149-155. However, the following suggests that perhaps Kant's ultimate rebuttal was his *Critique of Judgment* influenced by Mendelssohn's analysis of the three-fold structure of reason.

## Introduction

There is a popular narrative, which claims that 1) Enlightenment Reason with its blind embrace of progress by means of instrumental reason (logical or technical rationality) is the source of all our problems and, that 2) the flag of its erroneous grasp of the human condition is its neglect, if not outright suppression, of feelings. Already among the Romantics of the early 19th C, it was claimed that Kant's great mistake was his ignoring of feelings. Not infrequently, one points to Kant's own lifestyle as an indicator that he viewed reason to be a control mechanism over the self<sup>2</sup> – not entirely unlike Plato's emphasis in the *Republic* (441e) on the central role of skilled reasoning/calculation (λογιστοκόζ) for controlling the appetites and passions/rage (θυμός) of the soul to achieve internal harmony, hence for Plato, "justice." Kant's punctilious daily routine by which, it is said, one could set one's watch is taken to be an indicator of his exercising of cold, rational sovereignty over his feelings.<sup>3</sup> However, both claims about Kant's Critical Idealism, namely, 1) a belief that reason is exclusively instrumental reason, which properly and consistently applied, will bring certain material and social progress, and 2) an insistence that Critical Idealism ignores feelings, are false and distract from the value of Critical Idealism's potential contribution to the improvement of humanity and the fulfilment of humanity's obligations to the world. Although the feelings of awe and respect for the "law" do not *ground* theoretical and practical reason, their function is so crucial that to wish to ignore or suppress them is misanthropic. Kant's project, then, has a significant contribution to make in our materialistic age of instrumental reason that silently presupposes, hence ignores, the role of *a priori* synthetic judgment for understanding and accountability.

---

<sup>2</sup> Kant's distinguishing among theoretical reason and practical reason united by the reflecting judgment of aesthetics (αἴσθησις.: sense perception) is far more than a mere control mechanism as well as far more than merely instrumental reason. However, in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (AA VI, 26 f.), Kant speaks of "three capacities" (*Anlagen*) that together shape the human.: animality (*Tierheit*), humanity (*Menschheit*), and personality (*Persönlichkeit*) with the latter constituting the highest expression of the human –not as a control mechanism but as a creative, autonomous being able to assume responsibility consciously for its decisions and actions.

<sup>3</sup> See Heinrich Heine's derogatory dismissal of Kant in his *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland (1833/1834)*, Chapter 5, Book 3. (Berlin: Europaischer Literaturverlag GmbH, 2018): „It is difficult to describe Immanuel Kant's life because he had neither a life nor a story. He lived a mechanically structured, almost completely abstract life of a confirmed bachelor in a quiet, remote alley in Königsberg, one of the oldest cities at Germany's northeast border. I don't believe that the huge clock on the city's cathedral accomplished its external, daily routine more passionlessly and routinely than this citizen of the city, Immanuel Kant. Rising, drinking a cup of coffee, writing, teaching classes, eating, taking a walk, everything had its designated hour. The neighbors knew precisely that the clock struck 4:30 p.m. when Immanuel Kant exited his house in his gray cloak with Spanish cane in his hand heading toward the narrow Linden-alley that one has since named after him, "Philosopher's Way." He walked the route exactly eight times out and back, regardless of the time of year, and, should the weather be dismal or gray skies promise rain, one saw his servant, "old" Lampe, walking anxiously behind him with a large umbrella under his arm, like a quintessential picture of dutiful service.

There couldn't be a more dramatic contrast between the external life of this man and his destructive, world-pulverizing thought [a reference to Moses Mendelssohn's *Morning Hours* – see *Morgenstunde*: 3]. Truly, when encountering him, were the citizens of Königsberg to have suspected the comprehensive meaning of his thought, they would have had a far greater fear than answering to an executioner who only condemned people to death – but the good people saw in him nothing other than a professor of philosophy, and when he passed by at the stipulated hour, they greeted him warmly and set their watches accordingly." (Trans. McG)

## Beyond Instrumental Reason

Reason involves far more than merely instrumental reason according to Critical Idealism. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B 736), Kant distinguishes among three parts to reason (as well as a “history of pure reason”) that are necessary for us to experience, understand, and act in the world as we do.: 1) pure reason (as a “negative Discipline” [B 738, see B 823], achieved through methodological skepticism [B 788-789]), 2) the “Canon of reason” (morality [B 823 ff.]), and 3) the “Architectonic of reason” (totality, not a mere aggregate [B 860]).<sup>4</sup>

Pure reason consists of the non-sensuous, highest conditions of possibility for theoretical reason. It is “pure” not because it is morally better but because it has no perceptible elements to it:

All philosophy is either knowledge arising out of pure reason, or knowledge obtained by reason from empirical principles. The former is termed pure, the latter empirical philosophy.

The philosophy of pure reason is either a *propaedeutic* (preparation), which investigates the faculty of reason in respect of all its pure *a priori* knowledge, and is entitled *criticism*, or secondly, it is the system of pure reason, that is, the science which exhibits in systematic connection the whole body (true as well as illusory) of philosophical knowledge arising out of pure reason, and which is entitled *metaphysics*. The title ‘metaphysics’ may also, however, be given to the whole of pure philosophy, inclusive of criticism, and so as comprehending the investigation of all that can ever be known *a priori* as well as the exposition of that which constitutes a system of the pure philosophical modes of knowledge [...] a distinction, therefore, from all empirical and from all mathematical employment of reason.

Metaphysics is divided into that of the *speculative* [theoretical reason McG] and that of the *practical* [practical reason McG] employment of pure reason, and is therefore either *metaphysics of nature* or *metaphysics of morals*. (*Critique of Pure Reason* B 868-869) (Trans. N.K. Smith)

This is why the first *Critique* is *not* simply a text on theoretical reason’s epistemology (as many seem to assume); its stated primary concern is to illuminate the regulative ideas (or necessary assumptions) of pure reason that are required for us to be able to understand “*what is*” (theoretical reason) and to act in terms of “*what ought to be*” (practical reason).

Kant’s “Canon of Pure Reason” at the end of the first *Critique* profiles the priority of what in the second *Critique*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he will call practical reason over theoretical reason. For Kant, practical and pure reason go far beyond instrumental reason’s calculating, predicting, manipulating, and controlling capabilities, which, in any case, is only a part of theoretical reason. In short, not to discount the significance of instrumental reason, there is, nonetheless, much more to reason than the pragmatic skill-sets of instrumental reason.

---

<sup>4</sup> The third *Critique* described the role of *reflecting* judgment (the seeking out of a relational concept among phenomena because one does not already possess one for the phenomena AA V: 179) as the condition of possibility for the unifying of the two realms of the Dialectic and Canon of reason. See the *Critique of Reason* AA V: 176, 196-197; see, as well, for the formulation of the gap in terms of the beautiful and the moral, 354.

Finally, the realization of reason requires an “Architectonic”, the requirement of a “unity (*articulatio*)” or systematic *totality*, “not an aggregate (*coacervation*) B 861: “[...] a schema, that is, a constituent manifold and an order of its parts, both of which [the Dialectic and the Canon, McG] must be determined *a priori* from the principle defined by its end.” (Trans. N.K. Smith)

All pure *a priori* knowledge [...] has in itself a peculiar unity; and metaphysics is the philosophy which has as its task the statement of that knowledge in this systematic unity. Its speculative part [...] we entitle *metaphysics of nature* and [...] considers everything in so far as *it is* (not that which ought to be [which is the concern of practical reason McG]) (*Critique of Pure Reason* B 873) (Trans. N.K. Smith)

Metaphysics, alike of nature [theoretical reason McG] and of morals [practical reason McG], and especially that criticism of our adventurous and self-reliant reason which serves as an introduction or propaedeutic to metaphysics [all pure *a priori* knowledge McG], alone properly constitutes what may be entitled philosophy. (*Critique of Pure Reason* B 878) (Trans. N.K. Smith)

In other words, although instrumental reason is what is taken to be the basis for the (deceptively?) steady, material progress associated with Enlightenment Reason, according to Kant it is neither exhaustive of reason nor does it necessarily bring progress. He pointed out already in 1775 in his *Lecture on Morality* that the unusual causal agency of practical reason in principle gives us the power to destroy the earth,<sup>5</sup> and in the “Conflict of the Philosophical with the Legal Faculty” (in his *Conflict of the Faculties*), Kant not only rejects the notion of steady progress, but also that of steady decline or stagnation to claim that, while progress is not guaranteed, what is constant is change and that the task of progress is a *moral* task that involves those *inalienable human capacities* of reason that distinguish us as a species.<sup>6</sup> In short, progress means moral progress for Kant, not material progress, and there are no guarantees for either.<sup>7</sup> Humanity’s destructive power comes from the same source of humanity’s creative potential, its freedom: the degree to which humanity exercises a causality not reducible to but complementary to the “blind” mechanical causality of the physical world (hence, autonomous freedom), which in turn gives us the ability intentionally to change the world in ways that the natural world on its own could never accomplish. Because reason involves far more than merely instrumental reason, it is simply incorrect and misleading to classify his understanding of reason as limited to the technical

---

<sup>5</sup> See *Vorlesung zur Moralphilosophie* (Berlin, 2004): 177-180, especially 177.: „Wenn die Freyheit nicht durch objective Regeln restringirt wird, so kommt die größte wilde Unordnung heraus, denn ist es ungewiß, ob nicht der Mensch seine Kräfte brauchen wird, sich, andere, und die gantze Natur zu destruiren, bei der Freyheit kann ich alle Regellosigkeit denken, wenn sie nicht objectiv necessitirt ist, diese objectiv necessitirenden Gründe müssen im Verstande liegen, die die Freyheit restringiren.“

<sup>6</sup> See *Conflict of the Faculties* (AA VII, 081 f.).

<sup>7</sup> Kant speaks of “progress” in moral improvement as open-ended (see *Religion* VI:67) with the notion of “infinite” not as a concept of definite magnitude but as a negative concept of eternal duration, which “[...] says no more than that we must take our maxims as if, in all alterations from good to better going into infinity, our moral condition, regarding its disposition [*Hang* as inclination McG (AA VI: 29) ] [...] were not subject to any temporal change at all.” *The End of All Things* VIII: 334

skills of calculation, prediction, manipulation, and control of phenomena frequently associated with and dismissed as "Enlightenment Reason."

### On the Ubiquity of Feelings in Reason

Far from being absent, it is completely clear at the latest by the third *Critique*, the *Critique of Judgment*, that feelings are ubiquitous in Critical Idealism, and they have a positive role in conjunction with reason. In fact, Kant places feelings (*to be sure, not all feelings*) at the very core of theoretical reason and practical reason. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A 557-558/B585-486) of the causality of freedom (above, but never separated from nature) as a "transcendental idea" that is at no time directly, empirically manifest, but indirectly confirmed by humanity's creativity and that is inalienable yet never directly perceived. In the second and third *Critiques* he calls the creative freedom of practical reason the one "fact of reason."<sup>8</sup> Although by definition the "pure ideas of reason" cannot be facts because they cannot appear in the senses, of the three (the other two are God and the enduring identity of the self, the soul), autonomous freedom is the closest that empirical experience comes to confirming. Kant writes already in the *Groundwork* (AA IV, 459): "... we can explain nothing but what ... can be given in some possible experience. But [*sic.*] freedom is a mere idea, the objective reality of which can in no way be established according to laws of nature ... It holds only as a necessary presupposition of reason ... [W]here determination by laws of nature ceases, there all *explanation* ceases as well, and nothing is left but *defense* ..."

What do creative freedom and pure reason, generally, have to do with feelings? In short, *awe* (*Bewunderung*<sup>9</sup>) and *respect* (*Achtung*<sup>10</sup>) for the physical and moral law!<sup>11</sup> As he declares autonomous freedom to be the only "fact of reason," Kant quotes a famous passage from Juvenal: "sic volo, sic iubeo" ("that I will, that I command"). Be careful, though! Kant is not embracing my commanding whatever I capriciously might desire. Kant is underscoring the "goal oriented" nature of human understanding and action (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) as well as reminding us that the individual is capable of being held accountable for both understanding and action. He insists that what I will in practical reason as well as the exercising of theoretical reason with its more narrow, pragmatic instrumental aspect is subordinate to moral principles, and theoretical reason is only properly valid if the individual exercises her/his highest capacities to legislate the moral principle for her-/himself (in this sense, freedom is *auto-nomos*, that is, applying a law to itself). In the *Critique of Practical Reason* (AA V, 4\*) Kant calls freedom the *ratio essendi* (*the reason for being*) of moral laws because there can be no moral order without the ability to initiate an efficient causal sequence of events "above" and complementary to, but never "independent" of, nature. However, a moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* (*the reason for knowing*) of freedom because the very reality of a moral law presupposes the necessary condition of possibility that is freedom for such a law to occur. Nonetheless, even the presence of a moral

---

<sup>8</sup> See *Critique of Practical Reason* (AA V, 31, 42-43, 55-57) and *Critique of Judgment* (AA V, 473-474).

<sup>9</sup> See *Critique of Practical Reason* (AA V, 161).

<sup>10</sup> See *Critique of Practical Reason* (AA V, 76) and Recki, *op. cit.*, 273 that not only is respect for the physical but also includes "respect for the moral law" (*Critique of Judgment* V, 356) as well as for all persons who respect the law within (*Metaphysics of Morals* [AA VI, 468]; see Recki, *Ibid.*, 255, n. 43)

<sup>11</sup> See Recki, *Ibid.*, 295-296. Where there is no lawful order, there is no understanding much less accountability.

law is not *proof* for the reality of autonomous freedom because there can be no proof or disproof of causality given that we can only experience the effects of causality.

To be sure, feelings do not have the same claim to understanding as what Kant in the “Introduction” to the *Critique of Judgment*<sup>12</sup> calls the two domains (*Gebiete*) of “nature and freedom,” otherwise called “theoretical” reason and “practical” reason. Domains allow for understanding because they are governed by functional rules/laws<sup>13</sup> (imperceptible, relational functionality, not simply perceptible, contiguous substances<sup>14</sup>). In contrast to the two “domains” of nature and freedom, Kant calls a “field” (*Feld*) those clearly and distinctly experienced phenomena that can have no functional rules/laws, and he calls a “territory” (*Boden*) that range of clear and distinct experience of phenomena for which we have not yet grasped functional rules/laws in the moment but for which, in principle, there are functional rules/laws capable of being discovered. In the case of Nature and Freedom, then, we have domains (*Gebiete*): Nature gives us its physical laws, but only humanity (as far as we know) is able to discern and to act on the basis of those invisible, moral laws that apply to its unique causal system precisely because causality is not capricious despite freedom’s liberty to self-legislate the law. Freedom, in contrast to the physical law, must give the moral law to itself in self-legislation because its law is not given by nature. If the laws of freedom were given by nature, then we would be mere automatons or mechanical toys as Kant points out in the second critique, *Critique of Judgment*.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to domains, dreams and feelings are fields (*Felde*) because they present us with phenomena that in themselves can have no functional rules/laws. Kant observes in the first *Critique* (B 75) that “Without perception no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, [...] [perceptions] without concepts are blind.<sup>16</sup>” *Not unlike dreams, merely psychological feelings are “blind”* because they provide us with sensations or phenomena but without access to conceptual schemes governed by laws/functions in contrast to the case with nature and freedom. Dreams, Kant points out already in the first *Critique* (B 520-521) as well as in his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*<sup>17</sup> and *Metaphysik Mrongovius*,<sup>18</sup> provide us with clarity and distinctness of perception precisely without lawful/functional order. Their value, then, is to remind us that simply “opening our eyes” (i.e., simply having the experience of clarity and distinctness) does not give us understanding. We must search out and then add a functional rule/law to the

---

<sup>12</sup> See *Critique of Judgment*, section “II. On the Domain of Philosophy in General.”

<sup>13</sup> In light of the increasing reluctance to speak of physical “laws” even among natural scientists, it is even more important to emphasize the significance of relation and function among phenomena. The latter can be grasped by algorithms and, to a degree, by statistical significance.

<sup>14</sup> On the “functional” nature of concepts, which are necessary to understand objects (not direct perception of substances), see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* B 91-116, especially, Kant’s definition of function at B 93; see as well, *Metaphysik Mrongovius* XXIX: 889. For a succinct account of the shift in epistemology from substances to function, see Ernst Cassirer, *Die Begriffsform im mythischen Denken*. Leipzig/Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1922. For a more detailed account, see *Substance and Function and Einstein’s Theory of Relativity* (New York: Dover Publications, 1953) and *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*. 4 vols. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994.

<sup>15</sup> See *Critique of Judgment*, AA V, 101 and 147.

<sup>16</sup> *Anschaungen* is misleadingly translated by Norman Kemp Smith and others as “intuition” when it is more accurately translated as “perceptions” – McGaughey.

<sup>17</sup> See *Prol*, AA IV, 290-291.

<sup>18</sup> See *Metaphysik Mrongovius* XXIX, 885, 927.

sensations if there is to be understanding, and that is precisely what one doesn't and can't do in the case of dreams. Similarly, though in a very different respect, psychological feelings provide us with sensations that are diffuse and capricious. However, unlike dreams that remind us that understanding requires not just clarity and distinctness of perception but also functional rules/law, *the crucial value of aesthetic feeling* (in contrast to mere psychological feelings) *is to provide us with motivation to seek law-governed understanding and to self-legislate moral principles to guide our decisions and actions. Aesthetic feelings involve respect and awe before the law* (both physical and moral law, but not the civic law *per se*, which is and *should be* subordinate to the moral law).

### On Moses Mendelssohn's Influence on Kant's Project of Three Critiques

In 1764 with his submission *Investigation of the Clarity of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality* (*Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral*), Kant placed second after Moses Mendelssohn in an essay contest of the *Academie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*. Kant engaged Mendelssohn's work ever afterwards.

It is possible that Mendelssohn's *Morgenstunden* played a role in shaping at least the terminology for the second and third *Critiques*. Volker Gerhardt suggests that, following the publication of the "first, critical work on practical philosophy [...], one gets the impression that [... the other two critiques] happened automatically. The following texts, above all, the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and [...] *Critique of Judgment* (1790) emerge almost effortlessly in sheer amazingly, rapid succession.<sup>19</sup> The generation of the two remaining *Critiques* was probably far more intentional than "automatic". This paper does not propose that the idea of writing two more *Critiques* arose as a consequence of Kant's engagement of Mendelssohn's *Morgenstunden*. Kant had announced the project of a second *Critique* already in the *Groundwork*, five months before publication of Mendelssohn's book, and he had already raised the issue of what he called in *Moral Mrongovius*<sup>20</sup> the "philosopher's stone."<sup>21</sup>

[...] it is quite impossible to understand, i.e., to make comprehensible *a priori*, *how a mere thought, which itself contains nothing sensuous, may produce a sensation of pleasure or displeasure* [emphasis added]; for that is a special kind of causality about which, as about any causality, we can determine nothing whatsoever *a priori*, and must therefore consult experience alone. But [*sic.*] since it cannot furnish any relation of cause to effect except between two objects of

<sup>19</sup> Volker Gerhardt, *Immanuel Kant. Vernunft und Leben* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2007): 88.

<sup>20</sup> The date of *Moral Mrongovius* is not entirely clear. In his introduction to AA XXVII/2.2, Gerhard Lehmann writes.: "Das Schlußdatum seiner [Christoph Coelestin Mrongovius'] Handschrift: 1782 d. 11. Febr. Stimmt insofern nicht, als Kant nach dem Lektionskatalog erst wieder im Wintersemester 1782-1783 Moralphilosophie [...] gelesen hat." (1052) In any event, the lectures were given prior to the publication of Mendelssohn's *Morning Hours* as the case with the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

<sup>21</sup> „Wenn ich durch den Verstand urtheile, daß die Handlung sittlich gut sey, so fehlet noch sehr viel, daß ich diese Handlung thue, von der ich so geurtheilet habe. Bewegt mich aber dieses Urtheil, daß ich die Handlung thue, so ist es das Moralische Gefühl. Das kann und wird auch niemand einsehen, daß der Verstand eine bewegende Kraft haben sollte, urtheilen kann der Verstand zwar freylich, allein diesem Urtheile Kraft zu geben, daß es eine Triebfeder, den Willen zur Ausübung einer Handlung zu bewegen, werde, dieses einzusehen ist der Stein der Weisen.“ *Moral Mrongovius* AA XXVII/2.2: 1428; see Recki, *op. cit.*, 280.

experience, whereas here pure reason, by mere ideas (which for experience yield no object at all), is to be the cause of an effect that admittedly lies in experience, it is quite impossible for us human beings to explain how and why the *universality of a maxim as a law*, and hence morality, interests us. Just this much is certain.: it is not *because the law interests* us that it has validity for us (for that is heteronomy and dependence of practical reason on sensibility, namely on a feeling lying at its foundation, in which it could never be morally legislating), but the law interests because it is valid for us as human beings [...] <sup>22</sup> (CUP trans.)

What is claimed in the present paper is that already the language of the second *Critique* (published in 1788) was influenced by Mendelssohn and that in the third *Critique* the placement of the *feeling of attraction and repulsion (Lust und Unlust)* as the motivation for bridging “the gap” between nature and freedom by means of a commitment to functional, lawful order in reflecting judgment can be viewed as at least influenced by Kant’s “critique” of Mendelssohn’s notion of *Billigungsvermögen* (approval/disapproval) in the *Morgenstunden*. In other words, although when it comes to historical conclusions one is never free of unprovable, speculative leaps, there is reason to believe that the three-fold project of “critique” was not as automatic and effortless as Gerhardt suggests. Mendelssohn’s *Morgenstunden*, at least in part, appears to have provided a structure that shaped the language of the subsequent two *Critiques* and required a third *Critique* not mentioned in the *Groundwork*.

In short, Mendelssohn’s *Morgenstunden oder Vorlesungen über das Daseyn Gottes*, published in 1785 four years after Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, two years before the publication of the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and five years before the publication of the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), perhaps was influential in the process of writing Kant’s three *Critiques*. In any event, ***engaging the contrasting three-fold structures can contribute to understanding “what” and “why” Kant addressed the role of “feeling” in reason.***

Mendelssohn wrote a letter to Kant on October 17, 1785, to accompany his gift of a copy of the *Morgenstunden*.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Kant wrote an essay in 1786 on Mendelssohn’s *Morgenstunden* that was published as an attachment to Ludwig Heinrich Jakob’s *Prüfung der Mendelssohnschen Morgenstunden oder aller spekulativen Beweise für das Daseyn Gottes*. Clearly, Kant was intimately aware of Mendelssohn’s text.

Of particular importance, perhaps, for Kant’s subsequent writing of the two additional critiques is Section VII of the *Morgenstunden*.<sup>24</sup> Mendelssohn here speaks of knowledge, which experiences directly only the appearances of things, as consisting of three parts.: 1) the capacity for **knowledge** (*Erkenntnisvermögen*) as *material knowledge* of true/false judgments; 2) the capacity for **endorsement** (*Billigungsvermögen*) as formal knowledge of attraction/repulsion

---

<sup>22</sup> *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (AA IV, 460-461).

<sup>23</sup> See Kant AA X, Briefwechsel 1785, s. 413.: 16 Oktober 1785.

<sup>24</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, “VII. Fortsetzung. Streit des Idealisten mit dem Dualisten. Wahrheitstrieb und Billigungstrieb“ in *Morgenstunden oder Vorlesungen über das Daseyn Gottes* (Berlin, 2014): 43-50.



(*Lust/Unlust*);<sup>25</sup> and 3) the capacity for *desire* (*Begehrungsvermögen*).<sup>26</sup> Mendelssohn placed endorsement as attraction/repulsion (the *Lust/Unlust* of *Billigungsvermögen*) in the middle as the “connecting link” between material knowledge (*Erkenntnisvermögen*) and desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*). *Because endorsement has the “seed” of desire but is not yet desire (in short, it offers no content of its own, only attraction/repulsion), it is capable of recommending either material knowledge or the desires of wishful thinking.*<sup>27</sup>

For Mendelssohn the goals of these three capacities are all ultimately directed *outward* to the world of sense perception either to grasp truth (by finding the appropriate concepts that correspond to the “unchanging” truth of things) or to pursue wishful thinking by bending things to conform to our desires. The capacity of endorsement (of attraction/repulsion or *Lust/Unlust*) stands ready in the middle between material knowledge and wishful thinking to serve as the neutral “seed” drawn upon by the other two capacities for achieving their ends. Again, for Mendelssohn, then, epistemology in all three forms is concerned with sense perception. In contrast, the “how” of epistemology as an *internal, imperceptible* capacity is simply presupposed as if it is a *black box*.

Frequently today, Mendelssohn’s *black box* is filled with “objective” psychological data or neurobiological reductionism. In contrast, Kant’s solution is to give a *functional* account of the *black box*. Kant engages in an *analytic* of the three capacities<sup>28</sup> that constitute reason

---

<sup>25</sup> As his example of the capacity for endorsement as distinct from desire, Mendelssohn speaks of beauty, which “attracts us when we don’t possess it and the desire to possess it is completely absent.” (*Ibid.*, 45) One might have a connection here to the “Analytic of the Beautiful” in the third *Critique*?

<sup>26</sup> See *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>27</sup> See *Ibid.*, 46. It is perhaps not insignificant that, in both the introduction published with the third *Critique* as well as the longer introduction published separately, precisely at that point where Kant speaks of attraction/repulsion (*Lust/Unlust*) as the “bridge” connecting freedom and nature within the individual, he addresses the theme of “wishful thinking” (echoing Mendelssohn?!). However, in contrast to Mendelssohn, rather than viewing wishful thinking as in tension with understanding (*Erkenntnis*), Kant suggests that with wishing a human being “[...] works toward the production of the object by means of his representation alone, from which he can however expect no success, because he is aware that his mechanical powers [...] are either inadequate or [...] impossible [...] [Yet] they prove the causal relation of representations to their objects, which cannot be held back from striving to achieve their effect even by the consciousness of their inadequacy [...] Why there is this tendency in our nature [...] is an anthropological-teleological question. It appears that if we were not to be determined to the application of our powers until we had assured ourselves of the adequacy of our faculties for the production of an object, then these powers would remain largely unemployed. For ordinarily we learn to know our powers only by first trying them out. This illusion in empty wishes is therefore only the consequence of a beneficent arrangement in our nature.” (AA V: 177-178\*; see, as well, the first introduction, AA XX: 231-232\*)

Mendelssohn’s shadow perhaps contributes to an understanding, as well, of why Kant can say at the end of the “Preface” to the third *Critique*: “[...] with this [the *Critique of Judgment*] I bring my entire *critical enterprise* to an end.” (emphasis added) (AA V: 170) Critique goes beyond the perceptual to investigate the conditions of possibility for perception and accountable action in the first place. *Mendelssohn provides a description of knowledge but not a critique of reason*. Because there are only two lawful domains and because the two lawful orders are demonstrated in the third *Critique* to be “united” by a *common intellectual function of aesthetic judgment* as the feeling of attraction/repulsion [*Lust/Unlust*] not entirely an “unknown root” of the imagination (*Critique of Pure Reason* B 30), Kant has exhaustively examined and articulated the dimension of reason that is necessary for us to understand and to act morally accountably in the world.

<sup>28</sup> To be sure, before 1785 Kant spoke of “three powers” of knowledge (understanding [*Erkenntnisvermögen*], the feeling of attraction and repulsion [*Lust/Unlust*], and desires [*die Begierde*] (see *Logik Hechsel*, 30, lines 47-49 from 1782 and *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (1782) XXIX: 877). The point is not that Kant derived his three-fold structure of reason directly from Mendelssohn but that Mendelssohn’s terminology for the second, “*Billigungsvermögen*,” and

(theoretical, practical, and aesthetic judgment), and, although in the third *Critique* he employs the same three-fold division used by Mendelssohn, he renames the “connecting link” between theoretical reason (*Erkenntnisvermögen*) and practical reason’s desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*), the capacity of *reflecting, aesthetic judgment*<sup>29</sup> “[...] judgment [...] provides the mediating concept between the concepts of nature and the concept of freedom [...]” (*Critique of Judgment* AA V: 196). Hence, the need for a “critique” of judgment. Kant’s *critique turns the spyglass around from looking outward to sense phenomena to look inwards to ask.: What are the imperceptible conditions of possibility that are necessary for us to understand and to act in the world in the way that we do?*

In his table of capacities of reason at the end of the "Introduction" to the *Critique of Judgment*,<sup>30</sup> Kant identifies three faculties.: “Cognitive Faculties” [theoretical reason], “Feeling of Attraction and Repulsion” [the *Lust/Unlust* of aesthetic judgment], and “Faculties of Desire” [practical reason]. Precisely here in the third *Critique* Kant has expanded the description of the cognitive capacity that he provided in the first and second *Critiques*, concerned with understanding nature and exercising of autonomous freedom, respectively, to include an investigation of the “feelings of attraction/repulsion” (*Lust/Unlust*) in order to establish the place of practical reason in transcendental philosophy – about which he had expressed doubts in the first *Critique* (see B 29, B 597-8, and B 833). He articulated the “problem” for practical reason in the footnote at B 829\*:

All practical concepts relate to objects of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, that is, of pleasure and pain [*Lust und Unlust* – better: attraction and repulsion - McG], and therefore, at least indirectly, to the objects of our feelings. But as feeling is not a faculty whereby we represent things, but lies outside our whole faculty of knowledge, the elements of our judgments so far as they relate to pleasure or pain, that is, the elements of practical judgments, do not belong to transcendental philosophy, which is exclusively concerned with pure a priori modes of knowledge. (Trans. N.K. Smith)

Kant’s second *Critique* is far from merely unlikely a deliberate critique (in the sense of the Copernican Turn) of Mendelssohn’s “capacity for desire” (*Begehrungsvermögen*) in that Kant’s critique is concerned precisely with *the transcendental conditions of possibility for desire* rather than, as in Mendelssohn’s own case, with *the hypothetically pragmatic application of desire*. In other words, although Kant announced the project of the *Critique of Practical Reason* already in April of 1785 in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*,<sup>31</sup> Mendelssohn’s discussion of the three-fold architectonic of reason could well have played a role in the actual writing even of the second *Critique*. In addition, one can read the third *Critique* as a critique of Mendelssohn’s “capacity of endorsement” (*Billigungsvermögen*).

Two other possibilities, of course, are 1) that Kant entirely ignored Mendelssohn’s *Morgenstunden* or 2) that Mendelssohn’s three-fold structure of the faculties of the mind were influenced by Kant’s three-fold structure, not the other way around. The first option is

---

third, “*Begehrungsvermögen*,” as well as the emphasis upon their “external” focus, might have played a role in Kant’s writing of the subsequent two *Critiques*. See note 28 above.

<sup>29</sup> See *Critique of Judgment* AA V, 176, 195-197.

<sup>30</sup> At the end of the “Introduction” to the *Critique of Judgment* under “All the Faculties of the Mind.”

<sup>31</sup> See footnote 1, above.

contradicted by the circumstances of Kant’s personal relationship with Mendelssohn. The second option is contradicted by the “Preface” to the *Morgenstunden* although, granted, Mendelssohn himself seems inconsistent by first saying that he is aware of the writings of “great men” (presumably including Kant) only indirectly through the reports of others, which would mean that he hadn’t engaged Kant directly enough to be influenced by him, but simultaneously refers to Kant’s work as “the complete shattering” (*alles zermalmenden*) of metaphysics of whom Mendelssohn writes that he hopes that Kant “will rebuild with the same profound spirit that which he has torn down everything.<sup>32</sup>” However, the likelihood is greater that, if there was influence, it was that Mendelssohn influenced Kant.

Before turning to the third *Critique*, it is possible to take Kant’s second *Critique*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, to be, at least in part, a critique in the sense of the Copernican Turn of Mendelssohn’s “capacity for endorsement” (*Billigungsvermögen*) to the extent that the second *Critique* is concerned with the *transcendental conditions of possibility* for endorsement (attraction/repulsion; *Lust/Unlust*),<sup>33</sup> not as in the case Mendelssohn with the hypothetically pragmatic application of endorsement to true/false judgments or wishful thinking with respect to external objects. This critique of Mendelssohn’s “capacity of endorsement,” prepares for the resolution in the third *Critique* of two problems for Kant by means of the notion of reflecting judgment.: 1) *How and what role, does purposiveness play* within the limits of reason, generally, and, having established that purposiveness, in fact, must *necessarily* be presupposed by both our understanding of nature and autonomous freedom, 2) *how is it possible for the two systems of lawfulness* that govern theoretical and practical reason, that is, physical and moral laws respectively, *to be united into a single, unified totality*, which is a necessary condition of possibility for reason (see “The Architectonic of Pure Reason” in the *Critique of Pure Reason* B 860 f.)?

A visual comparison of “all the faculties of the mind” in the *Morgenstunden* and the *Critique of Judgment* clearly suggests the connection between them:

Mendelssohn:	Kant: <sup>34</sup>
Erkenntnisvermögen (Cognitive Faculty)	Erkenntnisvermögen
Billigungsvermögen (Approval/Disapproval)	Gefühl der Lust und Unlust (Attraction/Repulsion)
Begehrungsvermögen (Desire)	Begehrungsvermögen <sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Mendelssohn’s “Preface” in the *Morgenstunden*.: 3-4.

<sup>33</sup> See *Critique of Practical Reason* AA V:9\*.

<sup>34</sup> Already in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A 129 f/B 169 f), Kant presented a three-fold outline of the cognitive faculty (*Erkenntnisvermögen*) under the labels.: understanding, judgment, and reason. These “higher” cognitive faculties (*Erkenntnisvermögen*) are retained in the “First Introduction” (AA XX, 246) and the “Introduction” (AA V, 198) of the *Critique of Judgment*. However, in the “First Introduction” and “Introduction” to the third *Critique*, Kant has reworked, rearranged, and added the labels of the cognitive faculties according to the three-fold structure of the “Faculty of the Mind” (AA XX, 246) and “All the Faculties of the Mind” (AA V, 198) with the second (“feeling of pleasure and displeasure [*Lust/Unlust*] appearing under the more general “All the faculties of the mind” replacing the “feeling of attraction/repulsion” [*LustUnlust*] from *Logik Hechsel* and *Metaphysik Mrongovius* under the Faculty of cognition by “Judgment” [*Urteilskraft*]). As far as I’ve been able to determine, this arrangement appears for the first time in the “First Introduction” to the *Critique of Judgment* (see AA XX, 245), and possibly is explained by Kant’s engagement of Mendelssohn’s *Morgenstunden*. See note 27 above.

<sup>35</sup> Kant acknowledges in his “Preface” that he is open to a possible criticism for not having used the notion “*Begehrungsvermögen*” prior to the *Critique of Practical Reason* (see AA V, 10\*).

The centerpiece of the third *Critique* can be found in the “Introduction’s” Section “IV. On Judgment as an *a priori* Law-giving Capacity” (AA V: 179 f.): where Kant speaks of the difference between “determining” (*bestimmend*) and “reflecting” (*reflektierend*) judgment. In contrast to “determining judgment” that already possesses a universal for classifying a set of particular phenomena, “reflecting judgment” is the transcendental capacity of consciousness that is capable of seeking out the appropriate universal, which we don’t already possess, for a set of phenomena.

In everyday language, a common occurrence of reflecting judgment is the situation in which I realize that “I don’t have the faintest idea what someone is talking about.” In order to understand, I must myself go searching for the appropriate concept(s), which involves a complete set or scheme of concepts and not just an isolated concept, in order to grasp the relations in the content of what has been said. However, for Kant, the critique of judgment is concerned not with *what* one is concluding by means of the capacity of reflecting judgment but *how* one is able to do it. In other words, he shifts the focus, as in all critique, away from content claims to condition of possibility claims.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he had addressed the *how* of judgment by theoretical reason that allows us to understand nature, generally. In order to understand phenomena, generally, I myself must go searching not only for the appropriate concept for a particular set of phenomena (the functional coherence of the phenomena), but also I must invoke a complete set or scheme of concepts (not just an isolated concept) by selecting the appropriate elements from among what Kant calls the “Table of Categories of the Understanding” (B 106) that apply to the phenomena. In the everyday encounter with nature and, for those domains of nature where understanding is understood as conforming to physical laws already grasped, this selective, schematic process occurs on the basis of concepts and their schematic order that one already possesses, which is what Kant in the third *Critique* calls *determining judgment*. However, when it comes to unfamiliar phenomena of all kinds, it is more likely the case that one’s lack of understanding, or misunderstanding, is the consequence of one’s precisely not already possessing the appropriate categorical scheme. It is here that *reflecting judgment* is required. The third *Critique* is the investigation of *how* reflecting judgment (shared by both theoretical and practical reason) is possible.

Re.: Purposiveness within the limits of reason.: There are passages in the third *Critique* in which Kant suggests that nature generally, and not simply biology, is governed by purposiveness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*). One of those passages is the following that starts out by emphasizing the role of determining judgment when it comes to understanding nature. However, Kant makes it clear that, although theoretical reason, generally, is governed by determining judgment, *all determining judgments were once reflecting judgments*:

In fact, although in the concurrence of perceptions with laws in accordance with universal concepts of nature (the categories [of the understanding – McG]) we do not encounter the least effect on the feeling of pleasure in us nor can [we] encounter it, because here the understanding proceeds unintentionally, in accordance with its nature [...] [B]y contrast the discovered unifiability of two or more empirically heterogeneous laws of nature under a principle that comprehends them both is the ground of a very noticeable pleasure [...]

To be sure, we no longer detect any noticeable pleasure in the comprehensibility of nature and the unity of its division into genera and species, by means of which alone empirical concepts are possible through which we cognize it in its particular laws; but *it must certainly have been there in its time* [emphasis McG] [...] *It thus requires study to make us attentive to the purposiveness of nature* [emphasis McG] for our understanding [...] so that if we succeed in this accord of such laws for our faculty of cognition, [...] pleasure [over the coherent system of law – McG] will be felt. Conversely, a representation of nature that foretold that even in the most minor investigation of the most common experience we would stumble on a heterogeneity in its laws that would make the unification of its particular laws under universal empirical ones impossible for our understanding would thoroughly displease us; because this would contradict the principle of the subjective-purposive specification of nature in its genera and our reflecting power of judgment with respect to the latter. (CUP trans.; AA V, 187-188)

In short, Kant recognizes purposiveness in nature generally, not just with respect to organic phenomena (see *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 727-728 where he attributes to God not as an anthropomorphic agent but as the ultimate, unified totality that makes understanding possible<sup>36</sup> without having yet developed the notion of reflecting judgment, which is the focus of the third *Critique*).

Re.: the “Gap” between Nature and Freedom.: Frequently, the notion of the gap between nature and freedom in Section II of the “Introduction,” *Critique of Judgment* (AA V, 175-176) is taken as the basis for accusing Kant of an ontological dualism between “objectivity” and “subjectivity” (claimed not least to be the fundamental problem for Kant by Martin Heidegger in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*<sup>37</sup>). However, given that the theme of a gap between nature and freedom occurs as part of the *critique of judgment*, it ought to be no surprise that the concern is not with a gap between the transcendental ego and the empirical world (an internal/external gap) but a gap between theoretical and practical reason (an internal gap).<sup>38</sup> It is precisely the motivation of attraction/repulsion in reflecting judgment by aesthetic judgment that bridges the gap between the two lawful systems.:

Through the possibility of it’s a *priori* laws for nature[,] the understanding gives a proof that nature is cognized by us only as appearance, and hence at the same time an indication of its supersensible substratum; but it leaves this entirely undetermined. The power of judgment, through its a *priori* principle for judging nature in accordance with possible particular laws for it [theoretical reason], provides for its supersensible substratum (in us as well as outside us) determinability (*Bestimmbarkeit*) through the intellectual faculty.

---

<sup>36</sup> This notion of God as a necessary ground for experience and understanding is a theme found already in Kant’s earliest publications. For example: in the „Vorrede“ to *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels* (AA I, 224, 228) and *Neue Erhellung der ersten Grundsätze metaphysischer Erkenntnis* (AA I, 395-396, 407 [German.: Weischedel ed.. Vol. 1 [Darmstadt.: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998.: 435-439, 475).

<sup>37</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington.: Indiana University Press, 1968): 40-42

<sup>38</sup> No one accuses a physicist of dualism when s/he points out that light requires two conflicting theories (wave and particle theories) in order to account for light as we experience it. One recognizes that the “gap” is that between two theories, which drives some physicists to seek for a “deeper unity” or a Theory of Everything (TOE). Kant’s TOE is reflecting, aesthetic judgment.

But reason provides determination for the same substratum through its practical law [of practical reason - McG] *a priori*; and thus the power of judgment makes possible the transition from the domain of the concept of nature [theoretical reason] to that of the concept of freedom [practical reason].

[...] [U]nderstanding [...] contains the constitutive principles *a priori* for the faculty of cognition [*Erkenntnisvermögen*] (the theoretical cognition of nature); for the feeling of pleasure and displeasure [*Lust/Unlust* of aesthetic judgment] it is the power of judgment, independent of concepts and sensations that are related to the determination of the faculty of desire and could thereby be immediately practical; for the faculty of desire [*Begehrungsvermögen*] it is reason, which is practical without the mediation of any sort of pleasure, wherever it might come from, and determines for this faculty, as a higher faculty, the final end, which [...] brings with it the pure intellectual satisfaction in the object.<sup>39</sup>

It surely appears to be the case that Kant was influenced, at least in part, in his writing of his two additional critiques by re-thinking the meaning of “the capacity for endorsement” (*Billigungsvermögen*) and “the capacity for desire” (*Begehrungsvermögen*) that he found in Mendelssohn’s *Morgenstunden*.

### **Two Problems with One Solution.: Feeling, Purposiveness, and the Gap Between Freedom and Nature**

Forty percent of the *Critique of Judgment* (Section II) is devoted to a critique of teleological judgment in organisms. Because the focus here is on “objective purposiveness” (“*objective Zweckmäßigkeit*”) in organic systems, one might come to the erroneous impression that the third *Critique* is not concerned with a role of “purposiveness” in nature generally but only with a role of “purposiveness” in biological systems. However, as we have just seen, Kant proposes that the role of “purposiveness” for understanding (theoretical reason) and acting (practical reason) is by no means limited to organic phenomena.

The observable, apparent presence of teleology (purposiveness) in nature has been a central, Christian theological pillar at least since Christians began drawing on Philo of Alexandria’s *Logos* theology.<sup>40</sup> Kant had already emphasized the (undermining) limits to the teleological argument for God in the first *Critique* (B 648f), yet he also recognized that the “givenness” of conceptual and lawful “order” was a *necessary* presupposition for reason to be able to understand anything and to act at all.

However, the introduction to the third *Critique*, with its observation of a “gap” between nature and freedom, points to a conundrum that apparently undermines the equally *necessary*

---

<sup>39</sup> *Critique of Judgment* (AA V, 196-197; CUP trans.).

<sup>40</sup> See David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature.: A Survey* (Minneapolis, 1993). Philo, of course, is so indebted to Plato that Jerome, apparently, coined the famous aphorism.: “either Plato follows Philo or Philo Plato—so great is the similarity in doctrines and style.” (313, see as well, 4, 188, 208, and 338).

presupposition of a systematic unity (an Archetectonic) for understanding that Kant recognized already in his earliest writings and in the first *Critique*:<sup>41</sup>

[... ][The] unity of reason always presupposes an idea, namely, that of the form of a whole of knowledge—a whole which is prior to the determinate knowledge of the parts and which contains the conditions that determine *a priori* for every part its position and relation to the other parts. This idea accordingly postulates a complete unity in the knowledge obtained by the understanding, by which this knowledge is to be not a mere contingent aggregate, but a system connected according to necessary laws. (B 673; see as well, B 672 and 675) (Trans. N.K. Smith)

The third *Critique* represents a solution to both the ubiquity of purposiveness and the need to bridge the gap *in reason* between nature and freedom by introducing the notion of aesthetic judgment, which brings no new concept to either theoretical or practical reason but, nonetheless, allows us to see that both theoretical and practical *necessarily* are governed by a single transcendental capacity.: *reflecting judgment motivated by the feeling of attraction/repulsion (Lust/Unlust)* of awe and respect for the “law” that is aesthetic judgment.

Re.: the solution to purposiveness. Purposiveness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) is a necessary assumption behind all understanding and acting because both require coherent order for them to be possible in the first place. However, this necessity is a necessity that occurs within the limits to, and is required by the limits of, reason itself. In short, presumption of *purposiveness is part of the heuristic strategy of reflecting, aesthetic judgment that is necessary for reason* to be what it is without being able (or having) to draw any certain conclusions about a divine origin to or to prove/disprove divine purposiveness.

Re.: the solution of the gap between nature and freedom. At the same time, reflecting, aesthetic judgment is the common capacity of reason that confirms the unity to both theoretical and practical reason although they are governed by different “purposiveness:” theoretical reason is governed by the purposiveness of physical laws; practical reason is governed by the purposiveness of moral laws. The mysterious “unknown root” of the imagination of the first *Critique* (B 30) finds its critical clarification in the feelings of attraction and repulsion (*Lust und Unlust*) of Kant’s notion of reflecting judgment in the third *Critique*.

### **On the Centrality of Feeling in Reason**

One’s search (or refusal to search) for the appropriate scheme of concepts for understanding perplexing phenomena is motivated by the feeling of “attraction and repulsion,” *not psychologically with respect to the pleasurable or onerous nature of an external task but transcendently by the attraction or repulsion with respect to the lawful order* (physical or moral) that makes the task possible in the first place. Here, just as in the case of Section VII of Mendelsohn’s *Morgenstunden*, the feeling itself *provides no content* either conceptual or lawful. However now for Kant, feeling provides *a motivation to seek by means of reflecting judgment* a lawful content out of awe and respect for the physical and moral law, which constitute the orders

---

<sup>41</sup> Kant calls this notion of systematic unity or totality the “Archetectonic of Pure Reason.” See the *Critique of Pure Reason* B 860-879.

of nature and freedom not given with the phenomena themselves. In other words, the attraction/repulsion in play here is directed inward to a feeling of awe (*Bewunderung*) and respect (*Achtung*) that come with the assumption that there is a coherent conceptual scheme or a coherent system of laws that I can presuppose as I seek for the appropriate concept and its scheme of concepts. This feeling of attraction/repulsion (*Lust/Unlust*) for “order” drives one’s desire to grasp (or to deny) the “order” that the “faith” [*Führwahrhalten*] of reason requires to understand nature and guide freedom.<sup>42</sup>

General feelings of attraction/repulsion in themselves are as *unknowable* as they are ubiquitous and capricious in experience. Kant writes in the first introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*.: “It can be readily seen because they are not kinds of cognition [...] that attraction or repulsion [*Lust/Unlust*] *cannot be explained by themselves at all, and are felt, not understood* [emphasis added]; that one can, then, only skimpily explain them by means of the influence that a representation mediated by the feeling has on the activity of the mind.” (XX, 232) Nonetheless, this unknowability is by no means a dismissal of feelings because both the physical objects and concepts/laws of theoretical reason as well as the autonomous freedom and moral laws of practical reason are also in themselves *unknowable*! *Knowledge requires a combination of appearances and universals* with the consequence that *appearances*, incapable of being experienced as they are in themselves, *are capable both of encouraging efforts at understanding as well as of distorting understanding* by wild fantasy and delusion (*Schwärmerei*). The crucial requirement for proper understanding and accountable action is a commitment to the orders of nature and autonomous freedom by the “faith of reason.”

When it comes to theoretical reason’s understanding of nature, then, nature prescribes the imperceptible laws that we must grasp to understand nature’s appearances. Here, physical laws represent a necessity that is demanded by nature although our understanding of those laws are subject to change.<sup>43</sup> However, as we have stated, what is now taken to be determining judgments even when it comes to theoretical reason’s understanding of nature was once itself the product of reflecting judgment, a cognitive activity of autonomous freedom.

In contrast to theoretical reason, the “problem” for practical reason is that *no lawful phenomena necessarily determine what we **should** do*. Were there such, morality would be a heteronomous imposition on the individual that contradicts the very autonomous freedom that is the ground of morality. To be sure, the civic law (social norms), analogous to physical laws/order, can be heteronomously imposed by a group or the hypothetical imperatives of technical and pragmatic reason,<sup>44</sup> but the determination of the “rightness” or “wrongness,” hence of what one *should do*

---

<sup>42</sup> On the “faith of reason,” see *Critique of Pure Reason* B “ 850 and “What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?” (AA VIII, 137\*). Kant distinguishes this “faith” of reason from belief as “trust.” See *Logic* (AA IX, 66 and 85-86).

<sup>43</sup> See for example, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 508, 641, 684, 708, 720, 786, 862.

<sup>44</sup> The hypothetical imperatives of civic law, social norms, technical skills, and pursuit of personal, pragmatic ends are treated by Kant in the “Doctrine of Right” in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. In contrast, the “Doctrine of Virtue,” speaks of moral laws as “broad” in contrast to the narrow, particularities of the civic law/social norms, not to speak of hypothetical, technical and pragmatic imperatives. “Duty” has to do with categorical imperatives, not hypothetical imperatives so that **not everything that is “right” is moral, and duty is not a question of moral tyranny**. See, for example, „Ethical Ascetics §53” of The Doctrine of Virtue in The *Metaphysics of Morals* AA VI, 484-485.: “[...] monkish ascetics, which from superstitious fear or hypocritical loathing of oneself goes to work with self-torture and



according to categorical imperatives is dependent upon what Kant calls in the *Metaphysics of Morals* the “Doctrine of Virtue” (i.e., broad moral principles “higher” than socially constructed rules and the civic law, etc.).<sup>45</sup>

Here, though, the *should* of practical reason *appears to* violate the conditions of transcendental philosophy to the extent that Kant claimed in the “Refutation of Idealism” in the first *Critique* (B 274-294) that internal experience can only occur under the conditions of external phenomena. However, what is necessary for practical reason is that the individual establish the rule for her-/himself (it is not “given” by nature or through the senses). Because this legislating of the law for one’s self is possible only because humanity exercises a form of efficient causality (see Section III of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*) found in nature nowhere else to the degree humanity experiences it, it is possible for practical philosophy to succumb to enthusiasm and delusion (*Schwärmerei*) outside the limits of reason to the very extent that freedom is “beyond” nature and requires the self-legislating (but not creating – and more than theoretical reason creates physical laws) of its own, moral laws. Nonetheless, the paradoxical condition that makes for the awareness and exercise of autonomous freedom possible is the experience of external phenomena so that the *should* of practical reason *only appears to* violate the conditions of transcendental philosophy.

Kant’s third *Critique*, likely fueled if not inspired by the linking of feeling (the approval/disapproval [*Lust/Unlust*] of *Billigungsvermögen* and the desire of *Begehrungsvermögen*) with reason in Section VII of Mendelssohn’s *Morgenstunden* but now subjected to a Copernican critique, proposes in response that **subjective feeling accompanies all of reason’s capacities**. The determining judgments that are demanded by nature for the exercising of theoretical reason, themselves, were originally reflecting judgments motivated by the “feeling of “attraction and repulsion” (*Lust/Unlust*) for the physical law/order because the coherent scheme of concepts and the physical laws are themselves not “given” in the appearances to which they are applied. Our grasp of them involves the feelings of an awe (*Bewunderung*) and respect (*Achtung*) for the coherent totality that is the system of physical laws, which make it possible for theoretical reason to invoke a system of *a priori* elements (concepts/laws/order) that we can *add to* the phenomena to understand them.

Yet, Kant goes further in the third *Critique* to explicitly emphasize the role of reflecting judgment when it comes to biological phenomena in nature. Here, not only is theoretical reason driven by an original pleasure of reflecting judgment at an imperceptive “lawful order” of concepts/physical laws, but also the very understanding of biological processes requires that reflecting judgment attribute (!), but never is able to prove, teleological design to biological processes in order to understand biological systems. Right at the core of biology is a reflecting judgment by autonomous freedom regarding purposiveness (not directly “given” by the phenomena) in order to govern understanding.

---

mortification of the flesh, is not directed to virtue but rather to fantastically purging oneself of sin by imposing punishments on oneself [...] [I]t cannot produce the cheerfulness that accompanies virtue, but rather brings with it secret hatred for virtue’s command.” (Ibid., 485)

<sup>45</sup> On the difference between “broad” and “narrow” duties, see Section VIII (“Account of the Duties of Virtue as Broad Duties”) in the “Introduction” to the “Doctrine of Virtue” in *The Metaphysics of Morals* AA VI: 390-391.

An excellent example is the liver fluke that requires two external and unrelated hosts in order for it to complete its life-cycle. Biological systems require more than the assumption of lawfulness that is “given” by nature; they require the assumption of teleological purpose, which we must add, if we are to understand them. The capacity to grasp these “orders” involves both attraction and repulsion for the very order.: 1) when it comes to theoretical reason the physical order is attractive because it furthers understanding; it is repulsive at least to the extent that it *appears* to involve God as an anthropomorphic “designer” of natural biological systems, which would undermine the very capacities that humanity needs to exercise its theoretical and practical reason; 2) when it comes to practical reason the moral order is attractive because it indicates what we *should* do; it is repulsive because it can require us to do what *should* be done in painful rejection of our personal self-interest.<sup>46</sup>

Kant insists that it is inappropriate to attribute the teleological order to biological processes in order to argue for a divine designer. As he had pointed out in the first *Critique*, the attribution of anthropomorphic predicates to God is a massive speculative leap beyond the limits of human reason. In contrast, employment of the notion of natural, teleological systems is not only appropriate, but *necessary*, for us to understand nature alone, we must remain silent when it comes to ultimate explanations that attribute anthropomorphic characteristics analogically to God.

Following his investigation of “teleology in biology,” he concludes the third *Critique* with an examination of practical reason’s priority over theoretical reason because practical reason employs reflecting judgment (aesthetic feeling) to search out the moral law to govern the situation of one’s exercising of autonomous, creative freedom, accountably. Reflecting, aesthetic judgment as attraction/repulsion (*Lust/Unlust*) anchors (but does not ground) practical reason in transcendental philosophy, and it does so by underscoring the ubiquitous presence of feeling throughout all forms of reason, the feeling of “respect for the moral law” analogous to the “respect for the physical law” in theoretical reason.

In short, feeling is not only NOT neglected or suppressed by, but, on the contrary, feeling is central and valuable to all activity of reason from theoretical, over aesthetic judgment, to

---

<sup>46</sup> Kant distinguishes respect (*Achtung*) for the law from inclination toward an object.: “[...] duty is the necessity of an action from respect for the law. For the object as the effect of the action I have in mind I can indeed have inclination, but never respect, precisely because it is merely an effect and not activity of a will [...] Only what is connected with my will merely as ground, never as effect [...] can be an object of respect and thus a command. Now, an action from duty is to separate off entirely the influence of inclination, and with it every object of the will; thus nothing remains for the will that could determine it except, objectively, the law and, subjectively, pure respect for this practical law, and hence the maxim of complying with such a law, even if it infringes on all my inclinations.” (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*: AA IV, 400-401) (CUP Trans.). It is this capacity of respect for the law that is directed by aesthetic judgment inwardly in respect for the law that allows Kant to claim alone for humanity the “ideal of beauty” as an individual and as a species because humanity appears alone to be capable of (even if not actually achieving) the ideal of perfection as an idea of duty. Here Kant distinguishes between “[...] an aesthetic idea (*ästhetische Normalidee*), which is a particular perception in the senses and the idea of reason (*Vernunftidee*)” that is, the “goal of humanity insofar as it cannot be represented in the senses, which happens in the judgment of its shape by means of effects in appearances [...]; but [lies, rather] in the greatest purposiveness in the structure of the shape that would be the general standard of aesthetic judgment [...] but [for which] no particular, isolated [individual thing] is adequate, but which lies merely in the idea of the one doing the judging [...]” [Trans. McG] (AA V: 233)

practical reason. The differences among the faculties of cognition are NOT with respect to eclipsing and/or denial of feeling on the part of theoretical reason whereas feeling is permitted a function in aesthetic judgment and practical reason.<sup>47</sup> These feelings (not psychological feelings driven by sensuous pleasure and desires in the senses) are ubiquitous in reason, and it is neither possible nor desirable to suppress them.

Because of our enhanced destructive capabilities, the last thing that we need in our age is a misanthropic reduction of reason to instrumental reason. We live at a time that more than ever needs the positive embrace of reason's feelings and the commitment to reflecting judgment to motivate our quest for understanding of the other that/who is perplexing to us. Furthermore, we need a conscious commitment to the dignity of the other who, like us, exercises autonomous freedom "above" but never separable from nature, as part of humanity's creative response to the challenges of the world.<sup>48</sup>

Above all, we need a commitment to feelings as what drives our desire to be human in light of our highest capacities, which includes the feeling of "respect for the lawful orders" that govern phenomena even when their implication of "purposiveness" in nature threatens our own autonomous, creative freedom by making us either material automatons of nature or marionettes of a divine puppeteer but also includes the "worthiness" of satisfaction when we fulfill our desires on the basis of a self-legislated, moral principle that, at times, can even require us to sacrifice our very self-interest. Caught between material determinism and divine predestination, our respect and awe for lawfulness (the feeling of attraction and repulsion at the core, but not grounding of, reason) empowers us to consciously assume our birthright in maturity as we seek to understand the world and to act morally accountably because we can, not because we must.

As a rational "faith in order," which unites theoretical and practical reason, the feeling of awe and respect for the necessary conditions for understanding and accountable action motivates us in our response to the task represented by what Kant calls "our precarious position:"

[...] which is to be firm even though there is nothing either in heaven, or on earth, from which she is suspended, or on which she relies. Here she is to prove her purity, as the

---

<sup>47</sup> Aesthetic judgment functions as the original reflecting judgment required to search out physical laws, the experience of "free" beauty in nature (in contrast to the "appended" beauty experienced in human art, see Critique of Judgment §16), the power of attraction and repulsion in mathematical and dynamical sublimity that illuminates the illimitability and power of transcendental consciousness, as well as the role of desire in practical reason with its application of self-legislated laws to govern its autonomous reason all occur accompanied by feeling as a "respect" for, and "awe" in the face of lawfulness; hence, by no means to the exclusion of feeling! For the sake of brevity, this paper has focused on the role of feeling in theoretical and practical reason. However, feelings play a crucial role, as well, in judgments of "free" beauty in nature the mathematical and dynamical sublime presented by Kant in Books I and II the Part I of the "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment" in the third *Critique*.

<sup>48</sup> Kant formulates his notion of dignity owed to the other precisely in the individual's autonomous freedom that is inalienable, exercised only by the self, and can be exchanged for nothing else, hence, as a consequence, has no price (see *Groundwork*, AA IV: 434-435) along with the other's respect for the moral law (see the "Remark" in the "Doctrine of Virtue" of the *Metaphysics of Morals* (AA VI: 467-468). In this "Remark," he rejects any role for mere "appearances" such as race, age, gender, aristocratic rank, strength or weakness, and status and prestige when it comes to establishment of the dignity owed to the other. It is this respect, grounded by dignity, that leads him to reject slavery. See preferably the German text of the "Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre" of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, (AA VI, 270).

sovereign legislatrix of her laws, not as the herald of those that an implanted sense, or who knows what tutelary nature whispers to her, which yet – though they may still be better than nothing at all – can one and all never make principles that reason dictates, and that must have their source, and with it at the same time their commanding repute, altogether completely a priori.: to expect nothing from the inclination of a human being, but everything from the authority of the law and the respect owed to it or, if not, condemn the human being to self-contempt and inner loathing. (*Groundwork*, AA IV: 425-426) (CUP Trans.)

## WORKS CITED

Kant's works are cited according to the Akademie Ausgabe (AA) [Academy Edition] of the Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaft [Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences]. The exception is the Critique of Pure Reason, which is cited according to the pagination of its two editions: the 1781 First Edition (A) and the 1787 Second Edition (B). An example: Kant, *The Critique of Judgment* AA V: 431-432 refers to the Academy Edition Volume V: page #s 431-432. Translations into English of Kant's works often have the AA pagination in the columns. Unless otherwise indicated, translations of Kant's works come from the Cambridge University Press (CUP) edition.

Cassirer, Ernst. *Die Begriffsform im mythischen Denken*. Leipzig/Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1922.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*. 4 vols. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994. Bd. 1: 1906; Bd. 2: 1907 Bd. 3: 1920; Bd. 4: 1957.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Substance and Function and Einstein's Theory of Relativity*. New York: Dover Publications, 1953. 1910.

Gerhardt, Volker. *Immanuel Kant. Vernunft und Leben* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2007

Hamann, Johann Georg. Letter to 23.10.1785. In Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: *Werke*. Hrsg. v. Friedrich Roth u. Friedrich Köppen. Bd. 4/3. Abt. Leipzig 1819. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976.

Heine, Heinrich. „Chapter 5, Book 3“ of *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (1833/1834). Berlin: Europaischer Literaturverlag GmbH, 2018.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. 1781/1787.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* AA IV: 385-463. 1785.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Metaphysik Mrongovius*. Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR Band XXIX: 747-1047. 1783.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Moral Mrongovius* AA XXVII/II: 1395-1581

\_\_\_\_\_. *Religion within the Boundaries of mere Reason* AA VI: 1-202. 1793.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Some Remarks on L. H. Jakob's Examination of Mendelssohn's Morning Hours* AA VIII: 151-55- 1786.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Vorlesung zur Moralphilosophie*. Edited by Werner Stark and Manfred Kühn. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004. 1774/1775.

Mendelssohn, Moses. *Morgenstunden. Vorlesungen über das Dasein Gottes*. Berlin: Verlag der Contumax GmbH & Co. KG, 2014. 1785.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Morning Hours – Lectures on the Existence of God*. Frankfurt a.M.: Springer Verlag, 2011.

Recki Birgit. *Ästhetik der Sitten. Der Affinität von ästhetischem Gefühl und praktischer Vernunft bei Kant*. Frankfurt a.M., 2001.

\_\_\_\_\_. „Der Kanon der reinen Vernunft (A795/B823-A832/B859); ‘[...] nichts mehr, als zwei Glaubensartikel?’” in G. Mohr and M. Willaschek, *Immanuel Kant: Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Berlin, 1998): 597-616.