



Kant’s Demonstration of Free Will, Or, How to Do Things with Concepts

ABSTRACT: Kant famously insists that free will is a condition of morality. The difficulty of providing a demonstration of freedom has left him vulnerable to devastating attack: critics charge that Kant’s post-Groundwork justification of morality amounts to a dogmatic assertion of morality’s authority. My paper rebuts this objection, showing that Kant offers a cogent demonstration of freedom. My central claim is that the demonstration must be understood in practical rather than theoretical terms. A practical demonstration of x works by bringing x into existence, and what the demonstration of freedom brings into existence is a moral will, a will regulated by the moral law and capable of acting in accordance with it. Since to act morally is to act freely, bringing a moral will into existence actualizes our capacity for freedom and demonstrates that we possess it. To confirm the viability of such a demonstration, Kant must establish that agents can regulate their wills by practical principles, and that practical judgments are efficacious of themselves (i.e., that non-Humean motivational internalism is true). Kant, I argue, is successful on both counts.

KEYWORDS: history of ethics, agency, history of philosophy, Kant, metaphysics, free will, practical reasoning, responsibility

While many readers are sympathetic to the substance of Kant’s moral theory, few are comfortable with his arguments that purport to establish the authority of the moral law. The sticking point—or, for those less favorably disposed to Kantian morality, the breaking point—is the prominent role played by freedom. In Kant’s hands, the innocuous and commonsense view that morality has authority only for those capable of acting morally engenders a thorny philosophical problem. For Kant, only those with free will possess such a capacity, and as a result, his justification of the authority of morality requires him to establish, or demonstrate, that there is such a thing as free will. But since Kant conceives of freedom as independence from natural causality and, at the same time and for the same reason, denies the possibility of cognizing freedom, a successful demonstration must clear formidable philosophical hurdles. Not surprisingly, Kant’s efforts have been subject to vigorous attack ever since they emerged in print. In what follows,

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32 I defend Kant against the most damning of these criticisms, which is that his
 33 post-*Groundwork* demonstration ultimately retreats to a dogmatic assertion of the
 34 authority of morality.

35 Before outlining my strategy, I want to lighten my load by situating Kant's
 36 demonstration of freedom within its proper dialectical context. Two points in
 37 particular alleviate some of the looming challenges. First, Kant's demonstration is
 38 not meant to repel challenges to morality issued by the hard determinist or fatalist
 39 (Sch 12–13);¹ Kant's intended addressee is not someone worried that determinism
 40 as a metaphysical doctrine undermines the possibility of morality (A 803–4/B 831–
 41 2; Sch 13). Kant advises those troubled by such thoughts to reread the *Critique*
 42 *of Pure Reason* (KpV 97), which, he contends, proves the metaphysical possibility
 43 of freedom. (Allison aptly dubs this the 'therapeutic' function of transcendental
 44 idealism [2013: 297].) Second, at least in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant
 45 does not try to win over those who claim that an argument establishing the authority
 46 of morality must be based on theoretical, nonmoral premises.² The *Critique* is rather
 47 aimed at someone who acknowledges the importance of morality but worries that
 48 her undeniable *susceptibility* to sensible desire indicates a *subjection* to sensible
 49 desire that renders her incapable of acting morally. More specifically, the *Critique's*
 50 demonstration of freedom responds to worries that our wills are 'empirically
 51 conditioned' (KpV 15; see also KpV 94, G 406). An empirically conditioned will is
 52 limited to means-ends deliberation regarding ends ultimately grounded in sensible
 53 interests and to motivation by these ends. Such wills lack the capacity to act on the
 54 basis of pure practical principles, hence the worry that provokes Kant's response: if
 55 we possess empirically conditioned wills, we cannot act morally; and if we cannot
 56 act morally, moral obligation is a mere chimera (G 407).

57 This characterization of Kant's project has the salutary consequence of relieving
 58 him of two onerous argumentative burdens, namely, defeating the fatalist and
 59 convincing the skeptic. But his path is still daunting. A non-empirically conditioned
 60 will is on some occasions the source of its own causality, and the possibility
 61 of cognizing a will that is its own cause is excluded by the structure of human
 62 experience (KpV 29, 48): on Kant's account of theoretical cognition, our minds
 63 structure the sensible manifold by ordering it into a temporal series, an ordering
 64 that requires that all events be cognized as following from antecedent causes.
 65 Since an experience or cognition of free will is impossible, it is hard to see how a
 66 demonstration of free will could get off the ground.

67 The seeming impossibility of demonstrating freedom has led even friendly
 68 readers to complain that Kant fails to vindicate morality's claim to authority.

¹ Parenthetical citations refer to the Akademie pagination of *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the German Academy of Sciences (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1900–). Translations are from the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. I employ the following abbreviations: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (A); *Critique of Judgment* (KU); *Critique of Practical Reason* (KpV); *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (G); *Metaphysics of Morals* (MS); *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (Rel); *Review of Schulz* (Sch). References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* employ the standard A/B numbering.

² While these two points of interpretation are not universally accepted, they have been gaining significant traction (Hill 1998: 250; Ameriks 2003: 258; Reath 2006: 68, 75; Kleingeld 2010: 68; Timmerman 2010: 73n; Allison 2013: 292).

With respect to the second *Critique*, the most popular (and lethal) objection is that in lieu of a demonstration of freedom that would fulfill this function, Kant retreats to a dogmatic assertion of morality's authority (Bittner 1989: 88–90; Guyer 2000: 138; Ameriks 2003: 254–55n; 2013: 171–72; Wood 2008: 135). On this view, Kant eschews any attempt to provide a knockdown proof of human freedom and opts for an unpalatable alternative, which is to trot out the 'fact of reason', hoist its flag, and hope that we salute. In Schopenhauer's memorable words, this strategy is said to rely on 'an outrageous *petitio principii*'.

The plausibility of this objection can be seen by examining the orthodox interpretation of Kant's post-*Groundwork* argument for free will. Although proponents of the orthodox interpretation differ on the details (Henrich 1994a: esp. 83; Baron 1995: 43; Schönecker 2013), they agree on the basic steps:

1. Our consciousness of the authority of the moral law includes the awareness that we ought to will in accordance with the moral law.
2. Our consciousness of the moral 'ought' establishes that we *can* will in accordance with the moral law (via 'ought implies can' [KpV 47]).
3. Our consciousness of the ability to act in accordance with the moral law is a consciousness of our freedom (via the conceptual equivalence of a moral will and a free will [KpV 27–30; Rel 50n]).

Now for Kant's argument to go through, the consciousness in (1) must not be mistaken or illusory and the 'ought implies can' principle invoked in (2) must be sound. But both premises leave Kant deeply vulnerable to charges of dogmatism or circularity. Since a person's ordinary moral consciousness of the authority of the moral law *for her* will be veridical only if she is free, this consciousness cannot be used to establish that freedom. Second, as I noted above, the *Critique* is targeted at those plagued by the specter of their inability to act as morality demands. Thus, (2)'s bald insistence that 'ought implies can' will not, absent additional supporting argument, vindicate morality against such doubts. Kant's critics can thus be forgiven for suspecting that his argument is propped up by 'moralistic bluster' rather than rational support (Wood 2008: 135).

I will try to put these concerns to rest by showing that Kant offers a rigorous and coherent demonstration of free will. In my view, Kant hews fairly closely to the schematization just offered, but he supplies arguments for each step that have so far gone unrecognized or unappreciated, despite their considerable merit. I will not be so ambitious as to claim that Kant's program is ultimately sound. I am content to show that if we grant the correctness of Kant's analysis of morality—if we grant that the moral law really is the fundamental principle of morality—his demonstration of free will is on much firmer footing than is usually assumed.

The central tenet of my interpretation is that Kant's demonstration is best understood in practical, rather than theoretical, terms.³ In Kant's view, a *theoretical*

³ Constructivists such as Korsgaard, Kleingeld, Rawls, and Reath also advance a practical interpretation of Kant's justification of morality. In their view, Kant establishes the authority of morality by showing that

demonstration of x 's existence presents x in experience (sense perception, scientific experiment, etc.) or shows that x has some necessary connection to experience. If a theoretical demonstration is successfully prosecuted, propositions regarding the existence of x merit assent by any theoretically rational being. It is for this reason that Kant tries on a theoretical demonstration of freedom before a practical one; the *Groundwork* famously argues that we earn membership in the intelligible world by dint of the fact that our theoretical cognitions are governed by pure rational principles. This membership allegedly entails that we have the capacity to *act* on the basis of pure rational principles. While the *Groundwork* does not assert that freedom can be presented in experience, the demonstration is theoretical in the following sense: the truth of the proposition that assures our seat at the noumenal table—viz., theoretical cognition necessarily employs pure rational principles—is secured by the transcendental claim that the employment of these principles is a necessary condition of experience. Since we cannot deny the reality of experience, we cannot deny either our membership in the intelligible world or our freedom.

In the second *Critique*, Kant pivots to what I call a *practical* demonstration of freedom. In a strict, first-person sense, a practical demonstration of x 's existence obtains when an agent wills x into existence. In an extended, third-person sense, a practical demonstration works by showing *how* one could will the object into existence. Kant's texts provide a demonstration in the extended sense while individual agents carry out a demonstration in the strict sense. It is important to emphasize that we do not practically demonstrate freedom by bringing a free will into existence. Kant identifies freedom with the *capacity* to regulate one's will by pure rational principles and act independently of sensible interests (KpV 47). This capacity is not itself something we can bring about; if we didn't have it, there would be nothing we could do to acquire it. What the demonstration brings into existence is a *moral* will, a will regulated by the moral law and capable of compliance with it. But since acting morally is acting freely, bringing a moral will into existence actualizes our capacity for freedom. And by actualizing our capacity for freedom, we demonstrate that we possess it. In short, the second *Critique* offers a demonstration of freedom by showing how agents can bring about the existence of a will regulated by, and capable of acting in accordance with, the moral law.

Kant's decision to abandon the *Groundwork* strategy (KpV 8, 47–48), along with all pretense to an argument grounded on theoretical premises, often meets with disapproval (see, for example, Wood 2008: 135; cf. Henrich 1994a). But interpreting Kant's demonstration of freedom and corresponding justification of morality in practical terms has several significant advantages. It provides a way around the *Groundwork*'s failed theoretical demonstration, while rebutting charges

a commitment to the moral law is implicit in the fundamental norms of practical reason. They conclude that anyone who reasons practically is free in the Kantian sense. While I have sympathy with constructivism, there are two important differences in our approach. First, constructivists shoulder an enormous argumentative burden when they claim that the moral law *really* is the fundamental norm of practical reasoning. I make no such claims, which are unnecessary in any case: *Kant* does not think that practical reason, minimally construed, implies a commitment to the moral law (KpV 47). Second, and more important, constructivists lack an adequate explanation of the efficacy of moral judgment, which I provide below.

of dogmatism. (To my mind, the *Groundwork* argument has at least one fatal flaw: it does not show that we can act on pure practical principles, but leaves open the possibility, discussed below, that such principles can move us to act only when they serve a sensible desire.) It also makes better sense of Kant's fact of reason doctrine, with its emphasis on the role of a deed in the demonstration of freedom. Finally, and most importantly, a practical demonstration coheres with Kant's picture of the will, specifically his conception of willing as efficacious representation, in ways that a theoretical demonstration does not. As I argue below, Kant holds that practical laws determine a will *only* when they are efficaciously and self-consciously represented by that will. As a result, the demonstration of the existence of a will determined by the moral law—a free will—*must* originally be a practical one. (Once an agent has practically demonstrated her freedom, she can provide derivative, theoretical demonstrations. But these derivative demonstrations have an epistemic dependence on her original, practical demonstration.)

Before proceeding, I want to clarify a crucial point. Pure reason is practical, Kant says, when it 'determines' a will, and he defines a free will as a will determined by pure practical reason. So one of the fundamental tasks of the second *Critique* is to show that pure practical reason determines the will (KpV 45). But Kant is less careful than he should be about distinguishing two different aspects of determination, one upstream from acts of choice and the other downstream. These must be disentangled if we are to get clear on how Kant's demonstration of the practicality of pure practical reason is meant to work.

Looking upstream from acts of willing, or choice, we find determining practical principles. For Kant, practical principles state what it would be morally or prudentially good to do, and they can be sorted into three types: specific principles of action, general principles of ends, and second-order principles stating deliberative rules. Practical principles determine a will when they perform their characteristic role in the will's practical activity, that is, when they ground judgments regarding what we are to do, the ends we ought to pursue, or the way we are to deliberate. In the first two cases, practical principles function as premises of a practical syllogism (see McCarty 2006). For example, 'treating people with respect is good' serves as a major premise, which along with a minor premise such as 'telling the truth is respectful', grounds the judgment 'telling the truth is good'. In the third case, practical principles, such as the moral law and the principle of happiness, guide deliberation about the premises employed in practical reasoning. Looking downstream, we see that determinations of choice typically result in *action* (KpV 42), namely, the action specified by the choice or practical judgment (KpV 15, 42; G 446). (I use 'choice' and 'judgment' interchangeably since judgments are expressions of choices.) It is this feature of determination that enables practical judgments to function as efficient causes of action. As a bit of shorthand, I will designate the latter as the 'efficacious' aspect of determination and the former as the 'normative' aspect (Ameriks [2003: 252–53], Henrich [1994: 94–5], and Morrisson [2008: 15–16] describe this distinction in slightly different terms). An agent normatively determines her will by a principle when she takes it to be a normative standard for deliberation, choice, or action. The efficacious aspect of determination refers to that which moves agents from choice to action.

194 To establish that *pure* practical reason can normatively determine the will is to
 195 establish that the will's set of practical principles includes pure practical principles
 196 and that these principles sometimes ground the will's (*Willkür*) acts of choice (MS
 197 213). To certify that pure practical reason can efficaciously determine the will is
 198 to show that choices grounded in pure practical principles can, *of themselves and*
 199 *independently of sensibility*, move us to act in the way the principles specify. It is
 200 to show that pure practical reason, in the guise of pure rational principles, can be
 201 an efficient cause of our actions (KpV 48).

202 Kant first draws this distinction in his 1775 lectures (Kuehn 2014: 51),
 203 though at this point he still believes that efficacious determination, determination
 204 via a *principium executionis*, occurs by means of thoughts of divine reward
 205 and punishment (27: 274–75, 278). In Kant's mature moral philosophy, a will
 206 determined by pure practical reason is a will both normatively and efficaciously
 207 determined by pure practical principles. Insofar as a free will is a will with the
 208 capacity to be determined by pure practical reason, we can characterize free will
 209 as a will with the capacity to be both normatively and efficaciously determined
 210 by pure practical reason. In effect, the two aspects of determination by pure
 211 practical reason correspond to two aspects of freedom. What I call the 'legislative'
 212 aspect of freedom, or 'freedom_L', is the capacity to be normatively determined
 213 by principles of pure practical reason (KpV 29). By contrast, an unfree will is
 214 normatively determined solely by empirical principles grounded on conceptions
 215 of the pleasurable or agreeable. Freedom in its 'efficacious' aspect, or 'freedom_E',
 216 refers to the capacity to be moved to act by pure rational principles and the practical
 217 judgments in which they figure (G 445–47). An unfree will is moved to act by a
 218 sensible attraction to an object. *Both* aspects are necessary for freedom, and a will
 219 in which just one obtains is not free.

220 My interpretation of Kant's demonstration of freedom naturally divides into
 221 two sections, one focusing on freedom_L, the other freedom_E. In the first section,
 222 which defends an expanded version of the first premise of the orthodox argument,
 223 I argue that Kant is committed to the following claim: we actualize our capacity
 224 for freedom_L by *making* the moral law the fundamental law of our will. In
 225 brief, we make the moral law the law of our will by *bringing about* the
 226 normative determination of the will by the moral law—hence the practical nature
 227 of the demonstration. We bring about the normative determination of the will
 228 by the moral law by using the moral law to regulate our choice of practical
 229 principles.

230 Unfortunately, Kant's account of the normative determination of the will does
 231 not by itself, nor with the assistance of the efficacy condition, explain *how* choice
 232 is efficacious. Rather, Kant's account leaves open the possibility that agents can
 233 act in virtue of their practical judgments only by means of a sensible desire that
 234 moves them to act so. If this possibility were not foreclosed, it would sabotage
 235 Kant's justificatory project. The second section of my paper illuminates how Kant
 236 wards off this danger. Eschewing the popular 'ought implies can' strategy implicit
 237 in the orthodox argument (which renders Kant's justification of morality circular
 238 or dogmatic), I show that freedom_E is secured by a Kantian flavor of non-Humean
 239 motivational judgment internalism, which holds that practical judgments generate

an affective force that moves agents to act.⁴ It turns out that the demonstrations of freedom_I and freedom_E are two sides of the same coin: freedom_E follows from freedom_I. When one actualizes freedom_I, one actualizes freedom_E, demonstrating one's freedom in toto and securing the authority of the moral law.

I. Freedom in Its Legislative Aspect

Kant's discussion of the demonstration of freedom in its legislative aspect occurs at the beginning of the second *Critique*. He starts by uncovering the a priori principle of practical reason and then explains why we have reason to think that we possess pure practical reason. After briefly sketching the first step of his argument, I will discuss the second at length, as it contains the claim crucial to my interpretation: we can *bring about* the determination of our will by pure rational principles and make the moral law the fundamental law of our will.

Kant arrives at the a priori principle of practical reason through an analysis of the nature of practical principles and practical laws (KpV 31). Kant defines practical principles as propositions that contain a general (normative) determination of the will. Practical principles are subjective when they are valid only for particular agents, objective when they are valid for any rational agent whatsoever (KpV 19). Objective practical principles are practical *laws*. Since a priori principles of the will must be unconditionally valid, they must share the features of practical laws (KpV 20). Kant then argues that certain kinds of principles are incapable of functioning as practical laws, viz., principles whose content derives from an interest based on pleasure associated with the object contained in the principle (KpV 21, 25–27). After characterizing such principles as material principles, Kant concludes that the objectivity of practical laws must derive from their form, the form of universal lawfulness (KpV 27). To confirm the purely rational pedigree of practical laws, Kant reminds us that a principle with a lawful form necessarily issues from pure practical reason since 'the mere form of law can be represented only by reason' (KpV 28).

With this analysis in hand, Kant can identify *the* a priori principle of practical reason. Since a priori practical principles are formal, they tell us nothing about what we are to will. They tell us only *how* we are to will—we are to will in such a way that our practical judgments are ultimately governed by universal lawfulness. (As I discuss below, formal practical principles are second-order principles governing practical deliberation.) We are to will in such a way that our practical judgments have an objective, rather than merely subjective, validity. Accordingly, there is really only one a priori practical principle, the 'fundamental law of pure practical reason': 'so act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law' (KpV 30).

⁴ Although Kant's internalism has received some attention (Potter 1994, 2002; McCarty 2009: xv), its significance for his justification of morality has been overlooked. Allison once thought Kant's internalism to be of interpretive importance (1989: 125), but later abandoned this view (1990, 2013).

278 At this stage, Kant has not yet shown that pure reason is practical for anyone.
 279 His a priori analysis of the fundamental law of pure practical reason does not secure
 280 the synthetic claim that it is the law for us; it will *not* be the law for us if we lack
 281 pure practical reason. Hence the need to verify that we do possess pure practical
 282 reason, which can be achieved by showing that principles of pure practical reason
 283 normatively determine some of our practical judgments.

284 I have insisted that this demonstration is necessarily a practical one. That is,
 285 the existence of a will normatively determined by pure practical principles can
 286 be demonstrated only insofar as one brings about such a will, or normatively
 287 determines one's will by pure practical principles. To see why, we need to pay
 288 special attention to Kant's understanding of will and to what it means for a will to
 289 be normatively determined by practical principles. For Kant, will is a specific kind
 290 of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*), which is 'a being's faculty to be by means of its
 291 representations the cause of the actuality of the objects of these representations'
 292 (KpV 9n, translation altered). As a species of desire, willing is *a self-conscious*
 293 *representing that leads to the actualization of the object represented*. This definition
 294 enables us to state two individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions of
 295 willing, which I will christen the 'self-consciousness condition' and the 'efficacy
 296 condition'. To see what happens when a principle normatively determines the will
 297 and why the demonstration of freedom must be practical, these two conditions
 298 must be examined in more detail.

299 The self-consciousness condition states that if a principle is to determine our
 300 will, we must self-consciously represent it. (Here and throughout, 'will' refers
 301 primarily to *Wille* in the broad sense, which comprises *Willkür*, the faculty of
 302 choice, and *Wille* in the narrow sense, the faculty of practical principles [MS
 303 213].) Since will is an exercise of practical reason (G 412), the representations
 304 by which willing leads to its objects include concepts, judgments that combine
 305 concepts, and principles that render judgments valid or invalid (KpV 32; MS 213).
 306 Furthermore, as a type of *thinking*, the representational activity characteristic of
 307 willing is self-conscious (B131–32, 142). As a result, practical principles regulate
 308 our practical judgments only if the principles are self-consciously represented. The
 309 fundamental law of pure practical reason normatively determines the will only if
 310 we self-consciously represent it as so doing. By contrast, as Engstrom (2010a: 135)
 311 remarks, a theoretical law can govern the objects subject to it regardless of whether
 312 this relationship is even capable of being known by the objects in question; the
 313 laws governing Earth's orbit around the sun exist as laws even though Earth has
 314 no representation of them.

315 The efficacy condition states that a practical principle determines our will
 316 only if it is *efficaciously* represented, that is, represented in such a way that it
 317 at least sometimes leads to the actualization of its object. This condition marks the
 318 distinction between practical and theoretical reason. Theoretical reason is primarily
 319 employed in the service of determining the concepts of objects, but practical reason
 320 also aims at making its objects *actual* (*wirklich*) (B x; KpV 67).⁵ While theoretical
 321 cognition of an object depends on the actuality, or existence, of its object, practical

5 My discussion here is indebted to Engstrom (2002b, 2010a, 2010b).

cognition aims at bringing its object into existence. (A second distinction between theoretical and practical reason is that theoretical reason establishes what is the case, and practical reason establishes what ought to be the case [A633/B661].)

It is important to note that the efficacy condition cashes out differently for different kinds of practical principles. Some practical principles have an action as their object, e.g., 'always tell the truth'. We make these principles efficacious when we act in light of them. Other practical principles, e.g., 'health is good', have as their object a purpose or end. These principles are often too abstract to be directly efficacious. I cannot become healthy just like that, so if such a principle is to be efficacious, it must determine more specific judgments. One could, for instance, combine the principle 'health is good' with a constitutive judgment about how it is that one will become healthy (say, by exercising regularly) to form a practical syllogism. From the major and minor premises I draw the conclusion that I ought to exercise regularly. If I then act in virtue of this judgment, the principle is efficacious. Coming at this from the ground up, insofar as I aim at exercising-in-order-to-be-healthy, I turn the principle 'health is good' into a practical principle by making it operative in my will.⁶

A third type of principle—second-order principles that purport to govern deliberation about our more substantive practical principles—is especially important for the present discussion. For Kant, the moral law in its various formulations and the principle of happiness are the principles of this type. Neither tells us directly how to act. Rather, the moral law and the principle of happiness furnish the basic rules of two models of practical deliberation, rules that provide the criteria for the validity of substantive moral and prudential principles regarding actions and ends. (Substantive principles that fail to meet these criteria will be invalid or irrational.) The moral law tells us that a valid moral principle is one that any rational agent should adopt. The principle of happiness tells us that valid prudential principles are those that enable agents to promote their own happiness.

Since these second-order practical principles are aimed at regulating the formation and application of our more specific practical principles, they will be efficacious when they do regulate these principles. (Principles regarding ends can also have this function; for example, I can use the principle 'health is good' to determine the validity of a more specific principle such as 'eating well is good'.) Here another distinction must be drawn. To regulate one's will by a principle in a *strong* sense is to incorporate that principle into one's character and to be disposed to apply the principle whenever it is salient. In a *weak* sense, to regulate one's will by a principle is simply to take it as a normative standard and to consider oneself accountable for violations of the standard. Good Kantian reasons favor the weaker version. In the case of moral principles, the distinction between the two senses corresponds to the distinction between autonomy and autocracy, and Kant holds that a demonstration of freedom need only establish our autonomy (Engstrom 2002a; Baxley 2003). On the weaker version, a second-order practical

⁶ Actualizing the object of a judgment can take a number of different forms, not all of which result in concrete actions. For example, I actualize the judgment in question when I make a second-order rule not to deliberate about going to the gym on my scheduled gym days.

364 principle is efficacious when it functions as a normative standard for the formation
 365 and application of more specific practical principles. (The efficacy of principles of
 366 ends and actions depends on the possibility of efficacious determination, hence the
 367 necessity of a demonstration of freedom_F.)

368 With these preliminaries on the table, I can present the main argument of this
 369 section. Kant's demonstration of freedom must show, or explain how we can
 370 show, that pure practical reason normatively determines our will. The key to the
 371 demonstration lies in the self-consciousness and efficacy conditions that, taken
 372 together, entail that the fundamental law of pure practical reason, 'so act that your
 373 maxim could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law',
 374 normatively determines a will if and only if it is self-consciously and efficaciously
 375 represented by that will. From this it follows that the fundamental law normatively
 376 determines our will when we *do* self-consciously and efficaciously represent the
 377 fundamental law. In other words, the second *Critique* establishes that we can *bring*
 378 *about* the normative determination of the will by willing in accordance with the
 379 fundamental law of pure practical reason—by using it to regulate, in the weak sense
 380 just described, our specific practical principles.

381 Since a will possessing freedom_L is one with the capacity to be normatively
 382 determined by pure practical reason, when we *do* normatively determine our will
 383 by the fundamental law of pure practical reason, we actualize freedom_L. When we
 384 bring about the normative determination of the will by the moral law, we thus
 385 demonstrate that we possess freedom_L. (We can, however, normatively determine
 386 our will without demonstrating freedom_L. The legislation of a prudential principle
 387 is not the legislation of a law, or objective practical principle [KpV 2I, 27]. Since
 388 we demonstrate freedom_L only when we normatively determine our will by laws,
 389 prudential reasoning furnishes no such a demonstration.)

390 This interpretation might seem to portray normative determination in a
 391 voluntaristic light at odds with the familiar role assigned to *Wille*: the *Metaphysics*
 392 states that basic practical principles are not, as it were, up for grabs, but are
 393 legislated by *Wille* in the narrow sense (MS 2I3). However, in the *Religion* Kant
 394 grants *Willkür* the power to choose the principle that stands as our fundamental
 395 law (Rel 36); here he is utterly at ease with the notion of *Willkür* deciding the law of
 396 our will (*Wille* in the broad sense). Nor is the latter view in tension with the former.
 397 The *Religion* asserts only that *Willkür* determines the *effective* law of our will, and
 398 it leaves unscathed the moral law's status as the a priori principle of willing.

399 Returning to the argument at hand, the fact that the demonstration of freedom_L
 400 involves regulating one's will by the moral law and bringing into existence a will
 401 normatively determined by the moral law indicates that the demonstration is a
 402 practical one. Indeed, the foregoing supports a stronger interpretive claim. If a
 403 theoretical demonstration of freedom is impossible, and if we can actualize our
 404 capacity for freedom in the legislative sense only by efficaciously representing the
 405 moral law, then the demonstration of freedom *must* be a practical one. To be
 406 sure, once an agent is in possession of a practical demonstration of freedom, she
 407 gains access to derivative, theoretical demonstrations of freedom in the guise of
 408 memorial representations of her legislation, acts of self-appraisal, and so on. But
 409 these demonstrations are *derivative*. They must refer in some way to an original

practical demonstration, and they possess epistemic weight only by representing that demonstration.

Before proceeding, I want to address what might seem to be a fatal flaw in the argument on offer. One might worry that freedom is a *condition* of moral self-regulation since this regulation requires some independence from sensible interests. If so, then Kant's demonstration will turn out to beg the question, and my interpretation will exhibit the same defects as the orthodox version. To defuse this objection, I want to characterize more carefully the capacity at the heart of the matter, namely, the capacity that enables us to choose how to regulate our deliberation. Although Kant doesn't name the power in question, I will call it 'practical spontaneity'. In one sense, the spontaneity of practical reason is similar to that of theoretical reason: practical reason contributes something of its own to cognition (B 158n). Practical reason contributes practical concepts, ideas, and principles that govern practical judgments (A 68/B 93; G 452). But practical spontaneity is notably different from its theoretical sibling. A practically spontaneous being is spontaneous in that she is the source of her own causality (though not to the degree required by freedom, as I clarify below). Kant defines the will as the faculty of desire 'in accordance with concepts, insofar as the ground determining it to action lies *within itself* and not in its object' (MS 213, emphasis added). What Kant means when he says that the ground determining the will to action lies 'within itself' is that agents are in some sense self-determining; in willing, the will (*Willkür*) itself chooses what it is to do. Positively speaking, the will has the power to set its own ends, to choose the goals it will pursue (MS 381, 382, 385). Negatively speaking, acts of choice are never directly caused by sensible interests or inclinations, even those choices that incorporate actions on ends ultimately grounded in sensible interests.⁷ (By contrast, animals are causally necessitated by their inclinations.) Practical spontaneity is put under a spotlight in the *Religion*, where Kant memorably claims that the power of choice is such that it cannot be determined to act on an inclination '*except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim*' (Rel 24). Here Kant reinforces the point just noted—neither inclinations nor the sensible interests that are based on them show up on our doorstep as reasons for action (or for adopting ends)—adding that inclinations and interests become operative in willing when an agent takes them to be reasons in virtue of a practical principle that states why the object of the interest is good (see also Allison 1990: 97–98, 207–208; Korsgaard 1996: 163–36; Reath 2010: 53).⁸

⁷ Human beings are, however, capable of acting like animals. Desire's capacity to be completely receptive, or nonspontaneous, is called *Begierde* (MS 212). Desire is receptive when it is directly determined to action by a pleasurable representation of an object, such as when I reach for another bite of poutine despite deep feelings of satiety. Here my 'action' is not willed and is not an exercise of agency.

⁸ Kant observes that if we expect our sensible interests to do our agential heavy lifting, we will typically fail to will at all (Sch 13). If I walk past my refrigerator, stop, and find myself questioning whether to grab a beer or continue to the sink to do dishes, I cannot wait for my sensible interests to reply by pushing me into action. If I do, I will simply stand there, neither enjoying the beer nor washing the dishes. This laconic argument is the most Kant offers in favor of spontaneity.

446 However, spontaneity is not equivalent to freedom. Kant maintains that we are
 447 practically spontaneous even when we choose to act on principles that embrace
 448 sensible interests (MS 213; A803/B831; Allison 1990: 39). When we choose to act
 449 on such principles, we are obviously not acting freely. Accordingly, nothing in our
 450 ability to bring about the normative determination of the will by the fundamental
 451 law depends on robust freedom.⁹ All that is required is an understanding of what
 452 it means to reason in accordance with the moral law along with the generic ability
 453 to regulate our will by whichever practical principles we decide upon. The former
 454 is secured by a priori knowledge of the moral law, the latter by the spontaneity
 455 of the will. (Moral self-legislation is made even easier by the fact that Kant allows
 456 leeway in formulating the legislated principle; for example, living by the principle
 457 ‘what if everyone did that?’ counts as a legislation of the moral law (KpV 69–70).)

458 2. Freedom in Its Efficacious Aspect

459 To complete his demonstration of freedom, Kant must show that moral judgments
 460 can move us to act independently of sensible desire. This task is frequently
 461 overlooked by Kant’s commentators, especially those affirming an efficacy
 462 condition on willing, and it is often assumed that what I call normative
 463 determination entails efficacious determination. On this view, an agent’s decision
 464 to regulate her will by a moral principle automatically moves her to act on that
 465 principle. This dearth of attention is understandable, since Kant ultimately endorses
 466 the entailment; the *Religion* theatrically proclaims that despite our moral failings,
 467 ‘the command that we *ought* to become better human beings still resounds unabated
 468 in our souls; consequently, we must also be capable of it’ (Rel 45; see also Rel
 469 50n; KpV 47). But Kant cannot simply assert that the right kind of motivational
 470 connection obtains. Further argument is needed due to a gap between normative and
 471 efficacious determination: Kant’s efficacy condition opens up conceptual space for
 472 a will to be normatively and not efficaciously determined by pure practical reason.
 473 Although the efficacy condition entails that willing is efficacious, it says nothing
 474 about *how* practical principles regarding actions and ends are efficacious or *how*
 475 we are moved to actualize the objects of our choices. The efficacy condition does
 476 not entail that the will can be efficaciously determined or moved to act *solely by*
 477 *its cognition of a maxim*. Coming at this from the other direction, the efficacy
 478 condition is, by itself, compatible with the popular Humean story, according to
 479 which one can be moved to act on her principles or maxims only if she has a
 480 sensible interest in so doing. On this view, neither pure reason nor the moral law
 481 can move us to act of themselves, and this incapacity renders Kantian morality a
 482 dead letter. So a second step is needed. If Kant’s demonstration of freedom_L, and
 483 of freedom in toto, is to succeed, he must fill in the gap between normative and

⁹Put differently, even those who reject libertarianism can countenance practical spontaneity. Most compatibilists agree that choice is not determined by one’s strongest desire, but often (in part) by deliberation. Reasons-responsive compatibilism is especially noteworthy here.

efficacious determination in the right way (Henrich [1994b: 94–95] also emphasizes this problem, but he characterizes it in different terms).

The second *Critique* does not foreground the gap problem, though the *Groundwork* mentions it at least once (G 460). Kant identifies it most clearly in lectures from the 1770s, asserting that agents are not ‘organized’ in such a way that they are automatically moved to action by ‘objective grounds’ (27: 1429). As a result, ‘[w]hen I judge by understanding that [an] action is morally good, I am still very far from doing this action which I have so judged’ (27: 1428). Here and in other lectures, Kant toys with a theory of motivation reminiscent of Hume and the British sentimentalists (27: 1429; 25: 650; 27: 258).¹⁰ Although Kant eventually discards this strategy, it is evidence that he appreciates the difficulty and importance of accounting for the efficacy of practical reason.

The next few pages will argue that Kant bridges the gap in the requisite fashion by means of a view that I call, with apologies for the prochronism, non-Humean motivational judgment internalism (I develop this account of Kant’s internalism in more detail elsewhere). Kant’s internalist claim is that if *P* judges that she ought to φ , her judgment by itself and independently of any desire associated with the judgment generates an affective force that moves her to φ (KpV 9n, 47; MS 211, 213, 356; Rel 50n).¹¹ Accordingly, moral judgments can, of themselves, move an agent to act in the way specified by the judgment. Thus, given internalism, the source of the efficacy of moral judgment turns out to lie within pure practical reason.

There is something surprising about Kant’s internalism. Even though he advances a staunchly cognitivist theory of rational agency, he assigns an important and ineliminable role to pleasure. Pleasure, it turns out, provides the link between cognition and action that explains how we are moved to act on both our moral and nonmoral judgments. But since the pleasure involved has its source in cognition, we need not worry that it puts Kant on treacherous Humean footing.

Kant’s most important claim in this respect is that ‘every determination of choice proceeds from the representation of a possible action to the deed through the feeling of pleasure or displeasure’ (MS 399; see also MS 211; 28:894). The pleasure in question should not be understood as occurring *upstream* from choice. Rather, it operates *downstream* from choice; the determination in question is efficacious determination. Pleasure’s essential role, in both the moral and nonmoral domains, is to enable us to *carry out* our judgments. Once choice is normatively determined, that is, once we have decided on a course of action, we take pleasure in the thought of actualizing the object of choice or performing the action. And it is this pleasure that moves us to act.

¹⁰The affectivist strand of Kant interpretation favors this direction (Herrera 2000; Nauckhoff 2003; McCarty 2009; Frierson 2014).

¹¹Most contemporary philosophers take motivational judgment internalism to stand for the much different thought that one can sincerely judge that one ought to φ only if one is able to be moved to φ . (Exceptions include Nagel 1970; Wallace 1990; Dancy 1993; Shafer-Landau 2003.) On this view, what one ought to do is constrained by what one has the psychological capacity to do. In its Humean flavors, this type of internalism is used to defend moral noncognitivism.

522 Taken in isolation, this *Metaphysics* passage might not seem to compel my
 523 interpretation. But additional support can be found in many of Kant's other remarks
 524 about pleasure and satisfaction (*Wohlgefallen*). In the second *Critique* he writes that
 525 'pleasure is the representation of the agreement of an object or of an action with...
 526 the faculty of the causality of a representation with respect to the actuality of its
 527 object (or with respect to the determination of the powers of the subject to action
 528 in order to produce the object)' (KpV 9n, translation altered). When the faculty of
 529 causality is the will (*Willkür*), the object of pleasure is the thought of producing
 530 an object or performing an action that we have determined ourselves to produce
 531 or perform. The forward-looking thought of actualizing the object is what Kant
 532 refers to with the disjunct 'or with respect to the determination of the powers of
 533 the subject to action'. Put more simply, Kant's view is that we take pleasure in
 534 representing the actualization of our judgments—we take pleasure in the prospect
 535 of the *activity* of actualization, not just of the actualized object. When I judge that
 536 I ought to do something, I take pleasure in the thought of my efficacy, even when
 537 my goal is onerous, tedious, or painful. (To my knowledge, this view first appears in
 538 a 1782 lecture [24: 891]. The third *Critique* restates the points made in the second
 539 [KU 207, 242; KU, First Introduction 230–31].)

540 It should be noted that the pleasure involved in efficacious judgment is a
 541 special kind of pleasure, which the *Anthropology* labels intellectual pleasure and
 542 distinguishes from sensible pleasure (A 230; see also 29:877–78, 1013; KU 222).
 543 Sensible pleasure is produced by sensibility and is the product of contingent
 544 cultural and biological forces. The *Anthropology* curiously lacks a description of
 545 intellectual pleasure, but we can construct one by contrast with sensible pleasure:
 546 intellectual pleasure arises from the active, spontaneous judgments of practical
 547 reason. Confirmation can be found in Kant's empirical psychology lectures (28:
 548 586; 29: 1024), where he dubs intellectual pleasure 'satisfaction' (*Wohlgefallen*) and
 549 sensible pleasure 'pleasure' or 'sense-pleasure' (*Lust*) (28: 675; 29: 890). Intellectual
 550 pleasure is nevertheless a *feeling* bearing affective force—it is just because of this
 551 that it can move us to act.¹² The difference between intellectual and sensible pleasure
 552 lies in the *origin* of the pleasure. If the pleasure originates in sensibility, it is sensible;
 553 if it originates in practical reason, it is intellectual.

554 Kant's view, then, is that when I judge that I ought to do something, I take
 555 pleasure in the thought of bringing into existence the object of my judgment and
 556 accomplishing the task I have set for myself. As Kant puts it, 'the state of mind of a
 557 will determined by something, however, is already in itself a feeling of pleasure and
 558 identical with it' (KU 222). More generally, his view is that rational agents possess
 559 a disposition to take pleasure in the thought of their rational efficacy. Although he
 560 at one point dubs this a 'peculiar' fact (28: 586), once the details are on the table,
 561 we have what sounds like a fairly intuitive psychological and phenomenological
 562 story, so long as we accept Kant's conception of the will as fundamentally geared
 563 toward bringing its objects into existence. It is natural to think that a being who,
 564 by her very nature, strives for efficacy (KpV 9n), and strives for efficacy through

¹² Zuckert's (2002) claim that pleasure has intentional content fits nicely with my emphasis on intellectual pleasure, but her account need not be presupposed for my interpretation to succeed.

her practical judgments, will feel pleasure at the thought of realizing that efficacy and bringing into existence the object of her judgments. (Kant goes so far as to say that even God acts by means of anticipatory satisfaction [28: 1061–62].¹³) It is this intellectual pleasure that brings an agent to try to execute whatever project she has in mind.¹⁴ And since this pleasure is generated by cognitive acts of choice, it is just the kind of feeling required by Kant's non-Humean motivational internalism.

With this point in hand, Kant's conception of rational agency can be schematized as follows:

Time₁: Choice of maxim *M* on principle *P* 573
 Time_{1 or 2}: Cognition of salience of maxim *M* → Intellectual pleasure → 574
 Attempt to act in the way specified by *M* 575

The connection between internalism and freedom_E should now be clear. Given Kant's internalism, whenever an agent makes a practical judgment, her judgment generates an affective force that enables her to act in the way specified by her judgment. As a result, the normative determination of the will by maxim *M* entails efficacious determination by *M*. No sensible interest is needed to explain action. The upshot is that whenever an agent makes a *moral* judgment, she generates an affective force that, independently of sensibility, moves her to pursue the moral action specified in the judgment. In so doing, she actualizes freedom in its efficacious aspect.

3. Conclusion 585

It is now time to pull together the various strands of the paper and run through Kant's argument in its entirety. According to Kant, we make the moral law the law of our will and actualize freedom_L by regulating our will by the moral law. When this regulation involves making a moral choice, as it sometimes must, we generate a feeling that moves us to act in accordance with our moral judgments. As a result, we *can* do what the moral law says to do. When we make the moral law the law of our will, we thereby actualize the capacity to be moved to act by moral considerations and to act independently of all of our sensible inclinations and interests. Since actualizing freedom_L entails actualizing freedom_E, when we make the moral law the law of our will, we demonstrate freedom in toto.

The *Critique's* demonstration is a *practical* one in the sense that it provides instructions for bringing about a will determined by pure practical reason and actualizing freedom. If a reader follows these instructions—that is, if she regulates her will by the moral law—*she* practically demonstrates freedom, in the strict sense,

¹³ I discovered this view in Kain's piece on divine freedom (Kain, forthcoming).

¹⁴ My picture leaves open the possibility of nonmoral motivational overdetermination. In the case of action deriving from sensible interests, we often experience an additional pleasure, viz., pleasure at the thought of the object represented in the interest.

600 by actualizing it.¹⁵ In so doing, her idea of freedom ‘also actually produces the deed
 601 that accords with it’ (Sch 13).¹⁶ We can at last appreciate the full significance
 602 of Kant’s famous gallows example, which concerns a man ordered on pains of
 603 execution to give false testimony against his prince’s political enemy. The man
 604 knows he ought to tell the truth and then judges that he can do so despite the
 605 fatal outcome; he judges that pure practical reason can be an efficient cause of
 606 his action. Kant declares that the man ‘*rightly concludes*’ (Rel 50n) that ‘he can
 607 do [what morality commands] because he is aware that he ought to do it’ (KpV
 608 320). Clearly, the gallows passage illustrates a first-person, practical demonstration
 609 of freedom. More important, it invites readers, especially those who doubt their
 610 moral capacities, to undertake the demonstration and make it their own. Kant’s
 611 contention is that if they do so, they will show themselves to be free.

612 A more formal rendition of my interpretation reveals its structural parallels to
 613 the orthodox approach:

- 614 1. Our legislation of the moral law makes the moral law the
 615 fundamental law of our will (via the self-consciousness and
 616 efficacy conditions).
- 617 2. When the moral law is the fundamental law of our will, we
 618 sometimes judge that we ought to act morally in some respect (via
 619 the efficacy condition applied to second-order principles).
- 620 3. Our awareness of the moral ‘ought’ generates an ability to act in
 621 accordance with the moral law in that respect (via motivational
 622 internalism).
- 623 4. When we legislate the moral law, we actualize our capacity for
 624 freedom.

625 However, it must be emphasized that my attention to the self-consciousness and
 626 efficacy conditions as well as to Kant’s non-Humean motivational internalism
 627 supplies Kant with the tools needed to repel the charges of dogmatism and
 628 circularity that haunt the first two premises of the orthodox view.¹⁷ As such, on

¹⁵ Ware’s [2014] recent paper also emphasizes the first-personal character of Kant’s demonstration, though our accounts differ quite significantly in their particulars.

¹⁶ This resembles Korsgaard’s claim that ‘by acting morally, we can make ourselves free’ (Korsgaard 1996: 176). I agree with a slightly weakened formulation: we make ourselves free in the sense that we demonstrate our freedom by actualizing it. But I disagree with Korsgaard’s underlying argument, which relies heavily on Kantian respect. In Korsgaard’s eyes, respect is supposed to explain the normative and motivational determination of the will by pure practical reason. But respect cannot fill this explanatory role, since respect *presupposes* the fact that the will can be so determined. Furthermore, Kant says that while respect ‘indirectly’ determines the will (KpV 79), we are free only when the moral law *immediately* determines the will, i.e., when the moral law regulates a moral judgment, which in turn generates a moral motive. And it must be the case that respect only indirectly determines the will, because if it directly determined the will, or was the ground of the determination of the will by the moral law, Kant’s moral theory would collapse into the moral sense theory he so strongly opposes. The same issue affects Franks’s (2005: 295ff.) ‘performative’ interpretation of Kant’s demonstration of freedom, which locates the demonstration in the production of the feeling of respect.

¹⁷ My conclusion also tames Kant’s assertion that the consciousness of the authority of the moral law is ‘identical with’ consciousness of our freedom (KpV 42; see also KpV 46, 177). Taken literally, Kant’s claim is

my interpretation, Kant's demonstration can more readily achieve its fundamental aim: instilling confidence in those who acknowledge the importance of morality but worry that their sensible desires render them incapable of moral action. Kant's prospects in this regard are enhanced by a second consideration: it is not terribly difficult to determine one's will by the moral law normatively and efficaciously. This fact provides rational grounds for believing that our attempts at actualizing freedom will be successful and that we do therefore possess the requisite capacity. To be sure, as cognitively limited beings subject to psychological self-deception, we lack absolute certainty that we have legislated the moral law (G 407; KpV 47). But since Kant's argument establishes that the legislation of the moral law is within reach of any agent who acknowledges the importance of morality, such agents have good reason to believe that they are free and that their consciousness of the authority of the moral law is not illusory.

I will conclude with two points of clarification. First, it might seem surprising that I have said nothing about respect. I demur in part because Kant employs the concept in sundry ways, discussion of which would take us too far afield, and in part because respect, in its core sense as the affective impact of the recognition of the authority of the moral law, plays little role in the demonstration of freedom. As I noted above, respect *presupposes* the immediate determination of the will by the moral law, and it is the latter that must be established by the demonstration. Put differently, respect is a derivative feature of Kant's vindication of the possibility of moral motivation: the demonstration of freedom establishes our ability to act on moral principles, while respect is what enables us to cultivate virtue and make a *habit* of acting morally (KpV 75, 79; this interpretation most closely coincides with Engstrom's [2010c] but is compatible with other threads in the literature).

Second, Kant insists that pure reason can be proved to be 'actually practical' through a fact, which he dubs the 'fact of reason' (KpV 42). Although Kant is not completely consistent in his characterization of the fact of reason, most readers agree that it refers to the consciousness of the authority of the moral law (Allison 1990: 230, 233; Rawls 2000: 260; Sussman 2008: 66; Timmerman 2010: 83). My interpretation is on all fours with this view, but I would stress that, connotations of 'fact' (*Factum*) aside, the consciousness of the authority of the moral law is not a theoretical cognition of a property (viz., 'subject to the authority of the moral law') ascribable to a rational agent, much less *knowledge* that an agent has this property. As Kant puts it, 'in order to avoid misinterpretation in regarding this law as *given*, it must be noted carefully that it is not an empirical fact' (KpV 31; cf. KpV 48). From what has been said so far, it should be evident that the consciousness Kant dubs the fact of reason is the self-consciousness that corresponds to the act of making the moral law the law of one's will; it is the self-conscious representational component involved in actualizing one's freedom. It is for this reason that Kant can insist that pure reason proves itself to be practical through a consciousness that is also a deed (KpV 3).

worrisome because it suggests that morality is justified in light of an intellectual intuition of freedom, which is obviously irreconcilable with the critical philosophy.

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