

## Feeling and Moral Motivation in Kant: A Response to the Frierson-Grenberg Debate

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**Abstract.** In this paper, I aim to resolve the Frierson-Grenberg debate on the nature of Kant's account of moral motivation that took place in the third issue of *Con-textos Kantianos*. In their respective interpretations, Frierson and Grenberg fail to accommodate the *a priori* status of moral feeling when incorporating it into Kant's moral motivational structure. In response, I provide a novel transcendental interpretation – one that takes the *a priori* moral feeling both as an incentive of morality and as that which conditions the possibility of morality in human agents. I argue that Kant developed the notion of moral feeling solely in order to resolve the problem of motivational skepticism concerning the moral law. Since this problem occurs as a part of Kant's search for the supreme principle of morality, the notion of moral feeling becomes a part of both Kant's moral motivational structure and his argument to justify the moral law.

**Keywords:** Kant; Moral Feeling; Moral Motivation; Motivational Skepticism; Frierson-Grenberg Debate

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### 1. Introduction

In the third issue of *Con-Textos Kantianos* published in June 2016, Patrick Frierson and Jeanine Grenberg engaged in a debate on the nature of Kant's account of moral motivation. The debate specifically revolves around how the notion of *moral feeling* can be appropriately incorporated into Kant's moral motivational structure. While Frierson (2016a, 2016b) provides a third-personal, empirical interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation, Grenberg (2016) insists on a first-personal, phenomenological account of it. In this article, I show that both Frierson's and Grenberg's interpretations fail to accommodate the strict *a priori* status that Kant attributes to moral feeling in his writings. To restore moral feeling (along with its strict *a priori* status) into Kant's moral motivational structure, I argue that Kant's discussion of moral feeling must be read as a solution to the motivational skepticism that occurs as a part of his proof of the validity of the moral law. At various points in his writings, Kant expresses his difficulty in showing how the moral law of pure reason could possibly motivate all the finite rational agents towards moral actions. This problem occurs when considering the moral law as the supreme principle of morality, and Kant identifies the *a priori* moral feeling as a solution to it during his critical investigation into pure practical reason.

To show these claims, I begin this article by introducing Grenberg's and Frierson's interpretations of Kant's account of moral motivation. Then, in section 3, I show that their interpretations arose as critical alternatives to Allison-Reath's standard transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation. In section 4, I provide a critical summary of the debate between Grenberg and Frierson that took place over the course of three articles in the third issue of *Con-Textos Kantianos*. Here I also show the key problem that both Grenberg's and Frierson's interpretations face – i.e., their incompatibility with Kant's attribution of the *a priori* status to moral feeling. Finally, in section 5, I provide a novel transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation that includes the *a priori* moral feeling as its essential component. I do this by first identifying motivational skepticism as a problem that Kant faces from within his main project in moral philosophy. Then, I show that Kant's discussion of moral feeling as an *a priori* incentive is meant to resolve this issue, and that it successfully does so.

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## 2. Grenberg's and Frierson's Interpretations of Kant's Account of Moral Motivation

### 2.1. Grenberg's Phenomenological Interpretation

In her book *Kant's Defense of Common Moral Experience: A Phenomenological Account*, Grenberg (2013) claims that Kant had a well-thought-out phenomenological approach to morality throughout his writings on moral philosophy. For her, Kant appealed to “a method of attentive reflection upon a common, felt, first-personal” experience of morality “as a part and parcel of his method of grounding practical philosophy” (Grenberg 2013, p.15, 17). She holds that he made an extensive use of common, felt, first-personal moral experiences in order to establish the basic tenets of his moral theory. This includes his account of moral feeling and moral motivation. To put forward this interpretation, she considers Kant's definition of feeling from his *Metaphysics of Morals* (at *MS*, 06:211-212, 212f.) and draws our attention to two points about the nature of feelings in general. First, she points out that, for Kant, feelings have more to do with our “subjective experience[s]” than with our knowledge of “empirical objects of experience” (*ibid.*, p.43). Second, she notes that, for Kant, feelings “belong to...sensibility” irrespective of whether the representations that cause them have sensible or intelligible origins (*ibid.*, p.61). Keeping these two points in mind, she claims that moral feeling too is a subjectively felt experience that belongs to our sensibility. Since it is a subjectively felt experience, she reads Kant's discussion of the incentive of moral feeling as a phenomenological account of how we subjectively feel (from within) when we are moved to perform moral actions. More importantly, since it is a feeling that belongs to sensibility, she looks at Kant as appealing to the moral feeling to provide us epistemic access into the process of moral motivation. This epistemically enabling role of moral feeling is especially significant in the light of Kant's view that an epistemic access into how the moral law moves us is “beyond the usual, theoretical epistemic grasp of finite rational beings” (*ibid.*, p.68).

According to Grenberg's (2013) phenomenological reading, Kant's account of moral motivation essentially deals with how moral feeling “operates within the first-personal deliberative point of view of the common person” in the context of a conflict between moral obligation and one's need for happiness (*ibid.*, p.64). Within the framework of moral motivation, “the conflict between happiness and morality is a central moral experience, and the moral feeling of respect is, therefore, a central, frequently felt, common feeling” (*ibid.*, p.65). The process of moral motivation begins when individual human agents pay careful attention to first-personal experience of the internal conflict between happiness and moral obligation. Attentive reflection upon this experience causes a “common, knowable and even painfully familiar” “moral feeling” within us (*ibid.*, p.52, 66). On the one hand, this feeling imposes a powerful constraint on our need for happiness, and on the other, it evokes a positive feeling of respect towards the mysterious and intelligible cause of it. By enabling us to contemplate on its mysterious cause, moral feeling of respect “connects us to a rational, intelligible representation of the moral law and of ourselves as legislators of it” (*ibid.*, p.61). Thus, by paying close attention to the experience of moral feeling, we become internally aware of the categorical necessity to perform right actions, resulting in a moral motivation.

### 2.2. Frierson's Empirical Interpretation

In his book, *Kant's Empirical Psychology*, Frierson (2014) claims that Kant developed empirical psychology as a systematic study with its distinct nature, method and purpose in order to understand human beings as they appear from an empirical point of view. He writes that Kant's “empirical psychology describes the operation of human minds “from without,” with empirical accounts of causal interactions between the world and various powers of the human mind treated as properties of an object of investigation” (Frierson 2014, p.02). In laying out a broad, coherent picture of Kant's empirical psychology, Frierson specifically “argue[s] that Kant does have an empirical account of moral motivation, one that fits neatly into the general account of human [action and] motivation” (*ibid.*, p.116). He first takes Kant's transcendental idealist position and shows the possibility of viewing moral actions from two different standpoints: (i) from a practical or “from within” standpoint, “our [moral] actions are the consequence of free choices based on reasons” derived from the moral law and, (ii) from an empirical or “from without” standpoint, “our [moral] actions are consequences of natural (psychological) causes” occasioned by the operations of our faculties (*ibid.*, p.121). He then argues that Kant's discussion of moral motivation is “his most detailed psychological descriptions of action”, and hence, it falls within the empirical perspective on moral actions (*ibid.*, p.84-85). More specifically, he treats Kant's “account in “Incentives” [chapter of the second *Critique*] as an account of moral motivation *empirically considered*” (Frierson 2016a, p.357).<sup>2</sup> He argues that this chapter provides a detailed “picture of what respect for the moral law would look like empirically” because, for Kant, the aim of this chapter is “to give [a] detailed account of

<sup>2</sup> Frierson (2016a, p.355) “provides a glimpse of” his empirical interpretation from his book in his article “Kantian Feeling: Empirical Psychology, Transcendental Critique, and Phenomenology”. Hence, I refer to both his book and his article to show his empirical interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation.

“respect for the law” for discussing “morality itself subjectively considered as an incentive” (ibid., p.357). He takes Kant’s brief descriptions about feeling of respect to show how it follows from cognition of the moral law and then motivates agents to perform moral actions via our faculty of desire. He specifically shows that feeling of respect serves as the “motivational transition” from cognition of the moral law to determination of the faculty of desire (Frierson 2014, p.124).

Frierson (2016a, p.357) writes that Kant’s empirical account of moral motivation takes the form: “Cognition of Moral Law → Feeling of Respect for ML → Volition to Act according to ML → Action”. That is, moral actions follow from desires to act in accordance with the moral law, which arise as a result of the feeling of respect (for the moral law), which in turn follows from cognition of the moral law. First, moral principles of action (higher cognitive states) are generated and derived from the moral law of pure reason. The intellectual representations of these moral principles cause a positive feeling of respect for the moral law. This feeling of respect (which is an intellectual pleasure) generates the motivation (higher desire) for performing actions in accordance with moral principles (derived from the moral law). As Frierson (2014, p.127) puts it, “Reason provides consciousness of the moral law, which produces the feeling of respect, which provides a basis for making the moral law practically effective as the maxim of one’s action in a particular case”. Thus, Frierson provides an empirical interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation that fits his general empirical account of human action.

### 3. Situating Grenberg’s and Frierson’s Interpretations in Context

In the context of recent Anglo-American Kant scholarship, the phenomenological and empirical interpretations of Grenberg (2013) and Frierson (2014) emerged as better alternatives to Allison-Reath’s standard interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation. In their respective works, Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) argue that Kant’s process of moral motivation essentially involves consciousness or recognition of the unconditional value of the moral law during an internal conflict between our sensible tendencies and our moral disposition. Both identify this recognition of the supreme authority of the moral law with an intellectual attitude of respect for the moral law (see Allison 1990, p.123; Reath 1989, p.287). Now, if respect aids us in merely recognizing the unconditional worth of the moral law intellectually, why does Kant call it as “an obscure feeling” in his *Groundwork* (*GMS*, 04:401f.) and as “a special kind of feeling” in his second *Critique* (*KpV*, 05:92)? In order to account for respect as a *feeling*, both Allison (1990, p.123) and Reath (1989, p.287) consider respect for the moral law as having two aspects: “intellectual” and “affective”. Making this division, both argue that it is only the intellectual aspect of respect that serves as the moral incentive, while its affective aspect is a psychological after-effect of the process of moral motivation. This means, for Allison and Reath, feeling of respect is not an essential part of Kant’s moral motivational structure. Instead, it merely follows as an effect of the intellectual recognition of the unconditional value of the moral law in the minds of human agents.

Further, Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) understand the process of motivation caused by the consciousness of the moral law as that which conditions the possibility of morality in all rational agents. Their interpretation is, in fact, transcendental on the account of their treatment of Kant’s discussion of moral motivation as his argument for justifying the validity of the moral law.<sup>3</sup> Since Allison and Reath do not assign any positive role to *feeling* of respect within Kant’s moral motivational structure, their interpretation omits the notion of moral feeling from Kant’s justification of the moral law. Reath (1989, p.285) writes, “By the third chapter of the [second] *Critique*, Kant has established that the Moral Law can influence the will, or in his phrase, functions as an “incentive” (*Triebfeder*). [This means, the]...purpose of [his discussion of feeling of respect in] this chapter is to explore the effects of the moral consciousness on the faculty of desire.” Allison (1990, p.237) too similarly notes that the “analysis of [the feeling of] respect presupposes the doctrine of “fact of reason”, since it assumes the validity of the moral law and investigates the effects of the consciousness of this law on sensuously affected rational agents such as ourselves”. Thus, for Allison and Reath, Kant’s doctrine of the “fact of reason” is sufficient to show how the moral law motivates all the rational agents, and thereby, prove its practicality. If so, the discussion of moral feeling as an effect on our minds merely follows from it, and is therefore, not a part of the proof of the validity of the moral law.

Therefore, Allison-Reath’s interpretation excludes the notion of moral feeling both from (i) Kant’s moral motivational structure and, (ii) more importantly, from Kant’s main argument for establishing the validity of the moral law. In his *Kant’s Empirical Psychology*, Frierson (2014, p.124f.) specifically criticizes Allison for neglecting feelings from the process of moral motivation, and thereby setting up a “false contrast” between two types of rational principles. He also specifically criticizes Reath’s failure to look at the moral feeling within

<sup>3</sup> Allison (1990, p.95-98, 104) identifies our capacity to be motivated by the consciousness of the moral law as autonomous will, and simultaneously reads Kant’s principle of autonomy as that which successfully proves the possibility of morality in us. Reath (1989, p.285-288) too takes Kant’s account of moral motivation as a part of his doctrine of the “fact of reason”, and therefore as belonging to his justification of the validity of the moral law.

the process of moral motivation from an empirical standpoint. In his words, Reath's "position is correct about the practical point of view.... [But] he is wrong to see this point of view as the only point of view on moral motivation" (ibid., p.148). At a first glance, Frierson's problem with Allison-Reath's interpretation seems to be about the neglect of a positive role of moral feeling within Kant's moral motivational structure alone.<sup>4</sup> However, as I showed above, for Allison and Reath, Kant's account of moral motivation justifies the validity of the moral law as the supreme principle of morality. Hence, Frierson's criticism actually hints at a larger problem about the extent to which moral feeling plays a role in Kant's justification of the moral law in Allison-Reath's interpretation. Grenberg (2013) makes this point explicit when she criticizes Allison and Reath for not appealing to the notion of moral feeling in their discussion of Kant's proof of the unconditional authority of the moral law. Citing both Allison and Reath, she writes, "Most frequently, interpreters limit the role that moral feeling can play. For example, it has been argued that recognition of the validity of the moral law must occur purely rationally, with no appeal to feeling..." (Grenberg 2013, p.71). Following this, she focuses on Allison's position alone and argues that his view "cannot work because of the limits of reason in sensibly affected rational beings" (ibid., p.142). Emphasizing on the missing *feeling* aspect, she writes, "As such, we *must* rely on something like sensibility, receptivity... as the means by which we recognize pure a priori practical principles" (ibid., p.143). If so, "How... does Allison ground that consciousness of the validity and authority of the moral law if not via appeal to our capacity for receptivity?" (ibid., p.144).

Therefore, quite evidently, Grenberg (2013) and Frierson (2014) propose their phenomenological and empirical interpretations in light of their criticisms of Allison-Reath's denial of any role to moral feeling (i) within Kant's moral motivational structure and (ii) in Kant's justification of the moral law. From my brief account of their positions in section 2, it is clear that their interpretations aim to restore a positive space for the moral feeling. But, the extent to which they are successful in doing so (in terms of exegetical accuracy and interpretative coherence) is a matter of debate between Grenberg and Frierson.

#### 4. Debate between Frierson and Grenberg: A Critical Overview

##### 4.1. Mutual Disagreements in Attempts at Reinstating the 'Moral Feeling'

Frierson (2016a, 2016b) and Grenberg (2016) engaged in a debate about their respective interpretations in the third issue of *Con-textos Kantianos* published in 2016. As discussed in section 2.1., Grenberg (2013) proposes a novel phenomenological interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation – one that revolves around moral feeling, and considers it as conditioning the possibility of morality. For her, a common, felt, first-personal experience of the moral law (i.e., moral feeling) motivates us to perform moral actions, and thereby also justifies the validity of the moral law. This is certainly Grenberg's attempt at restoring the moral feeling within Kant's justification of the moral law – a task that the transcendental interpretations of Allison (1990) and Reath (1989) fails at. Frierson (2016a), in his article, "Kantian Feeling: Empirical Psychology, Transcendental Critique, and Phenomenology", criticizes Grenberg's (2013) view that Kant's phenomenology of respect grounds the basic tenets of his moral philosophy. He first agrees with Grenberg's view that "[t]here is a 'feel' to how the moral law shows up as a reason (from within), and this feel can... rightly [be] called 'phenomenological'" (Frierson 2016a, p.362). But he also argues that "the fact [of morality] for which Kant seeks conditions of possibility (in the second *Critique*) is not any particular phenomenological feel of moral obligation" (ibid., p.367). Hence, for Frierson, although Grenberg may be right in treating Kant's discussion of moral feeling phenomenologically, this "phenomenology [of moral feeling] is not at the heart of [Kant's] transcendental argumentation" for justifying the moral law. He further writes: [T]he phenomenology of respect that Kant lays out in the "Incentives" chapter of the second *Critique* is not very systematically important. Had Kant simply never written this chapter... no other parts of his philosophy would be affected at all" (ibid., p.369-370).

In the same article, Frierson (2016a) makes a different attempt at restoring the moral feeling within Kant's justification of the moral law. He aims to fix the problem of Allison-Reath's interpretation in a more direct manner by considering the possibility of reading the notion of moral feeling from a transcendental perspective due to the *a priori* status attributed to it. Towards the end of the same article, he writes, "[G]iven the general nature of our empirical psychology... and the normative status of the moral law..., we can know *a priori* that there must be a capacity for feeling a respect for the moral law that can outweigh non-moral feelings". He continues, "[i]n this case – and in this case alone... [Kant's] description of the nature of respect... has a second-order transcendental status" (ibid., p.369).<sup>5</sup> However, he quickly retracts from this step in his next article titled

<sup>4</sup> When taken this way alone, his criticism would add to the ongoing debate between the intellectualist and the affectivist interpretations of Kant's theory of moral motivation. (see McCarty 1993, p.423; Herrera 2000, p.396; Sargentis 2012, p.113-114; Frierson 2014, p.117; Ware 2014, p.741).

<sup>5</sup> One can also see him hinting at this direction in his book, *Kant's Empirical Psychology* (see Frierson 2014, p.118). But, he does not pursue this line of interpretation seriously any further in the book.

“Towards a Transcendental Critique of Feeling (A Response to Grenberg)” from the same issue of the journal. In it, he engages in a historical analysis of the development of the transcendental critique of feeling in Kant’s texts. His argument is that Kant’s attribution of a transcendental status to the *a priori* principles of the faculty of feeling reached its full development only in his third *Critique*. If so, Kant’s discussion of moral feeling in the second *Critique* was very close to, but not yet a transcendental philosophy of feeling. This is why, Frierson (2016b, p.389) writes: “I still don’t think that, from-within or phenomenologically or transcendently, the feeling of respect, or the philosophical analysis of it, or reflection on it, contribute to justifying the authority of the moral law”. Thus, he excludes the moral feeling from Kant’s argument to justify the moral law. He takes Kant’s justification argument to involve only “first-order transcendental claims” about the categorical nature of morality and “second-order [transcendental] claims” about the necessity of freedom (Frierson 2016a, p.366-367). Further, in order to compensate for the missing feeling component from Kant’s transcendental argument, he reads the notion of moral feeling as playing a crucial role within Kant’s moral motivational structure from an empirical viewpoint. For him, as I discussed in section 2.2, the moral feeling is significant in explaining how we convert moral judgements of reason into a desire to perform moral actions from a third-personal, scientific point of view. Thus, for Frierson, while Kant’s argument for establishing the validity of morality is transcendental (i.e., it revolves around how the fact of reason conditions the possibility of morality), his discussion of moral motivation is empirical (i.e., it revolves around how human agents get motivated by the moral feeling from a third-personal, scientific point of view).

In her article, “Response to Frierson’s ‘Kantian Feeling: Empirical Psychology, Transcendental Critique and Phenomenology’” from the same issue of *Con-textos Kantianos*, Grenberg (2016) calls Frierson’s lack of readiness to include the moral feeling into Kant’s transcendental analysis as “Paton Problem” or “Korsgaard Krankheit”. She explains this problem as follows: “[I]n a misguided effort to protect pure reason from the undue influence of sensibility, the genuine role for feeling in Kant’s practical transcendental philosophy is rejected” (Grenberg 2016, p.375). For her, it is Frierson’s unwarranted attempt to safeguard the ‘purity’ of Kant’s transcendental argument to justify the moral law that leads him to exclude the moral feeling from it. This problem of his, she claims, “put[s] Patrick in some awkward positions in relation to Kant’s texts”. More particularly, she finds it “odd that a feeling Kant describes as the only feeling that “can be *cognized a priori*”... is now to be *cognized* only empirically, or cognized a priori but with no essential import or meaning” (ibid., p.374). In addition to expressing her criticisms, she also defends her own stance against Frierson’s criticisms. She argues that he wrongly attributes a “reductionist” conception of phenomenology” of moral feeling, one that is “inert” and “non-agential”, to her (ibid., p.378). She further clarifies that her phenomenological interpretation does not take the moral feeling as directly conditioning the possibility of morality (as Frierson reads her), but as playing an indirect “epistemic role” to enable access into reasons that justify the moral law (ibid., p.378). By criticizing Frierson’s exclusion of moral feeling from Kant’s transcendental argument, and by defending her phenomenological interpretation against Frierson’s criticisms, Grenberg appeals for “a robust role for attentive reflection upon felt, phenomenological experience...in [Kant’s] transcendental argument” (ibid., p.380).

#### 4.2. *A Priori* Status of Moral Feeling: A Problem for Frierson and Grenberg

One problem that Grenberg (2016) raises against Frierson (2014, 2016a) in her response article is the way he treats the *a priori* status of moral feeling. This is the point Grenberg (2016) refers to as Frierson’s “awkward positions” in relation to Kant’s texts. The problem is: While Kant refers to the moral feeling as that which is “cognized a priori” (*KpV*, 05:72, 73, 78, 90), Frierson (2016a, p.357) insists that Kant’s notion of moral feeling must be taken as having an empirical status. In other words, Frierson compromises on the *a priori* status of moral feeling in arguing that it plays a key motivational role in causing moral actions from a phenomenal standpoint. However, he does not completely neglect Kant’s attribution of the *a priori* status to moral feeling. At some point, he makes an attempt to reconcile the *a priori* status of moral feeling with his empirical interpretation of moral motivation. He does this by claiming that its *a priori* nature is by virtue of its epistemic source (i.e., the moral law), and its empirical nature is by virtue of its function within the moral motivational structure. However, this view is problematic as the empirical status assigned to moral feeling is incompatible with Kant’s attribution of a *a priori* status to it. On the one hand, its empirical status means that its role as the moral incentive is applicable only to some of us generally, with some exceptions (contingently) and, on the other hand, its *a priori* status means it is applicable to all of us universally, without exceptions (necessarily). This incompatibility is a part and parcel of Frierson’s empirical interpretation because it treats the moral feeling as a psychological feeling derived from experience. That is, the nature of his empirical interpretation of moral motivation is such that it considers all of its essential elements, including the incentive of moral feeling as derived from experience. Experience, for Kant, can only give us the knowledge of “what is”, but “never that it must necessarily be thus” and with “no true universality” (*KrV*, A1). Hence, the moral feeling considered from an empirical standpoint will always lack *a priori* status.

Grenberg (2013) tries her best to avoid this problem in her interpretation. In her book, anticipating the problem, she makes a clear distinction between the “empirical experience” of moral feeling and the

“phenomenological experience of morality” (Grenberg 2013, p.40). Making this distinction, she points out that the empirical reading of moral feeling suffers from “this charge that its resulting claims hold only with empirical generality, not strict necessity” (ibid., p.30). She therefore prefers to appeal to the phenomenology of moral feeling which, she argues, “appeals to experience in a way that makes possible an *a priori* status” (ibid., p.32). Despite these efforts from her, Grenberg’s interpretation too fails to avoid the ‘*a priori* problem’ (that Frierson faces). To see how, first, one should see that, for her, “when Kant calls moral feeling “*a priori*,” he means simply that its cause is [the] intelligible [moral law]” (ibid., p.62). It is by virtue of its intelligible cause that this moral feeling is experienced universally and necessarily. Second, as discussed earlier, Grenberg’s main argument is that Kant appeals to a common, first-personal felt experience of morality in order to justify the validity of the moral law. She argues that this first-personal experience of moral feeling is the only way “we can access” the moral law, and this is the only way “we can vindicate the practicality of pure reason” (ibid., p.72). Now, the problem is: on the one hand, the experience of moral feeling is universal and necessary because it is caused by the moral law and, on the other hand, the moral law is universally and necessarily valid because of the experience of this moral feeling. Given that her main aim is to prove that the moral feeling is central to the vindication of the moral law, she cannot reject this point only to resolve this circularity. The only way out for her is to not rely on the moral law for justifying the *a priori* status of moral feeling. This would mean that the first-personal, felt experience of morality must have the elements of universality and necessity independent of its origination from the moral law. Grenberg consistently refers to the first-personal, felt experience of categorical obligation as an experience characterized by *necessity*. For instance, in discussing Kant’s Gallows Man example, she writes “[T]he obligation to tell the truth is something this man experiences as *categorically necessary*, that is, as holding no matter what pressures it puts on his love of life [emphasis added]” (ibid., p.41). This means, in her view, moral feeling, that we experience first-personally from within, contains an element of necessity in providing us access to the moral law and in driving us towards moral actions. While this cannot be disputed (as the appeal is made to the subjective experiences of individual human agents), she fails to explain how this felt experience of the categorical obligation is also universally applicable to all the finite rational agents. While she does refer to it as “a commonly felt human feeling” (ibid., p.60) repeatedly, this does not suffice to capture the strict universality aspect of the moral feeling that Kant writes about. The “commonness” of moral feeling means that it is inductively verifiable, and that it has the feature of empirical or comparative universality. This means, it is still not strictly universal for it to be qualified as having the *a priori* status. This attribution of a ‘soft’ version of *a priori* status to the moral feeling is primarily because Grenberg’s phenomenological account of moral feeling solely entails a first-personal experience of what it feels like from within. To give this kind of an interpretation, she mainly relies on Kant’s view that feelings are subjective mental states belonging to sensibility. Given that it has to do only with how an individual human agent subjectively feels when encountering the moral law, a phenomenological reading will always fail to justify how this feeling is also universally experienced by all human agents. Thus, moral feeling considered from a phenomenological standpoint does not do full justice to the *a priori* status that Kant attributes to it.

## 5. A Novel Transcendental Interpretation as the Better Alternative

Now, I propose a new transcendental interpretation of Kant’s account of moral motivation – one that not only takes the moral feeling as moving the will of human agents, but also considers motivation from moral feeling as a necessary condition for the possibility of morality. I offer this interpretation by reading Kant’s discussion of moral motivation, especially his account of moral feeling, as a solution to the problem of motivational skepticism occurring in his moral theory. First, I argue that Kant encountered the problem of moral motivation as a skepticism about the motivational efficacy of the moral law of pure reason. I show that this problem occurs as a part of Kant’s metaphysical project of uncovering the correct supreme principle of morality. Then, I show that Kant’s discussion of moral feeling and motivation, especially in “On the incentives...” chapter of his second *Critique*, appropriately resolves this motivational skepticism.<sup>6</sup> Since the problem of moral motivation is integral to Kant’s moral metaphysics, the solution that he offers via his account of moral feeling has transcendental significance.

### 5.1. Motivation as One of the Two Practical Functions of the Supreme Principle of Morality

For Kant, pure philosophy or metaphysics investigates the supreme principle that conditions the possibility of its subject matter *a priori*. Metaphysics of morals is a specific pure philosophical discipline that determines

<sup>6</sup> Korsgaard (1996, pp.311) coins the term “motivational skepticism” for the first time, and discusses its possibility generally in moral theories founded on practical reasons. In the context of Kant’s account of moral motivation, Ware (2014, pp.732) writes about another problem with a similar name, “motivational effect skepticism”. This problem is about the nature of the feelings that the moral law effects, rather than about how the moral law could possibly motivate human agents.

the supreme principle governing our moral actions *a priori* (*KrV*, A841-842/B869-870; *GMS*, 04:388-389; *MS*, 06:375; *V-Mo/Mron II*, 29:597). So, Kant's primary focus in his key texts on moral philosophy is to identify the correct supreme *a priori* principle that founds morality in all its forms. In his *Groundwork*, Kant (*GMS*, 04:392) emphasizes that "the search for and establishment of the *supreme principle of morality*" to be an "important" and a "central question" that must be "kept apart from every other moral investigation" (see also *MS*, 06:376). He thought that this supreme *a priori* principle of morality must condition the possibility of both our moral appraisal and our motivation to perform moral actions. Kant's emphasis on the motivating function of the principle of morality can be seen in his writings from as early as 1760s. In a note written in 1760s, Kant (*Refl*, 19:117) jots three fundamental questions about morality that require our attention. The first question is about the principle underlying moral adjudication, and the second is about the rule of its application. The third of the three is about the source of our motivation to perform moral actions: "Through what do the moral conditions become *motiva*, i.e., on what rests their *vis movens* [i.e., moving force] and thus their application to the subject?". Kant repeats the importance of these questions in another note written in mid-1770s. There too he stresses that we must demand the "[g]rounds of execution, *caussas subjective moventes* [i.e., subjectively motivating causes]" in moral philosophy (*Refl* 19: 220). Later in 1784-85, in a lecture recorded by Collins, Kant (*V-Mo/Collins*, 27:274) famously discusses the dual practical functions of the supreme principle of morality as follows:

We first have to take up two points here: (1) The principle of appraisal of obligation, and (2) the principle of its performance or execution. Guideline and motive have here to be distinguished. The guideline is the principle of appraisal, and the motive that of carrying-out the obligation; in that they have been confused, everything in morality has been erroneous. If the question is: What is morally good or not?, that is the principle of appraisal, whereby I judge the goodness or depravity of actions. But if the question is: What moves me to live according to this law?, that is the principle of motive.

The passage shows that, for Kant, the correct supreme principle of morality must be a capable of enabling moral judgements and moral motivation in agents.<sup>7</sup> We also see Kant insisting that the distinction between these two practical functions of the supreme principle of morality be made clear and explicit. He thinks that it is possible to erroneously subsume its motivational function under its appraising function. Doing so results in a significant categorical error that should be avoided in moral philosophy. This is why he particularly asserts that the "principle of motive cannot be confused with the principle of judgement (*V-Mo/Collins*, 27:275). The latter is the norm, and the principle of impulsion is the motive".<sup>8</sup> In another lecture he specifically mentions about the need for a fundamental motivating ground to convert moral judgement into moral actions: "All [moral] actions are indeed *adjudged* to be necessary, but a *motivating ground* is also needed in order to perform these actions [emphasis added]" (*V-Mo/Collins*, 27:299). Thus, we clearly see that Kant's supreme *a priori* principle of morality must serve as the fundamental source of moral motivation in addition to serving as the fundamental source of moral judgements.

## 5.2. Occurrences of Motivational Skepticism in Kant's Writings

For Kant, pure reason alone can give us the supreme *a priori* principle in the form of the moral law. Given the dual practical functions of the supreme principle of morality, it is required that the moral law of pure reason must serve as the fundamental *a priori* principle underlying the motivation to perform moral actions in all rational agents. In a lecture on ethics recorded by Mrongovius in 1785, Kant (*V-Mo/Mron II*, 29:626) says, "If [pure] reason determines the will through the moral law, [then, it means that] it has the force of an incentive, and in that case has, not autonomy merely, but also autocracy. [That is,] [i]t then has *both* legislative and *executive power* [emphasis added]". This means, for Kant to prove that pure reason is the source of the supreme principle of morality, it is required of him to show how pure reason is solely capable of serving as the source of moral motivation for all the rational agents. As a part of his justification of the moral law as the supreme moral principle, Kant repeatedly expresses his doubts about how this moral law of pure reason could possibly move finite rational agents (i.e., human agents) towards moral actions.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Kant's shift from posing three essential questions about morality (moral appraisal, application and motivation) to two core practical functions of the supreme principle of morality in his works in the Critical period can be read as an influence of Hutcheson's views on Kant. Walschots (2015, p.69-70), for instance, argues that Kant's distinction between principle of moral appraisal and moral motivation "likely goes back to Hutcheson's distinction between justifying and exciting reasons".

<sup>8</sup> In one of his lectures during mid-1770s, Kant (*V-Anth/Fried*, 25:486) mentions something similar in general terms: "The power of ruling is blind without the power of execution".

<sup>9</sup> This problem would not apply to purely rational agents who have a holy or a perfect will. Since they do not possess a sensible nature (with its own set of needs), their will is always determined by the moral law alone. As Kant puts it, the "perfectly good will [of the purely rational agents]...can be determined only through the representation of the good". In other words, "for a *holy* will... [the] volition is of itself necessarily in accord with the [moral law]" (*GMS*, 04:414).

Firstly, doubts about the motivational efficacy of the moral law are connected to the formal nature of the moral law. That is, if the moral law of pure reason is without any material content (in the form of incentives or ends) by virtue of its *a priori* status, then how is it possible for it serve as the ultimate source of moral motivation? In his discussion on the ideal of the highest good of pure practical reason in his first *Critique*, Kant claims that the moral maxims derived from the moral law do not automatically move agents to perform moral actions (in spite of their necessarily binding nature). This is because, the moral law of pure reason is “a mere idea” that needs external postulates such as God and immortality for its maxims to motivate agents to perform moral actions.<sup>10</sup> He writes that “the majestic ideas of morality are, to be sure, objects of approbation and admiration but not incentives for resolve and realization” (*KrV*, A812-813/B840-841). Kant repeats this skeptical position in a lecture when he says: “[S]ince the understanding is the faculty of rules and judgement, morality consists in the subordination of the action as such to the principle of the understanding. But how the understanding might contain a principle of actions is somewhat difficult to see. In no sense does it contain the end of the action” (*V-Mo/Mron*, 27:1428). That is, given its origination from the faculty of understanding (i.e., pure reason, to be precise), it is “difficult to see” how the formal moral law contains moral motives to drive all the rational agents (especially, human agents) to perform moral actions. Thus, motivational skepticism about pure practical reason arises due to the formality of the moral law.

The second point that adds to Kant’s skepticism about the motivational capacity of the moral law stems from the natural constitution of human agents. We are constituted in a way that we possess a sensible nature whose needs (in the form of instincts and inclinations) are not necessarily in alignment with reason and its moral law. In addition, the needs of our sensible nature are such that they “always have the first word” in seeking satisfaction of their demands (*KpV*, 05:147). Kant further notes, “[W]e find our nature as sensible beings so constituted that the matter of the faculty of desire (objects of [instincts and] inclination...) first forces itself upon us, and we find our pathologically determinable self...striving antecedently to make its claims primary and originally valid, just as if it constituted our entire self” (*KpV*, 05:74). Now, if we naturally have sensible needs which not only conflict with the demands of the moral law, but also have the power to overrule its necessitating capacity, then we are left with the question: how is it possible for the moral law of pure reason to move us towards moral actions? In a lecture transcribed by Collins, Kant (*V-Mo/Collins*, 27:293) says the following:

Morality consists in this, that an action should arise from the motivating grounds of its own inner goodness... But although the understanding is well aware of this, such a motivating ground still has no driving force. Moral perfection meets with approval, to be sure, in our judgement, but since this motivating ground of moral perfection is produced from the understanding, it does not have a driving force so strong as the sensory one, and that is the weakness of human nature, when it lacks moral goodness and *rectitudo*.

This passage tells us that the moral law aids us in knowing that moral goodness consists in actions stemming from pure inner motivational grounds. But it does not have a driving force that is capable of overriding motivational forces stemming from our sensible needs. Thus the problem has to be about our want of moral perfection and the prevalence of stronger motivational forces from our sensible needs. In another lecture Kant (*V-Mo/Mron*, 27:1429) expresses the same point when he says, “When a man has learnt to appraise all actions, he still lacks the motive to perform them...The understanding has no *elateres animi*, albeit it has the power to move, or *motiva*; but the latter are not able to outweigh the *elateres* of sensibility”. That is, our imperfect will does not automatically get motivated by the moral law because the motivational force associated with the needs belonging to the sensible nature outweighs necessitation (or obligating force) stemming from the commands of the categorical imperative.

Now, motivational skepticism due to our overpowering sensible nature cannot be dissociated from motivational skepticism arising due to the formality of the moral law. It is not the case that the compelling needs of our sensible nature alone give rise to doubts about the motivational efficacy of the moral law. Rather, they arise because the moral law originating from pure reason is formal and does not have a motivational resource that is capable of overruling the determining force of our sensible needs.<sup>11</sup> In Kant’s words, “[on the one hand, the] moral law has precepts, indeed, but no motives [as] it lacks executive authority... [on the other hand,] [m]en may indeed have good powers of judgement in moral matters, but no feeling [capable of moving us towards moral actions].” (*V-Mo/Collins*, 27:361) Thus, the two sets of concerns (one, the moral law is formal, and two, our will is imperfect) that make up Kant’s motivational skepticism are connected.

<sup>10</sup> Sargentis (2012, p.104) rightly points out that, although in his first *Critique* Kant (*KrV*, A815/B843) considers ideas of God and immortality to serve as the “obligating force” for the moral law of reason to come to effect via our actions, it “is not the final form of Kant’s theory of moral motivation”. He eventually argues that the moral feeling of respect positively serves as the foundational moral motive for human agents in his works on ethics in the Critical period.

<sup>11</sup> This does not mean I am foreclosing the possibility of motivational issues stemming from our psychological inability to adhere to motivation emerging from the moral law. My point here is just to point out that Kant dealt with a motivational skeptical challenge stemming from our imperfect will within his project of proving pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality.

### 5.3. Moral Feeling as the Incentive of the Moral Law: Kant's Solution to Motivational Skepticism

Kant works out the solution to the problem of motivational skepticism in the chapter “On the incentives of pure practical reason” of his *Critique of Practical Reason*. In it, he identifies moral feeling (or feeling of respect<sup>12</sup>) as an incentive that motivates all the finite rational agents to perform moral actions. He writes, “[Feeling of] [r]espect for the moral law is...the sole and also the undoubted moral incentive” (*KpV*, 05:78). He clarifies that this moral feeling “does not serve for appraising actions..., but [serves] only as an incentive” for the performance of moral actions (*KpV*, 05:76).<sup>13</sup> One problem in considering moral feeling as the incentive of morality would stem from Kant's own view that the moral law must itself be the incentive. In fact, he begins this chapter on incentives with a note that “the moral law determine[s] the will immediately” and that the performance of moral actions cannot happen by “means of a feeling, of whatever kind” (*KpV*, 05:71). This is the reason why Reath (1989) objects to considering the moral feeling of respect as an independent incentive of morality. To argue that the moral law does not require an incentive other than itself, he quotes Kant (at *KpV*, 05:76): “[The feeling of] respect for the moral law is not the incentive to morality; instead it is morality itself [(i.e., the moral law itself)] subjectively considered as an incentive” (Reath 1989, p.288). As a response to this objection, I showed above that it is difficult to see how the moral law can move the will of finite rational agents to perform moral actions all by itself. Kant expresses this motivational skepticism about the moral law at various points in his writings. Conceptually too, since an incentive is “understood [as] the subjective determining ground of the will” (*KpV*, 05:72), as opposed to the *objective* moral law, it would be oxymoronic to refer to the moral law as an “incentive” all by itself. Hence, what is needed is indeed an incentive – one that cannot be completely independent of the moral law. Kant therefore conceives the moral feeling as an incentive that is directly produced by the moral law itself. He writes that “the moral law... has influence on the sensibility of the subject and effects a feeling conducive to the influence of the law upon the will” (*KpV*, 05:75).<sup>14</sup> In fact, before claiming that “it is morality itself [(i.e., the moral law itself)] subjectively considered as an incentive” (that Reath places emphasis on), Kant (*KpV*, 05:75) writes, “[T]he moral law... is also a subjective determining ground - that is, an incentive - to this action *inasmuch as it has influence on the sensibility of the subject and effects a feeling conducive to the influence of the law upon the will* [emphasis added]”. This means that the moral law is an incentive only in so far as it effects a moral feeling in our minds for conditioning the possibility of moral actions. Only by effecting a feeling that is “inseparably connected” with it (*KpV*, 05:80), the moral law can condition the possibility of moral motivation in all human agents. Without the moral feeling, it is doubtful how the moral law could possibly serve as the incentive (i.e., the subjective determining ground of our will) of moral actions in human agents all by itself.

Since Kant considers the moral feeling “as the incentive to compliance with the [moral] law” (*KpV*, 05:79), actions performed due to motivation from this feeling are not only in conformity with the moral law, but are also stemming from it. He calls this moral feeling “as the sole way of determining the will by the law...and on...[which] rests the distinction between consciousness of having acted *in conformity with duty* and *from duty*” (*KpV*, 05:81). That is, acting from duty (or performing actions having moral worth) is possible in human agents when the moral law, not only serves as the fundamental principle underlying our moral appraisal, but also effects a moral feeling in our minds to condition the possibility of our moral motivation. Kant writes, “No other subjective principle [than this moral feeling] must be assumed as incentive, for then the action can indeed turn out as the law prescribes, but since, though in conformity with duty it was not done from duty, the disposition to the action is not moral; and in this lawgiving it is really the disposition that matters”

<sup>12</sup> Although Kant (*KpV*, 05:75) writes that the feeling of respect constitutes only the positive aspect of moral feeling (the negative aspect being the feeling of humiliation), he uses the terms “respect for the moral law” and “moral feeling” synonymously within the context of discussing it as the moral incentive. For instance, in the same chapter, “On the incentives of pure practical reason”, Kant notes that “respect for the moral law itself... is the *moral feeling* properly speaking” (*KpV*, 05:80). Again, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, he writes that “[r]espect for the law... in its subjective aspect is called moral feeling” (*MS*, 06:464). The difference between moral feeling and feeling of respect gains relevance only in the specific context of how exactly the process of moral motivation takes place in human agents.

<sup>13</sup> Kant's view that a moral feeling serves as the incentive for moral actions emerged only in mid-1780s. In fact, in his *Critique of Pure Reason* published in 1781, one can see Kant considering the motive of worthiness to be happy (*KrV*, A806/B834), the postulate of God and the hope for an afterlife (*KrV*, A812-813/B840-841) as possible candidates for the incentive of morality. As Walschots (2015, p.105) rightly points out “this seems to indicate that at the time of the first *Critique* Kant had not yet come to view that “[moral feeling of] respect [*Achtung*]”... is the moral motive”. As Allison (1990, p.67) calls it, Kant's moral theory expounded in his first *Critique* is still “semi-critical”. It is in his *Groundwork* published in 1785 that we find Kant writing about the moral feeling of respect as the incentive of morality for the first time (see, for instance, *GMS*, 04:440). From then on, in his works that followed, Kant consistently maintains that moral feeling is the incentive that motivates agents to perform actions in accordance with the moral law (see *V-Mo/Mron II*, 29:625 & *MS*, 06:400).

<sup>14</sup> As is well-known, Kant considers the moral feeling as a direct product or an immediate effect of the moral law in his other works too. For instance, in the first section of *Groundwork*, Kant (*GMS*, 04:401f.) identifies feeling of respect “as the *effect* of the law on the subject, and not as the *cause* of the law”. Again, towards the end of the text, he asserts that the moral feeling must be “regarded as the *subjective* effect that the law exercises on the will, to which reason alone delivers the objective grounds” (*GMS*, 04:460). Similarly, in his *Metaphysics of Morals*, he refers to the moral feeling as “a feeling of the effect that the [moral] lawgiving will within the human being exercises on his capacity to act in accordance with his will” (*MS*, 06:387).

(*KpV*, 05:82). Thus, the moral law of pure reason acts as the subjective motivational ground for performing moral actions only by effecting a moral feeling in the minds of human agents. Moral feeling therefore resolves Kant's skepticism concerning how the moral law could move finite rational agents towards moral actions.

#### 5.4. Transcendental Nature of This Interpretation and *A Priori* Status of Moral Feeling

As Reath (1989, p.285) and Allison (1990, p.237) point out, it is true that the chapter "On the incentives..." (at *KpV*, 05:71-106) occurs *after* Kant's doctrine of the "fact of reason" (at *KpV*, 05:31, 46-47) in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. But this does not mean (as Allison and Reath think) that this chapter is not a part of Kant's justification of the moral law as the supreme *a priori* moral principle. This is because, it is within his project of proving pure reason as the source of the supreme principle of morality that Kant encounters the motivational skepticism (which he expresses at various points in his works). His account of moral feeling, which he works out in the third chapter of the second *Critique*, resolves it. Hence, Kant's discussion of moral feeling as an incentive is an essential last step in his proof of the practicality of pure reason.<sup>15</sup> That is, Kant's discussion of how human agents get motivated by moral feeling is a part and parcel of Kant's main argument for justifying the moral law. This means, not only does the moral feeling motivate human agents, but it also aids the moral law to condition the possibility of moral motivation in all finite rational agents. This transcendental interpretation – one that considers the process of motivation from moral feeling as conditioning the possibility of morality in all finite rational agents – is also confirmed by Kant's use of the term "must" in describing the causal connection between the moral law and the moral feeling at the beginning of the chapter, "On the incentives...". He writes that his aim in this chapter is to "show a priori" what the moral law "effects (or, to put it better, must effect) in the mind insofar as it is an incentive" (*KpV*, 05:72). There is clearly an emphasis on the term "must effect" ("*wirken muß*") as, for Kant, it is a "better" ("*besser*") way of putting the connection between the moral law and its incentive. That is, it is "better" to consider moral feeling as that which the moral law *must effect* in our minds for it to serve as the incentive. Both Grenberg and Frierson fail to take note of Kant's use of the term "must effect" within parenthesis in the line quoted above. Ignoring this emphasis can lead one to take the moral feeling as that which the moral law *effects* in our minds, resulting in a first-personal, phenomenological or a third-personal, empirical interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation (that Grenberg and Frierson develop). In contrast, taking Kant's emphasis on "must" into account leads to a transcendental interpretation with a crucial role to the notion of moral feeling within it. That is, only if the moral feeling is *necessarily* effected by the moral law in *all* finite rational beings, the latter can serve as the fundamental motivating ground of moral actions in all rational agents; Only if the moral law successfully serves as the ultimate motivating ground of moral actions in all rational agents, it can be qualified as the supreme *a priori* principle of morality. Thus, Allison and Reath are indeed correct in taking the foundational motivational role of the moral law as justifying its validity as the supreme moral principle. However, their transcendental interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation misses the crucial chapter "On the incentives..." out of his argument for justifying the moral law. Including the moral feeling within Kant's moral motivational structure, and thereby within his justification argument is therefore a revision to Allison-Reath's standard transcendental interpretation.

Before moving to why Kant thought only a *feeling* must be effected by the moral law, a word about the *a priori* status of moral feeling is necessary here. Since moral feeling is a direct product of the moral law, both Grenberg (2013, p.62) and Frierson (2016b, p.386) read Kant's attribution of *a priori* status to moral feeling *solely* as a result of its origination from the moral law. In the chapter "On the incentives...", Kant (*KpV*, 05:78) himself notes that the "effect [of the moral law] on feeling...*can be cognized a priori from the moral law* [emphasis added]". However, reading it this way misses the independent *a priori* status that moral feeling acquires by virtue of being a direct product of pure practical reason. Kant identifies the moral feeling primarily as an *a priori* principle of pure reason during his critical investigation into the latter's practical use. This is evident when Kant notes that "we can cognize [the respect for the moral law] completely a priori" because it "is a feeling that is produced by an intellectual ground" (*KpV*, 05:73). By the phrase, "produced by an intellectual ground", he means "produced solely by reason" (*KpV*, 05:76). More clearly, in the section, "Critical Elucidation of the Analytic of Pure Practical Reason" of the second *Critique*, Kant writes that the moral feeling is "cognized a priori" as a "necessary influence [of pure reason] upon sensibility". It is during the critical analysis of "the relation of pure practical reason to sensibility" that Kant identifies moral feeling as the *a priori* incentive (*KpV*, 05:90). Hence, moral feeling must *necessarily* be effected by pure reason in the minds of finite rational agents during the latter's practical influence upon the sensibility of these agents. Just as the moral law originates from pure reason in its practical employment, the moral feeling too is a direct product of pure reason in its practical employment. This means, just as the moral law has an independent *a priori* status

<sup>15</sup> Sargentis (2012, pp.107) shares this view when he mentions, "Kant discusses the problem of motivation only in the context of his main aim, which is to show "that there is pure practical reason"".

by virtue of its origination from pure reason, the moral feeling acquires *a priori* status due to its origination from pure reason (when the latter has an influence upon sensibility in its practical employment). Hence, contra Grenberg's and Frierson's views, it is not the case that the moral feeling acquires its *a priori* status by virtue of its causal connection with the moral law. Rather, it acquires the *a priori* status primarily due to its origination from pure practical reason. In fact, it is because of its *a priori* origination from pure practical reason that Kant qualifies the moral feeling as the product of the moral law. This means, the *a priori* origination of moral feeling from pure practical reason logically precedes its origination from the moral law. Thus, despite its emergence as the product of the moral law, the *a priori* status of moral feeling traces its roots to its origination from pure practical reason.<sup>16</sup>

Now, why must a *feeling* be effected by pure practical reason (via its moral law) for conditioning the possibility of moral actions? The response to this question lies in Kant's conception of feeling in general. For Kant, feelings cause actions by determining our faculty of desire. When the feeling of pleasure determines the faculty of desire, the latter acquires the objects of pleasure via actions. Similarly, when the feeling of displeasure determines the faculty of desire, the latter avoids the objects of displeasure via actions.<sup>17</sup> Hence, Kant's choice of a *feeling* as a candidate for the incentive of morality has its roots in the nature of feeling and its capacity to cause actions by virtue of its connection with faculty of desire in general.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Kant does not take this moral feeling as an empirical feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Instead, moral feeling is conceived as the necessary effect of the moral law and not as its antecedent ground. If it was an antecedent ground of the law, then, like any empirical feeling of pleasure or displeasure, it would provide material ends to this highest practical principle of morality. Kant (*KpV*, 05:75) is very clear that "[t]here is...no *antecedent* feeling in the subject that would be attuned to morality: that is impossible, since all feeling is sensible whereas the incentive of the moral disposition must be free from any sensible condition". Moral feeling "must...be regarded as the *subjective* effect that the [moral] law exercises on the will" (*GMS*, 04:460). Hence, as opposed to the empirical physical feeling "which precedes the representation of the law", the *a priori* moral feeling is "that which can only follow upon it" (*MS*, 06:399). It is this peculiar nature of moral feeling (i.e., that it does not precede the moral law, but only succeeds it) that makes the moral law retain its supreme authority over moral motivation (in addition to moral appraisal) in finite rational agents. If this moral feeling did not succeed as an *a priori* effect of the moral law, then the moral law would possibly motivate human agents by "means of a feeling, of whatever kind" (*KpV*, 05:71). Since the moral law has only the form of universality and necessity, the *a priori* moral feeling that succeeds the law, serves as the incentive without violating the formal nature of the moral law (i.e., without giving any material ends). Thus, the *a priori* moral feeling aids the moral law to serve as the fundamental moral motive in all the finite rational agents without losing its formality.

I also showed earlier that Kant also expressed concerns about how the formal moral law could motivate human beings with a forcefully demanding sensible nature. As a response to this, he conceives of the incentive of moral feeling as that which must be capable of overriding the naturally forceful needs and tendencies of our sensibility. First, he specifies that the moral feeling must be a feeling of humiliation towards our own sensible nature in order to negatively resist the tendencies of our sensible nature (like, self-love and self-conceit) upon our will. At the same time, for him, the moral feeling should be a feeling of respect for the moral law so that it also positively serves as the moral motivating ground of our will (see *KpV*, 05:73-74). He considers the removal of hindering influences from our sensible nature (that the feeling of humiliation enables) as organically

<sup>16</sup> One of the reviewers aptly raised a concern about the connection that this independent *a priori* status of moral feeling shares with the doctrine of the "fact of reason". If the moral feeling is an independent *a priori* product of pure reason in its practical influence upon sensibility, then shouldn't this feeling be considered as another "fact" of reason? If so, does Kant's doctrine of the "fact of reason" entail it? My response to this question goes hand in hand with Ware's (2015) take on the connection between the moral feeling and the "fact of reason". In his response article to Grenberg, Ware (2015, 308-309) argues that it should be possible to include the moral feeling into Kant's justification argument by establishing a positive connection between the moral feeling and the fact of reason, "without making it identical to the fact of reason". He writes: "[W]e can distinguish the fact of reason (as our consciousness of the moral law's authority) and the feeling of respect (as the effect this consciousness has on our sensibility), yet maintain that Kant's analysis of respect is central to his project of justification". The position I have argued for is in agreement with this claim. While the authority of the moral law is the sufficient condition for the practicality of pure reason in all rational beings in general, the condition that is necessary for it specifically in finite rational beings is the moral feeling. Hence, the moral feeling is entailed in the doctrine of the "fact of reason" insofar it is an *a priori* product of pure reason in its practical use, and yet, it is different from the "fact" itself as it is a product only of pure reason's influence on sensibility in finite rational agents.

<sup>17</sup> A feeling of pleasure requires an agent to maintain it by reproducing the intuitions that caused it and a feeling of displeasure requires an agent to get rid of it by dismissing the intuitions that caused it (see *KpV*, 05:220). The only way for feelings to do so is by serving as the determining ground of the faculty of desire. Kant (*KpV*, 05:09f.) defines desire as "a being's faculty to be by means of its representations the *cause of the reality of the objects* of these representations [emphasis added]". For him, "All desires are directed to activity..." (*V-Anth/Fried*, 25:577) Regarding the connection between feeling and desire, he says, "Pleasure precedes the faculty of desire ... we can desire or abhor nothing which is not based on pleasure or displeasure. For that which gives me no pleasure, I also do not want. Thus pleasure or displeasure precedes desire or abhorrence." (*V-Met/Mron*, 29:877-878).

<sup>18</sup> In the "Preface" of the second *Critique*, Kant (*KpV*, 05:09f.) admits that the "concepts [of feeling, desire and their interconnection are] borrowed from [empirical] psychology" for his critical investigation into the possibility of pure practical reason. For him, relying on the truths of empirical psychology during the process of uncovering pure objects of metaphysics is valid in so far as "[w]e take from experience nothing more than what is necessary" (*KrV*, A848/B876).

conditioning the furtherance of the motivating influence of the moral law upon our will (something that the feeling of respect makes possible) (see *KpV*, 05:79). In a well-known passage, he writes:

The negative effect [of the moral law] upon feeling ...is *pathological*, as is every influence on feeling and every feeling in general. As the effect of consciousness of the moral law,...this feeling of a rational subject affected by inclinations is indeed called humiliation (intellectual contempt); but in relation to its positive ground, the law, it is at the same time called respect for the law;...inasmuch as it moves resistance out of the way, in the judgment of reason this removal of a hindrance is esteemed equivalent to a positive furthering of its causality. Because of this, this feeling can now also be called a feeling of respect for the moral law, *while on both grounds together it can be called a moral feeling* [emphasis added] (*KpV*, 05:75).

Thus, the moral feeling is a combination of a negative feeling of humiliation towards our own sensible nature and a positive feeling of respect towards the moral law. The moral law therefore must effect the moral feeling – a feeling that is both a feeling of humiliation towards our sensible influences and a feeling of respect for the moral law – in our minds in order to condition the possibility of moral motivation in all finite rational agents. By conceiving of the notion of moral feeling thus, Kant successfully resolves the problem of motivational skepticism and thereby also proves the validity of the moral law as the supreme principle of morality.

## 6. Concluding Remark

My reading of the moral feeling as a solution to the motivational skepticism makes my interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation transcendental. Since my transcendental account includes the moral feeling (within both the process of moral motivation and Kant's justification of the moral law), it is a revision to Allison-Reath's standard interpretation of Kant's account of moral motivation. This revision appropriately responds to the Frierson-Grenberg debate because the roots of this debate go back to the lack of moral feeling within Allison-Reath's reading of Kant's account of moral motivation. As I mentioned in section 3, the main subject matter of the debate between Frierson and Grenberg is how the notion of moral feeling can be correctly incorporated into Kant's discussions of moral motivation and the justification the moral law. The debate included Grenberg's attack of Frierson's position with a particular reference to the way he deals with the *a priori* status of moral feeling. I showed that Grenberg's own position falls prey to this attack. My claim that the moral feeling is a direct product of pure practical reason (and only an indirect product of the moral law) from within Kant's moral metaphysics makes a case for appropriately coming to terms with its *a priori* status. Inclusion of the *a priori* moral feeling within Kant's account of moral motivation, and thereby within his justification of the moral law, settles the Frierson-Grenberg debate.<sup>19</sup>

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