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Kant on Engaging Other Agents and Observing Reason at Work

I argue on systematic and textual grounds that Kant recommends that practical philosophers engage other agents as part of their theorizing. This engagement happens chiefly via confronting other agents with thought experiments or stipulated moral scenarios. I explain the specific contributions of this method for Kant's philosophy, and show how it is possible despite Kant's insistence that practical philosophy must be pure. Finally, I explain Kant's specific recommendations to engage other agents for the purpose of practical philosophy. My argument is directed against a number of recent Kant interpretations that conceive of Kant's ethics as solely first-personal.

Kant aims to capture morality from the inside or from the perspective of a moral agent under the moral law.¹ For this purpose the material agents can find within themselves is central. An agent's awareness of being under moral obligation plays a crucial role for the agent's moral life as well as for the way Kant proposes that critical philosophers theorize about morality. Kant's attempt to capture morality from the perspective of a moral agent raises the question of what the role of *other agents* is for his practical philosophy? Whilst the fact that we live in a world inhabited by other human beings is pivotal for Kant's political philosophy, and for his notion of moral progress and moral education, it is not clear that the fact that a moral agent lives among other moral agents and can interact with them is of particular importance for Kant's enquiry into the supreme principle and the source of morality.² Kant, for instance, claims that everyone, including practical philosophers, can "become immediately conscious"

1 See for instance Korsgaard (1996, xii): "This makes Kant's enterprise very different from that of philosophers who talk about morality and the moral agent from the outside, third-personally, as phenomena that are in need of explanation. Kant's arguments are not *about* us; they are addressed *to* us".

2 There has recently been focus on the social and political aspects of Kant's ethics with renewed interest in his account of moral education (see Munzel 2012, vanden Auweele 2015, Sticker 2015 a), as well as friendship, moral community and progress (see *pars pro toto* Moran 2012). See also Reath's (2006, ch.6) discussion of the social dimension of autonomy understood as a capacity to create reasons for others. All of this makes it *prima facie* likely that other agents are also relevant for Kant's *methodology of ethics*, but it could also be that other agents only matter once the ethicist applies the principles of ethics to concrete circumstances. I will show in this article that other agents indeed play important roles for the foundational philosophical enterprise of the ethicist.

of the moral law (5:29.34-5, see also 5:8fn., 91.8-92.17).³ He therefore recommends the “most ordinary attention to oneself” for confirming that the moral law really is “the pattern for the determinations of our wills” (see also 5:43.35-7, 8:287.26-288.1), and he assumes that the principle of morality “has long been present in the reason of all human beings and incorporated in their being” (5:105.11-2).⁴

The underlying reason for why attention to oneself or awareness of morality can do work for Kant and for why other rational agents do not seem all that important for philosophical theorizing about the fundamental aspects of morality is of course Kant’s assumption that there is just one reason we all share. With this assumption in place, it is plausible that without interfering factors such as rationalizing (see my sec.3), all rational agents will come to the same moral judgments and follow the same moral principles. I can then investigate only my own reason, work out how things stand from this pure rational point of view, and generalize my insights to all other rational agents.⁵ Many non-Kantians (and some Kantians), however, find this strategy unsatisfying: The assumption that there is just one reason and that I can generalize from what I can find within myself is highly contentious and it can hardly be treated as an uncontroversial assumption.

Furthermore, Kant’s method is in tension with how philosophers currently tend to theorize about morality. They take into account, or regard as evidence, how *other* academics as well as non-academics respond to stipulated or real cases, either immediately or on reflection, and they often try to elicit certain intuitions in *others*. Moreover, as philosophers we are in dialogue with others, we exchange arguments, and we are open to have our moral convictions and awareness of right and wrong overturned if others make a convincing case

3 I quote Kant volume:page.line according to Kant (1900ff.). The First *Critique* is quoted according to the A/B edition. Translations are, with occasional modifications, from Guyer, Wood (1995ff.).

4 See also 4:402.1-15, 404.8-11, 5:69.25-70.4, 6:181.29-34.

5 Rawls (1971, 50), for instance, assumes that: “We may suppose that everyone has in himself the whole form of a moral conception” and hence “if we should be able to characterize one (educated) person’s sense of justice, we would have a good beginning toward a theory of justice”.

against them. Given how important it is that philosophers are engaged in a common project with colleagues and that there are many non-academic moral agents whose intuitions, convictions, thoughts, reactions, actions, etc. might help ethicists in their search for truth, we should wonder what the role of other moral agents than the philosophizing subject is for Kant's ethical theorizing.

In this paper, I will argue that the method Kant recommends to the ethicist and that we find employed in crucial passages of his practical philosophy is not solely first-personal. I will present exegetical evidence that ethicists, according to Kant, should look at how other agents judge and reason about morality. Kant recommends that ethicists draw on evidence obtained through engagement with others, and this input is more important for Kant than often acknowledged (sec.2). I will then explain the specific *contributions* of other agents for Kant's method (sec.3), and show how Kant's method of practical philosophy is possible despite Kant's insistence that practical philosophy must be *pure* (sec.4). Finally, I will explain Kant's specific recommendations to engage other agents for the purpose of practical philosophy (sec.5). In a first section, I will motivate my discussion of the role of others for ethical theorizing. The idea that Kant's ethics is concerned with a special first-person perspective that Kant's practical philosophy asks the philosopher to take up has recently been advocated by a number of Kantians. Jeanine Grenberg's detailed account, which emphasizes the role of introspection for Kant, is of particular interest here, since she argues that Kant's departure from the usual ways of doing ethics is a considerable strength of his philosophy.

1. Grenberg's First-Personal Phenomenological Approach

According to Grenberg's (2013, 1) recent *Kant's Defense of Common Moral Experience*, it is the "tragedy of Kant scholarship in the past 200 years" to have lost sight of Kant's "first

intention of his project – the defence of a common approach to ethics”. Grenberg believes that Kant’s method is a “reflection upon a common, felt, first-personal experience at the ground of human agency: the conflict between happiness and morality, and the temptation to resolve that conflict via self-deception” (ibid.9). The experience in question is the experience of unconditional obligation revealed through the feeling of respect for the moral law.

Grenberg calls “phenomenological experience”⁶ a feeling in which an agent experiences herself as a rational agent. Such a feeling can only be had introspectively. Yet, it is not idiosyncratic but “universally shared” (ibid.21), since it is caused by the rational nature all rational agents share. Both the philosophically uneducated agent and the philosopher need to pay attention to their own phenomenological experience in cases of conflict between morality and happiness, since this is the route to moral improvement as well as to a better academic understanding of morality. The philosopher has the same starting point as the common agent, but better tools to analyse her own mental life (ibid.219-36).

Grenberg (ibid.15) contrasts the first-person perspective of Kant’s practical philosophy with a third-person perspective, which for her means treating someone like an object of (natural) science and, when it comes to morality, with undue detachment. For her a third-person perspective is not apt for practical philosophy. Furthermore, she believes that the third-person perspective in ethics is closely linked to matters of praise and blame (see ibid.19), which, for her, are not what the ethicist should focus on.⁷ I think Grenberg here assumes an overly narrow understanding of the third-person perspective. What I admit to others and the judgements and reactions I publicly articulate are accessible to other agents who take up a third-person or observer perspective on me, but these admissions and

6 Grenberg (2013, 16-7) is aware that “phenomenological” is not a Kantian term and that her usage of the term departs from tradition. I consider this a merely verbal issue.

7 Grenberg’s assumption that our practices of praising and blaming do not touch upon the deepest layers of ethics is very contentious. See for instance Timmermann (2007, xii), who believes that Kant is concerned with “attitudes of praise and censure” or practices of holding each other and ourselves “responsible”.

judgements are not necessarily concerned with matters of praise and blame. They can be admissions about what I think I ought to do and that I think I can do it. In what follows, I will show that a third-person perspective plays an important role for Kant's ethics.⁸

Grenberg's phenomenological approach has two characteristic features that have recently each been defended by other Kantians as well: Firstly, respect for the moral law is of *epistemic* relevance for philosophers as well as for non-philosophers and, secondly, practical philosophy should be concerned with *first-personal experiences* of oneself. The former point is, for instance, shared by Dieter Schönecker (2014) who emphasizes the role of respect for cognizing the validity of morality. He, however, does not interpret Gallows, which I will discuss below, as addressed to the reader and as requiring a specific first-personal perspective (ibid.65). The latter point is endorsed by Bernd Ludwig (2014, 133) and Owen Ware (2014, 11) who also read Kant's method as relying on a first-personal standpoint, which Kant "wants us to take up [...] ourselves, so that we can illustrate our consciousness of the moral law from a practical, first-personal perspective" (Ware ibid.).

In what follows, I will argue against Grenberg's second point. I will show that, according to Kant, the material practical philosophers should work with can be accessed in other than first-personal ways.⁹

Before elaborating on this, let me point out one general problem I see with approaches which read Kant's ethics as relying on a form of introspection as Grenberg's approach does. Kant himself warns in the *Anthropology* that observation of one's own mind is the

⁸ I cannot discuss my proposal here in relation to Darwall's (2006) second-person standpoint. The most important difference between us is that Darwall takes his proposal to be a challenge to Kant's notion that a Fact of Reason can vindicate the distinctive normativity of moral obligations without a second-person element. I, by contrast, take my proposal to be sympathetic to Kant. Grenberg discusses Darwall's challenge in ch.8 of her book. I should also mention that I understand Grenberg's first-person emphasis as concerned with the first-person *singular*. Of course, for Grenberg there is a natural transition from the first-person singular to the first-person plural, since she assumes that we all share the same rational nature. Yet, the method to access rational nature in the first place and insofar as this is possible is an introspective one or one that can be done in complete isolation.

⁹ See Ware (2015) for criticism of Grenberg's first point.

most direct path to illuminism [Illuminatism] or even terrorism [Terrorism], by way of a confusion in the mind of supposed higher inspirations and powers flowing into us, without our help, who knows from where. For without noticing it, we make supposed discoveries of what we ourselves have carried into ourselves (7:133.18-23).

Introspection can result in idiosyncrasies (“what we ourselves have carried into ourselves”, see also 7:161.33-162.2, 219.6-220.3, 25:857.5-16). Kant calls an agent who sees no need to compare one’s own judgements with those of others a “*logical egoist*” (7:128.31). He indicates that logical egoism corresponds to eudaimonism in the practical sphere, since logical egoists do not think of themselves as one rational agent among others, but as the only rational agent (7:130.3-21).¹⁰ Given that introspection can “without noticing it” result in the discovery of mere idiosyncrasies, we have to wonder: How can a philosopher ever be certain that her own experiences are not idiosyncratic? Kant is fully aware that academic philosophers can shut their ears to the voice of reason in order to maintain their theories and mislead and confuse themselves and others with their “head-perplexing considerations of the schools” (5:35.16-17). I will discuss the problem of idiosyncrasies in sections 3 and 5.

2. Common Human Reason in Ethics

Already the passage Grenberg (2013, 18-9, 56, ch.7) cites as the paradigm for first-personal phenomenological experience, the Second *Critique’s* Gallows Case, makes it doubtful whether Kant really is committed to an exclusively first-personal approach.

¹⁰ Furthermore, that at least on the level of applying general moral (and other) principles to concrete cases other agents play an important role for Kant becomes obvious in his *maxim of enlarged thought*, which helps us abstract from “subjective private conditions” in our judgements. The maxim asks us to hold “one’s judgement up not so much to the actual as to the merely possible judgements of others, and putting oneself in the position of everyone else” (5:293.32-294.3). Since this maxim, however, is not explicitly discussed in a moral context, I will bracket it here (see also 7:200.31-37, 228.22-229.2).

Gallows:

But experience also confirms this order of concepts in us. Suppose someone asserts of his lustful inclination that, when the desired object and the opportunity are present, it is quite irresistible to him; ask him whether, if a gallows were erected in front of the house where he finds this opportunity and he would be hanged on it immediately after gratifying his lust, he would not then control his inclination. One need not conjecture very long what he would reply. But ask him whether, if his prince demanded, on pain of the same immediate execution, that he give false testimony against an honourable man whom the prince would like to destroy under a plausible pretext, he would consider it possible to overcome his love of life, however great it may be. He would perhaps not venture to assert whether he would do it or not, but he must admit without hesitation that it would be possible for him. He judges, therefore, that he can do something because he is aware that he ought to do it and cognizes freedom within him, which, without the moral law, would have remained unknown to him. (5:30.21-35)

Grenberg (2013, 19) argues that in scenarios such as Gallows, Kant “is asking us, imaginatively, to consider ourselves to be in such a situation”, to take the experience of the person in the example “as our own” (ibid.164), and to reflect about the experience of conflict between morality and inclinations. What we expect then is that Kant appeals to the possibility of immediate awareness in his *reader* when he claims that “experience also confirms” (5:30.21) that it is legitimate to start his Second *Critique* enterprise with moral cognition or awareness of the moral law, as opposed to with freedom as Kant did in *Groundwork* III.¹¹

When we look closely at the Gallows passage we see, however, that Kant does not ask his readers to put themselves in the shoes of the person in the Gallows Case, but rather Kant (first party) asks the reader (second party) to involve someone other, a neutral *third party* (“But ask *him*...” ibid.30.27, my emphasis) and to learn something from this third party’s

¹¹ According to Ware (2014), the reader of the Second *Critique* is a spectator and supposed to *imagine* that she presents the Gallows Case to someone, but not supposed to actually present it to others. Here all the work of the examples is still done introspectively.

verdict. Kant stresses that an agent when presented with Gallows must “admit” [einräumen] (ibid.30.33) that she can do something because she is aware that she ought to. In Gallows, Kant is interested in what a third party would admit to others upon experiencing the special force of the moral law.¹² Gallows shows that Kant thinks that insights into how morality affects an agent’s thinking and responses can be had from other agents and that in some situations, for instance as a response to being challenged by a disagreeing colleague, this can be useful for the philosopher.

There are a surprising number of passages in Kant’s foundational writings on ethics in which he issues methodological advice to the philosopher that indicates a significant function for other agents, in particular for the common, philosophically untrained agent. Kant’s preferred way for talking about the common agent and her pre-philosophical understanding of morality is “common (human) reason/understanding”. Something is common [“gemein”] if it is widely or universally shared and not conditioned on agents’ having outstanding cognitive capacities, scientific knowledge, philosophical insight, or a special, “artificial” education (9:17.17-19, 44.20-8, 57.15-20).¹³ In what follows, I will call an agent whose reasoning is guided by common human reason and who is not at all or hardly influenced by philosophical theory a “common agent”.

12 Grenberg (2013, 175), without providing an argument, assumes that “admit” is only to be understood as an admission to *oneself*. That this admission, however, is a response to a question by someone else (“But ask him”) makes it more natural to interpret it as an admission to that other person. The latter is also a more natural reading of the German “einräumen”, since this term requires a reflexive form (“sich selbst gegenüber einräumen”), if it is meant specifically as an admission to *oneself*.

13 There is no relevant distinction for our purpose between “common human reason” and “common human understanding”. In the *Anthropology*, Kant, however, distinguishes healthy or sound reason (“gesunde Menschenvernunft”) from common human reason (7:139.18-140.14, 160.11-21, 199.20-4). Sound reason/understanding, sometimes also called “common sense” (*Gemeinsinn*) or “*sensus communis*” (5:293.20-9), is the capacity to apply general rules to concrete cases or a form of the power of judgement (5:169.1-4). What I mean by common human reason is a more general set of capacities than mere judgement: a “ground-level manifestation of ordinary human capacities of thought [...] which allow us to obtain substantive truths that go beyond mere sensation” (Ameriks 2006, 115).

A striking example for Kant's appeals to how a third party, which is neither Kant nor his reader, would *react* to a clear presentation of duty is the *Groundwork's* Sulzer footnote. The popular philosopher Johann Georg Sulzer had challenged Kant to explain why practical philosophy has failed to morally improve agents. Kant replies that this is so because practical philosophy so far has been impure. He suggests that the "most common observation" shows that

when one represents an action of righteousness – as it was performed with a steadfast soul, without aiming at any advantage [...] it elevates the soul and stirs up the wish to be able to act like that too. Even children of intermediate age feel this impression (4:411fn).

The most natural reading of this passage is that Kant here takes himself to make an empirical prediction that, if true, lends credence to his claim that an ethics based on a pure moral principle and an educational approach informed by such an ethics, as opposed to popular mixed doctrines grounded in empirical sources, cannot fail to morally improve agents. Presenting a fictional and stipulated example of action for the sake of nothing but duty, Kant predicts, will affect rational agents, even children; and we can observe that agents react to a pure presentation of duty in a way only creatures who recognize the authority of the moral law would.¹⁴ Kant here once more does not address his *readers* directly (he does not appeal to *their* feeling of respect or obligation), but appeals to a third, neutral, party, namely, to the observable reactions of a child. Kant believes that it establishes the superiority of his ethics over popular philosophical theory that he can show that the supreme principle of his

14 In the Second *Critique*, Kant even suggests that the notion of respect for the moral law is of great descriptive value "from a psychological point of view [...] for knowledge of human beings" (5:81.33-7). Kant believes that observable actions might leave "traces [Spuren] suggesting that they were done wholly from respect for duty" (ibid.85.21-2). These traces are the lack of any plausible explanation of an action as motivated by self-interest (ibid.22-3), as well as the fact that an action requires sacrifice (ibid.19). Furthermore, in the solution to the First *Critiques'* Third Antinomy, Kant claims that the empirical character can be a "sensible sign" of the intelligible character (KRV A/B: 546/574).

theory *de facto* affects rational agents. We can observe the results of this affection either in the way agents publicly express their admiration (for instance by praising agents whom they believe acted from duty), or when they admit their attitudes to us.

This point reoccurs in the Second *Critique's Doctrine of Method*. Here, Kant describes the scenario he presented in Gallows in greater detail and elaborates on its pedagogical function (5:155.12-156.27). Kant intends to address the challenge: “But if one asks: What, then, really is *pure* morality, by which as a touchstone one must test the moral content of every action?” (ibid.). According to Kant, “only philosophers can make the decision of this question doubtful” (ibid.). He recommends that when faced with a colleague who professes not to understand the idea that morality must be pure, the critical philosopher again involves a third party, a boy who is too young to have been subjected to much corrupting external influence and who presumably has not yet entangled himself in rationalizations but who is already rational. Such a child is a paradigm of a common agent. It would be unintelligible why Kant would here appeal specifically to a *boy*, that is someone who is certainly not a reader of the Second *Critique*, if he wants his *reader* to imagine himself in the position of the boy.

Kant thinks that if the critical philosopher can show that the boy can be brought to acknowledge the value of pure morality, then this can function as a warrant for Kant's theory. A criterion for morality (a “touchstone”) is already present and deeply rooted in how agents even without philosophical education reason about morality. Academic philosophers can overlook this and construct a system that leads away from this criterion (see also 5:35.16-17). Importantly for our purpose, the criterion is exhibited in how the boy judges (see 5:155), as well as in his reactions or attitudes such as “approval and applause” (ibid.) and “admiration” (5:156). This is primarily meant to be advice for educators: only present pure incentives or you corrupt your disciple's disposition. However, it also makes the same methodological

point as the Sulzer footnote: Kant's ethics can be defended against academic doubt when we show that a pure incentive puts an uncorrupted agent in a state of mind that nothing else will and elicits reactions from agents that self-love never could. I will come back to the difficult relation between education and philosophical method at the end of my paper.

Even in passages that are not concerned with education Kant appeals to how other agents reason about morality. In the *Groundwork*, Kant declares that common human reason in its practical judging "fully agrees" that if duty is more than a "chimerical concept" (4:402.9-15) the will requires a special principle. This principle is: "never to proceed except in such a way *that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law*".¹⁵ Kant maintains that this is a principle a common agent "always [...] has before [his] eyes" (4:402.15) when thinking about morality. The possibility of judging impartially about moral matters "proves that we actually acknowledge the validity of the categorical imperative" (4:424.34-5).

A certain way of reasoning about moral matters that every rational agent can engage in proves that the supreme principle of morality is already part of our reasoning, though philosophically uneducated agents are unaware of a philosophical formula of this principle.¹⁶ Reasoning is, to a certain degree, intersubjectively accessible. I can engage other agents in dialogue, they can articulate their assessment of moral cases to me, and I can learn what considerations led them to judge the way they did. The observation that an agent employs a notion of universality, for instance, that she wonders publicly about whether she is consistent in her assessment of herself and others, or worries whether she made an exception for herself, etc., shows that the core idea of the Universal Law Formula of the Categorical Imperative already functions as a *principium diiudicationis* for her.

¹⁵ 4:402.7-9. See also 4:403.5-8, 421.24-423.35, 5:44.2-22, 69.20-70.9, 29:628.32-4 for the principle Kant claims to have found in ordinary reasoning.

¹⁶ I argue this in detail in Sticker (2015 b).

Kant believes that observing agents' reasoning and judging about morality can show that they base their judgements on criteria that are independent of their self-interest. This, alongside agents' reactions to a pure presentation of morality, reveals that rational agents acknowledge a kind of normativity not determined by or rooted in self-love. Acknowledging this normativity is what Kant, in the Second *Critique*, refers to as the *Fact of Reason*. Whilst the Fact is a topic of its own and I cannot discuss it here in any detail, it is important for our purpose to point out that Kant claims that the Fact of Reason is:

undeniable [1]. One need only **analyse the judgement that people pass on the lawfulness of their actions** [2] in order to find that, whatever inclinations may say to the contrary, **their reason** [3], incorruptible and self-constrained, always holds the maxim of the will in an action up to the pure will (5:32.2-7).

Kant assumes that it is analysing *people's* judgments [2] ("*their* reason" [3, my emphasis]), not one's own, that makes the Fact undeniable [1]. Admittedly, "people" [Menschen] [2] to which the "their" refers can include the agent who seeks reassurance. Still, it is significant that Kant here does not say that the Fact of Reason becomes undeniable upon experience or taking up a first-personal perspective on oneself. I am of course acquainted with the Fact in the first place via experiencing the necessitation of duty myself, but the Fact becomes only *undeniable* when analysing *judgements of people* [Menschen, plural] [2], that is judgments presumably of oneself and others. The investigation of others' judgments about (stipulated) moral cases warrants the belief that there is a special kind of normativity at work in agents' reasoning (see also 5:104.31-6).

These passages show that Kant knows other than first-personal ways to access the material ethicists should work with. However, I do not mean to deny that the first-person is important for Kant's method. Let us quickly look at two short Second *Critique* passages to

understand this. Firstly, Kant discusses a person who “likes to vex and disturb peace-loving people”. If this person “finally gets a sound thrashing for one of his provocations” then “everyone would approve of it” and “even the one who received it must in his reason recognize that justice was done to him” (5:61.9-17). Here Kant appeals to both: How bystanders would react as well as to the perspective of the person who is immediately affected or what she would discover within herself upon reflection. Secondly, something similar holds for Kant’s discussion of the humble common man (5:76.36-77.9). Kant here describes my reaction (“*my spirit bows*”) if I have reason to suspect that the humble common man is an example of good moral conduct. Kant even says that in this case “I see observance of that law and hence its practicability proved before me in fact”. Of course, the practicability of the moral law cannot be proven conclusively in this way, since I can never be certain that the common humble man *really* acted from duty. Yet, the point here is that certain observations of others can lead me to learn something, which confers credence on Kant’s central notion that pure practical reason can be practical on its own. Without the possibility of actually encountering said humble man (as opposed to merely imagining him) Kant’s point would be moot as there was no independent way to verify or falsify Kant’s optimistic claim. It would be a bare assertion. Why should an opponent take Kant’s word for it?

3. What is the point of other agents?

There is textual evidence that other agents play a methodological role for Kant’s ethics, but what is this role? After all, Kant does not attempt to systematize our considered moral judgments into a reflective equilibrium in a Rawlsian fashion (see for instance Rawls 1971, sec.9). Instead, he begins with concepts he thinks rational agents at least implicitly already share, such as good will and duty, and proceeds through an analytic method to the principle that those ideas presuppose. Furthermore, I do not deny that agents have first-personal

awareness of the moral law. Why not stop with this? I suspect that this question, as well as the problem I will address in the next section, is the reason why some of the passages I discussed in section 2 are largely ignored in their methodological significance.

It is certainly true that Kant does not think that we need other agents in order to know what our duty is in concrete cases. According to Kant, the voice of reason speaks clearly to us (5:35.14-5, 80.1-2, 8:402.21-2, 405.7-35). When we are reasonably successful at scrutinizing ourselves and heeding the verdicts of conscience, we have all we need to recognize the requirements of morality in particular cases. In addition, if agents would need to learn from others what their duties were in specific situations, they would be dependent on others for cognizing what they ought to do and this would make them ultimately heteronomous.

Nonetheless there are three central functions for engaging others when theorizing about ethics. Firstly, engaging others is important for addressing challenges from colleagues, secondly, it can address doubts the Kantian philosopher herself might have, thirdly, it facilitates moral education.

(i) We saw that many of the passages in which Kant stresses the role of other agents or of a third party are not concerned with the question of what the right thing to do is. Awareness of this is for instance simply presupposed in Gallows. Many passages presented in section 2 are concerned with the question of how a Kantian philosopher should answer *criticism*, for instance, from popular philosophers (Kant's chief target in *Groundwork* II, 4:408.28-412.18, 426.18-9) and educators of the people who doubt that Kant's conception can serve to better mankind (the target of the *Sulzer* footnote and of the *Second Critique's Doctrine of Method*), as well as from empiricists who deny that pure practical reason can be practical on its own (the chief target of the Fact of Reason in the *Second Critique*).

The criticism that even sympathetic Kant interpreters level against his notion of a Fact of Reason¹⁷, shows that Kantian philosophy would gain considerable support if it can offer more than a claim to universal first-personal certainty of the Fact. It is therefore significant that Kant suggests that his assumption of a Fact of Reason can and should be supported by an analysis of “the most common practical use of reason” (5:91.18-29) and of “the judgement of this common reason before science would take it in hand in order to make use of it” (ibid.). The most common practical use of reason is certainly not the one of the sophisticated Kantian philosopher or of Kant’s educated readership.

Whilst Kant at the time of writing the Second *Critique* was, of course, unaware of our current critical assessment of the Fact of Reason, he must have been aware that his assumption is controversial for many of his *academic colleagues*. After all, there are rival principles that Kant’s academic colleagues claimed to find in introspection and hold with great certainty, such as the eudaimonist principle: “*From happiness in the most general sense arises the motives for every effort and so too for observance of the moral law*”.¹⁸ This principle is the foundation of the popular philosopher *Christian Garve’s* eudaimonism, and Garve denies that he can find within himself or in his “heart” a notion of duty independent of happiness (8:284.9-285.22).

It is unlikely that Kant, who sharply criticises the potential of academic philosophers to confuse themselves and others about morality (5:35.14-5, 155), thinks that his colleagues, such as Garve, will simply accept his notion of a Fact of Reason. A Kantian philosopher should at least have something to say to those who claim not to find the Fact within themselves. One strategy is to show via philosophical analysis of judgements that Kant’s

17 Guyer (2007, 462), for instance, claims that the Fact of Reason is a “footstamping”, and Wood (2008, 135) calls it a “moralistic bluster”.

18 Garve, Christian: *Versuche über verschiedene Gegenstände aus der Moral und Literatur*, quoted from 8:281.33-5.

starting point is shared amongst those who did not come into contact with potentially corrupting ethical theory, or that it is the default position of rational agents.¹⁹

(ii) Even without criticism by an unsympathetic colleague, a Kantian philosopher might worry that her personal experience of moral necessitation is insufficient to establish the possibility of a pure practical philosophy, for instance, because other agents might simply not share this experience. The observation of agents' reactions to moral scenarios can show that other human agents *de facto* acknowledge that morality enjoys a special normative status, and it gives the ethicist reason to believe that actions from duty are possible for agents. After all, agents would not show the same admiration upon hearing of an action of outstanding *prudence* (see 5:35.19-36.8). It is only the notion of a law that is presented as independent of all self-interest that inspires awe and lets agents admit that they can act on this law. This helps Kant to answer the worry: Is his ethics devised for creatures like us or does Kant present a theory that presupposes esteem for duty that we, frail human beings, in fact lack?²⁰ The answer to the question of whether Kant's ethics is an ethics for creatures like us can hardly be given a priori, since this question concerns contingent features of human psychology, namely, how much esteem we in fact have for agents who do their duty in the face of adversity.

(iii) The first two points focus on the role of engaging others for *philosophical theorizing* whereas (iii) focuses on *education and self-cultivation* in the face of a tendency to rationalize oneself out of moral obligations. Engaging other agents in order to obtain a better understanding of morality might not be necessary for uncorrupted non-philosophers²¹, since they can become aware of the Fact first-personally. Whilst Kant's explicit discussion of a

19 I develop an interpretation of the Fact of Reason along those lines in Sticker (forthcoming a).

20 In the *Religion* Kant speculates that there could be beings very much like us (rational and finite) but not under the moral law (6:26.26-37).

21 I should note that "corruption" as I understand it based on 4:404.37-405.19 is not the same as radical evil. Corruption is the result of rationalizing against the strict laws of duty, and it comes in degrees. Kant is optimistic that those who are not helped in their rationalizing by bad academic theory or misleading religious teachings are relatively uncorrupted in their understanding of morality. These agents might of course still lack the motivation to do what they are aware of as obligatory.

Fact of Reason is directed against his academic colleagues, we saw that Kant's appeals to other agents are also often linked to moral education. In fact, we saw that Kant often does not properly distinguish between philosophical method and education. He takes the capability of his theory to morally improve agents as evidence for its correctness.

Observation of and dialogue with other agents can help those who deceive themselves about morality. At the end of *Groundwork* I, Kant calls this form of self-deception "rationalizing" [vernünfteln]. Rationalizing means representing the moral law as more lenient and less stringent than it is and to falsely hold oneself blameless or excused before one's conscience (see 4:404.37-405.19).²² Whilst awareness of the moral law can never be entirely lost, agents might be confused by awareness of other supposedly moral factors, such as that their personal happiness morally has to count for something. For those who have rationalized so much that they can hardly hear the voice of reason and need to be reminded of the basics of morality as they are to be found in the minds of (relatively) uncorrupted common agents, observation of and engagement with less corrupted agents can be of great pedagogical value, and can help them to reconnect with what they understand about morality insofar as they are rational.²³

22 Rationalizing or self-deception in Kant is a topic in its own right, which I cannot discuss here. See instead Piper (2008), Grenberg (2010), Sticker (forthcoming b). Grenberg (2013, 90) argues that the reason why the common agent, according to the *Groundwork*, needs help "from outside" and must "exit the common point of view" is that an agent who is constantly threatened with self-deception is unable to properly distinguish between hypothetical and categorical commands. A major source of disagreement between me and Grenberg is that I believe that the post-*Groundwork* Kant is as concerned with and aware of the possibility and dangers of self-deception as the *Groundwork* Kant. Kant therefore hesitates throughout his critical practical philosophy to appeal to an agent's moral experience without philosophical scrutiny of this experience. Grenberg (2013, 289-90) even concedes this point in her conclusion: Kant's introduction of radical evil in the *Religion* shows that self-deception becomes an even more pressing problem in his later works. Yet, she does not discuss how this impacts her overall conception and continues to assume that it is only the *Groundwork* in which the possibility of self-deception bars us from genuine moral experience. Furthermore, in a reply to criticism by Ware, Grenberg (2015, 314) also appeals to the "deep-seated human tendency towards self-deception" to show that for apprehending the Fact of Reason properly we need to be attentive to our moral experiences. It is not clear in what sense this is still different from the *Groundwork* conception in which access to our moral experiences is always threatened by self-deception.

23 See also Reath (2006, 183-4) who argues that "the responses of others provide a partial measure of whether an agent has successfully exercised" his autonomy and might give the agent "a reason to reconsider the grounds of his claim and to continue his deliberation".

Whilst this can afford help to philosophers and non-philosophers alike, interaction with common rational agents can be of special importance to philosophers, since it can function as a check and balance for their theorizing. Philosophers, due to their sophistication, which can be in the services of rationalizing as well as of unbiased enquiry, can confuse themselves, their colleagues and the public and damage their own and others' understanding of morality. Interacting with agents who lack theoretical sophistication, and learning about their conception of morality can help philosophers identify whether and in what way they strayed from the conception of morality they are committed to qua rational agents.

Kant would refer those who doubt that common agents really do accord pivotal status to morality and that they really reason about morality based on rational standards to the way common agents ordinarily react to moral scenarios and reason about morality. Observation of common agents, Kant believes, can reveal that Kant's starting point is shared amongst all rational agents or the position of rational agents qua rational agents (without any additional instruction). This is supposed to address challenges by other philosophers, as well as doubts Kantian philosopher have themselves and it provides ways to tackle rationalizing.

4. Is this still a *Pure Practical Philosophy*?

I take it there is still a major concern against making observation of and engagement with others part of a philosophical investigation: Does this method jeopardize the status of Kant's ethics as a *pure* enterprise?²⁴ After all, Kant explicitly claims the moral law's capacity to

24 Grenberg (2013, 151) pushes an objection along those lines against Proops' (2003, 226) suggestion that there might be empirical confirmation for the Fact of Reason. She argues that nothing empirical can confirm the universality and strict necessity of morality. See also Saunders (2016, sec.3) who discusses the related issue that Kant's transcendental idealism does not allow for the type of phenomenological experience that Grenberg herself needs.

affect the human being and to guide her reasoning “rests wholly on the purity of the moral principle” (5:156.22-3, see also 4:406.5-8).

Purity, as Kant programmatically claims in the *Groundwork’s* introduction, requires that a moral philosophy is “completely cleansed of everything that might be in some way empirical and belongs to anthropology” (4:389.6-9). This is a methodological claim. Purity as Kant demands it here for establishing the principle of morality informs the philosopher about how she should conduct her business (she must cleanse her theory), and what she should not do (assume that anthropological data can settle fundamental ethical questions).²⁵ It seems that a practical philosophy that appeals to how other agents judge and react is not cleansed of everything empirical.²⁶ In order to evaluate whether this is true, we must understand what purity as a methodological prescription means for Kant.

Methodological purity requires two things. Firstly, a pure method, according to Kant, is one which does not make human nature, psychological states (desires, inclinations, etc.), customs, that is anything empirical, the “seat and origin” (4:411.8-10) of moral concepts. This seat or origin, or the *source* of morality, is reason. Practical philosophy has to be a pure enterprise in so far as it is concerned with the “ground of obligation” (4:389.12), and with grounding morality’s essential properties, that is those properties that distinguish moral commands from hypothetical imperatives (see also 4:425.32-426.21, 6:215.19-22).

Secondly, purity does not *per se* require abstraction from what philosophers observe or learn during the course of their lives. Purity demands of the philosopher to “*present* [a doctrine] solely from a priori principles” (4:388.4-8, my emphasis). It is not intended as a requirement concerning where philosophers should get their insights from in the first place.

25 Kant of course does acknowledge that anthropology plays a crucial role in the *application* of moral principles. See 4:412.4-5, 5:8.15-24, 6:216.28-217.27, 29:599.11-15.

26 We should not overstate this problem, though. As soon as we speak about *duty* we have already introduced impure components, namely, that which works against the moral law and makes morality a duty.

Purity is concerned with the question of what philosophers should *present* (to their colleagues, to public educators and to common agents) as the criterion for determining duty and as the foundation of morality. Philosophers are to conduct their business in such a way that they will not be “peddling the empirical mixed with the rational” (ibid.26-7). This leaves open that philosophers take into account input from a broad range of sources as long as the product of their philosophizing is one that does not present duty as contingent and other incentives than respect for the moral law as moral incentives. In this sense purity is a matter of content and presentation rather than method.

Assuming an impure source of morality, Kant alleges, would undermine and weaken the “genuine influence” of moral concepts, and call the “worth of actions” of an agent who acts on this principle into question (4:412.12-6), since it might lead agents to condition their commitment to morality on external sources that promise reward or threaten punishment. It is therefore a matter of great importance to present the principles and commands of morality as deriving from reason alone (see also ibid.411.16-9, 6:376.1-2). Kant believes that only those empirical elements of a practical philosophy diminish the motivational capacities of morality that lead agents to assume that the *source* of morality is something other than reason, or that reason needs empirical aids to *motivate*.²⁷ We have seen in the previous section that certain observations can answer doubts about morality. Answering these doubts presumably increases rather than decreases the motivational force of duty.

Kant’s notion of purity, as we saw, requires that moral philosophy is “completely cleansed [gesäubert] of everything that might be in some way empirical and belongs to anthropology” (4:389.6-9). It is important to pay attention to details here: A *cleansed* [gesäubert] conception

²⁷ See also 6:405.34-406.8 where Kant refuses to give anthropology, the paradigmatically impure science, a role for ethics due to concerns for the purity of the *motivational force* of morality.

is not one that has been *clean* [sauber] from the beginning, but one that is clean as result of a *cleansing*.²⁸ Observations as such prove nothing, since they might be observations of what is merely arbitrary or idiosyncratic. Kant believes, however, that philosophically trained observers can isolate rational structures in publicly articulated judgements and reactions.

The way to access rational structures in other agents' reasoning is empirical, namely, observation of spatio-temporal events such as speech or visible reactions. The observed *reasoning* itself, however, is an exercise of reason, and what is revealed is not contingent empirical facts, but – as Kant says explicitly in his *First Introduction* to the *Third Critique* – rational structures “indeed contained *a priori* in our moral judgements” (20:229.34-5).²⁹ Observation of how others reason about morality can let us access *a priori* structures, and it does not infest Kantian philosophy with impurity on a level of content, since the way to access the content but not the content itself is empirical. This distinction between the way to access rational structures and these structures themselves is already found in the *Second Critique* when Kant argues “that we know something by reason, when we are conscious that we could have known it, even if it had not been given to us in experience” (5:12.10-4). Rational cognition can first come to us in the form of an observation and we realize upon analysis of our observation that some of the observation's content can be defended by rational means alone. The validity of this content is not contingent on being observed.

The idea that practical philosophy has to begin from rational elements encountered in observation is also already implicit in the heading of *Groundwork I*, which announces a transition from *common rational* cognition of morality to philosophical cognition (4:393.1-4). Kant here indicates that he intends to develop a middle position between an elitism that holds

28 The “ge” in “gesäubert” indicates that the cleanliness is the result of an activity of cleansing. Kant makes repeatedly use of the notion of a cleansing operation (see 4:388.36, 389.5-23).

29 See also Timmermann (2005, 257.fn.34): Moral judgements “if examined from the proper perspective of moral philosophy, are not purely empirical. The basis is *a priori*”. Kant explicitly discusses *a priori* structures in practical judgements in his treatment of the most abstract structures of practical judgements: the *categories of freedom* (5:65.27-69.19, 103.21-105.22).

that only the views of experts matter for philosophy, not *common* cognition, and those who want to base philosophy in what is merely popular but not necessarily *rational*.³⁰ Kant believes that there is genuine rational content or material for philosophy even in the reasoning of philosophically untutored common agents, but not everything these agents utter is rational or reveals underlying rational structures. Therefore, it is the task of ethicists to isolate the rational content to be found in common cognition.

Before I elaborate on this task, let me quickly address a final potential problem for my reading: Kant believes that the world of appearances (the only world we can experience or observe) is entirely determined by natural causality. The only principles a causally closed world could reveal to observation are causal laws.³¹ It should be kept in mind, however, that a causally closed world is as dangerous to the possibility of moral action as to observing rational structures in moral judgements or reasoning. I take it that the apparent tension between causality and observing rational structures in reasoning and judgements is resolved by the resolution of the Third Antinomy and by the fact that Kant's entire practical philosophy is performed from the practical perspective (see for instance 4:455.28-458.36, 5:67.25-70.9), just as the apparent tension between causality and free moral actions is. If we engage in practical philosophy we have to assume that we are free and that our rational deliberation can become effective. Practical philosophy has different starting assumptions from theoretical philosophy and it is the main result of the Third Antinomy's resolution that the practical starting point is legitimate even from the theoretical perspective (5:48.17-57.17).

30 Kant is concerned that for many of his colleagues popularity functions as a means of justifying philosophical claims (4:388.19-31, 409.15-9).

31 This is essentially the point in Saunders' (2016, sec.3) paper I referenced in footnote 24 as a potential problem for Grenberg.

Ethicists therefore do not need to worry about a world that supposedly leaves no room for reasoning, judging and acting according to rational standards.³²

5. How to Observe Reason at Work

My reconstruction of Kant's proposed method puts considerable stress on a cleansing procedure, which the philosopher has to perform when engaging common agents. We must now discuss how Kant envisages this procedure.

The most immediate difficulty to overcome for observing reason at work is certainly an agent's propensity to rationalize (see sec.3). Whilst rationalizing aims to reassure *oneself* of the morality of one's actions, when we articulate our rationalizations to others the "dishonesty, by which we throw dust in our own eyes" can become "falsity or deception of others" (6:38.23-6). How can a philosopher ever be certain that she has uncovered common rational cognition of morality as opposed to common *rationalized* cognition? We can find four recommendations in Kant's works on practical philosophy for how to isolate rational content for the purpose of ethics.

(i) *Observation of reasoning and judgements*: Rational but philosophically uneducated agents might not have explicit beliefs about abstract subject matters. However, Kant believes that they *judge* and *reason* about concrete cases in ways that commit them to the abstract principles of Kantian philosophy.³³ That Kant is interested in reasoning and judging is

32 In the Second Critique, Kant even speaks of "observation of *free* actions of strangers" (5:159.20, my emphasis). He goes beyond the First Critique here, since his First Critique conception only gives the *possibility* of these actions. I am grateful to Joe Saunders for discussion of my interpretation and causal determinism.

33 The "moral *judgement* of every human being" (KRV A/B: 807/835) reveals the existence of pure moral laws. The principle of morality is found in the "use" of common cognition (4:392.20-1). Common human reason "in its practical *judging*" (ibid.402.14) is in perfect agreement with the content of the Universal Law Formulation. The concept of duty is "drawn [...] from the common *use* of our practical reason" (ibid.406.5-6). The

important, since Kant, as is well known, repeatedly stresses that it is difficult to fathom the depths of our own hearts or to know whether our own actions are done for the right motives.³⁴ Knowing this of other agents is presumably at least as difficult. Observation of behavior can tell us very little about motives or about whether a judgment is sincerely held: “[N]o example of exact observance [of the moral law] can be found in experience” (5:47.14-5, see also *ibid.*104.36-7, 4:419.36-420.3).

However, in their engagement with other rational agents for the purpose of practical philosophy, Kantian philosophers are not focused on others’ motives or *de facto* actions, but on their judgements. As Gallows reveals a moral *judgement* as such, in contrast to actions, is not prone to the most immediate influences of self-love. It abstracts from the question of whether agents will actually do what they judge to be obligatory, and from which motives they would do it. Kantian philosophers here do not need to worry about opacity of motives. The focus on judgements and reasoning, however, does not rule out *rationalizing or self-deception*, since in the case of self-deception the mistake is on the level of reasoning or judging, not on the level of translating judgements into actions. Furthermore, focus on judgment does not rule out cases in which agents judge one way but publicly express something else.

(ii) *Hypothetical Scenarios*: A promising way to exclude the influence of self-love from judgements is to let an agent evaluate *hypothetical* scenarios.³⁵ In hypothetical cases there is nothing immediately to gain or lose for the agent, and hence the agent is more likely to

correctness of Kant’s deduction in *Groundwork* III is confirmed by the “practical *use* of common human reason” (*ibid.*454.20). The Fact of Reason is undeniable once “the *judgement* that people pass on the lawfulness of their actions” (5:32.2-3) is analyzed. That pure reason can be practical on its own has to be shown “from the most common practical *use* of reason” (*ibid.*91.20, see also *ibid.*91.21-92.17). Philosophy can analyze the “examples of reason *judging* morally” (*ibid.*163.15-6). The concept of duty is clearest and natural to everyone in the “*judgement* of even the most common human reason” (8:289.9-13). All emphasises are mine.

34 See KRV A/B: 278/334, 551/579, 6:25.5-6, 38.7-12, 51.7-21, 70.1-71.20, 70.fn, 75.8-76.1, 451.21-36.

35 Examples are the Gallows Case and the Deposit Cases (5:27.21-28.3, 8:286.17-287.21).

appraise these scenarios based on rational criteria alone as opposed to prospect of gain and loss. Since Kant for his foundational enterprise is not interested in what an agent would in fact *do* in these situations, but only how she would *judge*, it does not matter that in a real life Gallows Case the agent might be more tempted than she imagines herself to be when presented with the scenario by a philosopher.

There is, however, still an epistemic obstacle to overcome even when observing the evaluation of hypothetical scenarios. In the preface to the *Anthropology*, Kant states that human beings who know that they are being observed will “appear embarrassed” (7:120.27-121.17) since knowing that one is being observed puts one in a “state of constraint and inner agitation, indeed even indignation” because one feels “exposed to another’s censure” (ibid.295.28-32). Whilst we do not stand to gain or lose *immediately* in hypothetical cases, agents have a pervasive interest in retaining their self-esteem, and they are aware that this requires presenting themselves to others in certain ways. They might give the answers they expect their interlocutor wants to hear, in order to avoid embarrassment before others as well as before themselves.

(iii) *Setting up cases*: In two passages in the Second *Critique*, Kant makes suggestions for how to properly present hypothetical scenarios to others and how to analyse judgements about them. In both passages the methodological recommendations come as a suggestion to adopt a method akin to *chemistry*. This suggestion is “at once odd and intriguing” (see Ware 2014, 11), and stands in need of explanation. The first passage is located in the *Critical Elucidation of the Analytic of Pure Practical Reason*, which provides an “investigation and justification” (5:89.12-3) of why the preceding *Analytic of Pure Practical Reason* has the form it has. The second passage is located in the very last paragraph of the Second *Critique*. This paragraph offers an overall summary of the Second *Critique*’s project. Both locations

suggest that the passages are concerned with philosophical method. The significance of the two passages for Kant's practical philosophy is frequently overlooked in the Kant literature³⁶, presumably since it is *prima facie* difficult to understand why Kant thinks that the ethicist can learn anything for her enterprise from the chemist.

Chemistry for the Kant of the 1780s is an "experimental doctrine" [Experimentallehre] (4:471.5-6, see also *ibid.*468.29) not a proper a priori science. Chemistry lacks an a priori part, its first principles lack necessity and they are based on experience (4:468.17-29). Experiments are the only means to warrant chemical principles.³⁷ In a chemical experiment, the chemist analyses or decomposes a substance into its elements and recombines the elements with other elements to gain an understanding of the substance's affinities.

According to the first chemistry passage, a philosopher can "like a chemist at any time set up an experiment with every human being's practical reason" (5:92.27-30). The scientist plays an active role in creating a specific setting, just as the ethicist should be active when engaging common agents.³⁸ Philosophers are supposed to create specific scenarios ("set it up"), and confront agents with these scenarios. Experiments are artificial and controlled situations explicitly created to isolate the structure under investigation from interfering factors. The ethicist has to "guide" agents to investigate certain questions or ideas (5:443.17), and must devise specific scenarios in the light of what it is that she is looking for. In Gallows, for instance, the situation is carefully constructed in such a way that morality unambiguously

36 To my knowledge only Rohden (2012) has a paper-length treatment of the first of these two passages. See now, however, also Sticker (forthcoming c) for a paper length discussion of Kant's conception of chemistry and how it relates to his moral-psychology and methodology.

37 In his *Opus Postumum* Kant changes his mind about the status of chemistry and admits that it is part of physics (21:288.5-6, 316.20-22), and hence has an a priori foundation. See Friedman (1992, ch.5.3), Carrier (2001, sec.7) for the reasons for Kant's change of mind.

38 According to Carrier (2001, 216), the "salient aspect of scientific method" for Kant is "the requirement to pose questions to nature actively [...] rather than passively following nature's lead". That Kant suggests a *scientific* method as a paradigm for ethical enquiry shows that he does not share Grenberg's worry that a third-person approach is too scientific for ethics. Kant rather seeks to enrich the methods of ethical enquiry by looking at the quasi science of chemistry.

requires one option, whereas prudence unambiguously favours another.³⁹ The response to these scenarios is supposed to confirm the philosopher's assumption that an agent will acknowledge her commitment to duty even when duty does not have prudence on its side. This shows that morality does not lose its normative grasp on agents when it is stripped of all promises of reward.

(iv) *Repetition and analysis*: In the second chemistry passage, Kant claims that once the philosopher has "at hand examples of reason judging morally" she has to "analyse them into their elementary concepts" via "a procedure similar to *chemistry* – the *decomposition*, by repeated experiments on common human understanding, of the empirical from the rational" (5:163.15-20). The two important notions here are "analyse" and "repeated". Kant is fully aware that often more than a simple question and more than a single fictional scenario are required to get philosophically relevant and viable responses from an agent. In order to bring out her rational commitments an agent is to be engaged in a dialogue, *repeatedly* asked, and to be presented with different scenarios and examples of outstanding moral conduct. In addition, the results of the repeated questions are to be *analysed* or decomposed into their components by the philosopher. Analysis of judgements helps philosophers to better detect and understand what is being revealed in the reactions and judgements she observes, and hence how she has to set up scenarios and frame her questions for further enquiry. Setting up cases, analysing responses, setting up new cases, analysing responses again and repeating experiments are means of enquiry that inform each other and serve to isolate the rational content of ordinary reasoning.

39 Kant emphasizes that: "We will prove [beweisen], then, by *observations anyone can make*" that "receptivity to a pure moral interest and hence the moving force of the pure representation of virtue, *when it is duly brought to bear on the human heart*, is the most powerful incentive to the good" (5:152.32-153.1, my emphasis). Duty has to be "duly brought to bear on the human heart" in order to elicit the right reaction.

In particular the last of the four methodological points leaves many questions open concerning how to correctly analyse judgements. Furthermore, it is a difficult question, and one that we may never know the answer to, whether Kant in fact did apply these suggestions to his *own* engagement with other agents. He might intend them to be rather advice for other philosophers who doubt that Kant's philosophy really has the common perspective on its side. Kant's response to these doubts is: If you ask the right questions and discard accidental and idiosyncratic elements in the answers, you will discover that my philosophy is supported by central elements of the common perspective. Practical philosophers can and should reassure themselves and others that they began their enterprise from what is rational as well as common by showing that they can bring agents without philosophical training to acknowledge that the philosopher's reflected conception of morality draws on what they were committed to all along.

Conclusion

The most important yield of my paper is to have shown that Kant's conception of a pure practical philosophy is not averse to learning from others about morality and that, in fact, it recommends this. This can function as an inspiration and exegetical licence for Kantians to be open to the plethora of material the world around them has to offer regarding ethical issues. It should also be a warning: Practical philosophers, whilst they should seek input from other agents, must be aware that this input requires reflection and critical scrutiny before it can be put to use for a philosophical enquiry. It requires philosophical skill to isolate the rational from the contingent and the rationalized, and to systematize only the former.

My reconstruction of Kant's method for confirming some of the core claims of Kant's ethics also reveals a tension in Kant's method that requires further discussion: Kant, as we saw, thinks that education and doing philosophy can go together and that the fact that a philosopher improves common agents reveals that the philosopher is on the right track. Kant sometimes leaves it unclear, however, whether he describes means to *teach* or ways to *obtain material* for philosophical theorizing. In the case of delivering material the philosopher should be led by or at the very least be responsive to the common agent in a sense that an educator does not need to be. In education the aim is not to discover how other agents reason, but to influence this reasoning or to strengthen agents' commitments.

We can put the problem like this: when theorizing, on the one hand, the philosopher must isolate the *rational* content of ordinary cognition, and, on the other hand, she must be open to what agents *actually* have to say (which is not always rational). Imagine the common agent being unable to find her convictions in Kantian moral theory. No matter how much Kant (or a Kantian) explains and how many examples he presents, the common agent does not judge or react in the way Kant expects. Would Kant think that persistent disagreement between him and the common agent must be the fault of the common agent and due to hidden rationalizing, or does Kant take the common agent so seriously that he would be willing to have himself corrected by continued failure to obtain the confirmation of the common agent? Can the common agent not only exhibit more rationality than Kant's head-perplexing academic colleagues but also potentially more than *Kant* (or a Kantian) himself?⁴⁰

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