

Affective Normativity

EARLY DRAFT

For the final version, see *EMOTION AND VALUE*, ed. Alix Cohen

Kant famously claims that emotions, as such, cannot be morally required: “Love as an inclination cannot be commanded” (G 4:399), and at times, his attitude seems even more negative:

[I]nclinations ... are so far from having an absolute worth ... that it must instead be the wish of every rational being to be altogether free of them. (G 4:428)

[They] ... are always *burdensome* to a rational being, and though he cannot lay them aside, they wrest from him the wish to be rid of them. (KpV 5:118)

“Affects” constitute a “lack of virtue,” “passions” are “properly evil,” and “virtue necessarily presupposes apathy” (MS 6:408). Such passages make Kant seem a hopeless resource for philosophers who increasingly see emotions as sophisticated cognitive engagements with the world, necessary parts of moral life, susceptible of rational evaluation, and generally among the “aspect[s] of our mental life” that are preeminently “important to the quality and meaning of our existence” (deSousa 2013:1) and for which we can even, in some sense, be held responsible (see e.g. Solomon 1976; Slote 2010; Smith 2005).

Fortunately, Kantians have stepped to his rescue, showing that overemphasis on apparently negative passages obscures more positive roles that a Kant-inspired ethics can ascribe to emotions. From Nancy Sherman’s observations that emotions “serve supportive roles” for moral life “as *modes of attention*” or “*mode[s] for conveying moral interest*” (Sherman 1997:145, 147) to Barbara’s Herman’s recognition of the role of emotions in the practice of moral judgment (Herman 1997) to Paul Guyer’s suggestion that “the subjective state of one’s feelings” can “reflect the moral choices of one’s will” (Guyer 1993:367), contemporary Kantian ethicists see his accounts of emotions as consonant with a broadly positive perspective on emotions. By now, anyone familiar with recent scholarship should reject the picture of Kant as virulent opponent of emotion and recognize his sophisticated accounts of how emotions help as well as hinder moral life.

Throughout these discussions, Kantians’ focus on emotions typically emphasizes their *moral* importance. Instead, this paper focuses on a new, central, and underappreciated aspect of Kant’s philosophy of emotion. My fundamental claim is that the *Critique of Judgment* defends a conception of normativity that is neither cognitive nor volitional, and thus adds a dimension to emotions’ “rationality” that is generally overlooked. Christine Korsgaard has helpfully drawn attention to the fact that human beings are “rational” in that “we have the ability to ask ourselves whether we *should* act in the way that we are instinctively inclined to. We can say to ourselves: ‘I am inclined to do act-A for the sake of end-E. But should I?’” (Korsgaard 2005: 85). This distinctively volitional rationality has its counterpart in cognition: “The same contrast exists in the

theoretical realm, the realm of belief. ... [A]s rational animals we are *aware* that we are inclined to take one thing as evidence for another, and therefore we can ask whether we should” (Korsgaard 2005:85-6). Korsgaard is typical of normative theorists in highlighting that both cognition and volition are susceptible of normative appraisal, and Kant’s first and second *Critiques* (and related writings) provide philosophical analyses of these two normative-reflective standpoints. These critiques examine human life from within, or first-personally, and explain not only what human life is *like*, but also how it binds itself normatively. The *Critique of Judgment*, like the other *Critiques* ascribes *normativity* to a particular aspect of the human standpoint; there Kant treats *feeling* as a way we take a first-personal stance, and he considers feeling, like belief and desire, as normatively-governed. Just as we can ask whether we should *act* as we are inclined or *believe* what the evidence seems to warrant, we can also ask whether we should *feel* what we in fact feel. We are subject to *affective* normativity.

In the rest of the paper, I start by replacing the vague notion of “emotion” with a brief sketch of Kant’s taxonomy of human mental states, specifically delineating the nature of “feeling,” which is the locus of affective normativity. I then outline Kant’s distinctions amongst sorts of feelings for which specifically affective normativity does *not* apply (section 2), before turning (in section 3) to his endorsement of affective normativity for other kinds of feeling and (section 4) some general reasons for thinking he is correct to isolate this form of normativity. In section 5, I raise two problems for his specific account of affective normative, and in the final section, I briefly sketch alternative accounts.

1. Kant, “Emotions,” and Feelings.

This paper shows one way Kant can contribute to contemporary philosophy of emotion. But Kant does not use the term “emotion,”¹ and he does not have a general theory of “emotions.”² In place of a theory of emotions, Kant developed detailed accounts of various mental states, some of which include what we today call emotions. Thus, for instance, Kant discusses anger (*Zorn*), which he classifies as an “affect” (*Affekt*) (A 7:255) as well as various kinds of hatred (*Haß*) that are “passions” (*Leidenschaften*) (A 7:270-71). Depending upon its particular form, sexual desire can be an instinct (*Instinkt*), inclination (*Neigung*), or passion (*Leidenschaft*); and love can be a feeling (*Gefühl*), passion (A 7:266), inclination, or can “lie in the will [*Wille*]” (G 4:399).³ Some

¹ In some respects, this claim is a trick. Kant is writing in German, so of course he doesn’t use the English term “emotion.” But my point is that none of the German terms that Kant use in his psychology can be accurately translated by the English catch-all “emotion.” The Cambridge Edition sometimes translates “*Rührung*” or “*Affekt*” as emotion (see the glossaries of *Practical Philosophy* and *Critique of the Power of Judgment*), but the former generally refers more to a sensuous stirring that to full blown emotion (as at KU 5:223, where “charms and emotions” are paired as ways that “barbaric” taste finds satisfaction) and the latter is an extreme form of feeling that Kant goes so far as to call a form of mental illness (see A 7:251). Neither corresponds to anything like the range of the English “emotion.”

² In that regard, he is in good company amongst at least some contemporary philosophers, who increasingly recognize that what we call “emotion” is not a unified phenomenon. As Amelie Rorty spiritedly put it, “Enough already with ‘theories of the emotions’” (Rorty 2004:269).

³ These varying taxonomic classifications for sexual desire and love are not conceptual confusions but Kant’s recognition that several importantly different emotional states fall under the general rubrics of “sexual desire” or “love.”

“emotions,” such as wonder (*Bewunderung*), are arguably cognitive states (KU 5:365). For Kant, no univocal concept covers all these cases and each category under which paradigmatic emotions fits includes other states that are generally *not* considered emotional. Thus “affects” include not only rage but also shock and laughter (A 7:262). “Passion” includes not only hatred but also a principled commitment to pursue honor at any price (A 7:270). “Feeling” includes moral respect and being in love but also the pain of being pricked by a needle.

Rather than a category for “emotion,” Kant offers a three-fold taxonomy of mental states as specific variations of cognition, feeling, or volition (desire). Thus anger is a kind of affect, which is a kind of feeling; while hatred is a kind of passion, which is a kind of inclination, which is a kind of volition.⁴ While distinguishing feeling from cognition and volition is superficially similar to traditional classifications of “emotions” as non-cognitive and volitionally-dubious, Kant’s classification of paradigmatic “emotions” under different (often combined) mental faculties belies any easy identification of “feeling” with “emotion.” And these intrinsically differentiated states can be related, such that cognitions can cause and provide content for feelings, which can in turn cause volitions.

Kant considered his three-fold account of human mental faculties important and original, and he sharply defended it against dominant⁵ alternatives.

We can trace all faculties of the human mind without exception back to these three: the *faculty of cognition*, the *feeling of pleasure and displeasure*, and the *faculty of desire*. To be sure, philosophers ... have sought to explain this distinction as merely illusory and to reduce all faculties to the mere faculty of cognition. But it can easily be demonstrated ... that this attempt to bring unity into the multiplicity of faculties ... is futile. For there is always a great difference between representations belonging to cognition, insofar as they are related merely to the object and ... the consciousness of it, and their objective relation where, considered at the same time as the cause of the reality of this object, they are assigned to the faculty of desire, and, finally, their relation merely to the subject, where they are considered merely as grounds for preserving their own existence in it and to this extent in relation to the feeling of pleasure (20:206)

Throughout his writings and lectures, cognition and desire are taken to relate to objects in the world, but in different ways. The former consists in representations that track how objects in the world are, while the latter is a representation oriented towards bringing the objective world into conformity with it. We can understand this in terms of the notion of “direction-of-fit,” where cognition involves a “mind-to-world” direction of fit and volition a “world-to-mind” direction (see e.g. Searle 1983:7-8, Smith 1994:111-124, deSousa 2013:16). But for Kant (as for Searle 1983:8), these ways of relating to the objective world do not exhaust the kinds of mental states there are. There is a third kind of state, one “merely subjective” in that it consists in a representation insofar as that

⁴ For details regarding this taxonomy and Kant’s empirical psychology in general, see Borges 2004, Frierson 2014, and Sorenson 2002.

⁵ Here I take the textbook Leibnizian empirical psychology of Wolff and Baumgarten as “dominant,” though it was already contested by Crusius, Tetens, and others. For discussion, see Hatfield 1990, Frierson 2005, and especially Sturm 2009.

representation seeks to preserve itself *in the subject*, without intrinsic consideration of the external world at all. Such representations are *feelings* of pleasure and displeasure.

For Kant, feeling is subjective in two senses. First, “Pleasure is the representation of the agreement of an object or of an action with the subjective conditions of life” (KpV 5:9n), so that feeling represents neither objects in the world nor actions taken in the world but only the relation between some object or action and oneself, that is, one’s “life” or “activity.” Second, what we “can... designate in general ... [as] pleasure” is “[t]he consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject for maintaining it in that state” (KU 5:220). Here even the apparent reference to actions or objects is dropped, replaced with something purely internal to one’s own mental life, the consciousness of a representation that causes its own maintenance. Pulling these definitions together (as Kant does, e.g., at VM 28:586), we can say that when one feels pleasure, one feels like continuing in one’s subjective state (that is, continuing to have the representations one has) because that state seems conducive to one’s life, or activity. When one feels displeasure one feels like ending one’s state because one’s state feels like an inhibition of activity.

In describing Kant’s account of feeling as “subjective,” it is important to distinguish *Kant’s* conception of “subjective feeling” from similar uses in recent philosophy of emotion. Many recent references to the “subjective” nature of “feeling” emphasize the importance of *bodily* feelings, either seeing emotions as nothing more than “our feeling of ... bodily changes” (James 1890:449) or at least emphasizing the distinctively affective part of emotions as “feelings of the condition of one’s body” (Goldie 2004). For Kant, however, the subjectivity of feeling is not a reference to anything *bodily* – feelings are mental representations and refer to mental, not physical, states.⁶ Moreover, as one theorist has recently exaggerated, “subjective” is “always used pejoratively ... given the premium we place on knowledge” (Calhoun 2004:108-9). The recent cognitivist turn in philosophy of emotion is largely a response to conceptions of emotions that make them merely “subjective,” where subjectivity is treated disparagingly as implying absence of normative “rationality.” For Kant, however, it is not “emotions” that are subjective but rather a particular component mental state – “feeling” – and even with respect to feelings, subjectivity is not only not pejorative but even opens a space for new conceptions of normativity.

Feelings, then, while often connected to cognitions and volitions, are not in themselves cognitive or volitional. One can represent one’s condition as unsuitable even while *cognizing* that it is suitable (or vice versa). In *Anthropology*, Kant observes that “*pain must always precede every enjoyment ... [f]or what else but a quick death from joy would follow from a continuous promotion of the vital force?*” (A 7:231). For one who understands and forms pragmatic maxims on the basis of this observation (say, Kant himself), painful representations remain painful in that they *represent* one’s present condition as unsuitable to “life.” But one does not have *cognition* of one’s condition as unsuitable; one might understand that pain right now is needed for life as a whole to be happier. One need not have *desire* to be rid of this particular pain; one might even *seek out* pains, as in Kant’s example of those who gamble because it is “a state of incessant

⁶ This does not deny that there might be physical bases for these mental states, but that they are different in kind. For a helpful discussion of a similar point, see Greenspan 2004.

movement between fearing and hoping” (A 7:232). Even when an object is deliberately chosen, one can *feel* pain insofar as it is directly inhibitory of self-activity.

Another divide between feeling and cognition or volition is that pleasure impels one to persist only *in one’s representation*. In themselves, feelings are not oriented towards the reproduction or continuation of objective states of affairs. The pain of fear, in itself, grounds a desire to cease *representation* of the object of fear, but not (yet) to change one’s situation. The pleasure of love gives a reason to continue *representing* the object of love (in the way that gives rise to this pleasure) but does not, in itself, provide *knowledge* of the object of love nor any *motive to do* anything with or for that object. Pleasure in an object is neither cognition of nor desire for it.

Nonetheless, pleasures are closely related to cognitions and desires:

[I] desire or abhor nothing which is not based on pleasure or displeasure. For that which give me no pleasure, I also do not want. Thus pleasure or displeasure precedes desire or abhorrence. But still I must first cognize what I desire, likewise what give me pleasure or displeasure; accordingly, both are based on the cognitive faculty (VM 29:877-8, cf. VA 25:1334).

Pleasures are *caused* by cognitions,⁷ and their represented objects share the content of the cognitions that cause them. Because pleasure is a feeling for a particular *representation*, there must be some (cognitive) source of that representation. And pleasures are necessary for volitions to arise⁸; pleasure is the feeling of a representation’s “causality...for maintaining itself,” and the most straightforward way of maintaining a *representation* is maintaining or bringing about the state of affairs represented. Insofar as I take pleasure in the representation of a flavorful blackberry, this representation has causality for maintaining itself. And while this causality might, in principle, be directed purely internally towards the representation itself, it more naturally gives rise to a *desire* or *volition*, a representation of eating the blackberry as a state of affairs *to bring about*. In general, that is, pleasures are *practical*, and while “[t]echnically ... there is a distinction to be made between feeling and desire ... for the purposes of describing action, there is ... little distinction to be made between the possession of a practical pleasure and that of a desire” (Grenberg 2001: 163). But while closely *connected* to both cognition and volition, feelings *as such* are neither cognitive nor volitional because they are purely subjective, referring only to the suitability of a representation (an internal state) to one’s “life” (the sum of internal states of activity), directing persistence only of the representation as such, not of any external states of affairs. And in some cases, as we will see, feelings do not involve volition or (higher) cognition at all.

For Kant, this threefold taxonomy within empirical psychology is also a framework for transcendental critiques of the human standpoint (see KU 5:198).⁹ Human mental states are not merely objects of empirical-psychological description, but also modes of engagement with the world that are – at least potentially – normatively evaluable. Cognitions can be true or false, justified or unjustified. Volitions can be morally required, permissible, or forbidden, and one’s volitional structure can be good or evil. Distinguishing feeling from cognition and volition thus opens up the possibility –

⁷ In this context, “cognition” includes mere sensation. As I will argue below, pleasures need not depend on or imply cognitions in the sense of *judgments*.

⁸ For application of this model to moral respect, see Frierson 2014.

⁹ For a detailed explanation of this twofold claim, see Frierson 2013.

one Kant will eventually realize (see 10:513-14) – that feeling is equally susceptible of normative evaluation.

This taxonomy provides for analysis of “emotions” into constituent, normatively-assessable aspects, some of which are often cognitive, others volitional, and others properly affective. Fear generally involves and includes *cognition* that some feature of the world is dangerous to one’s well-being, *desire* to make the world no longer dangerous for oneself (say, by fighting or fleeing), and a purely subjective displeasure, a representation of one’s psychological state as not-to-be-preserved. In fear, these different mental states are conjoined and well-integrated, such that one seeks to pass out of one’s present (subjective) state *by* seeking to change the objective world into a condition opposed to what one sees that world as being. Similarly, sympathetic concern involves an integration of one or more elements: *feeling* of pain on behalf of another, attuned *cognition* of another’s needs, and/or *desire* for improvement in another’s condition. Different forms of sympathetic concern manifest different balances of these elements, and some may lack various elements altogether. Often, however, so-called “emotions” are cognitive, affective, and volitional, and thus susceptible of various – and even conflicting¹⁰ – forms of normative assessment.

2. Affective normativity as cognitive and/or volitional?

Given Kant’s taxonomy of mental states, there are three different kinds of mental states, each of which *could* be normatively governed. It is possible, of course, that while cognition and volition are governed by norms of reflection, feeling is not. Once we isolate what feeling *is*, we might reject the notion that feelings are normatively evaluable. If feelings really are *subjective*, then perhaps we “should” feel whatever we *do* feel. Alternatively, given that feelings are often related to cognitions and volitions, we might think that normativity applies to those feelings solely by virtue of associated cognitive content or volitional import.¹¹

¹⁰ For example, sympathetic concern for a friend might be morally praiseworthy insofar as it partly expresses one’s good will, while being epistemically condemnable because one too hastily gives the friends’ expressions of sorrow the benefit of the doubt. For detailed discussions of conflicting valuations of emotions, see d’Arms and Jacobsen 2000 and Rabinowitz and Rønnow-Rasmussen 2004. There are specific problems with their analyses that are beyond the scope of my discussion here, but the general principle that emotions can be evaluated positively by one normative criterion and negatively by another is sound.

¹¹ These strategies are common amongst contemporary philosophers of emotion. Thus Ronald deSousa, after helpfully highlighting how cognitivist approaches “to the question of what is it for an emotion to be reasonable suppose that the relevant notion of rationality is epistemic,” goes on to say that there is another option: “Certain philosophers have argued that emotions are more like actions, for which we must bear responsibility (Sartre 1948, Solomon 1980)” (deSousa 2013: 29). DeSousa here is typical of contemporary philosophers of emotion in thinking that the problem of the normative evaluability of emotions has one of four possible outcomes:

- (1) Emotions are not normatively evaluable.
- (2) Emotions are epistemically evaluable (e.g. Nussbaum).
- (3) Emotions are volitionally evaluable (whether in terms of morality or pragmatic principles of self-interest or narrowly technical means-end reasoning) (e.g. Slote, Smith, Maiese)
- (4) Emotions are *both* epistemically and volitionally evaluable (either in combination or as two distinct but legitimate forms of evaluation) (e.g. Solomon).

All four options deny or fail to consider the possibility of a *distinctively affective* kind of normativity.

Kant recognizes and partly affirms the intuition that feelings are not normatively evaluable, but he sees this conviction as applicable only to one *kind* of feeling, what he calls a feeling for the “agreeable.” Something is agreeable when it immediately “pleases the senses” (KU 5:205, cf. A 7:230). The emphasis here on the senses indicates that such pleasures need not involve cognitions or representations of an object *as* anything in particular. When I find the taste of blackberries agreeable, I do not do so insofar as they are healthy or socially-approved or even insofar as they are excellent *as blackberries*; I simply enjoy what I taste. And the pleasure is not only subjective but also “private” (RA 715, 15:317), such that one can only ever say “It is agreeable *to me*” (CJ 5:212). In enjoying the blackberries’ taste, I do not take myself to be engaging in an enjoyment that is necessarily shareable. Others might also happen to enjoy blackberries, but nothing in my pleasure implies this. A feeling for the agreeable is the clearest case where affective normativity does not apply, since *no* normativity applies. As Kant explains, “of that which I call *agreeable* I say [only] that it *actually* produces a pleasure in me” (CJ 5:236). At most, when “one finds with regard to the agreeable that unanimity in their judging of it may be encountered among people ... the universality is understood only comparatively, and ... there are only *general* rules (like all empirical rules are), not *universal* ones” (CJ 5:213). Whatever general human tendencies one may find, agreeableness poses no affective *requirements*. All one can say is that “such and such is pleasing,” not that one *should* find it pleasing.

But feelings of agreeableness are not the only sorts of feelings. While one can enjoy blackberries at a purely sensuous (agreeable) level, one can also enjoy them *as* a healthy snack or *as* a luxury item or even *as* excellent specimens of blackberry.¹² These sorts of pleasures are genuine *pleasures*. There is a difference between *cognizing* a blackberry as an excellent blackberry and *enjoying* it as an excellent one. Fruit vendors may often need to cognize excellence for purely instrumental reasons, even when they are personally bored by it, and one might recognize something (say, a blackberry) as a luxury item while taking no pleasure in it on that account. When one *enjoys* blackberries for these reasons, one does more than merely cognize them. One takes *pleasure* in them as good: “That is *good* which pleases by means of reason alone, through the mere concept” (KU 5:207). These pleasures are different than mere feelings of the agreeable. One can genuinely enjoy as good for one’s health a disagreeable medicine or enjoy as an excellent example of atonal music a disagreeable set of sounds. And one can dislike – as bad for health, or socially-unacceptable, or poor quality – the greasy donut that gives so much (agreeable) pleasure.

Most importantly, feelings for the good are unlike feelings for the agreeable in being susceptible of normative assessment. Enjoying what is good involves cognition

¹² One can even take pleasure in the blackberry *as* something agreeable, which is different from feeling agreeable pleasure in it. That something is agreeable (to me) can become a way in which that thing is good, and this can become the basis of a pleasure in that goodness. Even here, the immediate pleasure in the agreeable blackberry is distinct from the further pleasure that I take in the blackberry *as* something agreeable. The latter pleasure depends upon reflective endorsement of the value of what is agreeable. And I can be *wrong* about the blackberry being good-because-agreeable but I can’t wrongly feel its agreeableness. It might be that the agreeable pleasure that I felt while eating the blackberry was actually a pleasure in the friends with whom I ate it, so I am wrong to take the blackberry *as* agreeable (since it isn’t), but it can never be wrong to feel agreeableness. For Kant’s discussion of this point, see KU 5:207-8.

and gives rise to volitions,¹³ so feelings for the good are capable of falling under both epistemic and volitional normative standards.¹⁴ With respect to cognition, the *good* is a *concept* rooted in understanding and reason,¹⁵ unlike the merely sensory *agreeable*, and thus feelings for the *good* are susceptible to epistemic standards for the formation and application of concepts. Moreover, because the concept of the good is generally a *practical* concept, it gives rise to volitions that can be evaluated in terms of how well they satisfy moral and prudential requirements.

To better see how cognitive and volitional norms apply to feelings of pleasure in the good, we can look to the three main forms of such feeling. Each of these can be evaluated according to cognitive norms, and at least two are susceptible to volitional evaluation. First, as construals of what is conducive to active life, feelings can be responsive to instrumental goods, things that are *good for* this or that (end of) activity or beneficial to the active pursuit of ends in general: “we call something *good for something* (the useful) that pleases only as a means” (KU 5:207). In Kant’s terms, one takes pleasure in what is recognized as useful either technically (for this or that end) or pragmatically (for happiness, or the satisfaction of ends in general). A solid hammer pleases because it is good for hammering nails and a good dinner party or raise in salary pleases because each is good for promoting overall well-being. But one can be in error about what is *really* useful. I may *think* blackberries are healthy and take pleasure in them for that reason, but be mistaken (either about blackberries in general or about these particular ones). I might admire and take pleasure in how the speed and power of my new computer improve productivity, when they really just facilitate distraction and procrastination. As in most cognitivist approaches to emotion, Kantian pleasure in the good involves *judgment* that something is good (or bad) in particular ways, and such judgment can be erroneous, making the pleasure itself misdirected. Pleasure in the instrumentally good can also be *volitionally* evaluable. Sometimes volitional error derives from cognitive error, as when one takes pleasure in and thereby desires what is

¹³ One might rightly argue that feelings for the agreeable also give rise to volitions, and in that sense are susceptible of moral or pragmatic evaluation. But there is an important difference between the agreeable and the good when it comes to volitional assessment. In the case of feelings for the agreeable, moral norms apply primarily – perhaps even exclusively – to the way in which one *responds volitionally* to one’s feelings. One who likes luxury items as good (whether intrinsically or instrumentally) has a bad – because imprudent – liking, and a better volitional structure would change the relevant feelings. But one who just happens to find agreeable those same luxury items might be blamable in failing to restrict the pursuit of this agreeable pleasure by genuine goods, but cannot be blamed for the simple liking itself.

¹⁴ Xxx In the next section, I argue that Kant sees feelings as susceptible of a distinctive kind of normativity. But he also recognizes that feelings are generally closely connected to cognitions and volitions in ways that make them susceptible to evaluation in cognitive and volitional terms as well. This normative overlapping is not unique to feelings. Kant discusses how the influence of various feelings and volitional tendencies can – through “prejudice” – undermine the legitimacy of cognitions (see VL 9:785, discussion in Frierson 2014:ch. 6), and choices based on false beliefs are susceptible of epistemic condemnations even if not directly immoral. (Barbara Herman’s account of Rules of Moral Salience (see Herman 1997) is a particularly complex example of the role of what are properly epistemic evaluations in moral reasoning. See too my discussion in Frierson 2003.). Just as epistemic and volitional norms can cross into each other’s domains, so too either can apply to the evaluation of many feelings.

¹⁵ Kant says “reason” in the quotation at KU 5:207, but he often uses “reason” to refer to the whole set of higher faculties (reason, the understanding, and judgment), and his consequent reference to concepts (which have their seat in the understanding) rather than ideas (which are the province of reason) shows that he has this broader concept in mind.

not really useful. Other times, it is properly volitional, such as when pleasure in the excellence of a particular *means* to an end leads to inflating that end's value or when pleasure in instrumental goods is prioritized over moral responsibilities.

Second, feelings can directly attend to what one considers "*good in itself*" in that it "pleases for itself." Ultimately, for Kant, there is only one proper object of this pleasure – the good will – but he considers other *prima facie* candidates for pleasure in what is good in itself, most notably the agreeable itself and happiness (as "the greatest sum of the agreeableness of life"). The general point is that in addition to taking pleasure in what seems *useful* for the promotion of ends, we also take direct pleasure in various ends as good. Again, there are both cognitive and volitional ways of failing to properly feel pleasure in what is good in itself. For example, while one cannot err in feeling what is agreeable, one might well err in one's judgment about *what* one finds agreeable, and mistakenly take pleasure in something as agreeably good in itself that is not the true cause of one's (agreeable) pleasure. Volitionally, there are issues derivative on cognitive failings (pursuing for itself something that is not really good in itself) and also one fundamental and properly volitional normative requirement. For Kant, "we can see a priori that the moral law ... must ... produce a feeling," so this "law ... is an object of ... a positive feeling that is ... cognized a priori" (KpV 5:72-3). The moral feeling of respect is one that we *ought* to feel,¹⁶ in that we ought to obey the moral law, and obedience to the moral law occurs when one acts "from respect for the law" (G 4:400).¹⁷

Finally, there is a third sort of pleasure in what is *good as* the kind of thing that it is. Here one "presupposes ... a concept" and takes pleasure in "the perfection of the object in accordance with it" (KU 5:229).¹⁸ In some respects, this pleasure is involved in the preceding two concepts of goodness. Knowing whether something is "good for something" involves "know[ing] what sort of thing the object is supposed to be" (KU 5:207), and, conversely, when judging the perfection of an object in accordance with its concept, one considers "the way in which the manifold is good for the thing itself, in accordance with its end" (KU 5:230). Thus for an artifact whose end is given extrinsically – "a church, a palace, ... or a garden-house" – being good *as* the kind of thing it is means being good *for* what that thing is designed to do. For an organism that is a natural end – a tree, giraffe, or human being – being good *as* the kind of thing it is means being good *for itself*. In either case, this form of judging focuses not on the relationship between objects and what is good for oneself but on the perfection of the objects themselves. The consideration of perfect instances of a concept *is itself* pleasing. This case involves so little role for volitional norms that Kant considers these pleasures

¹⁶ In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant clarifies that we don't technically have an obligation to feel respect (or moral feeling), but rather an obligation to do what is our duty, which happens by means of respect (see MS 6:399-400, 402-403). The details of his argument there are tangential to the central purpose of the present paper.

¹⁷ Strictly speaking, there is no cognitive failure in prioritizing happiness over morality. One might understand all there is to understand about the world and still find more pleasure in undeserved happiness than the good will. But one *ought* not find pleasure in happiness without the good will. Such a misplaced pleasure reflects a volitional failing that Kant would call an *evil* disposition.

¹⁸ Kant discusses this kind of pleasure in the good as a "judgment of taste ... [that] is not pure" (KU 5:229) but the reason that such judgments of taste are not pure is that they involve "the combination of the good" with the judgment of beauty (KU 5:230). I am here isolating the contribution of the good to these judgments to identify it as a distinct way in which one can take pleasure in the good.

quasi-aesthetic. But one can still *cognitively* err and thereby have feelings that one should not feel. Such pleasures – and related emotions such as awe, appreciation, and delight – involve judgments that an object is good of its kind, so one can err either in identifying its kind or in assessing what is good for that kind. The bird that one finds a bad and therefore displeasing ostrich may be an admirable emu, and the excessively large antlers that seem bad for an animal’s self-defense may be good for its attempts to attract a mate.

In sum, Kant isolates one kind of feeling – the agreeable – for which normativity does not apply. I like what I like, and there’s nothing more to it than that. But this is only the most sensibly-dependent feeling. Like the sensory perceptions on which it is based, one can judge the way in which feelings for the agreeable are integrated into more complex cognitions, feelings, and volitions, but not the feeling for the agreeable itself. Other feelings of pleasure involve concepts of goodness or perfection and (for at least two cases) give rise to volitions. And these pleasures *can* be normatively evaluated. They can err in terms of the cognitive content that they include, and they can be evil or imprudent in terms of the volitions for which they are, as Grenberg puts it, the “vehicles” (Grenberg 2001:163). But for Kant, these evaluations are not properly *affective* (KU 20:207); they are not principles governing feeling *as such*, that purely subjective component of emotion which is neither judgment about the world nor intention to change it.

3. Affective normativity as such

The analysis in the previous section showed that some feelings are normatively evaluable in terms of epistemic or volitional standards. One might think that any further, distinctively affective normativity is both impossible and unnecessary.¹⁹ It might seem impossible insofar as one considers the scope of feeling exhausted by the agreeable – for which normativity does not apply – and the good – which is reducible to cognitive and volitional norms. And it might seem unnecessary because the aforementioned standards provide for the two most universally-recognized forms of normativity. If feelings can be “wrong” in that they are epistemically unjustified or don’t fit the world and “wrong” in that they are states for which one can be held accountable and on the basis of which one can be judged prudentially foolish or morally blamable, we seem to have a sufficiently rich normative account of feeling to make sense of our complex emotional lives.

For Kant, however, our emotional life is richer and more complicated than that. In particular, emotions not only inform and motivate, but also involve feelings susceptible of their own kind of normativity, what he identifies as “taste.” Moreover, certain states are *purely* affective, involving neither volition nor (higher) cognition about the world: “The judgment of taste is not a cognitive judgment (neither a theoretical nor a practical one) and ... is neither grounded on concepts nor aimed at them” (KU 5:209). In this section, I briefly sketch Kant’s distinctively affective conception of normativity, one distinct from both a cognitivism that would see feelings as fundamentally cognitive and thus susceptible of cognitive evaluation and a voluntarism that treats feelings as merely constituents of volitions and thus susceptible of moral or pragmatic evaluation.

¹⁹ In fact, this seems to have been Kant’s view when he working on the *Critique of Pure Reason* (see KrV A21/B35n; 10:513-14; contrast KU 5:213).

Kant defends what I call affective normativity by focusing on the one context in which he considers feelings to be *independent* of cognition and volition: aesthetic pleasure. For Kant, all other feelings involve a necessary connection with desire/ volition. *Aesthetic* pleasure, however, is free of desire.

We have pleasure or displeasure without desiring or abhorring, e.g., if we see a beautiful area, then it enchants us, but we will not on that account wish at once to possess it. Pleasure or displeasure is thus something entirely different from the faculty of desire. (VM 29:877)

Kant takes this point far, claiming that if “the palace that I see before me [is] beautiful” I will feel a distinct pleasure in the contemplation of it, even if “were I to find myself on an uninhabited island . . . and could conjure up such a magnificent structure through my mere wish, I would not even take the trouble of doing so” (KU 5:204-5, cf. VM 29:878).²⁰ Insofar as one’s enjoyment of something *requires* an interest in its existence, one judges “interestedly,” and thus *not* aesthetically.

With respect to cognition, while aesthetic pleasure depends upon *some* cognition – since even sensory representation is a kind of cognition – it does not depend upon determinate judgment about or construal of any object. Unlike pleasure in a good hammer, good meal or good will, wherein one must always “know what sort of thing the object is supposed to be” (KU 5:207), aesthetic pleasure occurs precisely when one does *not* identify the object of pleasure according to specific concepts. Thus paradigmatic objects of beauty are “designs *à la grecque*, foliage for borders on wallpaper, etc., [that] signify nothing by themselves; they do not represent anything, no object under a determinate concept, and are free beauties. One can also count . . . what are called in music fantasias (without a theme), indeed all music without a text.” (KU 5:229). Even objects that fall, in a certain sense, under a concept are beautiful only insofar as they are sensed indeterminately:

Flowers are free natural beauties. Hardly anyone other than the botanist knows what sort of thing a flower is supposed to be; and even the botanist, who recognizes in it the reproductive organ of the plant, pays no attention to this natural end if he judges the flower by means of taste. (KU 5:229)

Even if one conceptualizes the object of aesthetic pleasure as a flower, it is not *qua* flower that one finds it pleasing, but simply as the indeterminate thing one sees. For Kant, the cognition, judgment, or determinate construal fundamental to cognitivist accounts of emotion (e.g. Roberts, Solomon, Nussbaum) would precisely bring the experience of aesthetic pleasure to an end. If one comes to see the object *as* some determinate thing, one no longer takes (aesthetic) pleasure in it.

Because aesthetic pleasure is independent of both volition and cognition, the normative assessment of such pleasure cannot depend upon volitional or epistemic standards:

[A] judgment about beauty in which there is mixed the least interest is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. (KU 5:205)

²⁰ Because of this extreme view about aesthetic pleasure, Kant has to defend the apparent inclination of people to promote the existence of beautiful objects. He does this in terms of the way in which, “only in society . . . it becomes interesting to have taste” (KU 5:205) because taste – and the creation or preservation of beautiful objects – facilitates sociability, for which we have an immediate inclination (KU 5:297-8).

[When] the judgment of taste is pure[, n]o concept of ... the given object ... is presupposed, by which the imagination ... would ... be restricted. (KU 5:230)

In that sense, taste is like the agreeable, something susceptible of neither cognitive nor volitional normativity: “There can be no objective rule of taste that would determine what is beautiful through concepts” (KU 5:231). Nonetheless, we *do* make judgments of taste; we consider not only what we *do* find beautiful but also what one *should* find beautiful. When judging aesthetically, we “lay claim to the consent of everyone” and “expect” others to share our pleasure in the beautiful object (KU 5:191, 211, 214-16); we consider such pleasure “valid” (KU 5:124-15, 236-7, 289), an “ideal norm” (KU 5:239) with “universal validity” that “can be rightly expected of everyone” “as necessary” (KU 5:289-90).

In all judgments by which we declare something to be beautiful, we allow no one to be of a different opinion, without, however, grounding our judgment on concepts, but only on our feeling, which we therefore make our ground not as a private feeling, but a common one. Now this common sense ... is to justify judgments that contain a “should”; it does not say that everyone *will* concur with my judgment but that everyone *should* agree with it. (KU 5:239, cf. 5:236-7)

Despite being grounded solely in feeling, aesthetic judgments represent pleasure in normative terms, as a pleasure one *should* feel. Aesthetic pleasure shows a distinctively *affective* normativity.

4. Why think Kant is right?

Kant, then, thinks there is a distinctive kind of normativity unique to feelings, those properly *affective* components of emotions. But is there any reason to think he is *correct*? Why think there really *are* feelings other than for the non-normatively constrained agreeable and the cognitivist-volitionalist good? Today, default “common sense” about aesthetic feeling is arguably the opposite of Kant’s, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” rather than “[when] we declare something ... beautiful, we allow no one to be of a different opinion” (KU 5:239). Even within contemporary philosophy of emotion, dominant views conflate “rationality” or “normativity” with various forms of either cognitivism or voluntarism.

One reason to think Kant is right about affective normativity the first-person stance of feeling itself, within which we simply *do* take a normative stance towards at least some pleasures, particularly but not exclusively aesthetic ones.²¹ “Guilty” pleasures are not limited to sadism and chocolate (which can be criticized on volitional grounds) but include pleasure in cheesy movies, corny pop music, and garish garage-sale landscape paintings. One *might* interpret the guilt-making features of these pleasures volitionally or cognitively, but they more naturally seem to be aesthetic judgments in the Kantian sense, that is, something like a recognition that we are treating as beautiful what is really merely agreeable or settling for the merely agreeable when we *should* aim for “higher” feelings. Of course, sometimes one’s enjoyment or lack thereof diverges from others’ without any normative failing: “They really like cardamom, but I can’t stand it.” For many divergences of pleasures, one takes idiosyncrasy as acceptable and even interesting. For

²¹ We can also “make an erroneous judgment of taste” (KU 5:216, see too 5:292-3), mistakenly taking as normative what is merely an agreeable charm. The very possibility of confusing the contingently subjective from the normatively-bound shows the essential difference between them.

other divergences, however (perhaps regarding a musical piece or mountain landscape), divergence needs *normative* explanation. Built into some enjoyments is a felt need to figure out why others who differ are *off*, in some sense, about their feelings, or how I could have gotten my own feelings so wrong. Such feelings, like feelings for the good, are treated as normatively constrained. Again, one *might* try to explain this normativity cognitively, in that one just doesn't recognize how the musical piece does this or that, or how such and such elements of the landscape are combined in such and such a way. But these explanations fall short. Were one to come to understand these features (cognitively), but fail to appreciate (enjoy) the music or landscape for them, one's affective failings would be greater rather than less. Correcting the cognitive failure exacerbates rather than alleviates the bad taste.

Affective normativity also helps explain the cultivation of affective virtues, what Kant would call good taste. Human beings should cultivate the capacity to feel properly. Cognitivists and moralists make sense of this requirement by reducing it to more familiar obligations to think and act with care. There is something correct about this explanation, since emotions are involved (for better and worse, cf. Elster 2004) in recognizing salient features of situations and acting properly in the light of them. But when I seek a deeper appreciation of poetry, sunsets, or opera, I am not *merely* aiming to be more attentive to salient features of those phenomena. Over-emphasis on *understanding* can even *interfere* with proper appreciation of these things. Nor do I primarily want to act better, to watch sunsets more often, say, or to promote better sunsets (whatever that would mean). What one cultivates in these cases is neither a way of thinking nor of acting, but rather a better way of feeling.

Even where cognitive and volitional standards apply, they often do not exhaust the applicable forms of normativity. Say I am ill and unable to fulfill an important but unpleasant obligation, such as playing departmental host to an important but boorish guest speaker. A colleague steps in and takes care of everything, and despite her packed schedule and other pressing obligations, handles everything with deft grace. When I turn to consider my colleague, emotional sensitivity is extremely important for cognitive and volitional reasons. Proper respect and sympathetic concern for her, and a general sensitivity to the feelings of others, can make me attuned to the fact that, despite her affected non-chalance, this was genuinely stressful and unpleasant. Seeing her condition properly is an important part of proper gratitude towards her. And this gratitude, along with the aforementioned respect and concern, should prompt certain actions: expressions of thanks and regret, future offers of help, tokens of appreciation, and so on. Through certain emotions, then, I am better attuned to salient features of my colleague's situation and consequently respond better to her, and these cognitive and volitional elements are important reasons that I *should* have the relevant emotions of respect, sympathetic concern, and gratitude.

But there are other reasons I should have these emotions. Part of sharing social space is being attuned to others feelings, particularly when those feelings are painful ones for which one is responsible. The normative requirement here is not merely cognition of others' feelings, but genuine sharing of them, and not merely for the sake of action. Likewise, central to many cases of gratitude is a *feeling* towards one's beneficiary. If I fail to *feel* for the stress I have caused, or to *feel* gratitude for the burden lifted from me, I fail *in an affective way*. Even if I work successfully to compensate for the cognitive

failures of lack of sympathy, and I exert extra force of will to ensure that I don't fail in the volitional components of gratitude, I still am missing something important, the right kinds of *feelings*.²² Arguably, in fact, the more I succeed in overcoming the cognitive and volitional failures connected with lack of feeling, the worse my affective failings are. If I establish mechanisms for ensuring that I am informed about every particular of the stress I have caused and its implications for my colleague, but I still don't *feel pained* by that stress, then I am cognitively better off, but affectively much more condemnable. The general point is that we hold ourselves to account not only for cognitive and volitional components of emotions, but also – at least sometimes – for their properly affective features.

Not only *do* we often judge feelings in ways that are irreducible to cognitive and moral evaluation, it is important that we be able to do this. If I am right about the first person point of view on feeling, we are not going to give up evaluating feelings in ourselves and others. But if we fail to recognize that there is a unique kind of normativity at work, we will mistakenly ascribe moral or cognitive failures (or vices) to what are merely affective ones. When we criticize someone for liking corny pop music or not sufficiently appreciating a sunset or even for not *feeling* an appropriate gratitude, we are not – or should not be – making cognitive or moral criticisms. Kant is correct that feelings as such cannot be directly morally required and that true cognition does not imply proper affective response. But in the absence of a concept of affective normativity, it can be tempting to *justify* one's sense that another should feel such-and-such a way by appealing to cognitive blindness or attributing moral failing. This slide is all-the-easier given that complex emotions usually involve multiple components. But with a clear articulation of a distinctively affective normativity, we have the language to call an attitude tasteless, improper, or dull, *without* implying that it involves ignorance, stupidity, carelessness, imprudence, or evil.

There are thus good reasons for making room for distinctively affective normativity. Reflection on the experience of certain feelings reveals a normative dimension to that experience, the cultivation of good taste and other affective virtues depends on it, and our evaluations of ourselves and others include an affective dimension that should be recognized as such. Seeing *that* we evaluate feelings affectively does not yet, however, show *how* we do so nor *why* such evaluation is legitimate. Further work is needed to spell out the nature and conditions of possibility of these sorts of norms, and

²² There is one complication to this picture. On most reconstructions of the moral importance of these emotions, they play an important volitional role as motives. I ought to be motivated, at least in part, by genuine affection for my friend. And thus (that is, for moral reasons), I ought to *have* genuine affection for my friend. Even with this addition, however, there is something *else* that feelings contribute in addition to this volitional component. We could see this in a couple of ways. First, we might consider two cases where a person is motivated purely by duty to visit her sick friend. In one case, she feels genuine affection for that friend, but is, say, a misguided Kantian moralist, and so works to ensure that her sense of duty rather than her affection is what motivates her. In the other case, she is motivated by duty because she simply feels no affection for her friend. Whatever we might say about the *moral* status of each (and I think the cases are genuinely difficult to analyze in that respect), the first friend is *affectively* superior (at least, in this respect). Alternatively, we might consider the case of someone with outrageous levels of emotional control, who can – as Kant seems to recommend (MS 6:457) – feel sympathetic pain when such pain would be motivationally efficacious but refrain from it in other cases. I contend that even if such a person suffers from no *moral* failing by virtue of failing to sympathize with a distraught friend he cannot visit, he suffers from a significant *affective* failing.

the fullest argument for affective normativity would appeal to the details of its nature and possibility. Unfortunately, when it comes to these details, Kant's approach has significant limitations.

5. Kantian specifics, problems, alternatives

Thus far, I have used Kant to defend a conception of normativity that is neither cognitive nor volitional. As human beings, we are capable of reflecting on our beliefs and inclinations, and this reflection has a normative character. Even while recognizing that we *do* believe or choose in particular ways, we can ask whether we *should* do so. And I have argued, drawing from Kant, that the same is true of feelings. For at least some feelings, we can step back and ask whether we *should* feel as we do, where this evaluation is neither cognitive nor volitional. Kant thus helpfully isolates feeling and articulates important arguments for affective normativity. However, his discussion of affective normativity is limited in several respects, of which this section focuses on two: its *scope*, and its overly cognitive *explanation*.

First, Kant's insight into the possibility of affective normativity is based on recognizing that *taste*, or *aesthetic* pleasure, is legitimately normative. Aesthetic pleasure (in Kant's sense) illustrates affective normativity particularly well because it occurs independently of cognitive understanding and volitional interest. But, as I suggested with some of my examples in section four, there is no reason to *limit* affective normativity to aesthetic cases. Starting with simple examples, one might reasonably ask someone playing pushpin for hours "How could you not be bored?" without this question reducing to volitional failure (why are you wasting your time?) or cognitive failure (what do you see in this?). One might *also* ask such volitional or cognitive questions, but even one who is excellent volitionally – pursuing self-cultivating and other-aiding activities out of a sense of duty, say – and cognitively – fully attuned to the world around them – can still be affectively deficient simply by virtue of not being *bothered* (at the level of feeling) by inactivity. Similarly, we can accuse someone of "moodiness," imposing on feeling something like a consistency requirement that there be *something* to explain why a condition elicits pleasure at one time and pain at another. There are countless further examples of this sort, where one criticizes another for a lack of humor, for instance, or for insensitivity to others' pain (even when they "understand" that pain cognitively and there is nothing they can do to help).

Kant's *Critique of Judgment* itself suggests a particularly interesting case of non-aesthetic affective failure in what Kant calls "adherent beauty," the pleasure we take in things of beauty that "presuppose a concept of the end that determines what the thing should be" (KU 5:230). For my discussion here, I need not enter into recent debates about whether there is a properly aesthetic component of adherent beauty that can be explained in terms of the harmony of the faculties (e.g. Allison 2001, Guyer 1979, 2002). Instead, I want to focus on Kant's claim that when one takes pleasure in an adherent beauty, at least part of that pleasure is due to "the satisfaction in the manifold in a thing in relation to the internal purpose that determines its possibility," that is, "a satisfaction grounded on a concept" (KU 5:230). As noted in section two, this concept-based satisfaction is a satisfaction in the thing insofar as it is good *as* the kind of thing that it is. There I emphasized that such judgments of beauty are susceptible to cognitive assessment; we can wrongly feel (or not feel) pleasure by, e.g., mistaking an emu for an

ostrich. But there is *also* a properly *affective* normativity here, when we fail to take pleasure in a perfect specimen of its kind, while knowing full well that it is perfect.

The failure to take pleasure in what is good as _____ is a properly *affective* fault. As in the case of boredom, moodiness, humor, and sensitivity, there is a way people should feel about things that are perfect specimens of their kind. This “should” is not cognitive or volitional, but because the relevant feeling is based on a concept, it is not properly aesthetic either. Kant’s argument for affective normativity, then, while it appropriately takes aesthetic feeling as a paradigmatic case where affective normativity applies, improperly relegates all other feelings to categories of either mere agreeableness (for which no normativity applies) or forms of the good that are susceptible only of cognitive and/or volitional norms.²³

Second, Kant’s discussion of affective normativity is formulated in terms of a *problem*, how to explain the *conditions of possibility* of taste. And his solution to this problem invokes several further concepts – most notably notions of purposiveness and the free play of the imagination and understanding – that are inessential to the insight that feeling is norm-governed and that end up making Kantian affective normativity more cognitive than necessary. As he lays it out, the basic “problem” is how to justify ascribing universal, normative standards based only on subjective feeling. His solution appeals to the universality of “common sense,” where this term refers to common *cognitive* faculties. Aesthetic pleasure²⁴ is pleasure in the free “play of the cognitive powers of the subject” (KU 5:222). One immediately and non-conceptually represents an object as suitable to representation as such, that is, as suitable to one’s cognitive faculties *in general*. While there is substantial disagreement amongst commentators about the nature of this free play, the general idea is that beautiful objects stimulate a “reciprocally expeditious” (KU 20:224) interplay of imagination and understanding that neither reaches a conclusion in a determinate cognition nor resists all reflective judging. Because there is neither a determinate cognition nor any impulse to activity beyond representation itself, aesthetic pleasures are neither cognitively nor volitionally evaluable. But because the subjective basis of aesthetic judgment is the free play of cognitive powers *that all human beings share*, one can legitimately expect that *any* human being *should* feel pleasure at the representation of the beautiful object. Because human beings share a “common sense” that is “the effect of the free play of our [common] cognitive powers” (KU 5:238), we can make judgments about what others *should* feel.

While this solution avoids strict cognitivism about affective normativity, it is still indirectly cognitive in basing affective normativity on shared *cognitive* powers. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to notice that the appeal to shared cognitive structures – while illuminating with regard to certain aesthetic experiences – is an extra and unnecessary step in analyzing affective (or even aesthetic) normativity *in general*.

²³ There is a further way in which the scope of Kant’s affective normativity is too narrow. He conceives of pleasure (and pain) as varying only quantitatively, in terms of intensity and longevity, so one evaluates only *whether* one should feel pleasure or at most whether one has an appropriate *degree* of feeling. But there is a much wider scope of affective evaluations than these merely quantitative ones, since there are important *qualitative* differences amongst feelings, even at the most basic level (cf. Melzack 1983 and Butler 1985 re: physical pain).

²⁴ I focus here on pleasure in the beautiful, but the general point that Kant makes affective normativity overly cognitive applies to the feeling for the sublime as well. For overviews of Kant’s aesthetics, see e.g. Allison 2001, Guyer 1979, and Zuckert 2007.

Through careful reflection on the experience of aesthetically enjoying beautiful objects, Kant showed that we take these enjoyments to be at once subjective and normative. Consistent with his general approach to normativity (explicit in *Groundwork* and implicit in the *Critique of Pure Reason*²⁵), what it means for there to be normative constraints on feeling is that the way that *I should* feel is at once recognizable by all others and binding on all others. If I should (or should not) find something pleasurable, then *all* should do so. Given that Kant already argued (in the first *Critique*) that human beings (necessarily) share certain structures of cognition, he can – and does – explain shared normativity of feelings on the basis of these cognitive structures.²⁶ But other options are equally open to Kant. Most straightforwardly, he could simply posit that human beings, in addition to shared “common *cognitive* sense,” also have shared affective structures. While one might understand this merely descriptively (as a claim in empirical psychology), one could also interpret it as Kant does similar claims about volition and cognition, that constitutive of the kind of feeling of which we are first-personally aware in aesthetic pleasure is the commitment to our feeling being sharable.²⁷ We could take the universality of affective normative standards as basic. Just as *Groundwork* uses the *problem* of how a normative standard for volition could be universal to posit a *solution* to that problem – we ought to will only in ways that can be universal – so Kant could take the clear articulation of the problem of affective normativity as its solution: we should feel only in a way that is consistent with “the confluence of the feeling of everyone” (KU 5:240). There would then be room for an account of that shareable feeling – as there is for our cognition and volition – but there would be no need for its shareability to depend upon the shareability of other aspects of the human standpoint. Unlike volitional normativity, this principle would not have even a formal determinate structure, because human beings do not feel according to maxims that can (or cannot) be universalized.²⁸

6. Alternative Affective Normativities

In the previous section, I objected to Kant’s particular account of affective normativity on the grounds that it takes too narrow a range of feelings as its object and

²⁵ For *Groundwork*, see 4:389 and the excellent discussion of these points in Reath 2006. For the *Critique*, see my discussion in Frierson 2009.

²⁶ This move does not transform affective norms into cognitive ones. Even if the reason that we can apply affective norms relates to the nature of our shared cognitive capacities, this does not make the norms themselves cognitive.

²⁷ Kant even offers a helpful framework for just this move in his account of three kinds of “egoism” in his *Anthropology*, where he points out that all three forms of egoism – “of understanding, of taste, and of practical interest” involve a satisfaction with one’s own judgment over against that of others, such that “the *moral egoist* limits all ends to himself” and “the *aesthetic egoist* is satisfied with his own taste, even if others find [it] ... ever so bad” (A 7:129-30).

²⁸ Thus there would be some quasi-empirical element to the application of the normative rule. But this element would only be *quasi*-empirical. Within the standpoint of feeling, one would consider whether one’s feelings are based on any merely contingent or idiosyncratic features of oneself, excluding as “valid” (or at least “validly normative”) those feelings that are so based. There would be no guarantee that one had applied this standard properly without the actual interaction with others against whom one could test one’s feelings as to a touchstone. But the fact that the application of this standard of taste is quasi-empirical is no different in Kant’s more cognitively-based theory, wherein one can never know with certainty and independent of others’ judgments whether one is really finding pleasure in the free play of one’s cognitive faculties.

offers too cognitive an account of affective normativity. One might take these particular problems to be general reasons to abandon the notion of affective normativity, but such a move would be premature. While Kant provides an excellent argument for a distinctive sphere of normativity, other philosophers, many of whom are often taken to be making arguments that are primarily cognitive or volitional, can best be read as addressing – better than Kant – the problem of *affective* normativity.

To take one example, Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is, like Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, based on the premise that normativity applies to feelings (sentiments); there are *proper* and *improper* sentiments, and what is proper is “universal,” as in Kant, both in that anyone can (in principle) see its propriety and in that anyone similarly situated should feel similarly. But Smithian affective normativity is superior to Kant's on both dimensions discussed in the previous section. For Smith, all sentiments are evaluable in terms of their propriety, including love, anger, grief, aesthetic feelings like awe and appreciation of beauty, and even basic bodily feelings like hunger.²⁹ And because Smith's theory allows for a wide range of qualitatively different sentiments, we can normatively evaluate such sentiments along qualitative as well as quantitative dimensions. Second, Smith does not require shared *cognitive* capacities to explain shared ascriptions of affective normativity. Human beings do share cognitive capacities, but we also share affective capacities, and it is primarily the latter that form the basis of ascriptions of propriety or impropriety to others' feelings. Smith thus provides an account of affective normativity that is different from Kant's in several key respects, but equally responsive to his fundamental insight that we take an evaluative stance on (at least some) feelings.³⁰

Adam Smith provides just *one* alternative model for affective normativity, one closely allied to Kant in its emphasis on universality but differing in having a broader scope, admitting that feelings can be qualitatively as well as quantitatively assessed, and locating the basis of affective evaluation directly in shared affective capacities rather than in cognitive ones. Once one attends to affective normativity as a distinct problem, however, one can see other possible theories of its nature. A second, and quite different, alternative to Kant comes from the existentialist tradition, emphasizing authenticity and sincerity as fundamental to proper affective states.³¹ It would be “inauthentic” to like an opera simply because “they” like opera. It can be uncool to like “popular” pop stars because it suggests a bland conformity with opinion, but admirable to stand up for one's idiosyncratic tastes, if they really are one's own. While rejecting Kantian-Smithian universalism, these approaches still recognize an implicit affective normativity, a sense that some ways of feeling are (for the particular individuals that feel them) better – because more authentic or sincere – than others.³²

²⁹ Arguably, Smith goes too far in holding up to evaluation even those feelings for the agreeable that Kant sees as not susceptible to normativity at all.

³⁰ For analysis of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, see Griswold 1999, Campbell 1971, and the essays collected in Brown and Fleischacker 2010.

³¹ E.g., Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre. While there are significant differences between these thinkers, and almost all resist the notion that their central concepts are normative in anything like a traditional sense, they all replace a universalizing and essentializing normativity with normative concepts of authenticity, creativity, and/or sincerity.

³² In some respects, Kant's account of affective (aesthetic) normativity actually blends important aspects of Smith's and existentialists'. Like Smith, Kant insists that affective excellence (good taste) involves feelings

We could multiply alternative approaches to affective normativity, developing Aristotelean approaches based on moderation (see *Nicomachean Ethics*) or fleshing out deSousa's notions of paradigm scenarios as normative constraints on appropriate feeling (deSousa 1987, 2004). None of these alternate accounts of affective normativity make Kant's strong distinction between affective normativity and other kinds of normativity (particularly moral or cognitive).³³ In making the distinction clearly and precisely, Kant's philosophy of emotion is superior to the alternatives. But once that distinction is made, one can turn to others to better articulate what is distinctive about affective normativity. Kant reveals a sort of normativity unnoticed in contemporary philosophy of emotion, one that provides a locus for philosophical discussion beyond the attempts to show the "rationality" of emotions by showing their cognitive or volitional dimensions. And with that revelation comes the hard work of developing cogent accounts of the nature of that new kind of normativity. Kant thought that he had done this, but he failed to do so successfully. We must do better.

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that are in principle universal, but like most existentialists, Kant locates in "genius" an excellence tied to individualizing authenticity.

³³ Smith explicitly considers his theory to be a Theory of *Moral Sentiments*. Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre all reject sharp distinctions between cognition, feeling, and choice. DeSousa's approach is arguably quasi-cognitivist, and Aristotle explicitly sees moderation in feeling as continuous with other forms of properly ethical-volitional excellence.

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