

KANT'S
Critique of Practical Reason
A Critical Guide

EDITED BY

ANDREWS REATH

University of California, Riverside

AND

JENS TIMMERMANN

University of St Andrews

 **CAMBRIDGE**
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	page vii
<i>List of contributors</i>	viii
<i>Translations and abbreviations</i>	x
Introduction	
ANDREWS REATH	I
1 The origin and aim of Kant's <i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>	
HEINER F. KLEMME	II
2 Formal principles and the form of a law	
ANDREWS REATH	31
3 Moral consciousness and the 'fact of reason'	
PAULINE KLEINGELD	55
4 Reversal or retreat? Kant's deductions of freedom and morality	
JENS TIMMERMANN	73
5 The <i>Triebfeder</i> of pure practical reason	
STEPHEN ENGSTROM	90
6 Two conceptions of compatibilism in the Critical Elucidation	
PIERRE KELLER	119
7 The Antinomy of Practical Reason: reason, the unconditioned and the highest good	
ERIC WATKINS	145
8 The primacy of practical reason and the idea of a practical postulate	
MARCUS WILLASCHEK	168

9	The meaning of the <i>Critique of Practical Reason</i> for moral beings: the Doctrine of Method of Pure Practical Reason STEFANO BACIN	197
	<i>Bibliography</i>	216
	<i>Index</i>	223

Introduction

Andrews Reath

The *Critique of Practical Reason* is Kant's second foundational work in moral theory after the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Its stated aim is 'merely to show that there is *pure practical reason*' (CpV 5:3). That is, it attempts to show that reason by itself yields an objective principle of conduct that applies independently of individuals' preferences and empirically given aims – a principle that Kant identifies with the fundamental principle of morality – and thus to show that practical reasoning is not limited to instrumental and prudential reasoning as the empiricist tradition holds. To accomplish this aim, Kant tries to document the origin of the fundamental principle that underwrites common moral thought in reason (in 'pure practical reason') and to establish its overriding authority.

A 'critique' is a critical examination of a cognitive faculty that sets out its powers and limits, and in particular establishes the legitimacy of any a priori concepts and principles that structure the relevant domain of cognitive activity. Kant's views about the need for and proper focus of a critique of practical reason changed over time. When he published the *Groundwork* in 1785, he intended it to take the place of a critique of pure practical reason. He writes that although 'there is really no other foundation for a metaphysics of morals than a critique of *pure practical reason*, just as that of metaphysics is the critique of pure speculative reason', the need for the former is less urgent. That is 'because in moral matters human reason can be brought to a high degree of correctness and accomplishment', while the theoretical use of reason tends to overstep its limits and to make illusory metaphysical claims. Further, a full-blown critique of practical reason would introduce complexities that are not strictly necessary to present and to ground the authority of the basic principle of morality (G 4:391). The third section of the *Groundwork* is entitled 'Transition from Metaphysics of Morals to the Critique of Pure Practical Reason', and initially Kant thought that the arguments in this section were sufficient title for the pure practical or moral use of reason.

After publishing the *Groundwork*, however, while Kant was preparing a revised edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he decided to add a ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’ as an appendix to that work, in order to respond to various objections to the *Groundwork* and to complete his critical system. But this appendix was not part of the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* when it appeared in 1787. It was published instead as a separate work in 1788 – only now with the title *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant continued to think that while the existence of pure practical reason needs some vindication, it does not need critical limitation. Rather, once the existence of pure practical reason is established, only the ‘empirically conditioned’ use of practical reason needs a critique, in order to limit its presumption of supplying the only grounds of choice (*CpV* 5:16).

The organizational structure that Kant imposes on the *Critique of Practical Reason* is similar to those of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment*. The second *Critique* is divided into a ‘Doctrine of Elements’ that takes up the bulk of the work and a much shorter ‘Doctrine of Method’, and the Doctrine of Elements in turn has both an ‘Analytic’ and a ‘Dialectic’ of pure practical reason. The main concern of the opening chapter of the Analytic is to establish the authority of the moral law as the fundamental principle of pure practical reason. [Chapter II](#) addresses questions about Kant’s concept of the good, and it defends his ‘method’ in moral theory of beginning with the concept of law rather than the concept of the good. Only by establishing that there is a practical law can one show that the necessity that is part of the common concept of duty is genuine. [Chapter III](#) is a detailed discussion of respect for the moral law as the moral motive, a topic that Kant had addressed only briefly in a footnote in the *Groundwork* (*G* 4:401fn.). This chapter explores the phenomenology of moral motivation and explains how the principle of morality functions as a motive, with an eye to substantiating the claim of [Chapter I](#) that pure reason is practical – that reason by itself yields practical requirements that can move the will. The Analytic concludes with a ‘Critical Elucidation’ that, among other things, explains its overall structure and sets out Kant’s two-standpoint approach to the problem of free will.

The Dialectic introduces the idea of the highest good as the necessary final aim of moral conduct and argues that our interest in the highest good warrants assuming the existence of God and the immortality of the soul as ‘postulates of pure practical reason’. The possibility of the highest good appears to generate an antinomy within practical reason that is resolved through these postulates. Without such beliefs we cannot conceive of the possibility of the highest good, and thus cannot rationally sustain the

commitment to its pursuit. In this way the second *Critique* contributes to and fills a lacuna in Kant's critical system, giving 'objective though only practical reality' to metaphysical objects that the *Critique of Pure Reason* had shown to be beyond the limits of human knowledge. The idea of a practical postulate is of interest as a form of rational belief whose warrant is not based on evidence, but rather on a set of practical interests that we are not free to abandon.¹

The second *Critique* assumes the basic account of the fundamental principle of morality – the Categorical Imperative – given in the *Groundwork*, and many of the central ideas and theses of the *Groundwork* reappear in the Analytic of the second *Critique*, especially its [first chapter](#). Both works assume that it is part of common moral thought that moral requirements carry unconditional authority, and their central arguments begin from an analysis of the concept of an unconditional requirement on conduct. To cite a few points of overlap, just as the *Groundwork* derives a statement of the Categorical Imperative from the concept of a categorical imperative (*G* 4:402–3, 420–1), the statement of the 'fundamental law of pure practical reason' in the second *Critique* (*CpV* 5:30) results from an analysis of the concept of a practical law (*CpV* 5:19). Both works argue that the fundamental principle of morality must, in some sense, be a 'formal' principle – a principle whose normative force depends on its form, and not on any end or purpose that constitutes the 'matter' of the principle (see *G* 4:400, 414, 415, 416 and *CpV* 5:27, 39–41). Moral theories that base their fundamental principle on an object given to the will – whether it be an object of the senses or one thought through reason – lead to 'heteronomy' and are unable to ground true categorical imperatives or practical laws (see *G* 4:441–4 and *CpV* 5:21–2, 39–41). Thus both works argue for the analytic claim that only a principle of autonomy – a principle based in the nature of rational volition or one that the will in some sense gives to itself – can ground the necessity that is part of the common concept of duty (see *G* 4:432–3, 440, 444 and *CpV* 5:33). Finally, both works argue for analytic connections between freedom and morality – that a will with the capacity to act from the formal principle of morality is free, and that the principle of

¹ For more complete overviews of the main themes of the second *Critique*, see the introductory essays by Stephen Engstrom, in Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), xv–liv; by Andrews Reath, in Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), vii–xxxi; and by Heiner Klemme, in Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, ed. Horst D. Brandt and Heiner Klemme (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2003), ix–lxii.

morality is the fundamental principle that governs a free will (see *G* 4:446–7 and *CpV* 5:28–30).

There are also important points on which the works appear to differ, though how deep these differences run is a matter of controversy. In the third section of the *Groundwork* Kant attempts to establish the authority of morality through a ‘deduction’, and as part of the overall argument he appears to claim that we may ascribe a robust form of free agency to ourselves simply on the basis of general features of rationality, including theoretical rationality (*G* 4:448, 451–3). However, in the second *Critique*, Kant claims that a deduction of the moral law is neither possible nor necessary and that the authority of the moral law is instead given as a ‘fact of reason’ (*CpV* 5:31, 42, 46–7). Furthermore, he claims that only moral consciousness gives us grounds for ascribing free agency to ourselves; rather than seeking a deduction of the moral law, Kant now holds that the moral law is the basis of a deduction of the capacity of free agency (*CpV* 5:30, 47–8).

The composition of the second *Critique*, its main lines of argument and their relation to those of the *Groundwork* raise several questions. What led Kant to write a self-standing ‘critique of practical reason’? What does Kant mean by a ‘formal principle’, and why does he think that the fundamental principle of morality must be a formal principle, or principle whose normative force comes from its form rather than its matter? What exactly is the ‘fact of reason’ and does it provide a satisfactory account of the authority of morality? How far-reaching are the differences between Kant’s approaches to the authority of the moral law in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*? If he abandons the idea of a deduction of the moral law, where does he think that the earlier argument falls short? What is Kant’s stand on the metaphysics of free agency in the second *Critique*, and how is it related to his views in other works, such as the first *Critique* and the *Groundwork*? The essays in this volume take up these and other questions that are central to understanding the aims of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, its central doctrines and contribution to moral theory and its role within Kant’s critical system.

Heiner Klemme’s essay, ‘The origin and aim of Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason*’, addresses the question why Kant decided to write a self-standing ‘critique’ of practical reason by turning to developments in Kant’s critical philosophy in 1786–7. Klemme identifies two reasons for this change. First, in the spring of 1787, Kant came to believe that judgments of taste had an a priori character, and he planned a ‘Groundwork of the Critique of Taste’ that later became the *Critique of Judgment*. This

development led Kant to modify his overall critical plan and to divide the project of a single ‘critique of pure reason’ into three separate critiques related to the faculties of understanding, practical reason and judgment. The *one* critique of pure reason is now presented in three works dedicated to (a) the constitutive use of the understanding and the speculative use of pure reason, (b) the constitutive use of pure practical reason and (c) the regulative use of the power of judgment in determining the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. Second, Klemme looks for the genesis of the *Critique of Practical Reason* not just in its Analytic but in its Dialectic. He argues that Kant’s discovery of an ‘antinomy of practical reason’ is a new development with no model in Kant’s previous work, and that even with the ‘fact of reason’, the validity of the categorical imperative cannot be completely secure until this antinomy is resolved – requiring a separate ‘critique’ of practical reason.

Andrews Reath asks how to understand Kant’s notion of a ‘formal principle’ in his essay, ‘Formal principles and the form of a law’. Early in [Chapter I](#) of the Analytic, Kant claims that a practical law must be a formal principle – that is, a practical principle that provides a ground of choice through its form, rather than its matter. Further he suggests that fundamental normative principles must be formal principles. Kant explicitly argues that practical principles that provide a ground of choice through their ‘matter’ cannot provide laws or apply with true normative necessity, but he does not clearly explain why formal principles (in his sense), and only formal principles, do apply with necessity. Reath argues that Kant’s conception of a formal principle is best understood not simply as a principle that involves some abstraction from content, but as a principle that is constitutive of some domain of cognitive activity – a principle that defines and makes possible and tacitly guides all instances of that kind of cognitive activity. So the formal principle of the rational or pure will would be its internal constitutive principle. Reath argues that understanding formal principles as constitutive principles establishes the connection that Kant sees between form, or formal principles, and normative necessity: a constitutive principle necessarily governs the relevant domain of cognitive activity and is not coherently rejected by anyone engaged in that activity. Reath develops this notion of formal principle, then considers how it figures in various central Kantian arguments – for example, that ‘material principles of morality’ cannot ground genuine laws and that a will governed by the formal principle of volition is a free will.

In ‘Moral consciousness and the “fact of reason”’, Pauline Kleingeld sheds new light on the significance of Kant’s claim that moral consciousness

can be called a ‘fact of reason’ (*Factum der Vernunft*). Many commentators take this claim to indicate that Kant gives up his earlier aspiration of justifying the principle of morality, and instead adopts an unarguable point of departure. This reading often leads to the complaint that Kant now leaves his moral theory without a proper foundation, and that even if moral consciousness is universal, morality might still be an illusion. Kleingeld argues that the hermeneutical key to a better interpretation lies in the proper understanding of the meaning of ‘*Factum*’. Current interpretations of ‘*Factum*’ as ‘fact’ fail to consider the etymological background. In Kant’s times, the first meaning of the term was ‘deed’, and its second meaning was ‘fact’, understood as the result of activity. Against recent proposals to read it as ‘deed’ or as a technical term indicating a moment in Kant’s proof structure, she argues that ‘*Factum*’, as used by Kant, is best understood as a fact that is the result of an activity. Furthermore, Kleingeld argues that the consciousness at issue in the fact of reason should be understood fundamentally as the consciousness of a *rational* principle, namely, of the law of pure practical reason. The argument of the [first chapter](#) of the second *Critique* proceeds almost entirely in terms of practical reason and the fundamental practical law, not morality. Of course Kant identifies this fundamental law with the moral law, but highlighting his focus on a rational principle helps avoid the misunderstanding that he is simply presupposing a particular conception of morality. This reading of Kant’s claims about the fact of reason makes it possible to answer the main criticisms voiced in the literature.

Jens Timmermann’s chapter, ‘Reversal or retreat? Kant’s deductions of freedom and morality’, concerns the differences between the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, published three years earlier – in particular their differences on the question whether the principle of morality stands in need of philosophical justification, as do the categories in Kant’s theoretical philosophy. The third section of the *Groundwork* purports to contain such a ‘deduction’ and thus the core of a ‘critique of pure practical reason’. In the second *Critique*, Kant explicitly rejects his previous conception of a ‘critique of pure practical reason’, comes close to admitting that his search for a ‘deduction of the moral principle’ was unsuccessful and deems explanation of the possibility of moral commands both impossible and unnecessary. Criticizing the practical faculty as a whole now reveals that the moral law is given as a ‘fact of reason’ and leads to a ‘deduction of freedom’ on moral grounds. Timmermann argues that the *Critique of Practical Reason* marks not just a strategic reversal, but also a retreat. The reason is that although many of the familiar doctrines and

arguments of *Groundwork* III reappear in the later work – the reciprocity thesis, the notion of ‘transferral into an intelligible order’, the idea that we conceive of ourselves as members of a normative realm – Kant is no longer willing to employ these elements in a formal deduction of the categorical imperative. A deduction would have to rely on the intuition of ourselves as members of a realm of autonomy, and according to Kant’s own epistemic restrictions, no such intuition is possible. Thus Kant now realizes that the justification of morality cannot be assimilated to the transcendental deduction of the concepts of the pure understanding. Furthermore, the second *Critique* represents a retreat because what in the *Groundwork* is merely meant to *confirm* the correctness of the moral deduction now takes its place: since ordinary moral consciousness establishes that morality is real, the question of its possibility can safely be disregarded.

In ‘The *Triebfeder* of pure practical reason’, Stephen Engstrom explores Kant’s account, in [Chapter III](#) of the *Analytic*, of how pure reason moves us to act through the moral law that it legislates, or how it is practical in human beings, in whom choice is subject to sensible impulses that may conflict with that law. Since the practicality at issue belongs to reason, it cannot depend on any special feature of our sensible nature that distinguishes humans from other sensible but rational beings. So the challenge is to show how the moral law can exercise an effect on the capacity to feel, and thereby become a spring of action, but without assuming any special capacity of moral feeling. In response, Kant describes certain natural attitudes that we have towards ourselves, claiming that our sensible nature includes a propensity of self-love, which also involves a propensity to self-conceit – an attitude of esteeming oneself in comparison with others. Since these propensities to love and to esteem oneself belong to us as sensible but rational beings, they take the form of tendencies to advance certain claims in which we deem ourselves worthy of the love and the esteem of others. Each person, however, being implicitly conscious of the moral law as the standard of validity for all such claims, recognizes that although love directed to oneself can be valid when broadened to include others, self-conceit, being essentially exclusive on account of its comparative nature, is inherently invalid and therefore to be wholly rejected. This recognition is in the first instance humiliating – a negative feeling expressing the passive side of the moral law’s striking down self-conceit. But complementary to this humiliation is a feeling of respect for the moral law, a feeling that is positive in so far as the law is recognized as integral to one’s constitution as a rational being. Observing that the diminution of self-conceit through this humiliation constitutes a furtherance of the moral law’s efficacy, Kant points to

this distinctive feeling of respect as the moral law's effect on the capacity to feel, or pure reason's practicality as it operates in rational beings with a sensible nature.

Pierre Keller's contribution, 'Two conceptions of compatibilism in the *Critical Elucidation*', takes on the conception of free will in the second *Critique*. Kant rejects a standard form of compatibilism, according to which psychological freedom is compatible with causal determinism, because that conception of freedom is insufficient to ground moral responsibility. Instead he develops a more complex form of compatibilism aimed at reconciling a stronger 'transcendental' (incompatibilist) conception of freedom with causal determinism through a two-standpoint approach to action. Keller's essay explores the contours of Kant's more complex form of compatibilism. Keller discusses Kant's view that the ideal of complete explanation generated by theoretical reason requires the real possibility of uncaused causes, but that attempts by theoretical reason to make sense of this idea lead to antinomy. Only practical reason can give content to this idea, through the commitments of ordinary moral thought. Common-sense morality is committed to the existence of categorical obligations that apply unconditionally, and thus to the possibility of being motivated solely by the intrinsic reasonableness of an action, independently of antecedent considerations tied to one's spatio-temporal position. In this way moral agency supports a notion of 'absolute spontaneity' or transcendental freedom. Keller explores the limits that Kant sees to empirical or psychological accounts of free agency. He then shows how the two-standpoint approach that emerges from Kant's transcendental idealism attempts to reconcile a more robust notion of free agency with causal determinism. If the notion of a complete set of inquiry-independent causal conditions is a necessary illusion of inquiry, then the claim that unconditioned agency and causal determinism stand in antinomial relation to each other is itself illusory. Since the transcendental idealist views the idea of complete causal explanation as a regulative ideal that can never be fully carried out, empirical causal explanations are never complete. That leaves us free in principle to regard our actions in terms of normative reasons, that is, to adopt a different standpoint towards our action from that of deterministic causal explanation. Furthermore, the commitments of common-sense morality to normative reasons based on unconditional obligations require that we take ourselves to be able to act on such reasons. In this manner, common-sense morality's commitment to the moral law gives both warrant and content to unconditional reasons as causes of action.

In his discussion of the Antinomy of Practical Reason, ‘The Antinomy of Practical Reason: reason, the unconditioned and the highest good’, Eric Watkins draws on certain features of the Antinomy of Pure Reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason* to reconstruct Kant’s argument and articulate its resolution. He then poses a number of basic questions about the concept of the highest good and develops detailed answers. The questions are: must there must be an object of pure practical reason at all?; must there be a *single* object of pure practical reason?; must the object of pure practical reason be the *highest good*?; could the highest good not be simply the supreme good rather than the complete good?; why must virtue and happiness be related by means of a one-way causal relation in the complete good? The resource that Watkins finds most helpful in addressing these questions is Kant’s conception of reason, according to which reason searches for the totality of conditions, and thus the unconditioned, for any conditioned object.

Marcus Willaschek’s essay is on ‘The primacy of practical reason and the idea of a practical postulate’. In several places in Kant’s work, most prominently in the Dialectic of the second *Critique*, Kant denies the unrestricted validity of the principle that rational belief requires evidence in favour of its truth. Rather, we can have rational warrant for a belief even in the complete absence of evidence for it, subject to two conditions. First, the belief must be ‘theoretically undecidable’: there can be no possible empirical evidence nor a conclusive a priori argument for or against the belief in question. Second, the belief must be ‘practically necessary’: someone who acknowledges the moral law as binding must, by a kind of subjective but still rational necessity, hold the belief in question. Kant calls a theoretical proposition that is both theoretically undecidable and practically necessary a ‘postulate of pure practical reason’, and he argues that there are exactly three such postulates – the existence of God, our own transcendental freedom and our immortality. With respect to these postulates, Kant holds that it is rational for us to *believe* in their truth even though they lie beyond the reach of human knowledge. In his essay, Willaschek concentrates on the general idea of a postulate of pure practical reason as a form of belief that is rationally held, though not based on evidence. He begins by laying out the special logical structure of the argument for the possibility of a postulate that Kant gives in the section ‘On the Primacy of Practical Reason’, then critically discusses and ultimately defends that argument. He considers the general idea of a postulate of pure practical reason and the epistemological status that Kant assigns to it. Finally, he suggests that the main idea behind Kant’s argument does not depend on Kant’s own, very demanding conception of morality.

Stefano Bacin's essay, 'The meaning of the *Critique of Practical Reason* for moral beings: the Doctrine of Method of Pure Practical Reason', addresses the philosophical role of the Doctrine of Method, the brief Part II of the second *Critique*. In order to underscore the functional connection of this part with the whole, Bacin begins by discussing the general meaning of 'a doctrine of method' in Kant's work, as well as the specific goals of the Doctrine of Method of the second *Critique*. The central section of the chapter focuses on the notion of 'receptivity to morality', which here has a central role and a quite distinct meaning. Bacin argues that Kant's main point in his account of how to 'make objective practical reason *subjectively* practical' (*CpV* 5:151) is that one ought to lead the individual agent to become aware of his own humanity, or fundamental dignity as a moral being, through an understanding of the basic concepts of the Doctrine of Elements. Awareness of one's humanity is the proper basis for conscious moral life. In Kant's view, recognition of this point is relevant to the overall aim of the second *Critique* – to show that pure reason is practical – and of moral theory itself. Kant believes that he has supplied a theory of moral agency that for the first time allows agents to understand their status as moral beings. The task of the Doctrine of Method is to show how it is possible to make agents aware of their basic moral capacities, and through that awareness to instil genuine moral dispositions. Accordingly, the Doctrine of Method is the completion of the *Critique*, confirming the conclusions of the Analytic through the common use of pure practical reason and connecting them with the experience of every moral agent. Bacin closes by discussing how Kant proposes to accomplish this task through exercises and examples intended to make agents aware of different features of their receptivity to morality. The 'science', or moral theory, developed in the first part of the *Critique* is thus connected with its final goal of a 'doctrine of wisdom'.

CHAPTER I

*The origin and aim of Kant's Critique
of Practical Reason*

Heiner F. Klemme

Why did Kant feel the need to write a *Critique of Practical Reason* after he had published the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*? Is it because he acknowledged, with the 'fact of pure practical reason', that his attempt to deduce the moral law in the *Groundwork* had failed? Or did he have other reasons to write a second *Critique* before publishing his *Metaphysics of Morals*? Obviously enough, Kant seeks to establish in the *Critique of Practical Reason* 'that there is pure practical reason'.¹ Kant does so with his critique of the 'entire practical faculty' that underlies the merely pure practical and the empirical practical application of reason. These two forms of the application of practical reason (roughly) correspond to the distinction between the 'analytic of pure practical reason' and the 'dialectic of pure practical reason'.

In the Analytic, Kant shows 'that pure reason can be practical – that is, can of itself, independently of anything empirical, determine the will – and it does so by a fact in which pure reason in us proves itself actually practical, namely autonomy in the principle of morality by which reason determines the will to deeds' (*CpV* 5:42). In the Dialectic in contrast, Kant maintains that pure reason in its practical application gets into conflict with itself while determining the highest good, which runs counter to the facticity of pure practical reason and is in danger of undercutting the validity of the moral law: 'If, therefore, the highest good is impossible in accordance with practical rules, then the moral law, which commands us to promote it, must be fantastic and directed to empty imaginary ends and must therefore in itself be false' (*CpV* 5:114). If there were an antinomy in the concept of a highest good, the doctrine of a 'fact of pure reason' could not be true. In

¹ Earlier versions of this text were presented at conferences in St Andrews, Leiden, Pisa and São Paulo. For further suggestions and criticism, I am especially thankful to Stefano Bacin, Reinhard Brandt, Bernd Ludwig, Andrews Reath and Jens Timmermann. I also thank Falk Wunderlich for the English translation.

order to secure the validity of the moral law, Kant thus has to show *why* pure reason gets into dialectical troubles, and *how* this dialectic can be resolved. The key to understanding this part of the argument is empirical practical reason, to which the empiricist philosophers refer as the chief witness in their sceptical attacks against the morality of the categorical imperative. According to Kant, empirical practical reason threatens the reality of the moral law, and at the same time, criticizing empirical practical reason secures its reality.

If the ‘fact of pure practical reason’ can be regarded as secure only when the ‘antinomy of pure practical reason’ has been formulated and also resolved, clearly the key to understanding the origin and aim of the second *Critique* lies in the Dialectic, and not (just) in the Analytic. With the doctrine of the ‘fact of pure practical reason’, Kant may or may not have abandoned the deductive strategy of the *Groundwork*; but without taking the ‘antinomy of pure practical reason’ into account, we will not understand why Kant composed the second *Critique* in the way he did. There is no model for this antinomy in Kant’s previous writings.

But what kind of considerations might have lead Kant to the ‘discovery’ (or construction²) of an ‘antinomy of pure practical reason’? Why does he publish the *Critique of Practical Reason* – and not just an appendix to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* entitled ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’, as he intended to do in late 1786? These questions are answered best when we turn to the history of the development of Kant’s philosophy and look for the motives that guided his reasoning between November 1786 and April 1787.

I. CRITICAL MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND ITS CRITICS

In spring 1786, Kant prepares a second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* at his publisher’s suggestion, where he wishes to react to the objections raised against the first edition from 1781. According to Kant, all these objections rest upon a ‘mistaken interpretation’³ of his main work. In the advertisement for the new edition, published on 21 November 1786 in the

² For more details on the ‘antinomy of practical reason’ that turns out not in fact to exist, see the instructive study by Bernhard Milz, *Der gesuchte Widerstreit. Die Antinomie in Kants ‘Kritik der praktischen Vernunft’* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2002).

³ See Kant’s letter to L. H. Jakob of 26 May 1786: ‘I am just now occupied with a second edition of the *Critique*, at the request of my publisher, and with it I shall clarify certain parts of the work whose misunderstanding has occasioned all the objections so far brought against it ... their strength will subside of itself once the pretext of their mistaken interpretation is removed’ (10:450 f.).

Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung (Jena), he also refers to a ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’ extending the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he intends to rebut ‘objections’, especially against the ‘principle of morality’, and to conclude ‘the whole of the critical investigations’:

there will also be a *Critique of Pure Practical Reason* as an addition to the *Critique of Pure Speculative Reason* in the first edition, which will, on the one hand, secure the principle of morality against the objections that have been raised or will be raised in the future, and on the other hand, is capable of accomplishing the whole of the critical investigations that precede the system of the philosophy of pure reason.⁴

However, Kant completed the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in April 1787 without the ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’ that he had announced. In the meantime, he has changed his plans: he abandons the ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’ as an appendix to the ‘*Critique of Pure Speculative Reason*’ (as he dubs the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1786), and instead, he prepares for publication a monograph with the title *Critique of Practical Reason*.⁵ As early as 25 June 1787, Kant reports the imminent completion of his work on the new opus:

I am so far along with my *Critique of Practical Reason* that I intend to send it to Halle for printing next week. This work will better demonstrate and make comprehensible the possibility of supplementing, by pure practical reason, that which I denied to speculative reason – better than all the controversies with Feder and Abel⁶ (of whom the first maintains that there is no a priori cognition at all while the other maintains that there is some sort of cognition halfway between the empirical and the a priori). For this is really the stumbling block that made these men prefer to take the most impossible, yes, absurd path, in order to extend the speculative faculty to the supersensible, rather than submit to what they felt to be the wholly desolate verdict of the *Critique*.⁷

On 11 September, Kant writes to Ludwig Heinrich Jakob that the *Critique of Practical Reason* ‘contains many things that will serve to correct

⁴ Quoted from Albert Landau (ed.), *Rezensionen zur Kantischen Philosophie*, vol. I (Bebra: Landau, 1990), 471–2. Kant had already mentioned this endeavour in a letter to Friedrich Gottlob Born of 24 September 1786 that has been lost. Born replies to Kant as follows: ‘I am looking forward immensely, by the by, to the important addition of a critique of practical reason, with which you will embellish your splendid work [i.e. the *CrV*] still more’ (10:470–2, here 471).

⁵ Against this, Beck argues with regard to *CrV* Bxlili that Kant had conceived such a plan ‘only after April 1787’ (Lewis White Beck, *Kants ‘Kritik der praktischen Vernunft’. Ein Kommentar* (Munich: W. Fink, 1974) 26; see also 24, 27–8; similarly Giovanni B. Sala, *Kants ‘Kritik der praktischen Vernunft’. Ein Kommentar* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), 53).

⁶ See Jacob Friedrich Abel, *Versuch über die Natur der speculativen Vernunft zur Prüfung des Kantischen Systems* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1787).

⁷ 10:490.

the misunderstandings of the [Critique of] theoretical [reason]. I shall now turn at once to the *Critique of Taste*, with which I shall have finished my critical work, so that I can proceed to the dogmatic part. I think it will appear before Easter' (10:494). In his letter to Carl Leonhard Reinhold, dated 28 and 31 December 1787, Kant once more expresses the aim of the *Critique of Practical Reason*: 'This little book will sufficiently resolve the many contradictions that the followers of the old-guard philosophy imagine they see in my *Critique [of Pure Reason]*, and at the same time the contradictions in which they themselves are unavoidably caught up if they refuse to abandon their botched job are made perspicuous.'⁸

The *Critique of Practical Reason* appears (with the year 1788 on the title page) in December 1787.⁹ In the preface, Kant comments on the title of the work:

Why this *Critique* is not entitled a *Critique of Pure Practical Reason* but simply a *Critique of Practical Reason* generally, although its parallelism with the speculative seems to require the first, is sufficiently explained in this treatise. It has merely to show that there is pure practical reason, and for this purpose it criticizes reason's entire practical faculty. If it succeeds in this it has no need to criticize the pure faculty itself in order to see whether reason is merely making a claim in which it presumptuously oversteps itself (as does happen with speculative reason).¹⁰

The aim of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, thus, is inverse compared with the aim of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: Whereas the first *Critique* is supposed to show that we cannot apply pure reason constitutively in a speculative sense, the second *Critique* is supposed to substantiate the view that objections against the practical constitutive application of pure reason put forward by the empiricists and sceptics are vacuous. Although we cannot understand the possibility of a pure application of practical reason a priori, this application must be possible, since the moral law is given to us in consciousness as 'the sole fact of pure reason' (*CpV* 5:31).

The objections against the possibility and the reality of the pure practical use of reason dissolve to nothing once we clearly distinguish between the

⁸ 10:513–16, here: 514.

⁹ See Kant's letter to Marcus Herz of 24 December 1787 (10:512) and Friedrich August Grunert's letter to Kant of December 1787 (10:506).

¹⁰ *CpV* 5:3. With pure practical reason, 'transcendental freedom is also established, taken indeed in that absolute sense in which speculative reason needed it, in its use of the concept of causality, in order to rescue itself from the antinomy into which it unavoidably falls when it wants to think the *unconditioned* in the series of causal connection' (*CpV* 5:3). For the significance of the *Critique of Pure Reason* for the positive concept of practical freedom in the *Critique of Practical Reason* see *CrV* Bxxx and *CrV* Bxxviii–xxix.

pure practical and the empirical practical application of (pure) reason. This point is stressed by Kant in one of his reflections:

The critique of practical reason has as its basis the differentiation of empirically conditioned practical reason from the pure and yet practical reason and asks whether there is such a thing as the latter. The critique cannot have insight into this possibility *a priori* because it concerns the relation of a real ground to a consequence, thus something must be given which can arise from it alone; and from reality possibility can be inferred. The moral laws are of this sort, and this must be proven in the same way we proved the representations of space and time as *a priori* representations, only with the difference that the latter concern intuitions but the former mere concepts of reason. The only difference is that in theoretical knowledge the concepts have no meaning and the principles no use except with regard to objects of experience, whereas in the practical, by contrast, they have much wider use, namely they apply to all rational beings in general and are independent of all empirical determining grounds, and that indeed, even if no object of experience corresponds to them, the mere manner of thinking and the disposition in accordance with principles already suffice.¹¹

Because the second *Critique* is intended to rebut the attacks against the practical application of pure reason, it cannot be a 'Critique of Pure Practical Reason'. The problem is not pure practical reason, but empirical practical reason, and thereby those philosophers who intend to undermine the absolute validity of the moral law with reference to it.

In the preface to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant comments on a few objections that have been raised against his critical philosophy in general, as well as against his foundation of moral philosophy in particular, since 1781. The most important of them pertain to (a) the relationship of freedom and the moral law, (b) the possibility of expanding our knowledge by the practical application of reason beyond the boundaries of experience and (c) the relationship of moral law and highest good.

(a) Johann Friedrich Flatt,¹² in his review of the *Groundwork*, had objected that it is inconsistent to 'call freedom the condition of the moral law' on

¹¹ Reflection 7201, 19:275–6 (in *Notes and Fragments*, trans. Paul Guyer, Curtius Bowman and Frederick Rauscher (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 464).

¹² 'Were this writing in front of us a few centuries older: we would hardly be able to resist the temptation to doubt the authenticity of one of the passages mentioned. But since this doubt is completely unnecessary in the present case, what remains is only to deem the inconsistencies and paralogisms we encountered *antinomies of Kant's reason*.' *Tübinger gelehrte Anzeigen*, fourteenth piece, 16 February 1786, 105–12, here 108–9; reprinted in Landau, *Rezensionen*, 277–83, here 281. For the significance of this review see also Johann Georg Hamann's letter to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi of 13 May 1786, in Johann Georg Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, vol. VI, ed. A. Henkel (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1975), 389–90. References to further reviews and critical reactions are to be found in Heiner F. Klemme,

the one hand, and on the other hand to claim ‘that the moral law is the condition under which we can first *become aware* of freedom’ (CpV 5:4fn.). Kant addresses this objection with his famous distinction between freedom as *ratio essendi* of the moral law, and the moral law as *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom: ‘Lest anyone suppose that he finds an *inconsistency* when I now call freedom the condition of the moral law and afterwards, in the treatise, maintain that the moral law is the condition under which we can first *become aware* of freedom, I want only to remark that whereas freedom is indeed the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom’ (CpV 5:4fn.).

(b) According to Kant,

the most considerable objections to the *Critique* that have so far come to my attention turn about just these two points: namely, *on the one side* the objective reality of the categories applied to noumena, denied in theoretical cognition¹³ and affirmed in practical, and *on the other side* the paradoxical requirement to make oneself as subject of freedom a noumenon but at the same, with regard to nature, a phenomenon in one’s own empirical consciousness¹⁴

These objections, raised by Johann Georg Heinrich Feder¹⁵ and Hermann August Pistorius,¹⁶ for example, can only be answered by ‘a detailed *Critique of Practical Reason*’ (CpV 5:6–7), where the ‘concepts of morality and freedom’ (CpV 5:6) are clearly determined. Hence, the *Critique of Practical*

‘Einleitung’ and ‘Sachanmerkungen’, in Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, ed. H. D. Brandt and H. F. Klemme (Hamburg: Meiner, 2003) and in Heiner F. Klemme, ‘Praktische Gründe und moralische Motivation. Eine deontologische Perspektive’, in H. F. Klemme, M. Kühn and D. Schönecker (eds.), *Moralische Motivation. Kant und die Alternativen* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2006), 113–53.

¹³ See CrVA378–9 and B429–30. ¹⁴ CpV 5:6.

¹⁵ *Zugabe zu den Göttingischen Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, third piece, January 19, 1782, 40–8, here 46; reprinted in Landau, *Rezensionen*, 10–17, here 16.

¹⁶ Hermann Andreas Pistorius comments on this point in his anonymous review of Johann Schultz’s *Erläuterungen über des Herrn Professor Kant Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Königsberg, 1784) as follows: ‘I further ask how it is possible, if man’s entire soul, his entire faculty of representation with all its impacts is regarded as appearance (how it has to be done according to the principles the author established and to his notion of space and time, as I understand it), to interpret a part of this soul – and what else is reason – as a noumenon, or a thing in itself! How do we know, given we are completely ignorant of the intelligible world and the *things in themselves*, that something belonging to man’s subjective and apparent power of thought, i.e. his reason, and thus he himself as well, insofar he is provided with reason, a part of the world of the understanding, *is a thing in itself*?’ (*Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, 1786, 111; Landau, *Rezensionen*, 342; for Pistorius see also Bernward Gesang (ed.), *Kants vergessener Rezensent. Die Kritik der theoretischen und praktischen Philosophie Kants in fünf Rezensionen von Hermann Andreas Pistorius* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2007). Kant also refers to this review in a preparatory work for the preface to the second *Critique*, see 21:416.

Reason has to show how the concept of causality through freedom obtains a non-empirical meaning.

(c) With the [second chapter](#) of the Analytic ('Of the Concept of an Object of Pure Practical Reason'), Kant reacts to an objection raised by Pistorius.¹⁷ According to Pistorius, Kant mistakenly did not establish the concept of the good 'before the moral principle' (*CpV* 5:9). In this chapter, Kant tries to justify 'the paradox of method', according to which 'the concept of good and evil must not be determined before the moral law (for which, as it would seem, this concept would have to be made the basis) but only (as was done here) after it and by means of it.'¹⁸

Without these objections,¹⁹ Kant probably would not have seen a reason to enlarge his *Critique of Pure Reason* with a 'Critique of Pure Practical Reason'. Actually, in none of the other critical writings does he deal with his critics to such an extent as in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. But what exactly explains the shift from the 'Critique of Pure Practical Reason' (as an appendix to the *Critique of Pure Reason*) to the *Critique of Practical Reason* (as a monograph) that occurred between November 1786 and April 1787? Was this shift due to pragmatic or merely technical reasons, as some commentators believe?²⁰ Or did Kant, in the context of his engagement with his critics, arrive at new insights into the nature of pure reason that forced him to publish a *Critique of Practical Reason*? Generally, two scenarios can be distinguished. According to the *first* scenario, Kant initially intended to reject the arguments against his doctrine of the categorical imperative through a line of thought belonging to

¹⁷ In his review of the *Groundwork*, Pistorius writes: 'First, the author remarks that only a good will can be regarded as good without qualification, and that this will is good only by the act of willing, i.e. it is good in itself, and not by what it causes and achieves or by its capability of achieving some predetermined end ... The author admits that there is something disconcerting in this principle for the estimation of the value of the will, although it is supposed to be accepted also by common reason; therefore, he considers it necessary to further examine it once again. I primarily wish the author had discussed the general concept of *good*, and specified what he understands with it, because obviously, we first would have to agree on this before we were able to work out anything concerning the absolute value of a good will. Therefore, I am entitled to ask: what is good in general, and what is a good will in particular?' (*Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, 1786, 448–9; Landau, *Rezensionen*, 354–5).

¹⁸ *CpV* 5:62–3. Regarding the 'paradox of method', see Reinhard Brandt, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen bei Kant* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2007), 361–70.

¹⁹ Further remarks are to be found in Klemme, 'Einleitung' and 'Sachanmerkungen', and Allen W. Wood, 'Preface and Introduction (3–16)', in O. Höffe (ed.), *Immanuel Kant: Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 25–41.

²⁰ This is Allen W. Wood's thesis: 'But obviously in the course of preparing a second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, it became evident to Kant that neither the time allotted for completion of his revisions nor reasonable boundaries of length for what was already a very long book would permit him to do things this way' (Wood, 'Preface and Introduction', 26; see also Beck, *Kants 'Kritik der praktischen Vernunft'*, 25).

the subject areas of [Section III](#) of the *Groundwork*, but then ‘discovered’ the ‘fact of pure reason’ that motivated him to write the *Critique of Practical Reason*. According to the *second* scenario, the crucial step towards the second *Critique* could not have occurred before the ‘antinomy of pure practical reason’ had been discovered, whether or not Kant has developed the doctrine of the fact of pure reason prior to November 1786. Or put differently: by discovering the antinomy, Kant accomplishes the transition from the ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’ to the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

In what follows, I would like to side with the second scenario. I want to make the case that after November 1786, Kant redetermined the relationship of empirical practical and pure practical reason. Whereas in the *Groundwork*, he speaks of a ‘*natural dialectic*’ (*G* 4:405) into which common practical reason inevitably falls when reasoning about the categorical obligation of the moral law, in the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant undermines any basis for doubt in the reality of the moral law with his doctrine of the ‘fact of pure reason’. Instead, Kant ‘discovers’ that when reason is practically applied to determine the concept of the highest good, an (apparent) antinomy results. This ‘dialectic of pure practical reason’ (*CpV* 5:107) (which had a place neither in the *Critique of Pure Reason* nor in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and is without a historical model²¹) explains, by its sheer existence, why there has to be a separate *Critique of Practical Reason* (see [section III](#)).

This discovery is accompanied by a second one regarding the realm of our a priori knowledge. Before 1787, Kant holds that also the feeling of pleasure and displeasure can be evaluated a priori, which would be part of a *Groundwork of the Critique of Taste* or the *Critique of Judgment*, respectively. This is accompanied by a redetermination of critical philosophy: the *one* critique of pure reason²² is realized in three separate critiques, dedicated to the understanding (*Critique of Pure Reason* or ‘critique of speculative reason’), to the power of judgment (‘foundation of the critique of taste’ or *Critique of Judgment*) and to reason (*Critique of Practical Reason*) (see [section II](#)).

²¹ See Michael Albrecht, *Kants Antinomie der praktischen Vernunft* (Hildesheim: G. Olms Verlag, 1978), 15, 133 and Milz, *Der gesuchte Widerstreit*, 265.

²² In the so-called ‘First Introduction to the Critique of Judgment’, Kant speaks of the ‘critique of pure reason (taken in the most general sense)’ (20:241).

II. THE TRIAD OF UPPER FACULTIES AND THE
'CRITIQUE OF TASTE'

In the note published in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* in November 1786 quoted above, Kant points to the significance of the 'Critique of Pure Practical Reason' for accomplishing the 'critical investigations'. Here, a first reason for the separate publication of the *Critique of Practical Reason* is hinted at. In order to understand it, we have to turn towards an aspect of the history of Kant's development in the 1780s, although there is not a single word on it in the second *Critique*, namely, the discovery that even our judgment of taste is a priori.²³ If taste can be given and needs a critique, it seems natural to devote a separate critique to each of the three faculties of cognition, feeling and volition. With the decision to write a 'Groundwork of the Critique of Taste' – leading to the *Critique of Judgment* – it no longer makes sense to publish the 'Critique of Pure Practical Reason' as an appendix to the *Critique of Pure Reason*.²⁴

When exactly does Kant decide to write a *Critique of Taste*? The announcement of a 'Groundwork of the Critique of Taste' (*Grundlegung zur Kritik des Geschmacks*) that Kant's publisher Johann Friedrich Hartknoch in Riga arranged for the Leipzig exhibition catalogue²⁵ for spring 1787 is particularly telling. Johann Bering refers to it in a letter to Kant of 28 May 1787: 'As much as I was delighted when reading in the Leipzig exhibition catalogue that you [Ew. Wohlgeb.] endow us again with a foundation of the critique of taste, in addition to the new edition of the Critique; so much was I saddened, since I did not find what I have so long desired, namely, the system of pure speculative and practical philosophy. If only you would take delight in endowing us with it soon' (10:488). Bering could not know that Kant was already working on the fulfilment of his wish. In the preface to the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant emphasizes – also as a

²³ See Piero Giordanetti, 'Kants Entdeckung der Apriorität des Geschmacksurteils. Zur Genese der Kritik der Urteilskraft', in H. F. Klemme *et al.* (eds.), *Aufklärung und Interpretation* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999), 171–96.

²⁴ Förster argues in a similar way: 'The critique of taste would thus have to be integrated into the new edition of the first Critique, together with its analogue in moral philosophy. Therefore, it can hardly be surprising that Kant decided in favour of three separate Critiques.' (Eckart Förster, 'Kant und Strawson über ästhetische Urteile', in J. Stolzenberg (ed.), *Kant in der Gegenwart* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2007), 269–89, here 276.) However, Förster does not consider that Kant initially intended to write a 'Critique of Pure Practical Reason', and accordingly, he does not discuss possible reasons to explain the turn towards the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

²⁵ 'Dessen Grundlegung zur Kritik des Geschmacks. gr. 8. Ebenda [Riga: Hartknoch]', Weidmann, *Leipziger Meßkatalog Ostern 1787* (see 5:515).

reaction to Pistorius' criticism – the relevance of this work to the systematicity of his philosophy:

Now, the concept of freedom, insofar as its reality is proved by an apodictic law of practical reason, constitutes the *keystone* of the whole structure of a system of pure reason, even of speculative reason; and all other concepts (those of God and immortality), which as mere ideas remain without support in the latter, now attach themselves to this concept and with it and by means of it get stability and objective reality, that is, their *possibility* is *proved* by this: that freedom is real, for this idea reveals itself through the moral law.²⁶

The *Critique of Practical Reason* rebuts the objections against the *Critique of Pure Reason* by providing 'objective reality' to its ideas of God and immortality with the concept of practical freedom.²⁷

But what could be the function of a 'Groundwork of the Critique of Taste' within the critical architectonic, if the 'keystone' of the system has already been set? In June 1787, Kant is still announcing a 'Groundwork of the Critique of Taste',²⁸ but changes his plans in December 1787 at the latest: the foundation *of*, or rather *for*, the critique of taste turns into *the* 'Critique of Taste'. In his letter to Reinhold of December 1787, Kant comments on the genesis of his third *Critique* as follows:

I am now at work on the critique of taste, and I have discovered a new sort of a priori principle, different from those heretofore observed. For there are three faculties of the mind: the faculty of cognition, the faculty of feeling pleasure and displeasure, and the faculty of desire. In the *Critique of Pure (theoretical) Reason*, I found a priori principles for the first of these, and in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, a priori principles for the third. I tried to find them for the second as well, and though I thought it impossible to find such principles, the analysis of the previously mentioned faculties of the human mind allowed me to discover a systematicity, giving me ample material at which to marvel and if possible to explore, material sufficient to last for the rest of my life. This systematicity put me on the path to recognizing the three parts of philosophy, each of which has its a priori principles, which can be enumerated and for which one can delimit precisely the knowledge that may be based on them; theoretical philosophy, teleology, and practical philosophy, of which the second is, to be sure, the least rich in a priori grounds of determination.²⁹

²⁶ CpV 5:3–4.

²⁷ Kant emphasizes this also in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, see CrV Bxxix–xxx and B395fn.

²⁸ See his letter to Christian Gottfried Schütz of 25 June 1787 (10:490). The Academy Edition mistakenly reads '*Grundlage*' (10:490) instead of 'Grundleg.'. For the corrected text, see Werner Stark, *Nachforschungen zu Briefen und Handschriften Immanuel Kants* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), 228.

²⁹ 10:514–15.

So, Kant had been planning to work on a monograph entitled 'Groundwork of the Critique of Taste' since spring 1787 at the latest, which he refers to as 'Critique of Taste' in a letter to Reinhold in December of the same year. The decision to publish a *Critique of Practical Reason*, already established in April 1787, and its actual publication in December 1787 are therefore closely connected to the decision initially to publish a 'Groundwork of', and subsequently a 'Critique of Taste'.

Kant's discovery of the a priori character of the judgment of taste provides him with an excellent reason to divide the project of the *one* 'critique of pure reason' into three separate critiques, which are yet materially related with regard to our three higher faculties (understanding, judgment and reason).³⁰ It should not come as a surprise here that in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant does not assign the function of demonstrating the *unity* of the three critical writings to the 'Critique of Taste'. This function is assigned to it only in the *Critique of Judgment*. Because the 'Critique of Taste' is not a critique of either pure speculative or practical reason, but rather dedicates itself to a critical examination of the reflective *power of judgment*, Kant was able to declare 'the structure of a system of pure reason' (*CpV* 5:3) completed in 1787, without thereby completing his 'critical enterprise' (10:494) as well, as he had announced in November 1786. He completed this 'enterprise' by his own account only with and in the *Critique of Judgment*.³¹ As he puts it in the 'First Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*': 'Philosophy, as a doctrinal system of the cognition of nature as well as freedom' does not acquire 'a new part' by the critical examination of the power of judgment (20:205), but would remain incomplete as the system of critical philosophy.

The relevance of the triad of higher faculties to Kant's decision to write a separate *Critique of Practical Reason* is sustained by formulations in the prefaces to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*,³² to the *Critique of Practical Reason*³³ and to the *Critique of Judgment*. To give but one example, Kant begins the preface to the third *Critique* as follows:

³⁰ See *CrVA*130/B169.

³¹ 'Thus with this I bring my entire critical enterprise to an end' (*CU* 5:170).

³² 'Since during these labors I have come to be rather advanced in age (this month I will attain my sixty-fourth year), I must proceed frugally with my time if I am to carry out my plan of providing the metaphysics both of nature and of morals, as confirmation of the correctness of the critique both of theoretical and practical reason' (*CrV* Bxliii).

³³ 'It may be observed throughout the course of the critical philosophy (of theoretical as well as practical reason)' (*CpV* 5:9fn.).

The faculty of cognition from a priori principles can be called *pure reason*, and the investigation of its possibility and boundaries in general can be called the critique of pure reason; although by this faculty only reason in its theoretical use is understood, as was also the case in the first work under this title, without bringing into the investigation its capacity as practical reason, in accordance with its special principles.³⁴

Kant instantly correlates these remarks to the three faculties: the *Critique of Pure Reason* is correlated with the understanding (in a constitutive respect) and the *Critique of Practical Reason* with reason (in a constitutive respect). The latter ‘contains constitutive principles a priori ... with regard to the *faculty of desire*’. The *one* project of a critique of pure reason is realized in three steps, according to Kant’s remarks from 1790: ‘the critique of the pure understanding, of the pure power of judgment, and of pure reason, which faculties are called pure because they are legislative a priori’.³⁵ This new determination of the relationship between critique and faculty explains why Kant abandons the ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’ as an appendix to the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

III. FROM THE *GROUNDWORK OF THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS* TO THE *CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON*

Certainly, discovering a priori principles of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure was an important reason for Kant’s decision to write a second *Critique*, but it was certainly not the only one. Since he mentions the ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’ (*G* 4:391; cf. *G* 4:446 ff.) in the *Groundwork*, it can be assumed that a comparison between the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* provides us with another clue why Kant published the *Critique of Practical Reason* in late 1787 instead of a ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’.

In the *Groundwork*, Kant distinguishes between the ‘critique of pure speculative reason’ and the ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’.³⁶ In 1785, however, he does not yet intend to devote a monograph to pure practical reason that will go beyond the discussion of the [third section](#) of the *Groundwork* (‘Transition from Metaphysics of Morals to the Critique of Pure Practical Reason’) *before* writing the *Metaphysics of Morals*. Rather, Kant’s opinion in 1785 seems to be that the *Groundwork* is entirely sufficient as a ‘preliminary work’ (*G* 4:391) to

³⁴ *CU* 5:167.

³⁵ *CU* 5:179. For the suggestion of a fourth *Critique*, apart from the three *Critiques* from 1781 (1787), 1787/8 and 1790, see Brandt, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, 497 ff.

³⁶ *G* 4:391; cf. *CrV* A841/B869.

the *Metaphysics of Morals*. A critique of pure practical reason is dispensable not least because, contrary to the theoretical application of our pure reason ('it is wholly dialectical'), in its moral application 'human reason can easily be brought to a high degree of correctness and accomplishment, even in the most common understanding' (G 4:391).

This statement is not completely unequivocal, however. Does Kant claim that the practical application of pure reason is *not* dialectical, contrary to its theoretical application? Or does he want to point out that 'in moral matters human reason' is involved with a certain dialectic, but one that can be resolved 'easily', contrary to the dialectic in the *Critique of Pure Reason*? Kant takes up the issue of the dialectic at the end of the [first section](#) of the *Groundwork* and interprets it in a way that supports the second alternative. After he has found the principle of morals in 'common rational moral cognition' (G 4:393 ff.),³⁷ he states:

Yet we cannot consider without admiration how great an advantage the practical faculty of appraising has over the theoretical in common human understanding. In the latter, if common reason ventures to depart from laws of experience and perceptions of the senses it falls into sheer incomprehensibilities and self contradictions, at least into a chaos of uncertainty, obscurity, and instability. But in practical matters, it is just when common understanding excludes all sensible incentives from practical laws that its faculty of appraising first begins to show itself to advantage.³⁸

Although the practical application of pure reason does *not* lead to a dialectic (based on an antinomy), we get entangled in a dialectical process when making (general) practical use of our reason that enforces the transition from common to philosophical rational cognition concerning morals. This process is explained by our sensible nature: as beings that strive for the satisfaction of their inclinations, human beings are motivated to reason *against* the strict demands of pure reason as soon as they interfere with their pursuit of happiness:

Now reason issues its precepts unremittingly, without thereby promising anything to the inclinations, and so, as it were, with disregard and contempt for those claims, which are so impetuous and besides so apparently equitable (and refuse to be neutralized by any command). But from this there arises a *natural dialectic*, that is, a propensity to rationalize against those strict laws of duty and to cast doubt upon their validity, or at least upon their purity and strictness, and where possible, to make them better suited to our wishes and inclinations.³⁹

When we want to provide 'access and durability' (G 4:405) to the moral law that is based on the application of pure reason, we have to resolve this – (as

³⁷ See G 4:403. ³⁸ G 4:404. ³⁹ G 4:405.

we might call it) weak – dialectic located between this rational insight and our desire for happiness. This can only happen within the frame of a metaphysics of morals that repudiates any doubt about the ‘purity and strictness’ (G 4:405) of the moral law. The *Groundwork* is necessary for purely practical reasons, because

common human reason is impelled, not by some need of speculation (which never touches it as long as it is content to be mere sound reason), but on practical grounds themselves, to go out of its sphere and to take a step into the field of *practical philosophy*, in order to obtain there information and distinct instruction regarding the source of its principle and the correct determination of this principle in comparison with maxims based on need and inclination, so that it may escape from its predicament about claims from both sides and not run the risk of being deprived of all genuine moral principles through the ambiguity into which it easily falls. So there develops unnoticed in common practical reason as well, when it cultivates itself, a *dialectic* that constrains it to seek help in philosophy, just as happens in its theoretical use; and the first will, accordingly, find no more rest than the other except in a complete critique of our reason.⁴⁰

Because the **third section** of the *Groundwork* announces the ‘transition from metaphysics of morals to the critique of pure practical reason’, and all dialectic requires a critique, clearly one should search for the resolution of the ‘natural dialectic’ in this section. However, Kant’s ‘*natural dialectic*’ does not establish a direct transition from ‘Metaphysics of Morals’ to ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’. Rather, the attempt to show ‘*on what grounds the moral law is binding*’,⁴¹ announced at the end of the **first section**, and to resolve the ‘natural dialectic’ in doing so, leads into ‘a kind of circle’ that requires critique in turn:

It must be freely admitted that a kind of circle comes to light here from which, as it seems, there is no way to escape. We take ourselves as free in the order of efficient causes in order to think ourselves under moral laws in the order of ends; and we afterwards think ourselves as subject to these laws because we have ascribed to ourselves freedom of will: for, freedom and the will’s own lawgiving are both autonomy and hence reciprocal concepts.⁴²

⁴⁰ G 4:405. ‘But such a completely isolated metaphysics of morals ... is not only an indispensable substratum of all theoretical and surely determined cognition of duties; it is also a desideratum of utmost importance to the actual fulfilment of their precepts’ (G 4:410; cf. G 4:389–90, 411–12).

⁴¹ G 4:450.

⁴² G 4:450. For a discussion of the suspected circle see, among others, Reinhard Brandt, ‘Der Zirkel im dritten Abschnitt von Kants “Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten”’, in H. Oberer and G. Seel (eds.), *Kant. Analysen – Probleme – Kritik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1988), 169–91; Dieter Schönecker, *Kant: Grundlegung III. Die Deduktion des kategorischen Imperativs* (Freiburg and Munich: Alber, 1999); Marcel Quarfood, ‘The Circle and the Two Standpoints (GMS III, 3)’, in C. Horn and D. Schönecker (eds.), *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2006), 285–300; and Jens Timmermann, *Kant’s ‘Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals’. A Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 131–4.

The suspicion that there might be a circle is cleared by answering the question about the ‘Whence’⁴³ of our obligation. In doing so, pure practical reason appeals to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which, with its distinction between things in themselves and appearances, indicates the point from which the concept of obligation originates, and the suspicion of a circle is eliminated. We have an obligation because we exist in the *mundus sensibilis* and the *mundus intelligibilis* at the same time: ‘For we now see that when we think of ourselves as free we transfer ourselves into the world of understanding as members of it and cognize autonomy of the will along with its consequence, morality; but if we think of ourselves as put under obligation we regard ourselves as belonging to the world of sense and yet at the same time to the world of understanding’ (*G* 4:453; cf. *G* 4:450). The suspicion of a circle is resolved together with the ‘*natural dialectic*’, since the critique of speculative reason takes care ‘that practical reason may have tranquillity and security from the external attacks that could make the land on which it wants to build a matter of dispute’ (*G* 4:457). These ‘external attacks’ are stated in the guise of the question ‘why the universal validity of our maxim as a law must be the limiting condition of our actions’ (*G* 4:449). The ‘*natural dialectic*’ is based on precisely this question – and with its resolution, the *Groundwork* has accomplished its practical end.⁴⁴

When we correlate our interpretation of the ‘*natural dialectic*’ with the question why Kant gave up his project of a ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’, we first have to search for the position of this dialectic in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. As a matter of fact, there is no space for the ‘weak’ ‘*natural dialectic*’ in the second *Critique* anymore.⁴⁵ It is not the question about the ‘Whence’ of our moral obligation, which has been settled with the ‘fact of pure reason’ and the feeling of respect for the moral law, but rather the *defence* of this ‘fact’. Kant has to show that happiness does not indirectly gain authority over our volition via the highest good, and that it does not undermine the ‘purity’ of the moral law. In its search for the

⁴³ Timmermann, *Kant’s Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 131fn. 25, rightly points to the fact that ‘whence’ is the correct English translation of ‘*woher*’, and not ‘on what grounds’ or ‘how’. However, the German ‘*woher*’ has both a spatial *and* a normative meaning in the context Kant uses it.

⁴⁴ See *G* 4:406, 410.

⁴⁵ So also Milz, *Der gesuchte Widerstreit*, 202, 277–8, and 316–17, and Eckart Förster, *Kant’s Final Synthesis. An Essay on the Opus postumum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 197. I do not think that Greenberg’s opinion is convincing, according to which the differences between the ‘*natural dialectic*’ of the *Groundwork*, the antinomy in the second *Critique* and the chapter on the canon of pure reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason* are due to the different intentions of these works (Sean Greenberg, ‘From Canon to Dialectic to Antinomy: Giving Inclinations Their Due’, *Inquiry* 48 (2005), 232–48). This interpretation ignores significant modifications of Kant’s ethics in the 1780s (see, among others, Klemme, ‘Praktische Gründe und moralische Motivation’).

highest and last object of its volition, pure reason engenders a conflict, namely, whether our subjective desire for happiness motivates us to virtue, or whether virtue causes our happiness (see *CpV* 5:113). Thus, the ‘*natural dialectic*’ of 1785, based on our sensible propensity to ‘reason’ against the validity of the moral law, turns into a dialectic in the concept of the highest good in 1787. Therefore, Kant changes the object of doubt (that proves unfounded in the end): whereas in 1785, doubt is cast upon the categorical validity of the moral law (hence upon freedom and our concurrent citizenship in both *mundus intelligibilis* and *mundus sensibilis*), in the *Critique of Practical Reason* doubt arises from the object⁴⁶ of our volition with the doctrine of the highest good: Do I have a motive to act virtuously only when I can hope that my virtuous aspiration causes my happiness? Or is it my desire for happiness that induces me to act virtuously?

Indeed, Kant’s plan to begin the second *Critique* with the doctrine of the fact of pure reason, which supersedes the systematic place ‘of this vainly sought deduction of the moral principle’ (*CpV* 5:47) of the *Groundwork*, has to be considered ingenious (even if perhaps not convincing on a systematical level). The validity of the categorical imperative is given relief from the ‘*natural dialectic*’, and the doubt of the critiques is explained by the ‘Antinomy of Pure Practical Reason’ (*CpV* 5:113–14), which they cannot resolve because of their lack of the proper (critical) instruments. Along these lines, Kant had mentioned to Reinhold in December 1787 that the *Critique of Practical Reason* demonstrates the contradictions in which those who ‘refuse to abandon their botched job’ are ‘unavoidably caught up’. Those who criticize the morality of the categorical imperative are confronted with a contradiction that is inevitable on the one hand, and whose resolution, on the other hand, at the same time proves the failure of the eudaimonist conception of morality.⁴⁷

With the doctrine of a consciousness of the moral law that is immune to doubt – the ‘*data*’ of the ‘original practical principles lying in our reason’ (*CrV* Bxxviii) – Kant rejects, in the manner of a *coup de main*, two objections: first the objection that he did not prove the moral law, and second, the objection that he did not give a meaning to the concept of freedom that transcends the state of discussion of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in both cases because man’s transcendental freedom is established with the practical reality thought in the moral law, whose possibility had to

⁴⁶ See Eckart Förster, ‘Die Dialektik der reinen praktischen Vernunft (107–121)’, in Höffe (ed.), *Immanuel Kant: Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 173–86, here 174.

⁴⁷ Similarly Albrecht, *Kants Antinomie der praktischen Vernunft*, 133.

be left open in the first *Critique*. Already in its preface, Kant determines the relation between freedom and moral law as follows: 'For, had not the moral law *already* been distinctly thought in our reason, we should never consider ourselves justified in *assuming* such a thing as freedom (even though it is not self-contradictory). But were there no freedom, the moral law would *not be encountered* at all in ourselves' (*CpV* 5:4). Pure practical reason fills a gap in the system of human reason. With it and with the concept of freedom 'the enigma of the critical philosophy is first explained: how one can *deny* objective *reality* to the supersensible *use of the categories* in speculation and yet *grant* them this *reality* with respect to the objects of pure practical reason; for this must previously have seemed *inconsistent*, as long as such a practical use is known only by name' (*CpV* 5:5).

Moreover, the 'dialectic of pure practical reason' reveals a parallel between the speculative and the practical application of pure reason. In both cases, we want to know the unconditioned: 'Pure reason always has its dialectic, whether it is considered in its speculative or in its practical use; for it requires the absolute totality of conditions for a given conditioned, and this can be found only in things in themselves' (*CpV* 5:107).

It seems that with the publication of the *Critique of Practical Reason* – as regards its doctrinal aspect – the harmony between the pure speculative and the practical application of reason has been perfected: The *Critique of Practical Reason* confirms the reality of our moral consciousness with the concept of practical freedom, which is secured, for its part, by the transcendental idealism of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. With the doctrine of the 'fact of pure reason', the primacy of the moral law over the highest good of our volition is certain – against the objection by Pistorius. The validity of the moral law is not challenged by the highest good as the final end of our volition. Our respect for the moral law and our hope for happiness are two sides of one and the same practical application of reason. Put according to a formulation in the *Moral-Kaehler* from the mid-1770s: 'Every upright person has this belief, it is impossible that he can be upright without at the same time hoping, according to the analogy to the physical world, that such behaviour really has to be rewarded. He believes in the reward for the same reason he believes in virtue.'⁴⁸ Because there is only one pure reason,

⁴⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Vorlesung zur Moralphilosophie*, ed. W. Stark (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 82. Accordingly, Kant writes in section 87 in the *Critique of Judgment*: 'The moral law, as the formal rational condition of the use of our freedom, obligates us by itself alone, without depending on any sort of end as a material condition; yet it also determines for us, and indeed does so a priori, a final end, to strive after which it makes obligatory for us, and this is the *highest good in the world* possible through freedom' (*CU* 5:450).

the question about the determining ground (what should I do?) cannot be separated from the question about the final end of our volition (what may I hope?).

IV. CONCLUSION

The second *Critique* originates out of an expansion of a 'critique of pure practical reason' that Kant initially intends to provide for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he wants to remove objections raised against his conception of the practical application of reason and its compatibility with the pure speculative application of reason. The transition from the 'Critique of Pure Practical Reason' to the *Critique of Practical Reason* has two main explanations:

- (1) With the discovery of the a priori character of the judgment of taste, and the plan to write a 'Critique of Taste', Kant modifies his overall critical plan: The *one* critique of pure reason is now presented in three works that are dedicated to (a) the constitutive application of the understanding and the speculative application of pure reason, (b) the constitutive application of pure practical reason and (c) the regulative application of the power of judgment in the determination of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure.
- (2) With the doctrine of the 'fact of pure reason' and the 'dialectic of pure practical reason', Kant goes beyond the theoretical resources of the *Groundwork* with the intention of rebutting important objections raised by his critics. With the doctrine of the 'fact of pure reason', pure practical reason makes itself immune to the objection that it is not the determining ground of our volition. And with the transformation of the '*natural dialectic*' of the *Groundwork*, those who are sceptical about the unconditioned validity of the moral law are referred to a contradiction in the concept of the highest good that exposes the 'rational' core of their criticism of Kant's philosophy of pure reason, and, at the same time, Kant rebuts this criticism by resolving the 'antinomy of practical reason'.

With the resolution of the 'antinomy of practical reason', aided by the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant has demonstrated, according to his own intention, (a) that the determination of the highest good of our volition has to follow *after* the moral law has been determined, (b) that pure practical reason does not require common sense to dispense with happiness, but shows that we become worthy of happiness as a result of our virtuous striving and (c) that pure speculative reason secures the concept of freedom

of pure practical reason and thereby, in turn, provides 'objective reality' to the ideas of speculative reason (God, freedom, immortality). In doing so, the '[c]ritical resolution of the antinomy of practical reason' establishes the 'primacy of pure practical reason in its connection with speculative reason' (*CpV* 5:119).

Although both *Critiques* together lay the foundations 'for a scientific system of philosophy, both theoretical and practical' (*CpV* 5:12), their argumentative aims are inverted. The first *Critique* rejects pure speculative reason's request to consider the conditions of thinking sufficient conditions of theoretical knowledge, and the second *Critique* rejects empirical practical reason's demand to be the only practical instance as dogmatic presumption.⁴⁹

More pointedly, the transition from the 'Critique of Pure Practical Reason' to the *Critique of Practical Reason* is explained by Kant's philosophical insights regarding the nature of pure reason. As pure practical reason, it manifests its reality in the guise of our consciousness of the moral law, but not without becoming entangled in a dialectical contradiction, just as pure speculative reason does. For the resolution of this contradiction, it depends on the *Critique of Pure Reason* as much as the latter benefits from the *Critique of Practical Reason* providing its speculative ideas with 'objective reality'. From a philosophical point of view, the *Critique of Practical Reason* is the consequence of the emancipation of the practical application of reason from the theoretical one, which is accompanied by a reorganization of the 'critical business' in the guise of three complementary critiques.

Has the *Critique of Practical Reason* been successful in the end? We have good reason to answer this question in the negative. With the analytic and dialectic, Kant creates a tension that threatens the unity of his critical work of 1787/8. Whereas he claims, on the one hand, that the moral law is given to us as a fact, he emphasizes, on the other hand, that the 'antinomy of practical reason' puts just this fact in question. However, if the fact is given, how can the suspicion that pure reason contradicts itself in its practical application come up at all? This suspicion of an antinomy obviously suits Kant, because only thus can he assign the criticism of the validity of the categorical imperative a place within the system of pure reason, and at the same time prove that this criticism is unfounded. As he had already done

⁴⁹ See Dieter Henrich, 'Ethik der Autonomie', in D. Henrich, *Selbstverhältnisse. Gedanken und Auslegungen zu den Grundlagen der klassischen deutschen Philosophie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), 11–13. Translated as 'Ethics of Autonomy', trans. Manfred Kuehn, in Dieter Henrich, *The Unity of Reason: Essays on Kant's Philosophy*, ed. Richard Velkley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 89–123, here 92–4.

in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant searches for the ‘rational’ occasion of our doubts about the reality of pure reason in the *Critique of Practical Reason* as well. Whether he was able to remove it remains debatable in view of the tension discussed.

In the end Kant might have felt that something went wrong with his *Critique of Practical Reason*, because in the *Critique of Judgment*, he seems to renounce his earlier view of the relationship between the moral law and the highest good. The moral proof for the existence of God

is not meant to say that it is just as necessary to assume the existence of God as it is to acknowledge the validity of the moral law, hence that whoever cannot convince himself of the former can judge himself to be free from the obligations of the latter. No! All that would have to be surrendered in that case would be the *aim* of realizing the final end in the world (a happiness of rational beings harmoniously coinciding with conformity to the moral law, as the highest and best thing in the world) by conformity to the moral law. Every rational being would still have to recognize himself as forever strictly bound to the precept of morals; for its laws are formal and command unconditionally, without regard to ends (as the matter of the will).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ *CU* 5:451.