ABSTRACT

Aristotle and Kant on the Noble and the Good

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In this dissertation, I examine and compare the moral and political thought of Aristotle and Kant using the ancient Greek concepts of the noble (*to kalon*) and the good (*to agathon*). Kant has been accused of being a rationalist who neglects the importance of emotions and prudence. I argue that Kant recognizes that moral and political progress depends on prudence and a commitment of the emotions, which is achieved in part through a recognition of the moral as beautiful. Kant describes himself as breaking with all previous moral philosophy, arguing that so-called *eudaimonism* reduces morality to self-interest. I contend that Aristotle uses the noble and the good to describe the virtuous person as someone who pursues his own good in an elevated sense by aiming at the noble. Aristotle depicts moral virtue as both an end in itself and constitutive of happiness, understood as flourishing rather than an emotive state. Moreover, he connects noble action to prudential judgment, which involves an assessment of the good achieved in a particular circumstance. Examining the moral and political thought of Aristotle and Kant in terms of the noble and the good reveals a surprising point of concord between two figures who are often portrayed as opposite one another.

Aristotle and Kant on the Noble and the Good

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Modern moral and political thought is often framed in terms of a debate between Kantians and their critics. Broadly speaking, Kantians are criticized for prioritizing the right over the good, for conflating politics with ethics, and for overlooking the importance of prudence. Kantians, by contrast, criticize their opponents for reducing moral and political motivation to self-interest, which deprives ethics and politics of their intrinsic worth. I hope to complicate and enrich the debate between Kantians and their critics by reviving an older quarrel between Kant and Aristotle. A reappraisal of that conflict reveals that Aristotle cares more about the intrinsic worth of ethics and politics than Kant seemed to appreciate and that Kant is more attuned to political necessity than his critics allege. Without collapsing Kant into Aristotle, I argue that Aristotle is more Kantian than Kant thought and that Kant is more Aristotelian than some have thought. Even if Aristotle and Kant differ in important respects, they both teach us that a complete political science must account for both utility and nobility.

Though Kant rarely mentions Aristotle by name, he situates himself in relation to a much older tradition of philosophy than utilitarianism. At the beginning of the *Groundwork*, Kant rehearses the Greek categories of philosophy before he announces that he is proposing an ethics that is altogether new. His classically trained readers would have known well who Kant has foremost in mind when he distinguishes himself from those who rely on empirical observation, nature, inclinations, or human happiness as

moral guides. For Kant, it seems that the utilitarian threat to morality is much older than Bentham and owes at least as much to the Aristotelian tradition as it does to the social contract theorists. To save morality from hedonism, Kant proposes that it be "completely cleansed…of everything empirical."[1] Kant insulates morality from our bodily existence, which is polluted with selfish drives, in order to rescue it from the Aristotelian tradition's proto-utilitarianism. He personifies morality as a lady whose beauty and honor are in need of defense from those who would defile her by confusing her with advantage. Seeing morality in terms of her usefulness destroys her sublimity and attractiveness.[2] Similarly, Kant sees statecraft as an exercise in human freedom that has a worth independent of its usefulness.

While Kant's description of the tradition may be a fair characterization of the way Aristotle has been calcified within the school of Aristotelianism, it is a simplification of Aristotle's moral philosophy to elide it with the utilitarian moral thinking of the social contract tradition. Throughout his political writings Aristotle makes a distinction between the noble, beautiful, or fine (*to kalon*) and the good (*to agathon*) that allows him to go beyond a simple and reductionist eudaimonism. To be sure, *eudaimonia* and self-concern are threads that run throughout Aristotle's ethics, and Aristotle insists on a final correspondence between doing well and faring well. But Aristotle also recognizes that virtue requires acting from a certain state and "for the sake of the actions themselves."[3]

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[1] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4:389.

[2] Ibid., 4:442.

[3] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 1105a29-34, 1144a18-20; Professor Collins persuasively argues that "the noble" is Aristotle's way of speaking of virtue as an end in itself. Susan D. Collins, "Moral Virtue and the Limits of the Political Community in Aristotle's 'Nicomachean Ethics,'"

That virtue is something other than self-interested calculation becomes clear in Aristotle's discussion of courage, where he insists that the courageous human being acts for the sake of *to kalon*. In his political writings Aristotle attempts to theoretically accomplish what the Greek word for gentleman, *kaloskagathos,* had done lexically. In so doing, Aristotle refines the Greek understanding of what it means to be noble and good. Like the gentleman, the city also transcends the merely useful; it begins from necessity but continues for the sake of "living well." The gentleman is a citizen-statesman who rules and is ruled in turn, not simply for the sake of bodily preservation, but also because participating in one's own governance is part of what it means to live nobly.

While Kant unfairly criticizes Aristotle for forgetting the importance of motivation, Kant may be unfairly censured for absolutely prioritizing the right over the good and overlooking practical outcomes.[4] Since Kant's categorical imperative applies universally, placing all human beings in a common "kingdom of ends," his ethical theory has seemed to some too rigid to handle the needs of particular political contexts.[5] However, while he sets out a rigorous ethics, primarily concerned with motivation, and an ideal politics, premised on the free and autonomous individual, Kant also cares about contemporary political problems, which leads him to consider prudential approaches to

American Journal of Political Science 48, no. 1 (2004): 47–49, doi:10.2307/1519896; Professor Ward notes that Aristotle uses a lack of noble motivation to exclude deficient approximations of virtue, indicating that noble motivation is a prerequisite for virtue. Lee Ward, "Nobility and Necessity: The Problem of Courage in Aristotle's 'Nicomachean Ethics,'" *The American Political Science Review* 95, no. 1 (2001): 71–83.

[4] Steven Smith attributes this view to Kant, though the phrase, "right over the good," is frequently heard in conjunction with Michael Sandel's critique of Rawls and of his indebtedness to Kant. Steven B. Smith, "Goodness, Nobility & Virtue in Aristotle's Political Science," *Polity* 19, no. 1 (October 1, 1986): 10, doi:10.2307/3234856; Michael J. Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," *Political Theory* 12, no. 1 (1984): 82.

[5] R.F. Atkinson, "Kant's Moral and Political Rigorism," in *Essays on Kant's Political Philosophy*, edited by H. Williams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

making real political progress towards freedom. Kant exposes a gap between nature and freedom or between the phenomenal and the noumenal, but he also supplies a "provisional politics" that is, in the words of Elisabeth Ellis, "worldly, pragmatic, and intensely committed to the everyday pursuit of freedom."[6] Although Kant differs from Aristotle in substituting freedom for virtue as the end of politics, he resembles Aristotle in his recognition that human life is an in-between state, fraught with practical difficulties, which therefore points to a kind of political prudence, or *phronesis*, as the defining virtue of political life.[7]

The arguments of Aristotle and Kant for recognizing nobility and necessity could deepen our contemporary political debates. Idealism in foreign affairs should be chastened by a sober assessment of political necessity, and likewise, realism could be ennobled by linking it to higher ends than security. In the heated public debate over whether our young should be equipped with useful skills or deepened by sublime encounters with poetic depictions of truth and nobility, each side can begin to recognize the merits of the other. Even the discipline of political science, which has trouble explaining the attractiveness of heroes in popular culture or justifying the civic participation that democratic citizenship requires, might be enriched by a renewed engagement with the quarrel between Aristotle and Kant.

The dissertation is divided into three parts. In the first part I treat the roles that the noble and the good play in Kant's moral and political thought. My investigation of these

[6] Elisabeth Ellis, *Kant's Politics: Provisional Theory for an Uncertain World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 9.

[7] Eric Sean Nelson, "Moral and Political Prudence in Kant," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 44, No. 3 (2004): 305-319; Kant, "Perpetual Peace," in *Political Writings,* ed. by H.S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 118-119.

themes reveals that Kant's reputation as a rationalist who divorces moral and political reasoning from empirical considerations is not entirely deserved. Although Kant does respond to the Aristotelian tradition by transferring the basis of moral and political philosophy from nature to reason, in Chapter One I show how Kant nevertheless relies on the emotions and a conception of beauty to explain how we as embodied creatures pursue virtue and right. In Chapter Two I argue that while Kant does articulate universal moral and political principles, he still attends to prudential assessments of the good when he considers how his moral goals (for example, that everyone be treated as an end and never as a means) can be made a political reality. In the second part I take up Aristotle's moral and political thought as it relates to the noble and the good, with Chapter Three examining Aristotle own concern with prudence and with the achievement of a complex variety of goods and Chapter Four arguing that Aristotle also cares about intentions and the intrinsic value of moral and political life. The chapters on Kant and Aristotle do not divide neatly into chapters devoted to the noble or the good as each appears in each author. For example, although Kant's attention to the emotions and the beauty of morality could be associated with the noble, it is also a sign of his prudent concern that morality be realized in embodied creatures. Both chapters on Kant, then, serve to correct misperceptions regarding Kant's rationalism. Likewise, in the chapters on Aristotle, the noble factors into Aristotle's account of prudence, and Aristotle presents the noble alongside an assessment of a variety of goods.

In the final part and chapter, I attempt to put Aristotle and Kant in conversation with each other on the noble and the good. While Kant and Aristotle differ in their metaphysical commitments and in the content of their moral and political teachings, each

in his own way draws our attention to the essential connection between the noble and the good. Both Kant and Aristotle recognize the importance of motivation and call our attention to the intrinsic attractiveness of moral action. Each recognizes that longing for nobility poses a challenge to moral and political life while remaining indispensable to it, and thus each subordinates that longing to the dictates of reason. Neither Kant nor Aristotle thinks the noble and its concomitant passions can or should be entirely excluded from moral and political life. Bringing into view the common ground that Kant and Aristotle here share also makes it possible to explain why Kant might be better understood as responding to the strand of modern thought that emphasized utility as the standard for moral and political life.

Drawing on the German concept of duty (*Pflicht*), which in 18th-century Prussia was informed by an ideal of selfless devotion to feudal as well as moral and religious obligations, Kant challenges the idea that moral reasoning can be based on human happiness. He takes issue with a happiness-based ethic insofar as it turns reason into a self-interest calculator, depriving moral deeds of their dignity. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant sets himself in opposition to the basic assumptions of Aristotelian ethics in order to restore the dignity, beauty, and intrinsic worth of morality. Kant does not name Aristotle, but his references to empirical observation, nature, inclinations, happiness, and self-love apply to views older than those of the early social contract theorists, like Hobbes, and of utilitarians, like Bentham.[8] Whomever Kant has in mind, his declaration that all empirical approaches to ethics do "not even deserve the

[8] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:388-4:389, 4:393, 4:401n.

name philosophy" and his dismissal of "*all* previous efforts" to discover the principle of morality would include Aristotle.[9]

What had been called moral philosophy was in Kant's view defective insofar as it was grounded in nature. Kant thus claims to articulate the first true moral philosophy, which he derives from pure reason. He draws a sharp distinction between nature, which is the realm of self-interest and deterministic natural processes, and reason, which is the realm of freedom and morality. Morality proceeds from categorical imperatives, which are rationally necessary in themselves, rather than from hypothetical imperatives, which are means to other ends, for example, happiness. Kant concludes that nature and social circumstance serve only to obscure the moral injunctions of reason, so he reconstitutes morality independent of these foundations.

Kant extends this approach to his comments on education. In the *Groundwork*, Kant argues that students should learn morality in its abstracted form rather than through imitation, since all particular instantiations of morality are imperfect. Imitation, he writes, "has no place at all in matters of morality."[10] In saying this Kant challenges the traditional method of moral education, which held up exemplars of virtue in history or literature whose attractiveness might inculcate virtue in those who beheld them. Since Kant grounds morality in duty and in the dignity that every rational being possesses, he has been frequently described (for example, by Jean Bethke Elshtain and Charles Taylor) as an enemy of the emotions and of the love of honor.[11] However, Kant's turn from

[9] Ibid., 4:390, 4:432, emphasis added.

[10] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:409.

[11] Charles Taylor holds that Kant's concept of universal dignity has had a corrosive effect on honor as a motivation for action. Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition*," ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 25–73;

experience to reason leaves room for feelings and emotions, since morality is for him both beautiful and good. By presenting morality in its abstracted form, Kant attempts to make it all the more attractive and compelling. He therefore allows for a kind of aesthetic education towards citizenship, which he describes later in the *Critique of Judgment*. In *Judgment*, he argues that art can play a didactic role in making the case for freedom even as it illustrates its own moral limits.[12]

Kant develops the connection between morality and beauty in his 1786 essay, "Conjectures on the Beginning," which he published the year following the *Groundwork* and several years before *Judgment*. In "Conjectures," Kant again isolates morality from the contamination of experience, but he does so to reveal its attractiveness. His genealogy of morals, as it were, begins with human beings discovering that their sexual instinct, initially a "periodic urge," can be "prolonged and…increased by means of the imagination." The imagination abstracts from the beauty found in particular human beings to an ideal of beauty, so humans are able to deny themselves the satisfaction of their immediate inclinations. Thus, the human being's sexual instinct develops into a love of beauty in human beings as such and then of beauty in nature. The human being's refusal to give immediate gratification to this instinct lends beauty an "ideal quality." Moreover, the human being simultaneously develops a "sense of decency," which Kant defines as an "inclination to inspire respect in others by good manners." Kant suggests

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Elshtain says that Kant "holds the emotions at a distance as a dangerous force not bound up with reason." Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Kant, Politics, & Persons," *Polity* 14, No. 2 (1981): 208n; However, Rachel Bayefsky attempts to show that honor still plays a role in Kant's political thought. Rachel Bayefsky, "Dignity, Honour, and Human Rights: Kant's Perspective," *Political Theory* 41, No. 6 (2013): 810; Louden responds to Kant's "enemy-of-the-emotions" reputation by emphasizing what Kant's theory has in common with virtue-based ethics. Robert B. Louden, "Kant's Virtue Ethics," *Philosophy* 61, No. 238 (1986): 486.

[12] Christian R. Donath, "Liberal Art: Art and Education for Citizenship in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*," *Review of Politics* 75 (2013): 3-23.

that the human being who loves beauty does not want to appear ugly and therefore cultivates beautiful manners. As a result, the human being becomes a "moral being."[13] Although Kant is here speaking historically, he suggests that moral education is also aesthetic education and that progress up the ladder of morality is motivated by the love of beauty, or as the Greeks would say, by *eros*. The desires of human beings draw them to the beautiful.

The role of the emotions in Kant's philosophy has been minimized by the scholars mentioned above in part because of the great emphasis that Kant places on reason and duty. To overcome the problem of our self-interested nature, Kant grounds morality in *a priori* reason. For a maxim to be properly moral, it must be arrived at without recourse to empirical observation. This move discloses the autonomous rational being who is equal in dignity and respect to all others and who has the same moral obligations regardless of his character or situation. Kant separates virtue from happiness both theoretically in terms of definition and practically in terms of motivation. In the *Groundwork* Kant says that moral deeds must be performed out of a sense of duty to the moral law.[14] Thus, moral deeds must be performed with the right intention. Duty opposes and steers us clear of selfish passions, but it does so by its own inherent power of attraction. Even though Kant says that reason operates on human beings directly, without the interference of pleasure, he nevertheless resorts to describing the moral life in terms of beauty when he speaks of duty. Reason thereby instructs and reforms the emotions by way of duty, but Kant nevertheless sees the emotions as an indispensable part of moral and political life. We

[13] Kant, "Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History," in *Political Writings,* ed. by H.S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 224-25.

[14] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:398-4:400.

therefore have a duty to cultivate and refine our emotions to achieve moral and political progress.

Because Kant derives his moral principles from what is categorically true of all rational beings everywhere and situates humanity in a common "kingdom of ends," he has been accused (by Steven Smith, for example) of forgetting the particularity of politics and of confusing politics with morality.[15] On Kant's view, war between states will eventually give way to trade and with it the end of war and the beginning of a universal cosmopolitan existence.[16] Kant describes a kind of historical taming of the passions in the direction of peace. Thus, he looks forward to a time when acquiring states will be illegitimate and standing armies will be abolished. He also welcomes the creation of a universal federation of states and even seems to entertain the idea of a single international state.[17] Based on these recommendations, Kant's hope in the future effectiveness of international institutions seems to make him naively unaware of the constancy of what Carl Schmitt calls "the political."[18] The persistence of the distinction between friends and enemies, Kant's critics allege, will dash the Kantian's internationalist hopes.

However, the rational rigor of Kant's moral theory and its political applications are complicated by a closer inspection of his political writings. While in his ethical works Kant seems to expect a great deal of human beings, in his public-political works he shows

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[15] Steven B. Smith, "In Defense of Politics," *National Affairs* (Spring 2011): 135.

[16] Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose," in *Political Writings,* ed. by H.S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 49-51.

[17] Kant, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," in *Political Writings,* ed. by H.S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 94, 102, 105.

[18] Seyla Benhabib, "Carl Schmitt's Critique of Kant: Sovereignty and International Law," *Political Theory* 40, No. 6 (2012): 688-713.

an appreciation for the fact that human beings cannot yet be counted on to act morally. For example, when Kant considers the implications of his ethics for politics, he shows no qualms in looking to institutional solutions. Although Kant demonstrates a commitment to closing the gap between politics and its moral ends, he does not confuse the two. In the *Groundwork*, Kant is mainly concerned not with making humanity moral but rather with saving morality from the epistemological threat posed by an increasingly mechanistic account of nature, by which he is persuaded. Kant writes with a different purpose in his political writings, where he takes up the practical problem of making everyday progress toward moral ends. While political institutions cannot teach citizens to act out of duty when they follow the moral law, they can minimize their treating one another as a means to their own ends. Kant describes politics as a duty and as necessary for moral action, elevating politics beyond the merely necessary in the direction of freedom.[19]

Only some aspects of Kant's thought support the idea that politics serves this elevated purpose. Although Kant presents a philosophy of history that leaves little scope for human agency, as I discuss below, he also advocates a prudential provisional politics that is simultaneously oriented by freedom and attuned to circumstance. Kant is a complex thinker who makes several attempts over the course of his career to describe how human beings move from nature to freedom, not all of which are consistent with one another.

While art and aesthetic judgment may seem removed from the realities of politics, Hannah Arendt looks to the *Critique of Judgment* as a bridge between nature and freedom

[19] Charles Taylor, "Kant's Theory of Freedom," in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 327-328.

and as the true foundation for Kant's politics.[20] According to Arendt, Kant left his politics unwritten, devoting not a single full-length work to politics, but he left a key to his politics in his account of aesthetic judgment, which might by analogy be applied to politics. Indeed, Kant seems to leave clues along these lines by using political language in his description of aesthetic judgment. Kant grounds aesthetic judgment in a social consensus at a particular time and in a particular place.

But because aesthetic judgment is socially rooted, it does not have the universal grounding Kant leads us to expect of his politics, which brings some critics to argue, persuasively, that Arendt's focus on the Third Critique says more about Arendt than it does about Kant.[21] As Ellis explains, Kant sees humankind as heading toward a determinate moral goal, whereas Arendt sees indeterminacy as a "permanent fact of collective life."[22] Arendt uses aesthetic judgment as a way of combining art with politics, thus negotiating the gap between freedom and necessity, but Kant does not explicitly elide these as Arendt does. Moreover, such a melding seems unlikely because aesthetics for Kant lacks morality's solid rational ground.

Another attempt to explain the move from nature to freedom, as Pierre Hassner and William Galston have explained, involves Kant's philosophy of history.[23] While Kant rejects nature as a moral standard in the *Groundwork*, he nevertheless adopts a

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[20] Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. by Ronald Beiner (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982).

[21] Steven B. Smith, "Review of *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* by Hannah Arendt," *Ethics* 94, No. 3 (1984): 531-534.

[22] Ellis, 61.

[23] Pierre Hassner, "Immanuel Kant," in Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, ed., *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), 581-621; William Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975).

teleological view of human nature, which is uniquely rational. Over the great "world-drama," reason develops the human species, bringing humanity out of its instinctual, animal existence and drawing it towards perfection. But while nature thus comes to light as purposive, it is not moral. It develops the human species through unsocial sociability. The harshness of nature forces humans to labor and reason and so develop as a species. Continual antagonism pushes human beings into politics and eventually to develop institutional arrangements and universal standards of justice based on reason. In both history and politics, it matters not whether individuals behave morally, because history will use them just the same, and institutions can be crafted to take advantage of their worst tendencies.

However, Kant elsewhere speaks as if it were up to us to achieve progress. Chapter Two focuses on Kant's neglected provisional politics, as Ellis has called it, as a more promising way of dealing with the gap between nature and freedom. While Kant does describe political ideals and what is right simply in the "Doctrine of Right," he also makes the case for provisional conceptions of right. Kant acknowledges that the good simply cannot be immediately realized and as a result makes room for intermediary steps in a process of gradual reform. More broadly speaking, what Patrick Riley describes as Kant's "contractarianism" shows Kant to be engaged in the difficult task of balancing republican legitimacy with the precepts of morality.[24] Kant recognizes that there is a tension between right and republicanism, and he does not naively resolve the tension one way or another.[25] Although Kant's relationship to prudence is complicated, he ultimately

[24] Ellis, 6; Patrick Riley, *Kant's Political Philosophy* (Totowa, NJ: Rowan and Littlefield, 1983), 99-100.

advocates a prudential approach to moral and political change that involves judgment, institutions, and education and keeps in view the moral good of political order.

Although Aristotle has been frequently accused of aiming too high (by Machiavelli and Hobbes, for example), Kant finds fault with happiness-based ethics for not aiming high enough. In Chapter Three, I turn to Aristotle in order to consider Kant's implicit critique of Aristotle, which is that Aristotle confuses duty with self-love and makes morality capricious by deriving it from happiness. Aristotle associates moral virtue with human flourishing, which is how "*eudaimonia*" is most often translated today. In both the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, Aristotle takes the good (*agathon*) as his beginning point, and he finds the human good to be happiness (*eudaimonia*). Aristotle offers that "it is pretty much agreed on by most people," by "both the many and the refined" that the good is happiness and that there is a correspondence between living well, faring well, and being happy. Not only does Aristotle closely associate doing good and faring well,[26] but a thread of self-concern runs throughout Aristotle's description of moral virtue. Aristotle says that the "decent person…wishes the good things for himself…for his own sake."[27]

However, Aristotle does not describe moral virtue as simply useful to our happiness. Rather, it is constitutive of happiness. Although Aristotle does not demand of moral virtue the unadulterated selflessness that Kant does, he nevertheless avoids Kant's objection that empirical approaches to virtue reduce morality to utility. Even so, while

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[25] As a result, the debate over whether Kant supports "liberal imperialism" is not easily put to rest. See, for example, James Lindley Wilson and Jonathan Monten, "Does Kant Justify Liberal Intervention?," *The Review of Politics* 73, no. 4 (2011): 633–47; Michael C. Desch, "Benevolent Cant? Kant's Liberal Imperialism," *The Review of Politics* 73, no. 4 (2011): 649–56.

[26] In Greek, *eupraxia* can mean both acting well and faring well. Like Plato before him, Aristotle seems to take up the challenge of showing the truth behind this lexical ambiguity.

[27] Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1166a15-17; this is also true of the noble (1168b29-31).

Aristotle thinks that human beings are simultaneously oriented by the noble, he nevertheless emphasizes moral virtue's connection to happiness and pleasure. In describing moral virtue, Aristotle recognizes the contribution of pleasure throughout, whether he is emphasizing its importance in the formation of habits, or in virtue itself.

Aristotle argues that all human beings aim at the good, but shows that their actions are everywhere constrained by political context. For instance, Aristotle first locates the origin of the city in a process of organic growth. Both households and villages come together for the sake of meeting needs, but the city exists for the sake of living well.[28] As Aristotle proceeds, he seems especially attuned to political necessity, which involves human beings seeking their own good in a given set of circumstances. In his description of polity, for example, Aristotle conceives of statecraft as a bringing together of competing classes with competing claims to rule.[29] He holds back from condemning any regime outright and even appears to give advice to tyrants, appealing to their own self-concern as cause for moderation.[30] The best regime is a thing to be wished for, but prudence requires working towards the regime that is best in a given set of circumstances.[31] Aristotle's political science uses the ordinary language of citizens and statesman to equip them to exercise prudence in reconciling what is best simply with what is possible.

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[28] Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. by Peter L. Phillips Simpson (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1997), 1252a24-b30, 1253a7; Mary P. Nichols, *Citizens and Statesmen* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992), 9.

[29] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1281a, 1283a.

[30] Ibid., 1314a.

[31] Ibid., 1288a.

Aristotle is concerned with the good and happiness of particular people and regimes. He speaks of the best regime in Book V of the *Ethics*, but he largely eschews abstract moral and political rules that hold in every situation.[32] For Aristotle, both moral and political action depend on the character of the person and the character of the regime. By defining the virtues as means between extremes connected to the passions of particular people, Aristotle avoids speaking of moral virtue as the same for everyone.

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle again connects politics with producing good outcomes in particular circumstances. In Book I, he gives an account of the deliberative rhetoric of the public assembly, which aims at intermediate goods and ultimately at happiness. Aristotle says that the advisory speaker seeks the advantageous in addressing the public assembly, and seeking the advantageous, as it turns out, is pursuing the good and avoiding the bad. However, public assemblies are not in a position to pursue the good simply. Rather, they seek the greater good in a given set of circumstances,[33] and the circumstances include the character of the regime. Again, Aristotle appears to give advice to proponents of all kinds of regimes, especially since he considers the preservation of the regime a good. Public assemblies deliberate on a number of topics, such as finances, foreign policy, and commerce, but in every case the final goal they seek is the happiness of their citizens, a conclusion that affords Aristotle another opportunity to explore the moral and material content of happiness.

[32] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1135a5.

[33] *Plato's Gorgias and Aristotle's Rhetoric,* Joe Sachs, trans. (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2009), 1358b.

In Chapter Four, I respond to the Kantian critique of Aristotle on the basis of Aristotle's concern with intentions, choice, and moral ends. The philologist Walter Donlan argues that *kaloskagathia* was coined by Greek aristocrats to signify their rank in society,[34] but Aristotle uses the term to indicate moral worth. I argue that by conceiving of morality in terms of the noble and the good Aristotle is able to go beyond simple eudaemonism. Aristotle says that the political art aims at happiness and that the human good consists in virtue, but he also refers to the noble as an end of moral action.[35]

Aristotle is not so oriented by outcomes—happiness, for example—that he neglects the importance of intention. Even though Aristotle draws connections between the virtues and self-concern well understood, he nevertheless emphasizes that the virtues have worth independent of their usefulness. Though he suggests that there is a final correspondence between doing good for others and faring well oneself, Aristotle nevertheless understands that moral actions performed solely out of self-regard are somehow not noble.

Aristotle presents the city as containing the ends of both nobility and necessity. Although the political community comes into being for the sake of life, it exists for the sake of living well and the cultivation of doers of noble deeds.[36] Aristotle may seem later on to be making ambition counteract ambition in his construction of the mixed regime, but he also holds out the possibility of cultivating virtue and pursing goods in common

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[34] Walter Donlan, "The Origin of Kalos Kagathos," *The American Journal of Philology* 94, no. 4 (December 1, 1973): 366–67, doi:10.2307/293615.

[35] Ibid., 1095a16-19, 1098a16.

[36] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1280a32, 1281a2.

through deliberation and speech.[37] At its best the city rises above necessity, while remaining anchored by it, to cultivate noble citizens.

Aristotle participates in that task by describing the education that produces such citizens. In the *Politics,* Aristotle emphasizes the importance of habituation as a means of training the passions in preparation for noble action. In the *Rhetoric,* Aristotle links the three forms of rhetoric, deliberative, epideictic, and forensic, to moral ends, the good, the noble, and the just. Combined with a proper training of the passions through habituation, rhetoric, when properly used, has the ability help us see and pursue moral ends. On Aristotle's account, speakers on ceremonial occasions use epideictic rhetoric to praise and blame as they illustrate the noble, giving us examples of what it means to live well.[38] As we have already seen, speakers in public assemblies exhort and warn in order to persuade their audiences of what they consider good for their city, but Aristotle explains the good as containing moral virtue. By describing rhetoric in light of its moral ends and not simply as a tool of manipulation, Aristotle suggests that it can play a didactic role in the political community.

While Kant sets himself in opposition to the history of moral philosophy, his criticisms better fit early moderns like Machiavelli and Hobbes, who were themselves responding to the perceived inadequacies of the Aristotelian tradition. Impatient with the ancient tradition's preoccupation with imaginary republics or the so-called best regime, Machiavelli urged a reconfiguration of philosophy so that it would be concerned with effectual truth rather than the imagination of it; Machiavelli collapses truth and morality

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[37] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1296b38-1297a6, 1253a.

[38] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1098a.

into what is politically expedient. This development was accompanied by a similar revolution in natural science, which made nature a thing to be manipulated rather than a guide for human life. The threat to morality posed by the early modern conception of nature was driven home to Kant by David Hume, whom Kant credits with awakening him from his "dogmatic slumber."[39] Thus, as I suggested earlier, Kant's removal of morality from the plane of nature to reason or freedom may be understood as an attempt to save morality from the epistemological threat posed by modern science. This relocation reveals the autonomous individual who is equal in dignity and respect with all others. Although Kant does not renew the search for the *summum bonum*, he does try to make room for morality in politics and to give the modern social contract tradition a more elevated basis.[40] As Christine Korsgaard notes, Aristotle and Kant have different views of the limits of human reason and the highest good for human life.[41]

Whereas Aristotle saw the love of the noble as something in Achilles to be reformed, Hobbes saw it as a cancer in European princes, whose pride and overweening ambition threatened to plunge society back into the state of nature. In contrast to Aristotle, who sought to understand the noble in relation to manifold human goods, Hobbes sought to minimize its influence by shifting our gaze from the noble to security. Hobbes' *Leviathan* attempts to dispense with both.

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[39] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics: That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science: With Selections from the Critique of Pure Reason, Revised Edition*, trans. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4:260.

[40] Bernard Yack helpfully describes how Kant derives his idea of an "original contract" from our "shared identity as moral actors" in *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*. Bernard Yack, "The Problem with Kantian Liberalism," in *Kant & Political Philosophy: The Contemporary Legacy*, ed. by Ronald Beiner and William James Booth (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 227.

[41] Christine M. Korsgaard, "Aristotle and Kant on the Source of Value," *Ethics* 96, No. 3 (1986): 505.

As I explained above, Kant acquired a largely undeserved reputation for being an enemy of the emotions, spiritedness and the love of honor included. Against this understanding of Kant, Robert Louden persuasively argues that Kant does not entirely jettison virtue ethics, and Rachel Bayefsky shows that Kant does not completely abandon honor in favor of dignity.[42] Kant's version of honor may be unrecognizable to a figure like Achilles, but Kant is more able than Hobbes to identify the love of honor as a praiseworthy source of motivation. Kant therefore tries to reintroduce aspects of the noble, even if they are subordinated to reason. In this regard, Kant's rationalism resembles Aristotle's own rational engagement with the noble.

Even though Kant and Aristotle disagree on ultimate questions and answers, they nevertheless agree on the importance of the noble and the good. Kant and Aristotle think that moral deeds must be chosen for their own sakes, and they stress the attractiveness of morality as an inducement to act morally. Although they highly value reason as the definitive human attribute, they understand that passions or moral feelings are essential features of political life. Kant and Aristotle also argue that steps towards reform should be gradual and informed by context. Both have a view of what is best simply, but their politics is also interested in what is possible in a given set of circumstances. Putting Kant and Aristotle in conversation with one another reveals underappreciated aspects of each and exposes a point of qualified concord on two important facets of political life. Politics consists not in a choice between the advantageous or the noble to the exclusion of one or the other but of a complex balance between the two.

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[42] Bayefsky, 809-37.

CHAPTER TWO

Kant's Use of the Emotions in the Pursuit of Virtue and Right

Kant takes issue with every moral theory that preceded his because his philosophical predecessors allowed morality to be confused with more or less refined self-love, which, Kant says, has nothing to do with morality.[1] He dismisses all efforts to ground morality in inclinations, "in the nature of the human being or in the circumstances of the world in which he is placed."[2] Because he shifts the ground of morality from nature to reason, isolating the moral life from sensory experience and abstracting it from the particularity of human life, Kant has been accused of being an enemy of the emotions.[3] Jean Bethke Elshtain, for instance, says that Kant "holds the emotions at a distance as a dangerous force not bound up with reason" and approvingly quotes Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) who, in *The Acting Person,* interprets the categorical imperative as a rejection of the emotions.[4] Similarly, Charles Taylor credits Kant's rationally-generated idea of "dignity" with undermining the love of honor as a motivation for action.[5] These criticisms are part of a broader, longstanding critique of Kant's moral

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[1] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:406.

[2] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4:389.

[3] Robert Louden testifies to Kant's "enemy-of-the-emotions" reputation. Robert B. Louden, "Kant's Virtue Ethics," *Philosophy* 61, no. 238 (October 1, 1986): 473–89.

[4] Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Kant, Politics, & Persons: The Implications of His Moral Philosophy," *Polity* 14, no. 2 (December 1, 1981): 208n.

[5] Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition": An Essay with Commentary*, ed. Amy Gutmann, 1st edition (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992), 25–73; See

and political philosophy. In Kant's own time Christian Garve faulted him for idealistically neglecting political necessity. It was partly in response to Garve's criticisms that Kant penned "On the Common Saying: 'This may be true in theory, but it does not apply in practice.'"[6] More recently, Kant has been accused of what R.F. Atkinson calls "rigorism" in ethics and politics, which ignores the need for context-specific applications of principle.[7]

On the other hand, Susan Shell documents the role that Kant found for the beautiful and the sublime in the broader effort of "securing the rights of man" and "teaching others how to live."[8] Drawing on the later *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Metaphysics of Morals,* Robert Louden argues that Kant assigns emotions a role in virtuous action.[9] Finally, Rachel Bayefsky finds that Kant does not reject the desire for honor outright but rather retains it as "conducive to respect for dignity."[10] These scholars contribute to a growing body of scholarship that contends that Kant is nuanced, prudential, and committed to achieving moral and political progress in his own time.[11]

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also, Rachel Bayefsky, "Dignity, Honour, and Human Rights: Kant's Perspective," *Political Theory* 41, no. 6 (December 1, 2013): 810, doi:10.1177/0090591713499762.

[6] Howard Williams, "Christian Garve and Immanuel Kant: Some Incidents in the German Enlightenment," *Enlightenment and Dissent* 19 (2000): 171–92.

[7] R.F. Atkinson, "Kant's Moral and Political Rigorism," Howard Lloyd Williams, ed., *Essays on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 1st edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 228–48.

[8] Susan Shell, "Kant as Propagator: Reflections on 'Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime,'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 3 (April 1, 2002): 456.

[9] Louden, "Kant's Virtue Ethics," 484–89.

[10] Bayefsky, "Dignity, Honour, and Human Rights," 1.

[11] See, for example: Elisabeth Ellis, *Kant's Politics: Provisional Theory for an Uncertain World* (Yale University Press, 2005).

While I show how the rigoristic interpretation of Kant finds ample support in his critical treatment of nature as opposed to reason and in his circumspect treatment of particular emotions, the central purpose of this chapter is to build upon and extend these latter arguments in support of a Kant who, in contrast to charges that he severs the connection between reason and the emotions, consistently wrestles with their relationship. Indeed, I provide evidence that Kant prudentially appeals to and makes use of the emotions in pursuit of moral and political progress. Other scholars, such as Howard Caygill and Paul Guyer, have sought to revisit the status of the emotions in Kant's corpus. Caygill argues that, with the exception of part of Kant's critical period, emotions play an important role in Kant's moral philosophy.[12] Guyer thinks the clear separation of nature and freedom in the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Pure Reason* is abandoned as early as the *Critique of Practical Reason*.[13] I build on their work with a broad, synthetic account of the positive role that the emotions play across Kant's corpus, and I find evidence even in the *Groundwork* of Kant already blurring the line between nature and freedom. Throughout his career Kant comes back to the idea that morality has an aesthetic dimension, that is, a quality of beauty that inspires certain emotions, that can and should be made use of to pursue the moral ends of virtue and right, even as he asserts that we must ultimately subordinate emotions to reason and morality. Appealing to noble sentiments, Kant argues that they can rationally make use of aesthetic experience in their

[12] Howard Caygill, "Kant and the Relegation of the Passions," in *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 217–30, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7t0cc.14.

[13] Paul Guyer, "Passion for Reason: Hume, Kant, and the Motivation for Morality," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 86, no. 2 (2012): 4–21.

pursuit of moral and political goals as long as they do not untether that experience from those rational ends.[14]

Duty and the Insufficiency of Nature

To draw his readers' attention to the motivations at the heart of moral action and, by implication, to the deficiency of any moral theory based on happiness, Kant employs the concept of duty (*Pflicht*), a word with deep resonances in 18th century Prussia, given its connections to military discipline and the asceticism of Prussian pietism.[15] Although Kant's teaching is by no means limited to Prussians, Kant uses and refines a concept that was especially prominent in 18th century Prussia. Duty, for Kant, captures the idea of a good will or right motivation and makes it "shine forth all the more brightly."[16] Duty reveals how moral motivation can be both difficult and attractive. In feeling the obligation of duty we realize our attachment to the moral law. Kant uses the idea of an *absolute* duty to refer to an action that is morally "good in and for itself."[17] Moral deeds need nothing more than themselves to recommend them. Kant says in "Perpetual Peace" that "the concept of duty" must be "recognized for its own sake, irrespective of any

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[14] I therefore do not go as far as Arendt who thinks aesthetic judgment can be easily transposed into the political sphere. Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner, 1st edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

[15] For example, Karen Hagemann documents the appearance of a "sacred duty" to risk one's life on the battlefield in songs designed to democratize the military duty traditionally ascribed to Prussian aristocrats. Karen Hagemann, "Of 'Manly Valor' and 'German Honor': Nation, War, and Masculinity in the Age of the Prussian Uprising against Napoleon," *Central European History* 30, no. 2 (January 1, 1997): 218, doi:10.2307/4546697; Kant, *Groundwork*, vii. In her introduction to the text, Christine Korsgaard notes the possible influence of Kant's Pietist upbringing on his philosophy. See also, Shell, "Kant as Propagator," 455.

[16] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:397.

[17] Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings*, trans. Patrick Frierson and Professor Paul Guyer (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 20:25.

possible gain in return."[18] Since morality frequently requires doing one's "often bitter duty" without any hope of reward, happiness cannot be a barometer for moral worth.

For Kant, morality is clearest when virtue is pursued even in spite of the consequences. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, he remarks that doing one's duty often "involves sacrificing many of the joys of life."[19] Doing one's duty requires setting aside self-interest as a motivation for action. He writes, "The greater the moral perfection of the action is to be, the greater must be the obstacles, and the struggle."[20] Only in sacrifice is the moral law revealed in its might.[21] Duty must therefore rely on a higher principle than self-love. In "Theory and Practice," Kant writes that "practically no one" would deny that actions become more morally impressive the farther removed they are from self-interest, since this allows the "nobler impulses to stand out."[22] Stripping away selfishness reveals the good will that lies at the core of moral motivation. In arguing that morality should be valued for its own sake, Kant distances himself from the "eudaimonist" who says that there is a "peace of soul in which virtue is its own reward" and that it is that peace that recommends it.[23]

In Kant's familiar distinction between the phenomenal realm of nature and the noumenal realm of freedom—in which deterministic processes characterize the former,

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[18] Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 121n.

[19] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor, 2nd edition (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6:484.

[20] Kant, *Observations*, 27:14.

[21] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, ed. Mary J. Gregor, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, 1st edition (Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 271.

[22] Kant, *Political Writings*, 67.

[23] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:377.

reason and choice the latter—moral emotions belong to the phenomenal realm. We experience them as they arise from our nature as human beings, and they are not always reliable. Reason gives us the ability to step back and freely evaluate the veracity of our moral emotions, providing a final basis for judgment. The moral commands of reason therefore trump moral emotions. If following the commands of reason produces unhappiness, it is "not human beings but the order of nature [that is] imperfect."[24] Although Kant sometimes describes human nature as unchanging, in his *Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History* he links reason with our development as a species. It was reason that encouraged human beings to "quibble with the voice of nature" and thus trade our happy, natural existence for one that is free but fraught with anxiety.[25] Thus, in the original circumstance, nature, "being the work of God," was good, and freedom, "being the work of man" was bad. But ultimately freedom leads to the full development of the species, as human nature becomes a history of progress from a state of corruption to one of perfection. Human nature is thus a work in progress and is distinct from the rest of the natural world.[26]

As human nature improves, it remains bound up with our former, merely animal existence. Kant is known for his low view of human nature. As he says in "Idea for a Universal History," "[n]othing straight can be constructed from such warped wood as that which man is made of."[27] Nature supplies us with a drive to meet our natural needs and to

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[24] Kant, *Observations*, 19:97.

[25] Kant, *Political Writings*, 224.

[26] Ibid., 227. In "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan purpose," Kant takes a teleological view of *human* nature, but unlike Aristotle, Kant sees nature in this sense as an historical goal, which in time reason will inexorably bring to fruition. Ibid., 41–42.

[27] Kant, *Political Writings*, 46.

pursue our own happiness, even as our reason calls us to a vocation that is "sublimely above nature," both the nature that is outside us and the nature that constitutes us. In a certain sense reason is of course a part of human nature, and Kant sometimes speaks that way, such that human nature viewed broadly has redemptive qualities.[28] But here Kant distinguishes between nature and reason to illustrate how human beings are unique in their ability to stand apart from nature.

Importantly, Kant's two distinct categories for aesthetic, that is, sensory, experience, the beautiful and the sublime, in their purest form, originate not in nature but in ourselves. It is human nature to transcend nature, which brings feelings of the sublime. True sublimity, which arises with the difficulty of overcoming an obstacle, does not inhere in anything in nature but rather is produced by our mind when it becomes conscious of our superiority to nature.[29] Kant defines the sublime as a "feeling of our supersensible vocation, a feeling which, however obscure it may be, has a moral foundation."[30] Beauty involves a correspondence between the form of an object and our own cognitive powers,[31] but we find the standards for beauty not in nature but *a priori* in ourselves.[32] As Roger Scruton explains, "we see in objects the formal unity that we discover in ourselves."[33] We experience the beautiful and the sublime when we see that

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[28] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:411, 6:472.

[29] Kant, *Judgment*, 264.

[30] Ibid., 292.

[31] Ibid., 191.

[32] Ibid., 350. Kant distinguishes a priori aesthetic judgment from the a priori reason that produces the categorical imperative.

[33] Roger Scruton, *Kant: A Very Short Introduction*, Revised edition (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 107.

reason and its moral commands make us aware of ourselves and allow us to live as more than simply natural beings.

Kant aims to save morality from those "who are accustomed merely to explanations by the natural sciences" by rejecting nature as a guide for moral and political life. Partisans of natural science are "stirred by the proud claims of speculative reason" and thus "assail the moral concept of freedom" by deriving morality from nature.[34] Kant responds to the natural scientists not by rejecting their view of the natural world but by positing a separate realm of freedom that can be accessed by way of reason. In *The Critique of Judgment,* he sides with modern natural science when he understands nature to be the "sum total of sense objects." Viewed in this way, nature is "like a machine," and such a deterministic mechanism cannot fully explain our existence. For example, if our experience of nature were the whole story, we could not hold criminals responsible for their transgressions.[35] Kant says that the mechanistic view of nature "gives us no basis whatever [for assuming] that things of nature serve one another as means to purposes." Nature's purposes cannot be known through a priori reason or experience.[36] Instead, we presuppose nature's purposiveness with the faculty of judgment.[37]

Judgment indicates that nature's purpose is not our happiness but our cultivation. For Kant, the natural world is better understood as an obstacle to be overcome than as a

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[34] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:378.

[35] Kant, *Political Writings*, 145.

[36] Kant, *Judgment*, 193, 359, 389.

[37] The abstraction involved in moral reasoning points in the direction of belief in God, immortality, and the purposiveness of nature. Scruton, *Kant*, 95, 108; Kant, *Judgment*, 196.

guide to human flourishing. Nature contributes to our cultivation by being inadequate. Its deficiency prompts us to improve our environment. In his essay, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose," Kant says that "all the culture and art which adorn mankind…are fruits of his unsociability."[38] Nature supplies us with animal inclinations, which we must subdue in order to develop as human beings.[39]

From the perspective of our rational nature, human nature seems especially deficient. According to Kant the "true courage of virtue" is to be found not in overcoming external difficulties but in "facing the evil principle within ourselves and overcoming its wiles."[40] On its own "human nature does not of itself harmonize with [the moral] good," but it "[can be made to harmonize with it]…through the dominance that reason exerts over sensibility."[41] Kant's point seems to be that we are composite beings who in a sense possess a higher and lower nature, and our higher, rational nature is capable of overcoming the tyranny of lower natural inclinations. Without reason's direction, we will not find the good "at all in acquaintance with human nature," but with reason nature can be brought into harmony with the moral good.[42] Thus, we should not rely on nature to access the realm of freedom. Rather, we should bring the realm of freedom to bear on

[38] Kant, *Political Writings*, 46.

[39] Kant, *Judgment*, 46.

[40] Kant, *Political Writings*, 124.

[41] Kant, *Judgment*, 271.

[42] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:410.

nature.[43] By introducing us to the realm of reason and freedom, Kant hopes to counteract the natural sciences' blindness to morality.[44]

In deriving morality empirically from nature, partisans of the natural sciences more or less presupposed that morality would be consistent with our happiness.[45] In fact, Kant agrees that nature (as opposed to our rational nature) does urge us to pursue our happiness, but he argues that we also possess the countervailing force of a free will, which self-imposes categorically binding laws that are often at odds with our happiness as natural beings, though consistent with our complete nature as human beings. As a result, reason would seem a poor instrument for the pursuit of happiness.[46] In the commands of duty we find the freedom to rise above our natural inclinations to pursue happiness and instead strive to be worthy of happiness.[47] For Kant, happiness is a good, and it is even the "highest physical good we can [achieve]." But it cannot be the highest good per se since we know by a priori reason that our pursuit of it ought to be circumscribed by the moral law.[48] Only once we have checked a given action against the commands of duty are we "entitled to look round for happiness."[49] Even if we can never be sure of our success in doing our duty, we know morally that we "*ought to fulfill* [our] duty completely unselfishly," separating our "desire for happiness from the concept of

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[43] Kant, *Judgment*, 195.

[44] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 378.

[45] I refer again to those Kant identifies as "people who are accustomed merely to explanations by natural sciences" (*phyiologisch Erkarungen*). Ibid.

[46] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:395.

[47] Kant, *Political Writings*, 67, 72.

[48] Kant, *Judgment*, 450.

[49] Kant, *Political Writings*, 67.

duty, in order to preserve the latter's purity."[50] When duty and happiness conflict with one another, as they often do, we know that it is our duty that should prevail.[51]

Happiness belongs to the realm of nature rather than the realm of reason and freedom. Furthermore, it is not simply derived from nature. Rather, it is an idea "tied to imagination and the senses" that "each person chooses to set himself," making it a "wavering concept." Without omniscience, we lack a principle by which we could "determine with complete certainty what would truly make [us] happy."[52] The diversity of human desires and circumstances precludes the certainty that Kant thinks human knowledge requires.

Even if the definition of human happiness were artificially limited to a least common denominator that all human beings share, the definition would not be achievable. Of the human being in search of happiness, Kant writes, "[e]ven if we restricted the concept of happiness to the true natural needs shared by our entire species...[the human being] would still never reach what he means by happiness…for it is not his nature to stop possessing and enjoying at some point and be satisfied." The natural world is not simply a home for human beings. "Famine, flood, frost, [and] attacks from other animals" are evidence that "nature…is very far from having adopted [us] as its special darling." Kant continues, "What is more, man's own absurd *natural predispositions* land him in further troubles."[53] Even those who achieve some degree of physical well-being cannot, because of the mutability of the material world, rest in their

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[50] Ibid., 68; Cf. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:378.

[51] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:405.

[52] Ibid., 4:418.

[53] Kant, *Judgment*, 430. The emphasis is Kant's.

security.[54] We see again that, for Kant, nature both outside and within us is often at odds with us and is beneficial only insofar as it provides the adversity that is necessary for our cultivation. That our own animal nature can be our adversary suggests that what we are essentially is found primarily in our rational capacity, even if in another sense human beings are both rational and natural.

Although Kant finds us at odds with nature understood as a metaphysical category, human nature understood broadly is not without its redemptive qualities. Human beings also have a "noble predisposition to the [morally] good," which makes them "worthy of respect."[55] As we have already begun to see, reason redeems us from nature, freeing us from selfishness and predisposing us toward the morally good. When reason does apply itself to the pursuit of happiness, it leads us away from "true satisfaction."[56] The latter is achieved only obliquely, by acting consistent with and from duty. In any case, Kant distinguishes happiness from satisfaction, which suggests that he understands happiness narrowly and that our complete nature demands a more comprehensive vision of the good. For Kant, reason need not slavishly pursue one's happiness, narrowly understood. When operating a priori, that is, independent of any empirical observation, "common human reason," unencumbered by science or philosophy, is capable of moral cognition, which provides us with everything we need "in order to be honest and good, and even wise and virtuous." Thus, "every human being, even the most common" can through reason "have as good a hope of hitting the mark as

[54] Kant, *Observations*, 27:46.

[55] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:441.

[56] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:395.

any philosopher can promise himself" and is "almost more sure in this matter" of accessing the dictates of duty. At its best, philosophy plays a supplemental role in making duty "attentive to its own principle."[57] Where natural science fails, reason succeeds. Thus, Kant relocates the ground of morality from nature, where his predecessors had placed it, to a priori reason.

The Usefulness of Feeling, Emotion, and Aesthetics

Because moral laws come from a priori reason, they hold categorically, regardless of the circumstances. They are theoretical principles that do not depend on empirical observation. Kant writes, "Everyone must grant that a law, if it is to hold morally, that is, as a ground of an obligation, must carry with it absolute necessity…therefore, the ground of obligation…must be sought…a priori simply in concepts of pure reason."[58] That Kant limits morally significant goodness to the principles of a priori reason has earned him the reputation of an enlightened rationalist who opposes emotions and the aesthetic dimensions of morality since they are subjectively experienced.[59] But in the remainder of this chapter I will show that while Kant conceives of morality as derived from a realm entirely separate from the empirical world, he leaves room for sensory experience as essential to the actual practice of virtue. Though Kant is cautious in his treatment of emotion, he nevertheless connects it to the pursuit of virtue and right. To the extent that we remain human, partly natural and not fully rational, moral life will have a sensory

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[57] Ibid., 4:404.

[58] Ibid., 4:389.

[59] Kant uses "aesthetic" to refer to the science of sense perception, whereas Baumgarten uses it to refer to a science of the beautiful, something Kant rejects. I use "aesthetic" here to refer to a perception of the beautiful. "Aesthetic, N. and Adj.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed December 25, 2016, http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/view/Entry/3237.

component. Although it takes different forms, this interest, I argue, remains almost constant throughout Kant's career, appearing even in critical works such as the *Groundwork,* where some otherwise sympathetic scholars have found it missing.[60]

It is true that Kant speaks negatively of emotions, which he describes in terms of affects and passions. An affect is a temporary feeling that precedes reflection, such as shock, while a passion is a "sensible *desire* that has become a lasting inclination," such as a hatred that began as anger.[61] Both affects and passions impede free choice, although passion is deep-seated and bound up with the will, making it blameworthy. In *The Critique of Judgment* (1790) he says that "an affect is an agitation of the mind that makes it unable to engage in free deliberation about principles," which for Kant means that it precludes moral action.[62] In *Observations* (1764) Kant says that the passions "for the most part…run counter to wisdom, since they choose silly ends.[63] In *Judgment,* Kant goes so far as to say that passions abolish freedom entirely.[64] Moreover, in *Contest of the Faculties* (1798) Kant says that "all passion as such is blameworthy."[65] Consequently, it is "sublime" to subdue one's affects and passions and instead pursue immutable principles.[66] While Kant seems a little harder on the emotions at the end of his career, it is clear that he is critical of emotions from beginning to end.[67]

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[60] See, for example, Caygill, "Kant and the Relegation of the Passions," 223.

[61] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:408.

[62] Kant, *Judgment*, 272.

[63] Kant, *Observations*, 27:31.

[64] Kant, *Judgment*, 272n.

[65] Kant, *Political Writings*, 183.

[66] Kant, *Judgment*, 272; Kant, *Observations*, 2:215.

Feelings that go unaccompanied by moral rules can be foolish or dangerous. Kant points out that an affectionate, good-hearted person could very well also be a liar, an idler, or a drunkard. Thus, an otherwise beautiful inclination "in so far as it is without self-control and without principles becomes ridiculous."[68] Likewise, a sanguine person may be "liberal and generous" but also a "poor payer of debts, since he has much sentiment for goodness but little for justice."[69] Kant notes that there is something sublime about revenge, "however impermissible it might be." Perhaps we might be impressed with the difficulty of an act of revenge and its connection to justice, however inconsistent it may be with the rational restraint that law demands. In another place Kant explains that although a feeling for the noble inspired knighthood and the virtuous subduing of passions, these eventually degenerated into duels and "castigation, vows, and other such monkish virtues."[70] We may have a feeling of the sublime, that is, of our freedom from nature when in fact we are contradicting the dictates of morality.

On its face, Kant's criticism of emotions appears consistent with his critical effort to cleanse morality of everything empirical. Emotions, after all, are part of our misguided, all-too-human nature and cannot be counted on to provide us with categorical imperatives. However, Kant views feelings, emotions, and inclinations as safeguards of right and encouragements toward virtue. He recognizes that "human nature is not capable

[67] Caygill offers an extended account of the appearance of affects and passions across Kant's corpus. As I mentioned above, with the exception of Kant's critical philosophy (*Judgment* excluded) where he thinks they are ignored, Caygill finds significant consistency between Kant's early and late work, with the former largely anticipating the latter. Caygill, "Kant and the Relegation of the Passions."

[68] Kant, *Observations*, 2:217.

[69] Ibid., 2:222.

[70] Ibid., 2:215.

of an immediate moral purity" and that we therefore need supplements to virtue.[71] Susan Shell draws our attention to a key passage in *Observations* that illustrates this side of Kant:

> In recognition of the weakness of human nature and the little power that the universal moral feeling exercises over most hearts, providence has placed such helpful drives in us as supplements for virtue, which move some to beautiful actions even without principles while at the same time being able to give others, who are ruled by these principles, a greater impetus and a stronger impulse thereto.[72]

Everyone, whether principled or not, can benefit from these supplements. Thus, in unpublished notes from the same period Kant writes of the need to "excite the inclinations that most closely agree with morality: love of honor, sociability, [and] freedom."[73] In another place, Kant writes, "The weakness of human nature consists in the weakness of the moral feeling relative to other inclinations. Hence providence has strengthened it with supporting drives…, e.g. honor, *storge,* pity, sympathy, or also with rewards and punishments."[74] When the pangs of conscience fail us, these supporting drives help us counteract other, more problematic inclinations. Although these are not to be confused with moral motives, Kant says in *Observations* that a morality cleansed of these motives is "chimerical."[75] Kant is clear in these early writings that empirical supplements to virtue are necessary and even desirable, given the moral weakness of our nature.

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[71] Ibid., 20:28; See also ibid., 27:33.

[72] Kant, *Observations*, 2:217; Shell, "Kant as Propagator," 458.

[73] Kant, *Observations*, 19:113.

[74] Ibid., 19:77. *Storge* is the Greek word for familial love or natural affection, which arises from close association.

[75] Ibid.

Both in early works, such as *Observations,* and late works, such as the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant links a kind of feeling to conscience, making it essential rather than merely instrumental to living a moral life. Personally felt sentiment and moral feeling, which constitute the conviction of conscience, provide us with an important mode of access to the moral law. In announcing the subject of his lectures for the winter semester of 1765-1766 Kant writes, "The distinction between good and evil in actions, and the judgment of moral rightness, can be known, easily and accurately, by the human heart through what is called sentiment." Sentiment cannot replace moral philosophy, which has an important clarifying role to play, but it is a relatively effective alternative.[76] Yet Kant's precise outworking of the implications of the categorical imperative, however consistent it is with sentiment, remains necessary because with sentiment we see moral matters "sharply but not clearly."[77] Subjectively felt, sentiment lacks the precision of moral principles, but it often points in the right direction. It helps less than fully rational beings overcome the defects of their composite nature.

Though moral feeling is sharp in its conviction, it suffers from weakness in the competition with other (immoral or amoral) feelings and drives. When it comes to making decisions based on the conviction of conscience, moral feeling exercises "little power…over most hearts." However, providence has supplied us with not only conscience but also "helpful drives."[78] From Herder's notes of Kant's lectures on ethics we learn that moral feeling is the pleasure we take in free actions. It is universally felt,

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[76] Ibid., 2:311.

[77] Ibid., 19:97.

[78] Ibid., 2:217; See also, ibid., 20:169.

unequivocal in its teachings, and provides the ground of conscience, making it our "final yardstick." Kant goes so far as to say that the "sole moral rule" is: "Act according to *your moral feeling*!"[79] These are some of Kant's strongest statements in favor of moral feeling. His emphasis on the importance of moral feeling here may be due to the fact that these remarks were delivered to a popular audience (and recorded by Herder) and were therefore designed to be more exhortative than philosophical.

Yet even in these early writings Kant makes a distinction between decisions based on feeling and those based on principle and insists that only the latter belong within the domain of morality.[80] Moral feeling cannot "firmly establish maxims and first principles that are objectively valid." Rather, it is "more a hypothesis to explain the *phaenonmenon* of approbation that we give to certain actions."[81] It would not be surprising, then, if moral feeling did not enter Kant's critical philosophy. Still, while it may be distinct from morality per se, moral feeling continues to play a role in actual moral practice. Perhaps Kant does, as Ronald Beiner suggests, "rise above his own earlier allegiance to the moral sense theory associated with Francis Hutcheson and Lord Shaftesbury," but elements remain in Kant's critical philosophy, lurking perhaps just beyond the bounds of the metaphysics of morals proper.[82] Then, in his later writings, he revisits the sensory components of morality more directly.

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[79] Kant, *Observations*, 27:16. Johann Gottfried Herder was an especially gifted student of Kant's at the University of Konigsburg in the 1760s. His thorough notes preserve Kant's lectures on moral philosophy.

[80] Ibid., 27:15.

[81] Ibid., 19:117.

[82] Ronald Beiner, "Review of Essays on Kant's Political Philosophy by Howard Loyd Williams," *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 26, no. 3 (September 1, 1993): 606.

In much later works, such as "Theory and Practice" and "What is Orientation in Thinking*?*" we find Kant again wrestling with the difference between moral feeling and principle. Belonging to the phenomenal world, moral feeling cannot serve as the basis of moral obligation. For that, we must look to the rationally legislated moral law.[83] Although caused by the moral law, moral feeling is ultimately a subjective experience and therefore unreliable. The "pangs of conscience" have a moral source, but conscience itself is a natural and therefore undependable effect.[84] In the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant explains that moral feeling provides us with a kind of access to duty and the moral law through "pleasure and displeasure of a distinctive kind," but in "practical laws of reason we take no account of these feelings."[85] Nevertheless, the feeling of this pleasure is indispensable in leading a moral life. Indeed, in the *Groundwork* Kant says that reason must "induce a feeling of pleasure…in the fulfillment of duty" for human beings to will as they ought.[86] Even during the period when Kant was developing his critical philosophy, he made it clear that moral action must have a sensible component. We depend on moral feeling "to make us aware of the constraint present in the thought of duty."[87] Though prone to fault, moral feeling is duty's sensible component and is therefore an indispensable part of our moral lives.

In the *Metaphysics of Morals* we find that "moral endowments," such as "*moral feeling, conscience, love* of one's neighbor and *respect* for oneself (*self-esteem*)…lie at

[83] Kant, *Political Writings*, 68, 243.

[84] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:394.

[85] Ibid., 6:221.

[86] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:460.

[87] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:400.

the basis of morality, as *subjective* conditions of receptiveness to the concept of duty." They are not, strictly speaking, within our control. They are predispositions that we all have, and it is by them that we are put under obligation.[88] Nevertheless, they can and should be cultivated. For example, one has a duty to "cultivate one's conscience, to sharpen one's attentiveness to the voice of the inner judge, and to use every means to obtain a hearing for it."[89] As Paul Guyer has pointed out, these various "aesthetic preconditions," that is, nonrational preconditions, for morality complicate the picture one often takes from the *Groundwork,* where the motivation for moral action seems limited to a rather unemotional, reason-generated respect for the moral law.[90] Moral endowments that are subjectively experienced and require cultivation seem to blur the line between nature and freedom.

Kant consistently connects morality with emotive experiences throughout his career. In *Observations* he says that we take pleasure in morality because it is beautiful or sublime. A feeling of the beautiful arises when we find satisfaction in morality, while joy in our own moral worth produces a noble feeling of the sublime.[91] We experience the sublime in the difficulty of our striving to achieve morality and the beautiful on our having achieved it. Both bring us feelings of pleasure, albeit of different kinds. Virtue may require depriving oneself of physical goods, but the pain of this loss is mitigated by

[88] Ibid., 6:399.

[89] Ibid., 6:401.

[90] According to Guyer, respect itself receives a more complicated treatment in the Critique of Practical Reason. Guyer, "Passion for Reason," 15; Kant distinguishes respect from other feelings. Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:401.

[91] Kant, *Observations*, 27:5.

the awakening of a "much finer moral feeling."[92] Kant makes a similar point in his critical writings. In spite of our making sometimes severe sacrifices when acting morally, we are helped along by our "liking" for moral character and the pleasure that comes when our actions conform "with the idea of our vocation" as moral beings.[93] In the *Groundwork*, where Kant seems to draw the line between morality and happiness most clearly, he says that happiness can be "built upon physical or moral feeling."[94] Morality and happiness need not be mutually exclusive.

Kant again draws the connection between morality and pleasure in the later *Metaphysics of Morals.* He goes so far as to say that actions performed without pleasure "have no inner worth," and the person who performs otherwise moral deeds begrudgingly "shirks as much as possible occasions for practicing virtue." Thus, the presence of pleasure has both moral and practical implications. Doing one's duty may sound unpleasant, but the virtuous person is in fact cheerful in the performance of duty.[95] Pleasure cannot reliably direct us to the moral; however, the agreeable, the beautiful, the sublime, and the absolute (morally) good are all associated with feelings of pleasure.[96]

Moral feeling also plays an important role in moral education. After all, metaphysics is a "speculative subject that few know how to handle." Popular teachers can forgo certitude and moral purity and instead "be content to rely on [moral] *feeling*."[97]

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[92] Ibid., 27:46.

[93] Kant, *Judgment*, 292.

[94] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:442.

[95] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:484.

[96] Kant, *Judgment*, 266–67.

[97] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:376.

Although moral feeling is not an object of choice, we can and are obliged "to *cultivate* it and to strengthen it through wonder at its inscrutable source."[98] Indeed, in *Observations* Kant describes its cultivation as essential to achieving moral character. He writes, "I can morally move no one except by means of his own sentiments."[99] Thus, in education "we have first to awaken the moral feeling," even before we cultivate obedience, because "sensory motivating grounds…make it easier for the soul subsequently to make its decisions based on principles."[100] Thus, Kant demonstrates a concern with sentiments as crucial to moral education in both his early and late writings. It is less apparent in his critical philosophy, although Steven DeLue persuasively argues that Kant's lectures on ethics that just precede his critical works reflect a continued concern with the moral training that "orients emotions and appetites to favor right principles."[101] Perhaps Kant sets these concerns aside in his critical philosophy not because he no longer thinks that morality has an empirical component but because he is writing for a different audience and with a different purpose. Indeed, it may be that the *Groundwork* is a kind of experiment designed to show that the fundamental principle of morality can be located in a priori reason and does not purport to explain every facet of moral life. Kant suggests as much when he acknowledges that, while it will not be his chief concern in the *Groundwork*, ethics must have an empirical component.[102]

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[98] Ibid., 6:400.

[99] Kant, *Observations*, 20:33.

[100] Ibid., 27:10, 27:15.

[101] Steven M. DeLue, "Aristotle, Kant and Rawls on Moral Motivation in a Just Society," *The American Political Science Review* 74, no. 2 (June 1, 1980): 391, doi:10.2307/1960634.

[102] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:388.

The Beautiful and the Good

As we will soon see, while aesthetics is distinct from morality and politics for Kant, it nevertheless supplements the pursuit of virtue and right. First, though, we should consider Kant's sometimes circumspect treatment of aesthetic judgment. As we have seen with the other potential encouragements towards virtue and right, Kant warns us against approaching aesthetics uncritically. He clearly acknowledges that appearances can be deceiving and that the beautiful is not grounded in rational principles. In *Observations* Kant cautions us against the illusion of "false brilliance."[103] In *Judgment* he advises us against taking good taste as a "sign of a good moral character," since "virtuosi of taste" can be "vain, obstinate, and given to ruinous passions."[104]

Furthermore, aesthetics can be put to nefarious purposes. For example, to show how public speaking has the potential to become an "insidious art," Kant distinguishes "rhetorical power and excellence of speech," which belong to fine art, from oratory, which he defines as "the art of using people's weaknesses for one's own aims."[105] In relying on "the art of persuasion" orators deceive "by means of a beautiful illusion" and as a result "win over people's minds for [their] own advantage before [their hearers can] judge for themselves." Orators pretend to engage their audience's reason when in fact they are taking away their audience's freedom to make their own rational judgment. In contrast to the orator Kant holds out the possibility of the "excellent man and expert speaker." Nevertheless, whenever the "machinery of persuasion" is involved we cannot

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[103] Kant, *Observations*, 2:255.

[104] Kant, *Judgment*, 298.

[105] Ibid., 327n.

shake the "lurking suspicion that we are being artfully hoodwinked," making persuasion an inherently lower form of art.[106]

Aesthetic judgment cannot be moral judgment because it is not grounded in principles derived from pure reason. The aesthetic is what is "merely subjective in the presentation of an object."[107] It primarily describes the experience of a subject rather than an objective fact about the external world. It is nevertheless an experience we expect to share with others. An aesthetic judgment "expects confirmation not from concepts but from the agreement of others."[108] Although in making a judgment of taste we "cannot help judging that [the object] must contain a basis for being liked [that holds] for everyone" and we "talk about the beautiful *as if* beauty were a characteristic of the object and the judgment were logical,"[109] in fact "the judgment is only aesthetic and refers the object's presentation merely to the subject." Judgments of taste necessarily involve a claim of universal validity, but they do not in fact have "a universality based on concepts."[110]

Kant says that the beautiful is "quite independent of the concept of the good."[111] When we present "the [morally] good as the object of universal like we do so by *means of a concept*," but the beautiful cannot be presented to others conceptually as a rational

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[106] Ibid., 327–28.

[107] Ibid., 188.

[108] Ibid., 216.

[109] The emphasis is mine.

[110] Kant, *Judgment*, 212.

[111] Ibid., 226.

principle.[112] Kant acknowledges the attractiveness of morality even as he distinguishes it from other things we might perceive as beautiful. For beauty perceived by the senses, "there can be no rule by which someone could be compelled to acknowledge that something is beautiful. No one can use reasons or principles to talk us into a judgment on whether some garment, house, or flower is beautiful."[113] No matter how much we might believe that we have a "universal voice" when we identify a cause of the feeling of the beautiful, there can never be a science of the beautiful.[114] The beautiful feeling is liked universally, but we have no conceptual basis for agreeing on what inspires it.[115] Kant posits that aesthetic judgment is based on a feeling of pleasure that arises when we sense a harmony between the form of an object and our own cognitive powers.[116] Nevertheless, our judgment is based on feeling and at best refers to a concept that is "indeterminate and indeterminable." Kant presents taste as an antinomy and seemingly resolves that judgments of taste are neither objective nor merely subjective.[117] In any case, I think Kant gives us grounds to be more circumspect regarding claims of taste insofar as they are more slippery than moral judgments.

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[112] Ibid., 213.

[113] Ibid., 216.

[114] Ibid., 304.

[115] Ibid., 219; Delue explains the beautiful as a "shared sense that can be communicated to others." Steven M. Delue, "Kant's Politics as an Expression of the Need for His Aesthetics," *Political Theory* 13, no. 3 (August 1, 1985): 419.

[116] Kant, *Judgment*, 191.

[117] Ibid., 338–39.

Kant differentiates between the "intellectual power of judgment" that produces moral feeling and the "aesthetic power of judgment" that produces "taste."[118] Both judgments create feelings of pleasure and displeasure, but moral feeling has a definitive bearing on how we should act. In making an aesthetic judgment, by contrast, we do not need to know anything about what is being judged. When we find a flower beautiful, for instance, we simply find it pleasing to us.[119] Unlike moral feeling, the pleasure of taste is disinterested and free, requiring no further action.

And yet, despite the clarity of this distinction between the aesthetic and the moral, the two concepts do finally relate to one another in important ways. Kant says that aesthetic judgments have a "kinship with moral feeling."[120] He notices that we often speak of objects of nature and art using moral language. We often "call buildings or trees majestic and magnificent." He says it is "in fact difficult to think of a feeling for the sublime in nature without connecting with it a mental attunement similar to that for moral feeling."[121] Kant concludes that certain natural phenomena produce sensations that are "somehow analogous to the consciousness we have in a mental state produced by moral judgments." As a result, taste "enables us…to make the transition from sensible charm to a habitual moral interest."[122] Kant says we are safe in assuming that someone who takes a direct interest in the beauty of nature "has at least a predisposition to a good moral

[118] Ibid., 300.

[119] Ibid., 207.

[120] Ibid., 301.

[121] Ibid., 268.

[122] Ibid., 354.

attitude."[123] Taste thus "points to a moral sense." While an "aesthetic of morals" is "not…part of the metaphysic of morals" it is "still a subjective presentation [of the moral law]." It arouses feelings like disgust and horror that "make moral aversion sensible" and thus help us overcome our contrary impulses.[124] We are able to prescribe rules for uniting taste with reason or the beautiful with the good, and that union "enables us to use the beautiful as an instrument for our aim regarding the good." By a power of attraction, the beautiful can help sustain an otherwise laborious moral resolve.[125] Although an aesthetic of morals falls short of metaphysics, it is nevertheless important for how virtue and right are realized in the real world.

Conversely, even though a judgment of taste "cannot be determined by a concept of the good," it is "in developing our moral ideas and in cultivating [*Kultur*] moral feeling" that we find "the propaedeutic that will truly establish our taste." Taste benefits from the guidance of reason. Kant writes that "taste gains by…a connection of aesthetic with intellectual liking, for it becomes fixed and, though it is not universal, rules can be prescribed for it with regard to certain objects that are purposively determined." It seems that it is only when moral feeling precedes and supports taste that taste can "take on a definite, unchangeable form."[126] It is because "we refer [*Rucksicht*] the beautiful to the morally good" that "our liking for it include[s] a claim to everyone's assent."[127] Thus,

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[123] Ibid., 301.

[124] Ibid., 165.

[125] Ibid., 231.

[126] Ibid., 221, 356.

[127] Ibid., 353.

moral feeling and taste are related to one another, and the closer their relationship, the better.

We find support for the connection between intellectual and moral attraction in Kant's earlier writings. The relationship between moral feeling and taste is possible because the beautiful, which is what taste perceives, is found not only in physical objects but in concepts as well. For example, Kant says that there is "a beauty in the cognitions of reason."[128] In calling the cognitions of reason beautiful, Kant says that there is something in knowing that is intrinsically attractive, quite apart from its utility.[129] There would be, by implication, beauty in the moral law.

Moreover, there appears to be an analogous relationship between the beautiful and morality. In *Judgment* Kant writes that the beautiful "prepares us for loving something…without interest."[130] Interest is precisely what Kant faults in his contemporaries' understanding of morality. In Herder's notes Kant sides with the Ancient Stoics against the moderns, lamenting that the majority of Germans have followed Hobbes, insofar as they "relate everything to self-interest," instead of learning from the nobility of the Stoics.[131] In another place in *Judgment* Kant says that what "we call beautiful is also liked directly."[132] As we will see, this is how Kant thinks we should relate to morality.

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[128] Kant, *Observations*, 15:310.

[129] Kant says that "beauty is without utility." Ibid., 20:133.

[130] Kant, *Judgment*, 267.

[131] Kant, *Observations*, 27:3.

[132] Kant, *Judgment*, 208.

Judgments of the sublime prefigure our relationship to morality in a different way. Such judgments prepare us for esteeming something "even against our interest."[133] Insofar as we remain less than fully rational, we must expect the contamination of interest, and in those cases when we must set aside our own desires, we should be willing to face the difficulty that accompanies the sublime, an experience Kant describes as pleasure mixed with displeasure.[134] In experiencing the sublime, we fearfully encounter nature's ability to overpower us at the same time that we are reminded of reason's superiority to nature.[135] When we call deeds beautiful, sublime, or noble we mean that they are worth doing regardless of or even in spite of the consequences. Likewise, the feelings that morality inspires are beautiful or sublime.[136] In his remarks on *Observations*, Kant takes it for granted that "greater sacrifice and self-denial…have an inner beauty."[137] In apprehending sacrifice as beautiful we recognize that we like moral deeds quite apart from their usefulness. Being further removed from self-concern, sacrificial deeds better illustrate the "beauty of virtue."[138]

Kant develops the connection between morality and beauty in his "Conjectures on the Beginning." His genealogy of morals, as it were, begins with human beings discovering that their sexual instinct, initially a "periodic urge," can be "prolonged

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[133] Ibid., 267.

[134] Ibid., 258.

[135] Ibid., 258–61. Kant focuses on objects in nature, but it is easy to see how this also applies to the nature that constitutes us.

[136] Kant, *Observations*, 27:5.

[137] Ibid., 20:7.

[138] Ibid., 2:217.

and…increased by means of the imagination." The imagination abstracts from the beauty found in particular human beings to an ideal of beauty, so humans are able to deny themselves the satisfaction of their immediate inclinations. Thus, the human being's sexual instinct develops into a love of beauty in human beings as such and then of beauty in nature. The human being's refusal to give immediate gratification to this instinct lends beauty an "ideal quality." It becomes an unreachable goal, unattainable in the natural world. Moreover, the human being simultaneously develops a "sense of decency," which Kant defines as an "inclination to inspire respect in others by good manners." Kant suggests that the human being who loves beauty does not want to appear ugly and therefore cultivates beautiful manners. As a result, the human being becomes a "moral being."[139] Although Kant is here speaking historically, he suggests that moral education is aided by aesthetic education and that progress up the ladder of morality is motivated by the love of beauty, or as the Greeks would say, *eros*. The desires of human beings draw them toward morality.

In *Groundwork* Kant praises moral feeling even though it is not morality itself because "it shows virtue the honor of ascribing to her *immediately* the delight and esteem we have for her and does not, as it were, tell her to her face that it is not her beauty but only our advantage that attaches us to her."[140] Although Kant opposes duty to selfishness, he sees moral feeling or the conviction of conscience as consistent with perceiving the beauty of the moral law. Indeed, he contrasts the perception of beauty with the pursuit of one's advantage. Conversely, to base morality on incentives is to "undermine it and

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[139] Kant, "Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History," in *Political Writings,* ed. by H.S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 224-25.

[140] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:443.

destroy all its sublimity."[141] Even when Kant turns his attention to formulating a metaphysics of morals based on pure reason, he resorts to beauty to describe our attachment to virtue.

In addition to describing morality in aesthetic terms, Kant recommends a moral education with aesthetic features. It is easy to miss this because Kant says that virtue could be more effectively taught if it were conceived of "in its complete purity" and if it were purged of "the superfluous wealth of advantages" that are so often attached to it.[142] As with moral theory, Kant thinks moral education has put too much emphasis on the "quest for happiness" and not nearly enough on "worthiness of happiness."[143] Teachers have tried to make virtue more appealing by presenting it in terms of its advantages, but "in trying to make their medicine really strong they spoil it." Actions tainted by self-interest pale in comparison to "an action of integrity done with steadfast soul, apart from every view to advantage of any kind in this world or another." Such a deed "elevates the soul" and awakens in us a wish to perform similar deeds.[144] Indeed, as we have seen, deeds that come from a pure will "shine forth" more brightly and are thus more compelling to students.[145] Although it may be more difficult to find real-world examples of selfless acts, Kant recommends a purified pedagogy not only for its truth but also for its effectiveness in making virtue attractive to students.

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[141] Ibid., 4:442.

[142] Kant, "Theory and Practice," in *Political Writings*, 71–72.

[143] Ibid., 72.

[144] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:411.

[145] Ibid., 4:397.

This does not mean morality should be taught merely through abstract principles; Kant thinks examples play an important role in moral education. In *Judgment,* he writes that "an example of virtue and holiness will always accomplish more than any universal precepts we have received from priests or philosophers." We learn best not from abstract principles but from concrete examples. The need for pure motivation does not preclude teachers from using examples that have been "set for us in history." However, our use of examples should not interfere with the "autonomy of virtue." Our deeds must ultimately arise "from our own and original (a priori) idea of morality."[146] We cannot simply derive morality from examples.[147] We should make use of historical examples as precedent, but we should not corrupt the moral worth of our own actions by merely imitating those precedents,[148] because "what others give us can establish no maxim of virtue." As a result, "A good example…should not serve as a model but as a proof that it is really possible to act in conformity with duty." We should not compare ourselves to a particular human being but "with the *idea* (of humanity), as he ought to be." [149]

While we should not abandon ourselves to imitation and comparison, Kant makes a case for imitation's usefulness. Even though imitation is "a mechanism of sense rather than a principle of thought"[150] and "has no place at all in matters of morality,"[151] it can nevertheless serve as a starting point "for a still undeveloped human being." For such a

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[146] Kant, *Judgment*, 283.

[147] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:409.

[148] Kant, *Judgment*, 283.

[149] Ibid., 223.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:409.

person, “imitation is the first determination of his will to accept maxims that he afterwards makes for himself.”[152] So while we should strive to live by laws we have arrived at by our own reason, imitation can serve as a first step towards that goal.

Although Kant understands that moral and political progress take time and can sometimes be seen only when taking a long view of history, he nonetheless thinks we have an obligation to seek progress in our own time through education. Susan Shell translates two of Kant’s notes that reveal both his interest in education and his indebtedness to Rousseau. Kant writes, “Rousseau set me right. And I would consider myself more useless than the ordinary worker if everything I did did not contribute to securing the rights of man.”[153] In another place he says, “It is…fitting that a human being expend his life on teaching others how to live...Would that Rousseau showed how, on the basis of [*Emile*], there could spring forth schools.” Commenting on these passages, Shell says, “All of Kant’s subsequent philosophy can be understood as an attempted solution to that problem.”[154]

Despite nature’s shortcomings, it indirectly teaches us to pursue moral and political improvement by showing us that progress is up to us. Kant writes that “the evils that either nature or our quarrelsomeness and selfishness visit on us do also summon, increase, and steal the soul’s forces to keep them from succumbing to those evils, and so

[152] Kant, *Judgment*, 223.

[153] Immanuel Kant, Beobachtungen iiber das Gefiihl des Schbnen und Erhabenen (Konigsberg: Kanter, 1764); reprinted in Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Koniglich Preuflische [later Deutsche] Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Reimer; later, De Gruyter, 1900-), 20:44; Shell, “Kant as Propagator,” 456.

[154] Ibid.

let us feel a hidden aptitude within us for higher purposes."[155] In recognizing that aptitude we realize that moral and political progress is up to us and depends on our own efforts.

Even though Kant distinguishes aesthetics from morality, he thinks that art can play a role in cultivating moral beings. Kant acknowledges that the fine arts can be connected with moral ideas for their mutual benefit.[156] As Christian Donath argues, Kant ranks the fine arts based on "what each art form can teach an audience about freedom and its proper use."[157] Kant gives poetry the highest place among the arts because it "rises aesthetically to ideas" and "fortifies the mind." In poetry we recognize the mind's ability to think freely and spontaneously, undetermined by nature. As Donath explains, "the best artworks are those that transmit 'moral ideas.'"[158] Fine art per se does not make man "morally [*sittlich*] better for [life in] society," but it does make him "civilized [*gesittet*] for it" and as such will "prepare him for a sovereignty in which reason alone is to dominate."[159] As Donath explains, on Kant's view, art "gradually prepares individuals to become autonomous citizens" and thus "teaches the values of a liberal citizenship."[160] Art by its nature is an exercise in human freedom, but to be beautiful art must submit to social constraint. Donath takes this attention to both freedom and lawfulness as "evidence that Kant believed that art could prompt an audience to reflect on the duties of liberal

[155] Kant, *Judgment*, 434.

[156] Ibid., 326.

[157] Christian R. Donath, "Liberal Art: Art and Education for Citizenship in Kant's Critique of Judgment," *Review of Politics* 75, no. 1 (January 2013): 6, doi:10.1017/S0034670512001052.

[158] Ibid., 4.

[159] Kant, *Judgment*, 433.

[160] Donath, "Liberal Art," 7.

citizenship,"[161] because it is in the proper balance of freedom and lawfulness that we achieve autonomy.[162] So in addition to communicating ideas of morality, freedom, and right, the very idea of fine or beautiful art teaches us something about what it means to be a good citizen.

Conclusion

Because our feelings, inclinations, and emotions are bound up with our all-too-human nature, Kant recommends that they ultimately be brought before the bar of reason. We know this intuitively, he alleges, because duty calls us to transcend our merely human nature and live as fully rational beings, an achievement not within reach for embodied creatures. But Kant recognizes that we live in an in-between state. Although we strive to live rationally, morally, and freely, we cannot dispense with feelings, inclinations, and emotions, some of which, when appealed to, can direct us toward virtue and right. Morality becomes real to us only when our moral feeling convicts us personally through conscience. Love of honor, of others, and of ourselves fall short of duty, but if brought within the bounds of reason they can motivate our pursuit of virtue and right. So, too, can our experience of the beautiful and the sublime. As symbols of the morally good,[163] they attach us to the morally good at the same time that they teach us that morality needs nothing more to recommend it than itself. With caution and some measure of ambivalence Kant commends sensory and empirical supplements to virtue without which virtue would be chimerical. Therefore, instead of eradicating emotion and experience,

[161] Ibid., 14.

[162] Ibid., 22.

[163] Cf. Kant, *Judgment*, 353.

Kant suggests a rational engagement with them that will strengthen the better angels of our nature and thus help us achieve moral and political progress

CHAPTER THREE

Kant's Prudential Pursuit of Virtue and Right

Kant sometimes speaks dismissively of prudence, gives little in the way of a systematic treatment of political judgment,[1] and did not devote any of his major works to the subject of politics. In Kant's own time scholars such as Christian Garve faulted him for idealistically neglecting political necessity.[2] It was partly in response to Garve's criticisms that Kant penned "On the Common Saying: 'This may be true in theory, but it does not apply in practice.'"[3] Because Kant formulates categorical imperatives that apply everywhere and always and because he suggests that politics must "bend its knee" before right, he seems to neglect the prudential judgment that would allow political actors to adapt their aims to particular circumstances. These criticisms have not gone away. More recently, R.F. Atkinson described Kant's "moral and political rigorism," which makes Kant's position unyieldingly moral in areas like honesty, rebellion, and punishment, even when it comes at the expense of clear political goods.[4] The very idea that Kant would pursue universal ideals, like a perpetual peace presided over by a world state, appears to

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[1] Ronald Beiner, for instance, faults Kant for neglecting the importance of prudence. Donald J. Maletz, review of *Review of Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy and Kant's Political Philosophy*, by Ronald Beiner et al., *The American Political Science Review* 78, no. 1 (1984): 278, doi:10.2307/1961342; Cf. Eric Sean Nelson, "Moral and Political Prudence in Kant," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2004): 305n; Peter Berkowitz criticizes Kant for his "entirely nonprudential account of virtue." Peter Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 2nd Printing edition (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1999), 132; Cf. Robert C. Bartlett, "Socratic Political Philosophy and the Problem of Virtue," *The American Political Science Review* 96, no. 3 (2002): 525.

[2] Cf. Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 73.

[3] Williams, "Christian Garve and Immanuel Kant."

[4] Williams, *Essays on Kant's Political Philosophy*.

some to confuse politics with morality.[5] However, a growing body of scholarship finds another side of Kant's philosophy that is, in the words of Elisabeth Ellis, "worldly, pragmatic, and intensely committed to the everyday pursuit of freedom."[6] In this chapter I aim to contribute to that scholarship by considering Kant's conception of the relationship between morality and politics, his vision for moral and political progress through prudential judgment, and how his understanding of the aims of politics supports his nuanced approach to moral and political progress. Without compromising his ideals, Kant describes how morality can and must apply in practice.

Morality and Politics

In *Perpetual Peace* Kant defines morality and politics as the theoretical and applied branches of right.[7] Politics is morality applied, so by definition, politics cannot conflict with morality.[8] The ideal state is one where moral duty is "recognized for its own sake, irrespective of any possible gain in return."[9] In contrast to Hobbes, Kant embraces the idea of a "moral politics;" it is a politics oriented by ideals of freedom and equality. Nevertheless, he follows Hobbes in drawing the limits of outer freedom, which create a space within which we can act as we please.[10] The state should limit freedom only to keep us from infringing on the freedoms of others. In the "Doctrine of Right" section of

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[5] Steven B. Smith, "In Defense of Politics," *National Affairs* 7 (Spring 2011): 136.

[6] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 9.

[7] Kant, *Political Writings*, 116.

[8] Cf. ibid., 124.

[9] Ibid., 121n.

[10] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 34.

the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant argues that a scheme of limited, republican government flows from the categorical imperatives of his moral philosophy.[11]

To draw the limits of government Kant makes a distinction in the *Metaphysics of Morals* between virtue and right. Government concerns itself only with right, which sets the boundaries of external freedom. Virtue, which refers to the motives from which rightful deeds are performed, cannot be coerced and therefore lies beyond the bounds of state action. Both virtue and right are part of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, but Kant completely separates politics and right from the motivational aspect of morality, which we usually associate with Kantian ethics.[12] It is not the job of politics to make human beings moral, since morality presupposes being able to freely choose to obey the moral law. Politics should have moral ends, but those moral ends should be limited to right.

However, while morality does dictate the ends of politics, it would be wrong to think that the entirety of Kant's politics could be derived from his moral thought. As Ellis argues, despite Garve's criticisms, Kant rarely makes the mistake of directly applying his ethical system to the practice of politics.[13] Eric Sean Nelson explains that politics is for Kant "only indirectly determined by the categories of right." Kant sees politics, in contrast to ethics, not as a science or doctrine but as an art whereby the mechanism of nature is used to establish right.[14] Unlike ethics, the practice of politics necessarily draws on experience of the natural world, which means that politics belongs to Kant's "impure

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[11] William A. Galston, review of *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, by Hannah Arendt and Ronald Beiner, *The Journal of Politics* 46, no. 1 (1984): 304, doi:10.2307/2130447.

[12] Cf. Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers: Volume 2, Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 327.

[13] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 70, 74.

[14] Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 307; Kant, *Political Writings*, 113.

and empirically-informed" ethics.[15] In using this terminology, Nelson builds on the work of Robert Louden,[16] who argues that Kant distinguishes between ethics as a doctrine and its application. Right, as the political branch of Kant's metaphysics of morals, constitutes a doctrine, science, or ideal, but politics describes the context-dependent art of reaching that goal. Thus, the art of right's application cannot be understood simply in terms of right.

It is true that right constitutes a universal goal that all regimes should ultimately pursue.[17] In the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant identifies the well-being of a state with the principles of right and says we are obligated by a categorical imperative to pursue those principles politically.[18] This has led some to argue that Kant neglects the particular. Steven DeLue writes, "The problem with which one is constantly faced in Kant's thought is that respect for law does not guarantee a perspective that allows us to understand persons in their unique and particular forms."[19] However, Kant shows some signs of recognizing and attending to this difficulty.

For example, Kant cautions us against the dangers of universalism. Although in *Observations* Kant admits that a general affection for humankind is sublime, he warns that it is also colder and that "it is not possible that our bosom should swell with

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[15] Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 316.

[16] Robert B. Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[17] Cf. Mary P. Nichols, "Kant's Teaching of Historical Progress & Its Cosmopolitan Goal," *Polity* 19, no. 2 (1986): 212, doi:10.2307/3234910.

[18] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:318.

[19] Delue, "Kant's Politics as an Expression of the Need for His Aesthetics," 410.

tenderness on behalf of every human being."[20] Even though Kant in some sense thinks all human beings possess an equal worth and dignity by virtue of their being moral beings, he recognizes that a universal—and necessarily abstract—commitment to the equal worth of all human beings does not amount to a sustainable attachment to any particular human being. We neglect our limits to the detriment of those in need. Remarking on this passage, Kant later writes, "The universal love of humankind has something high and noble in it, but in a human being it is chimerical. If one aims for it one gets used to deceiving oneself with longings and idle wishes."[21] Kant is under no illusions about the limits of human affection. Later, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, he cautions against setting up a "state made up of nations" over too vast a territory, since that would make governing and protecting it impossible. Kant ultimately rejects the possibility of a world state because he envisions it leading to a "soulless despotism."[22] Although his universal morality logically points in the direction of a peace brought about by a world state, he simultaneously admits that it is an "unachievable idea."[23]

Kant's Vision for Moral and Political Progress

Although Kant is often caricatured as an idealist uninterested in practical outcomes, he was open about his desire to promote political progress in his own time. In his unpublished remarks on *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*,

[20] Kant, *Observations*, 2:216.

[21] Ibid., 20:25; Cf. ibid., 27:67.

[22] Immanuel Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, ed. Pauline Kleingeld, trans. David L. Colclasure (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 8:367, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1npwr1.13.

[23] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:350.

Kant credits Rousseau with giving him an interest in seeking political improvement. He views his philosophical endeavor as a useful one that will "impart a value to all others" by establishing "the rights of humanity."[24] Moreover, Kant evinces a concern with Prussian politics. Contemporary readers of Kant often miss the correspondence between his political writings and actual political events. For instance, while Kant does not mention the partitioning of Poland in connection with his case for non-intervention in the affairs of other states, he could be certain that his readers would not have missed the timeliness of these remarks in "Perpetual Peace."[25]

Whatever we make of Kant's philosophy of history, we can infer that Kant still thinks there is a role for human agency since he sees himself as an agent of political progress and gives us guidance on how to go about it ourselves. He says that a metaphysics of morals "cannot dispense with principles of application," and for these principles we must "take as our object the particular *nature* of human beings, which is cognized only by experience."[26] In connecting a metaphysics of morals with principles of application, Kant suggests that we have a duty to think seriously about the latter. The metaphysics of morals as a doctrine is distinct from the art of its application, and yet it teaches us something about how it should be applied. For instance, when we turn to application we ought to ask questions such as, "How should people be treated in accordance with their differences in rank, age, sex, health, prosperity or poverty, and so forth?" While he insists that ethical obligation remains the same regardless of these

[24] Kant, *Observations*, 20:44.

[25] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 75.

[26] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:217; Cf. Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 313n.

characteristics, he suggests that such differences should lead to differences in application.[27] Matters of application reveal what Robert Louden calls the "impure" side of Kant's ethics, since empirically derived principles of application rely on our imperfect knowledge of human nature and cannot be known clearly and distinctly like a metaphysics of morals.[28]

Ellis finds *Perpetual Peace* "Kant's most far-reaching exploration of the problem of the pragmatic application of ideal principles to imperfect political reality."[29] For example, Kant says that we are obliged to pursue political reforms, but that in some circumstances "it must be permissible to delay their execution until a better opportunity arises."[30] Taking Kant's corpus as a whole, Paul Formosa even finds evidence of Kant allowing exceptions regarding truthfulness, civil disobedience, and the restriction of rights and liberties if the circumstances require it.[31] In any case, Kant's sensitivity to matters of application suggests that he sanctions at least some forms of prudential reasoning, even in the case of right.

The case for Kant's pragmatism regarding the application of moral and political ideals is complicated by what Kant says directly about prudence. In no uncertain terms, Kant disassociates prudence from morality. As a "maxim of self-love" prudence only

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[27] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:469.

[28] Holly L. Wilson, review of *Review of Kant's Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings*, by Robert B. Louden, *The Review of Metaphysics* 54, no. 4 (2001): 923.

[29] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 72.

[30] Kant, *Political Writings*, 118.

[31] Paul Formosa, "'All Politics Must Bend Its Knee Before Right': Kant on the Relation of Morals to Politics," *Social Theory and Practice* 34, no. 2 (2008): 181.

advises, whereas "the law of morality *commands*."[32] Prudence can counsel us in our pursuit of happiness or well-being, allowing us to come up with pragmatic rules, but only morality can create a duty.[33] Kant therefore distinguishes the "moral point of view" from the "pragmatic point of view."[34] In his early notes on moral philosophy he says that the "rules of morality proceed from a special, eponymous feeling," whereas prudence has no such source.[35] Kant avoids including prudence in ethics because, as Nelson explains, it is "insufficient to establish the autonomy, impartiality, and universality of the moral law."[36] Prudential reasoning is necessarily particular since it pursues goods like well-being that vary according to circumstance.

In addition to excluding prudence from morality, Kant often speaks of prudence in derogation. Unlike moral duty, our "practical rules of prudence are governed by the principle of self-love."[37] For example, to be honest because it is the best policy is to follow a prudential maxim rather than a moral law.[38] Prudence and morality may often point to similar outcomes, but in their motivation they are entirely different.[39] In the

[32] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5:36; Cf. Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:418.

[33] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:427, 6:433n; Kant credits the Epicureans with setting up the "ideal of prudence" since they made happiness the highest good. Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Louis Infield (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980).

[34] Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert B. Louden (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 7:235.

[35] Kant, *Observations*, 19:93.

[36] Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 308.

[37] Kant, *Judgment*, 470.

[38] See, for example, Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:455.

[39] For example, Kant says that both prudence and morality teach that "I ought not to give to the poor wretch more than I can spare." Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 19.

Groundwork he defines prudence "in the narrowest sense" as "skill in the choice of means to one's own greatest well-being," or, as he puts it in his *Lectures on Ethics*, "the ability to use the means towards the universal end of man, that is, happiness."[40] Prudence appears as a means of achieving happiness. In *Anthropology* he associates prudence or practical reason with the "inclination toward the capacity of having influence in general over other human beings." Put more starkly, prudence allows us to put others' inclinations within our power, which is tantamount to "*possessing* others as mere tools of one's will."[41] In *Lectures on Pedagogy* Kant defines worldly prudence as the ability to "use human beings for one's purposes."[42] A tool of manipulation, prudence can serve not only selfishness but a desire to dominate others. In Herder's notes on Kant's lectures, prudence is concerned with choosing means and takes no account of ends. One can be prudent without being wise; one can be good at selecting means without having chosen a good end.[43] Nelson explains that part of the problem is that the "German word *Klugheit* even intimates an amoral or immoral cleverness" of the kind Kant associated with the "strategic guile and dishonesty of politicians."[44] Whereas Aristotle, as I will later argue, attempted to save *phronesis* from its association with amoral cleverness by connecting it to the noble, Kant in many cases abandons *Klugheit* as irredeemably Machiavellian.

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[40] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:416; See also Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 309; Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 4.

[41] Kant, *Anthropology*, 7:271; Cf. Kant, *Judgment*, 201'.

[42] Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, trans. Robert B. Louden and Günter Zöller, Reprint edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9:486.

[43] Kant, *Observations*, 27:36. Herder's notes from Kant's lectures appear in the Academy Edition of Kant's works.

[44] Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 306.

On the other hand, Kant sometimes speaks positively of prudence. In *Remarks* Kant does not find it objectionable that science makes us more prudent, a quality which is "generally suitable to human nature."[45] Although happiness is distinct from morality, Kant does not discourage us from promoting the general welfare.[46] In fact, while he makes a distinction between prudence and wisdom in *Observations*, in the later *Lectures on Ethics* he seems to narrow that gap. He writes that prudence is the "ability to determine both the end and the means to that end."[47] Nelson notes that while Kant draws a clear distinction between prudence and morality in the *Groundwork*, in *Lectures on Ethics*, which precede the *Groundwork* only by a few years, he allows prudence to play more of a complementary role to morality.[48] In the *Groundwork* where Kant seeks to isolate morality from all other kinds of reason to show its foundation in a priori reason, he seems to use prudence in a technical, operationally-defined sense. But in his publicly delivered lectures, he uses prudence in a looser sense, allowing it to include the means and end. Kant also treats prudence positively in his *Lectures on Pedagogy.* Even though he there gives prudence an amoral cast, the "education of prudence" plays an important role in the formation of citizens. Although Kant does not go so far as to eliminate the gap between prudence and morality, Nelson persuasively argues that prudence is for Kant "essential to practical reasoning and interaction in society."[49]

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[45] Kant, *Observations*, 20:7.

[46] Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 309.

[47] Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 5.

[48] Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 305n.

[49] Ibid., 310.

Belying the idea that Kant thinks right should be pursued regardless of the circumstances or result, Kant advocates prudential gradualism. He looks to prudence as a salutary source of restraint that will make political progress ultimately more likely. For example, in *Perpetual Peace* he counsels us to "prudently remember that [progress] cannot be realized by violent and precipitate means, but must be steadily approached as favourable opportunities present themselves."[50] We find a similarly context-dependent approach in the *Metaphysics of Morals.* Although he thinks a pure republic is required by right, he recognizes that this cannot be achieved "all at once." Rather, we are under obligation to make changes "gradually and continually," not letting our impatience get the better of us.[51]

Kant supports his gradualist stance on political change with a corresponding theory of provisional right. Ellis explains, "Kant's principle of provisional right recommends that existing institutions be judged according to whether they are consistent with the continued possibility of progress, rather than by direct comparison with some set of ideal norms."[52] For instance, even though Kant thinks a regime's having a hereditary nobility is contrary to right, he does not advocate immediately stripping the nobility of their privileges and property. Rather, he merely suggests it would be better if their positions were allowed to lapse after their deaths. Although he argues that hereditary privileges are contrary to right, even if the sovereign deems them "prudent," Kant allows for an intermediary period of provisional right as a waystation on the way to right

[50] Kant, *Political Writings*, 122; Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 318.

[51] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:340; Cf. Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 312, 318.

[52] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 9.

proper.[53] Later in the *Metaphysics of Morals* he says that "the nobility of a country…may be permitted for a certain period of time and may even be [made] necessary by circumstances," in spite of the fact that hereditary privileges are inconsistent with the "universal right of human beings." Moreover, it could be provisionally right to allow their positions to continue until public opinion supports reform. Kant allows democratic constraints to affect the implementation of right. Thus, Kant explicitly recognizes that circumstances should affect the application, implementation, and even the determination, of right. [54]

Similarly, Kant says that as a matter of right the estates of a knightly order or the holdings of a church can be "revoked without scruple," but here, too, he urges that the timing should depend on public opinion. Appearing to weigh security concerns against right, he says that knightly property should be seized only if "public opinion has ceased to favor *military honors* as a means for safeguarding the state against indifference in defending it." The church's property should be taken only if "public opinion has ceased to want masses for souls, prayers, and a multitude of clerics appointed for this as the means for saving the people from eternal fire." Kant says this in spite of the fact that he views these measures as reforms and thinks that as a matter of right "there can be no corporation, estate, or order which, as owner of land, can pass it on in accordance with certain statutes to succeeding generations for their exclusive use."[55] This suggests that

[53] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:329; Cf. ibid., 6:341.

[54] Still, he goes on to undermine the property claims of the nobility by arguing that all property depends on the existence of the state and therefore on the pleasure of the sovereign's will. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:370.

[55] Ibid., 6:324-5.

Kant is willing to weigh the rightness of a measure against its feasibility. Revoking the rights of a knightly order prematurely could undercut the state's ability to defend itself and thus halt the progress of right. Ellis explains, "Provisional right calls for judgment according to the maxim of preserving the possibility of progress toward the just state."[56] It is by this standard that we are to judge whether changes should be made immediately or in the future. Kant is therefore, as Ellis says, "comfortable with the provisional and uncertain politics of transition."[57]

In adapting applications of right to the demands of circumstance Kant practices prudential judgment, and advocates the use of prudence in this sense. Nelson ultimately concludes that prudence carries two substantially different meanings in Kant's writings:

> (1) instrumental rationality in the service of self-interest—and this is Kant's primary usage of the term,—and (2) context-sensitive judgment that considers the proverbial right means at the right time in the right place.[58]

Although Kant opposes prudence in the narrow sense, he advocates "political prudence" as a way of carrying out reforms that are appropriate to a particular context. Political prudence, he says, "does not consider it beneath its dignity to take instruction from the way of the world when formulating its own maxims." Kant recognizes that the only way to be a moral actor in the arena of action is to "couple the concept of right with politics." The "moral politician" constantly seeks to bring the constitution of the state "into compliance with natural right," but, consistent with political prudence, he thinks it

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[56] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 70.

[57] Ibid., 1.

[58] Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 307.

"nonsensical to demand that…a flaw immediately and hastily be changed."[59] Hasty reforms will backfire and ultimately prove counterproductive.

Prudence presupposes a kind of judgment, but the role of judgment in Kant's moral and political thought is, like prudence, difficult to understand. Kant of course wrote a *Critique of Judgment*, but he does not there directly address political judgment. Hannah Arendt famously takes Kant's account of aesthetic judgment there as a basis for developing a theory of political judgment, but since Kant does not think aesthetic judgment can find grounding in definite principles it does not seem likely that he would have approved of Arendt's appropriation. As Ellis explains, Kant thinks "humankind is on the way to determinacy," while Arendt thinks that "indeterminacy is a permanent fact of collective life."[60] Still, as Ellis points out, there are qualities of aesthetic judgment that are ripe for appropriation, and Kant almost seems to encourage us in this endeavor, as when he describes aesthetic judgment in political terms.[61] Here, though, I would like to focus on what Kant says directly about political judgment.

The moral law, since we can know it clearly and distinctly through a priori reason, appears to preclude the use of judgment, and this seems especially true of right. In distinguishing right from virtue Kant says that right produces only "narrow" duties, while virtue admits of "imperfect" or "wide" duties. We have a narrow duty, for example, not to steal from others, and violating that duty is punishable by law. On the other hand, we have a wide or imperfect duty to practice benevolence, which is dependent on contingent

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[59] Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace," 8:372.

[60] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 61.

[61] Ibid., 50.

factors. Duties are imperfect when they lead "to questions that call upon judgment to decide how a maxim is to be applied in particular cases."[62] For example, Kant says we have a duty "to sacrifice a part of [our] welfare to others without hope of return," but he also thinks it "impossible to assign determinate limits to the extent of this sacrifice."[63] Thus, in *Perpetual Peace* he concludes that philanthropy is only a conditional duty, whereas respect for the rights of man is "absolutely obligatory."[64] Wide duties are conditioned on circumstances, such as how much we have to spare, whereas narrow duties are not.[65]

This could suggest that respect for right does not require context-sensitive judgment; however, in the same work, Kant also develops a provisional account of right that appears to call for a form of judgment that takes its bearings from experience and therefore cannot be based entirely on definite moral principles.[66] While the principles of right and virtue are derived from a priori reason and can be known definitely, their application depends at least partially on judgment.[67] Alternately, Kant could be saying that provisional right, while required for the establishment of right, does not rise to the level of even an imperfect duty, but this seems inconsistent with what we saw above. In any case, Kant seems to fall short of giving us the full account of the prudential aspect of his moral philosophy that the subject deserves and demands.

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[62] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:411.

[63] Ibid., 6:393.

[64] Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace," 8:385.

[65] Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 19.

[66] Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 308.

[67] Ibid., 312.

On the other hand, Kant does consider prudential judgment to be part of the work of philosophy. He divides practical philosophy into two components: the metaphysics of morals and moral anthropology. The task of the latter is to explore the "subjective conditions in human nature that hinder people or help them in *fulfilling* the laws of a metaphysics of morals" and to "deal with the development, spreading, and strengthening of moral principles."[68] In the *Groundwork* Kant similarly divides "ethics" or "moral philosophy" [*Weltweisheit*] into an empirical part called "practical anthropology" and a "rational part" called "morals" [*eigentlich Moral*]. He says the empirical part should account for the "laws of the human being's will insofar as it is affected by nature" and for what ought to happen "while still taking into account the conditions under which it very often does not happen."[69] This is not Kant's focus in the *Groundwork* or the *Metaphysics of Morals.* He did eventually publish *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* based on his own twenty-four years of lectures on anthropology, but there is surprisingly little there regarding the prudential application and dissemination of moral ideas.[70] It could be that he thought this side of moral philosophy, being context-dependent, was incapable of systematization, but in my view Kant could say more, at least about the connection between moral obligation and moral anthropology.

Kant more frequently recurs to the subject of education, where he indicates that some form of prudential reasoning can be taught. His comments on education reveal that he is concerned with achieving moral and political progress, and they imply both that

[68] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:217.

[69] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:388; Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 313.

[70] Frederick Rauscher, review of *Review of* Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, by Immanuel Kant trans.) Robert Louden (ed, June 12, 2007, https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/22990-anthropology-from-a-pragmatic-point-of-view/.

progress is up to us and that our success depends on how we proceed. Kant thinks skill, worldly prudence, and morality are all essential components of practical education.[71] He thinks educators should "reflect especially on the development of humanity, and see to it that humanity becomes not merely skillful but also moral."[72] He takes it as a given that education involves the "procurement of skillfulness," which he here calls culture. Skill is something we gradually acquire through habit.[73]

In his *Lectures on Pedagogy* Kant casts prudence as separate from morality but essential to its implementation. Prudence makes us "well suited for human society, popular, and influential." These are not necessarily moral qualities, but they are qualities a citizen needs to achieve progress politically. Prudence is in this sense education's practical component that allows us to accommodate ourselves to others at the same time that it allows us "to use all human beings for [our] own final purposes" as human beings.[74] The end of prudence in this sense is potentially but not necessarily moral. At one point in these lectures, Kant specifically addresses what he calls "worldly prudence," which appears to be the same concept. He defines "worldly prudence" as "the art of using skillfulness effectively, that is, of how to use human beings for one's purposes." Kant does not here specify that the purpose must be "final," but it remains an interpersonal skill that is the mark of an educated person. This prudence allows for something dangerously close to deception, insofar as it is "able to conceal itself and make itself impenetrable," "particularly in regard to its character." It makes one adept at

[71] Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 9:486.

[72] Immanuel Kant, "Lectures on Pedagogy," in ibid., 9:449.

[73] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 9:486.

[74] Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 9:450.

"dissimulation" or "holding back one's faults." Nevertheless, Kant says that such dissimulation need not extend to hypocrisy or dishonesty. Despite his reputation for being uncompromising with respect to dishonesty, he here tells us that dissimulation "is not always hypocrisy, and can sometimes be allowed," although it "borders very closely on dishonesty."[75] He therefore suggests that we be prudent in our truth-telling. He argues that outright deception, which he associates with "craftiness," is not actually prudent, since "one can deceive the naïve person only once."[76]

Kant does not think morality should always be taught in the form of abstract principles, although it should ultimately take its bearings from metaphysics.[77] For example, Kant recommends teaching "biographies of ancient and modern times," which will leave a "lasting impression of esteem on the one hand and disgust on the other." Repeatedly judging past deeds as praiseworthy or blameworthy will "by mere habituation…make a good foundation for uprightness in the future conduct of life."[78] This is presumably one way Kant thinks that moral feeling, a prerequisite for obedience, should be cultivated.[79]

He also advocates the use of rewards and punishments in education, which "can serve indirectly as a means of moral training." Kant writes, "If a man does good for the sake of reward, he will gradually acquire the habit of good deeds and will ultimately do

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[75] Ibid., 9:486.

[76] Ibid., 7:198.

[77] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:376.

[78] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:155.

[79] See, for example, Kant, *Observations*, 27:10.

them regardless of reward and merely because they are good."[80] Although Kant judiciously avoids saying that education can make a person moral, he does indicate that it can be a preparation for morality. Kant, in making such recommendations, is closer to Aristotle than he admits. Kant thinks that in education we can be led gradually to "acquire the disposition to choose nothing but good ends."[81] Acting in accordance with duty can prepare us for acting from duty.

Kant warns against aiming for some illusory standard beyond the requirements of duty. Educators should not give examples of "so-called *noble* (supermeritorious) actions" lest it produce "heroes of romance" with "longings for inaccessible perfection," who pride themselves on their "extravagant greatness" but who find "common and everyday obligation…insignificant and petty."[82] This warning significantly qualifies his recommendation above concerning the biographies of ancient times. Fearing the moral hazard of a greatness untethered from goodness, he lowers the sights of education from that of ancient nobility. Although duty can be attractive, he rejects the allure of heroic greatness.

Although Kant advises the use of historical examples in moral education, he thinks morality itself should be presented as purely as possible, in part because he thinks it will then have "more power over the human heart."[83] Puzzlingly, this closely follows Kant's recommendation that educators use historical biographies to give students practice in identifying moral deeds. Students, it seems, should practice drawing the pure moral

[80] Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 57.

[81] Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 9:450.

[82] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:155.

[83] Ibid., 5:156.

principle from particular historical events. As I argued in Chapter One, Kant thinks students will be attracted to the idea of acting out of respect for the moral law. Particular historical deeds will often be polluted by nonmoral motivations, so they should be mined for their moral content.

Kant also thinks rewards and punishments can be useful in the political realm. To "promote good conduct" he recommends setting aside the goal of achieving "immediate moral *goodness*" and instead taking "the commands of a rewarding and punishing lord as a basis."[84] Although respect for the moral law cannot be coerced, people can be forced to act as if they did have that respect. They can therefore be good citizens without having to be good people. Through what DeLue calls a "Madison-like" system of checks and balances, Kant thinks "the problem of setting up a state can be solved even by a nation of devils."[85] Politics cannot ultimately force people to be free in the moral sense, but it can at least compel them to act in accord with the principle that we should treat others as ends, preserving the external freedom of all.

In some sense institutions are a means of promoting moral progress, but they are themselves an ideal of right that we are obliged to work towards.[86] They are the concomitants of peace. Here, too, Kant argues only for gradual change. Even though he thinks a "world republic" or "state of peoples" is consistent with right, he recognizes that human beings are not capable of this, and he instead advocates a more achievable federation of states that retains the possibility of war.[87] Ellis persuasively argues that the

[84] Kant, *Observations*, 20:39. The emphasis is Kant's.

[85] Delue, "Kant's Politics as an Expression of the Need for His Aesthetics," 411; Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace," 8:366.

[86] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 52.

definitive articles of *Perpetual Peace* lay out a “mechanism for progress…in the form of freedom-guaranteeing political institutions” that are meant to achieve the “ideals provided by practical reason” that he describes in the preliminary articles.[88]

Order and the Ends of Politics

Kant’s prudential approach to political progress makes sense in light of his understanding of the ends of politics. In *Perpetual Peace* he says that the state should be organized “in accordance with freedom and equality as the sole concepts of right.”[89] Right can be realized only in civil society, so “leaving the state of nature is based upon duty.”[90] Indeed, it is permissible to force others to leave the state of nature and “enter a rightful condition.” Apart from political association, rights and duties do not exist. The state of nature as an idea is violent and “devoid of justice.”[91] Political union is a goal which we all “*ought to share*” and is an “absolute and primary duty in all external relationships.”[92] This union gives rise to a condition of peace, but we are obliged to enter it not from fear of violent death but because it is the only way justice can be achieved. In *Perpetual Peace* Kant exhorts us: “Seek ye first the kingdom of pure practical reason and its *justice*, and your end (the blessing of perpetual peace) shall be added unto you.”[93] The

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[87] Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace,” 8:357; See also, Ellis, *Kant’s Politics*, 77; Kant envisions the league of nations becoming a permanent “congress of states.” Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:345, 6:350.

[88] Ellis, *Kant’s Politics*, 75, 78.

[89] Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace,” 8:378.

[90] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:267.

[91] Ibid., 6:311-2.

[92] Immanuel Kant, “Theory and Practice,” in *Political Writings*, 73. The emphasis is Kant’s.

[93] Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace,” 8:378. Contrast Matthew 6:33.

Kantian social contract therefore avoids a selfish Hobbesian calculation, while still emphasizing the importance of the rule of law in Hobbesian fashion.

Kant does not think the liberal ideals of freedom and equality should be pursued if it will dissolve the existing political order. He condemns revolutions that would take place without regard for the justice of their aims since they undermine the rule of law. Because right has no substance apart from lawful institutions, any political order is better than no order at all.[94] In the *Metaphysics of Morals* he says that "it is the duty of the people to tolerate even what is apparently the most intolerable misuse of the supreme power."[95] Our duty to unite politically precludes any right to revolution.[96] Kant therefore cautions people against questioning the origins of their government, lest they find them to lie in force and fraud, since "the presently existing authority ought to be obeyed, whatever its origin."[97] Kant is often charged with exalting the individual over the community, but in "Theory and Practice" he says the preservation of the state is an absolute duty, whereas the "preservation of the individual is merely a relative duty."[98] The absoluteness of Kant's prohibition on rebellion is a matter of some controversy, but Ellis rightly observes that, owing to Kant's dark view of the likely outcome of violent revolution, "Kant tolerates much less violence in the name of some version of political

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[94] Ibid., 8:373n; Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 317; Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 82.

[95] Kant, *Political Writings*, 145; However, Kant may not be consistent on this point, since he thinks we have a right to self-defense. Moreover, Formosa argues that Kant makes a distinction between violent and peaceful resistance. Formosa, "All Politics Must Bend Its Knee Before Right," 160, 169.

[96] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:320; However, as Dieter Henrich explains, Kant rationalizes the French Revolution by arguing that it was not in fact a revolution. Ronald Beiner and William James Booth, eds., *Kant and Political Philosophy: The Contemporary Legacy*, Revised ed. edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 111.

[97] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:318-9.

[98] Kant, *Political Writings*, 81.

justice than his [Enlightenment] predecessors,"[99] which is surprising given that it is Kant who has the reputation of being a naïve idealist. Instead of leading him to a naïve idealism, his political ideals bring him to accept imperfect instantiations of right rather than risk the dissolution of justice.

Another end of politics, indeed "the highest political good" according to the *Metaphysics of Morals*, is perpetual peace. Kant here admits that perpetual peace is unachievable, but he nevertheless argues that we are obliged to work towards a constitution conducive to it. Kant writes that "establishing universal and lasting peace constitutes not merely a part of the doctrine of right but rather the entire final end of the doctrine of right…for the condition of peace is the only condition in which what is mine and what is yours are secured under *laws*."[100] Freedom and equality have no substance independent of a peaceful, lawful condition.

For that reason, right is difficult to identify during a time of war. However, Kant's pacific goals do not prevent him from establishing grounds for a right to go to war, even if he does try to circumscribe warfare with rules. For example, he says that in self-defense a state is "permitted to use any means of defense except those that would make its subjects unfit to be citizens."[101] Kant is under no illusions about the necessity of warfare.[102] Indeed, some scholars find grounds even in *Perpetual Peace* for "liberal imperialism." Michael Desch, for instance, sees a tension between Kant's prohibition of intervening in the affairs of other states and his insistence that the "civil constitution of

[99] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 15.

[100] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:354-5.

[101] Ibid., 6:347.

[102] Ibid., 6:346-7.

every state should be republican." Desch thinks the dire situation of the Kantian state of nature justifies taking action against those who threaten its return.[103] Even if this is true, however, we must reconcile it with Kant's worry that intervention undermines the sovereignty that makes any instantiation of right possible.[104]

Conclusion

Kant does in fact subordinate politics to morality, letting morality set its ends. However, concerned with the realization of those ends, he sketches a prudential approach to achieving moral and political progress that recognizes the need for incremental political change. He sees that we need to develop a faculty of judgment that will help us apply moral principles in particular situations. Kant left that empirical side of practical philosophy relatively underdeveloped, but his remarks on education do seem oriented in part by the desire to make students capable of making prudential judgments on their own. They also elucidate education's role as another source of moral and political progress. Neither education nor politics can force us to be moral, but they can prepare the way for morality. Kant's prudential approach to politics makes sense in light of its ends. Indeed, the ends of politics justify Kant's incremental approach, since to demand progress prematurely is to risk the dissolution of the lawful order on which the principles of freedom, equality, and peace and their progress depend.

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[103] Desch, "Benevolent Cant?," 653–55. Kant is Hobbesian in arguing that people can be legitimately forced to leave the state of nature and enter a rightful condition, but it is significant that Kant's metaphysics of morals proceeds from a priori reason and not the sovereign state. Moral reasoning can take place apart from political order.

[104] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 85.

CHAPTER FOUR

Aristotle and the Complexity of the Good

In contrast to Kant, who criticizes all previous moral theories for conflating morality with self-interest, early moderns such as Machiavelli and Hobbes, fault their predecessors for aiming too high. Like Kant, Machiavelli distinguishes himself from those who have come before, claiming to introduce new modes and orders. He dismisses the prevailing idealist tradition and its "imaginary republics" as ruinous, implying that the ancients let their search for the best regime blind them to the "effectual truth" in politics. Whereas Aristotle writes "so that we may become good," Machiavelli urges us to "learn to be able not to be good, and to use this and not use it according to necessity."[1] Hobbes criticizes Aristotle more directly:

> And I believe that scarce any thing can be more absurdly said in natural Philosophy, than that which now is called *Aristotles Metaphysiques*; nor more repugnant to Government, than much of that hee hath said in his *Politiques*; nor more ignorantly, than a great part of his *Ethiques*.[2]

Hobbes takes issue with Aristotle for reasons similar to Machiavelli's. According to Hobbes, Aristotle's search for happiness as the final cause of political association was in vain since "there is no such *Finis ultimus*, utmost ayme, nor *Summum Bonum,* (greatest Good), as is spoken of in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers."[3] Hobbes thinks that

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[1] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103b27-28; Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince: Second Edition*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, 2nd edition (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1998), XV.

[2] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Revised Student Edition*, ed. Richard Tuck, 2nd Revised Edition (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 370.

[3] Ibid., 47.

in examining the ends of politics Aristotle undermines the legitimacy of actual regimes and encourages revolt against apparently unlawful tyrannies,[4] which in Hobbes's view ignores the necessary logic of sovereignty that undergirds political order and secures peace. In this chapter my aim is to defend Aristotle from the charge that he neglects political necessity and to explore a different kind of modern criticism of Aristotle, one that emanates from transcendental heights above ancient eudaimonism. In the first part I examine the relation of morality and politics to self-concern in Aristotle's political writings. In the second part I consider his attention to political necessity. In the third part I argue that the good plays an important role in Aristotle's broader project of preparing gentlemen to be citizens and statesmen.

Self-concern in Morality and Politics

In Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle sets out to investigate the human good (*agathon anthropinon*) and happiness (*eudaimonia*).[5] He concludes that "it is pretty much agreed on by most people," by "both the many and the refined," that the good is happiness and that there is a correspondence between living well, faring well, and being happy.[6] Aristotle eventually posits that the good in the authoritative sense and therefore

[4] Cf. ibid., 377.

[5] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102a15, 1144a26-28, 1218b25-26.

[6] As Bartlett and Collins point out, Aristotle uses (eu prattein), which means both "to act well" and "to fare well." Ibid., 1095a17-20; Cf. Aristotle, *The Eudemian Ethics*, trans. Anthony Kenny, 1st edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1217a21, 1219b1.

human happiness is an "activity of the soul in accord with virtue."[7] The life of complete virtue is both happy and pleasant.[8]

Because Aristotle thinks virtue is constitutive of happiness, it might appear that he derives virtue from its contribution to happiness. On that basis, Kant criticizes the "*eudaemonist*" for making happiness "his motive for acting virtuously."[9] Steven Smith takes issue with this reading of Aristotle, but he nevertheless understands Aristotle to mean that the "moral worth or value of an action can only be assessed insofar as it contributes to our happiness." Happiness is thus for Aristotle the "standard or criterion by which particular actions and desires are judged and in light of which we can describe them as either virtuous or vicious."[10] On his view the virtues can be arrived at by way of happiness, even if the virtues are not performed for its sake.

However, Ronna Burger finds it significant that Aristotle does not attempt to derive the moral virtues from happiness. She notes that *eudaimonia* "is never mentioned in the course of Book II, nor in relation to any particular virtue of character discussed in Books III and IV."[11] Rather, Aristotle there offers a kind of phenomenology of the moral virtues gathered from the insights of moral actors.[12] Viewed from that standpoint,

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[7] Ibid., 1098a16-17.

[8] Ibid., 1169b31-32.

[9] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:377.

[10] Smith, "Goodness, Nobility & Virtue," 8, 13.

[11] Ronna Burger, *Aristotle's Dialogue with Socrates: On the "Nicomachean Ethics"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 48, 239n1; Cf. Aristide Tessitore, "A Political Reading of Aristotle's Treatment of Pleasure in the Nicomachean Ethics," *Political Theory* 17, no. 2 (1989): 254; Devin Stauffer, *Plato's Introduction to the Question of Justice* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 12n. Marcus Hester, "Aristotle on the Function of Man in Relation to Eudaimonia," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (1991): 7; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b25-1098a17.

[12] Burger, *Aristotle's Dialogue with Socrates*, 72.

virtuous deeds are performed not for the sake of happiness but for the sake of the virtues themselves.[13] Burger argues that virtuous deeds appear self-interested only when they are viewed from outside the virtuous person's perspective.[14] It is true that in Book I, Chapter 7 Aristotle posits a human function or work (*to ergon*), apparently rooted in our nature as human beings, and connects it to virtue (*arête*). Virtue would then be the excellence of the human soul as seeing is the work of the eye. But Aristotle does not use this function argument, which appears only in "outline," to explain the human good or happiness, for he goes on in Chapters 8-12 to examine and refine common opinion on these matters.[15]

Although Aristotle does emphasize the noble as the end of action in his presentation of the moral virtues, he at various points presents the virtuous person as also aiming at his own good. In Book I, Chapter 7 Aristotle says that we would choose the virtues for their own sakes, "even if nothing resulted from them," but without skipping a beat he says "we choose them also for the sake of happiness."[16] In Book IX he writes of the decent person, "he both wishes the good things for himself, that is, the things that appear such to him, and he does them (since it belongs to a good person to work at what is good); and he does them for his own sake."[17] Virtue is one of the good things that the decent person wants for himself. Unlike Kant, Aristotle does not, finally, see these two motivations as mutually exclusive. Sometimes Aristotle relates self-concern to morality

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[13] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1144a18, 1248b34-37.

[14] Burger, *Aristotle's Dialogue with Socrates*, 176, 202.

[15] Hester, "Aristotle on the Function of Man in Relation to Eudaimonia," 7; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b25-1098a17.

[16] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b1-6.

[17] Ibid., 1166a13-17.

descriptively without necessarily using it describe the moral person's motivation. For example, in Book V he says that although the decent person "is disposed to taking less for himself," he could in fact be "grasping for more than his share of another good," such as "what is unqualifiedly noble."[18] The decent person ultimately recognizes that the goods "pertaining to soul are the most authoritative and especially good."[19] Self-concern, properly understood, subordinates material goods to the good of the soul.[20]

In Book IX, Chapter 8 Aristotle identifies two kinds self-lovers. He notes that those who criticize "self-lovers" fault them for allotting "to themselves the greater share of money, honors, and bodily pleasures," which are coveted by the many.[21] They do not, by contrast, label the person who practices the virtues and thus "secure[s] what is noble" for himself a "self-lover," even though "this sort of person would seem to be *more* of a self-lover," insofar as he "allots to himself the noblest things and the greatest goods."[22] On the contrary, "all approve of and praise those who are preeminently serious about noble actions." Indeed, "the good person ought to be a self-lover" since "he will both profit himself and benefit others by doing noble things."[23] Praiseworthy self-lovers simultaneously benefit themselves and the political community, and yet, Aristotle raises the possibility that the performer of noble deeds could be taking the noblest things and

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[18] Ibid., 1136b21-23.

[19] Ibid., 1098b12-15.

[20] Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Peter Simpson (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 1254b27, 1323b13. Moreover, in Book VI, Chapter 12 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* we find that the intellectual virtues of prudence and wisdom, while choiceworthy in themselves, also produce happiness.

[21] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1168b15-18.

[22] Ibid., 1168b25-31.

[23] Ibid., 1169a8-14. This, too, comes from Book IX.

greatest goods from others. As salutary as elevated self-love and the pursuit of nobility can be, they bring with them the possibility of competition for nobility.

Aristotle argues that the actions of the serious person are ultimately consistent with self-concern, and yet they achieve their own good by attending to the good of others. The serious person "does many things for the sake of both his friends and his fatherland, and even dies for them if need be." He gives away money and honors and political offices and even forgoes "certain [noble] actions" so that a friend can perform them. Aristotle recognizes that in certain situations performing a virtuous deed could take the opportunity to perform the deeds from another. We can imagine a situation in which the serious person allows a friend to lead the charge in a crucial battle. However, in all such "praiseworthy things," which appear in the first instance sacrificial, the serious person, from another perspective, "allots more of the noble to himself." Aristotle contends that even those who die for others are choosing "to feel pleasure intensely for a short time over living in a haphazard way for many years" and "to do one great and noble action over many small ones." In choosing to sacrifice their good, they are actually choosing "some great noble thing for themselves."[24] In Aristotle's presentation, sacrificing is a way of benefiting oneself, and yet, what makes these deeds praiseworthy is in part the virtuous person's intention to sacrifice. In the *Rhetoric* Aristotle criticizes the old, whose "self-love is greater than it ought to be" and who "live with a view to what is advantageous rather than to what is beautiful."[25] Aristotle finds the disposition of the old blameworthy

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[24] Ibid., 1169a18-1169b2. Aristotle does not name Achilles here, but these words seem designed to call him to mind.

[25] Plato and Aristotle, *Gorgias and Rhetoric*, trans. Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2008), 1389b33-1390b1.

because they care too much for themselves and their own well-being. The young, by contrast, are tempted in their pursuit of the noble to throw away their own life in a way that is neither noble nor morally good.

Aristotle describes the tension between our own good and the good simply in the context of friendship. Friendship serves as an analogue to virtue. Friends are good for us, but if we treat them as means they cease to be true friends, since "those who wish for the good things for their friends, for their friends' sake, are friends most of all."[26] Aristotle implies that we do not do good for our friends for our own sakes.[27] He specifically distinguishes friendships based on profit or utility from the highest form of friendship based on virtue or moral goodness.[28] Friendship in the highest sense is "founded on virtue." Friends are "purely good," not merely useful. [29] And yet, this friendship of the highest sort, based on virtue rather than utility, is in fact good for and in the interests of both parties.[30] Moreover, benefiting a friend is in some sense benefiting oneself since a friend "is another self."[31] Aristotle suggests that in true friendship the good and the useful will coincide, but it is in benefiting our friends that we achieve our own good.[32]

At the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle famously rejects without argument the crude and slavish view that the human good and happiness are pleasure,

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[26] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b7-11.

[27] Ibid., 1166a3-6; *Rhetoric*, 1361b37-39.

[28] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b8, 1157a16.

[29] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1237a10-13.

[30] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1157b33.

[31] Ibid., 1169b7.

[32] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1238a2-3.

although he admits that the many suppose it "not unreasonably."[33] He advises us to be "especially on guard against the pleasant and pleasure, for we do not judge it impartially," and even to dismiss pleasure since in doing so "we will err less."[34] Aristotle recognizes that our interest in pleasure can lead us astray as to what constitutes virtue and true happiness. Vices can bring pleasure and virtues pain, and vice versa. For example, the activities of the licentious person bring pleasure.[35] On the other hand, the courageous person undergoes the pain of being "deprived of the greatest goods knowingly."[36] Aristotle admits that pursuing the moral good can be painful.[37] Moreover, "pleasures are an impediment to prudent thinking," and thus to virtue.[38] Sometimes prudence requires taking the difficult path.

It is not long, however, before Aristotle holds out the possibility that "what accords with virtue is pleasant or not painful."[39] Eventually, he even connects virtue and happiness with pleasure,[40] and in the *Eudemian Ethics* he takes issue with those who say that "the good, the noble, and the pleasant (τό τε ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ ἡδύ) belong to different things."[41] For example, the liberal person gives with pleasure and is not

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[33] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1095b15-20.

[34] Ibid., 1109b8-9, 11.

[35] Ibid., 1154a6-9.

[36] Ibid., 1117b25.

[37] Ibid., 1158a25.

[38] Ibid., 1152b16-18.

[39] Ibid., 1120a27-30.

[40] Ibid., 1152b7-8, 1153b14-15, 1169b31-32.

[41] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1214a7-8.

pained.[42] Aristotle ultimately argues that the serious person is the measure of what is pleasant in fact.[43] Since there is a variety of pleasures, some indicative of the good and some not, he concludes that pleasure is "not the good" and that "not every pleasure [is] choiceworthy."[44] There are good and bad pleasures.

Aristotle contends that the virtues have a moral worth independent of their ability to bring pleasure. He says we would take "possessing the virtues" seriously "even if they should bring us no pleasure."[45] As a consequence, virtue should be the standard by which we judge pleasures. Moral virtue is characterized by a right relationship to pleasures and pains.[46] It "belongs to virtue to feel both pleasure and pain at the things one ought and as one ought."[47] The actions that bring us pleasure and pain are not static. For example, those who are "undergoing restoration…enjoy both sharp and bitter things," and while sharp and bitter things are not "pleasant by nature or pleasant unqualifiedly," enjoyment of them is welcome in someone who is not yet virtuous.[48] The virtuous person moves beyond enjoyment of sharp and bitter things to what is pleasant unqualifiedly. The pleasures felt by the incontinent as they practice self-restraint are "of serious worth only

[42] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1120b30.

[43] Ibid., 1176b23-26.

[44] Ibid., 1172b29-32, 1174a9-10.

[45] Ibid., 1174a6-8.

[46] Ibid., 1105a12-14.

[47] Ibid., 1121a1–4.

[48] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1153a3-6.

incidentally."[49] Since continence is not the end, its attendant pleasures fall short of what is pleasant by nature.

On the other hand, the virtuous or serious person or the lover of what is noble will take pleasure in what is "pleasant by nature," which includes what is "good by nature."[50] Aristotle writes that "provided nothing gets in the way, what is good in the abstract is one and the same thing as what is pleasant in the abstract."[51] For the perfectly serious person there is no "discord in the passions between what is good and what is pleasant."[52] Although Aristotle rejects the view that happiness can be reduced to an emotive state, he nevertheless suggests that pleasure can play a salutary role in the virtuous and happy life, since "pleasures help increase the activities" from which they arise.[53] He does not condemn them for contaminating moral motivation. Rather, he thinks we can make use of the fact that we are "naturally inclined towards pleasures."[54] Indeed, as Aristotle observes, "Pleasure is something we choose, pain something we avoid."[55] Pleasure is not the end of virtuous action, but to the virtuous and not-yet-virtuous alike, it is an attractive result.

Like moral virtue, politics simultaneously transcends self-concern and remains anchored by it. Aristotle says that communities "come together for a certain advantage,

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[49] Ibid., 1154b2.

[50] Ibid., 1099a12-15, 1170a15; Cf. Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1237a26-30.

[51] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1236b26-27.

[52] Ibid., 1237a6-9.

[53] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1175a36.

[54] Ibid., 1108a16-17.

[55] Ibid., 1119a23.

namely, to provide some of the things conducive to life."[56] The political community comes into being from a similar desire.[57] In the first instance, political communities seek the advantageous, and while they exist for the sake of living well and are oriented by an understanding of justice, they are still persuaded by arguments framed in terms of advantage.[58] Speakers in the public assembly will be persuasive only if they tie their exhortations and warnings to happiness,[59] and Aristotle deems this a good thing. Because members of the public assembly look in part to their own interests, which are ultimately connected to the interests of the whole, they are not as easily manipulated as judges in the lawcourts.[60]

On the assumption that public assemblies seek the advantageous Aristotle undertakes an investigation of happiness and its parts. He includes fortune, external goods, and virtues of body, but he also includes virtues of soul. As Mary Nichols explains, "Aristotle teaches rhetoricians how to incorporate into their speeches the variety of goods that men seek," and he "indicates the extent to which rhetoric involves refining opinions and modifying desires in light of more comprehensive goods."[61] The rhetorician can help members of the public assembly connect their own good to the common good.

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[56] Ibid., 1160a9-10.

[57] Michael Davis, *The Politics of Philosophy: A Commentary on Aristotle's Politics* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 28–29.

[58] *Rhetoric*, 1364b.

[59] Ibid., 1360b8-9.

[60] Ibid., 1354b30.

[61] Mary P. Nichols, "Aristotle's Defense of Rhetoric," *The Journal of Politics* 49, no. 3 (August 1, 1987): 675, doi:10.2307/2131273.

Moreover, the public assembly's concern for the beneficial is not limited to mere life. Aristotle says that human beings are unique in their capacity for reasoned speech and therefore for perceptions of the good and the bad and the just and the unjust, and "a community in these things makes a household and a city."[62] Indeed, he later says that of the things essential to a city's existence "most necessary of all" is "judgment about what is advantageous and just in their intercourse with each other."[63] A city cannot exist without justice.[64] Agreement on these matters ranks ahead of food, arms, and commodities as the defining characteristic of the city. While the city "originates for the sake of living, it exists for the sake of living well."[65] It ultimately raises its sights from the goods of the body to the goods of soul. At its best, the city equips citizens to "take part in the deeds of virtue," since such deeds are an aim that each shares in common.[66] Furthermore, Aristotle raises the possibility that the laws could help us become good.[67] It is apparently for this reason that Aristotle poses the question of how someone becomes a skilled legislator, a question that introduces the subject of the *Politics*.[68]

While virtues are choiceworthy in themselves, virtuous deeds often involve the good of another. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle says that "best is he who makes use of virtue not in relation to himself but in relation to another." He continues, "This

[62] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1253a7.

[63] Ibid., 1328b2.

[64] Ibid., 1283a9.

[65] Ibid., 1252b27.

[66] Ibid., 1323b36.

[67] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1180b25-28.

[68] Ibid.

justice…is not a part of virtue but the whole of virtue."[69] Indeed, the common opinion of justice is that it is "the good of another."[70] Aristotle goes on to say that the just person "does what is advantageous to another."[71] In the *Politics* Aristotle says that "the political good is justice, and justice is the common advantage."[72] The profit motive, by contrast, is a cause of injustice.[73]

Although the political community arises from biological necessity, Aristotle teaches that our own good depends on seeking the common good. He identities correct regimes based on whether the rulers "look to the common advantage."[74] We depend on the political community, so its preservation and flourishing are related to our own good. The rule of the few declines into oligarchy when the rulers "distribute all or most of the goods to themselves."[75] Although part of our flourishing as human beings consists in political rule and virtue, Aristotle identifies tyranny, the worst of all regimes, by the tyrant's use of rule for the pursuit of his own good.[76] Forgetting what they owe to the political community, tyrants use politics for their own narrow self-interest.

Aristotle consistently associates nobility with the pursuit of the common good. He ranks the deliberative rhetoric of the public assembly above the forensic rhetoric of the

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[69] Ibid., 1130a7-8.

[70] Ibid., 1134b5-6.

[71] Ibid., 1130a4.

[72] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1282b14.

[73] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1130a28.

[74] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1279a17.

[75] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1160b11-16.

[76] Ibid., 1160b8.

lawcourts, ascribing to the former "greater beauty and greater civic importance" since it is concerned with the common interest rather than private transactions.[77] In the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle contrasts the statesman, who "chooses noble deeds for their own sake" with the person who enters politics "for money and gain."[78] While the noble statesman contributes to his flourishing in a higher and more elevated sense, he does not use politics for personal gain, narrowly construed. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle says that "to secure and preserve the good of the city appears to be something greater and more complete: the good of the individual by himself is certainly desirable enough, but that of a nation and of cities is nobler and more divine."[79] The statesman who serves the common good becomes a participant in the establishment of something more beautiful than he could achieve on his own.

Prudence in Morality and Politics

As Smith reports, the Kantian or deontological charge against Aristotle is that he attempts to "found virtue on prudence,"[80] letting self-concern and expedience affect what is right in a given circumstance. As we saw in Chapter 2, Kant at times explicitly rejects prudence as inextricably bound up with self-concern or as a mere means, untethered from any moral end. On the other hand, Machiavelli and Hobbes find Aristotle and the tradition he inaugurated insufficiently attentive to political necessity. I turn now to

[77] *Rhetoric*, 1354b25-30; See also Nichols, "Aristotle's Defense of Rhetoric," 663.

[78] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1216a25-27.

[79] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094b8-11.

[80] Smith, "Goodness, Nobility & Virtue," 12.

consider how Aristotle's theory might meet the objections of both Kant and the early moderns.

For Aristotle, prudence *(phronesis*) does not have the same negative connotations as the German "*Klugheit*" that, as we saw earlier, is sometimes associated with amoral cleverness. Indeed, Aristotle goes out of his way to distinguish prudence from cleverness, which can be praiseworthy or base.[81] Prudence does seem to be a calculation of means. As he says in Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, "virtue makes the target correct, prudence the things conducive to the target."[82] But while prudence does not determine the end, Aristotle does not think prudence is severable from a moral end. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* he writes that prudence is "necessarily a characteristic accompanied by reason, in possession of the truth, and bound up with action pertaining to the human goods."[83] Prudence is for Aristotle a uniquely human virtue.

He confronts the common perception that prudence could be simply a capacity for calculating means to any given end, a capacity if so defined, we would share with other animals. Aristotle says that "all would say" that prudence involves an evaluation of "the good condition for each sort of thing." On this definition, "certain beasts…are prudent" when they demonstrate "forethought concerning their own life." Humans and beasts alike are capable of calculating what is "advantageous to themselves."[84] However, prudence on Aristotle's definition goes beyond a calculation of advantage and points towards the noble. Beasts cannot be prudent, on Aristotle's definition, because they do not pursue

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[81] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1144a26-28.

[82] Ibid., 1144a9.

[83] Ibid., 1140b20-22.

[84] Ibid., 1141a22-31.

moral ends. Prudence, popularly defined, could be the correct determination of means to a self-serving end, but this would conflict with the principle that virtue must be chosen for its own sake.

Even so, the prudent person is "skilled in aiming…at what is best for a human being."[85] Prudence serves both moral virtue,[86] which requires acting for the sake of the noble, and wisdom, the supreme intellectual virtue.[87] In regards to moral virtue, Aristotle describes prudence as "yoked to the virtue of one's character, and it to prudence."[88] It is therefore "impossible for someone who is not good to be prudent."[89] Against the common view that confuses prudence with cleverness, Aristotle links prudence to moral virtue, distinguishing it from the kind of calculation practiced by beasts. The prudent necessarily concern themselves with the things "just, noble, and good for a human being."[90] They are serious, virtuous, and good.[91] Prudence selects the mean relative to us in passions and actions, making it a defining characteristic of moral virtue.[92] Thus, "virtue in the

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[85] Ibid., 1141b14.

[86] Ibid., 1144a9.

[87] Ibid., 1145a6-12; See also Mary P. Nichols, "Both Friends and Truth are Dear," in Ann Ward and Lee Ward, eds., *Natural Right and Political Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Catherine Zuckert and Michael Zuckert* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 77.

[88] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1178a17-19.

[89] Ibid., 1144a34-36.

[90] Ibid., 1143b18-28.

[91] Ibid., 1152a6-10, 1143a36, 1144b29-33.

[92] Ibid., 1106b36-1107a2.

authoritative sense does not arise in the absence of prudence."[93] Aristotle goes so far as to say that "all the virtues will be present when…prudence is present."[94]

It is true, however, that the dictates of prudence are not as clear and distinct as Kant understands the commands of the moral law to be. Prudence, being an intellectual virtue, is learned through teaching, which requires experience and time,[95] and what prudence calls for is affected by circumstances. What is just, noble, and good for a particular human being cannot be known with mathematical precision;[96] the noble and just things "admit of much dispute and variability," and even good things, such as virtue or external goods, are criticized for leading some astray.[97] The person who practices the political art must be content with demonstrating the truth "roughly and in outline" and with drawing conclusions that hold "for the most part."[98] Moreover, since moral virtues concern the passions and actions of particular people, the mean is at least in part relative to us. Aristotle implies that the middle term is affected by our natural inclinations.[99] We can speak of virtue only roughly and in outline in part because of our own diversity.

Prudence is then not pure reason but deliberation that appropriately accounts for the particular circumstances in a given situation. Aristotle writes:

> It seems to belong to a prudent person to be able to deliberate nobly about things good and advantageous for himself, not in a partial way—for example, the sorts

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[93] Ibid., 1144b14-18.

[94] Ibid., 1145a1-3.

[95] Ibid., 1103a14-16.

[96] Ibid., 1098a28-29.

[97] Ibid., 1094b15-19; See also Nichols, "Aristotle's Defense of Rhetoric," 669.

[98] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1194b20-23; See also *Rhetoric*, 1357a34.

[99] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1109a15.

> of things conducive to health or to strength—but about the sorts of things conducive to living well in general.[100]

What is conducive to living well in a given set of circumstances is not the sort of thing that can be known beyond a shadow of a doubt. As Aristotle explains, "nobody deliberates about things that cannot be otherwise."[101] Prudence helps us form opinions about what "admits of being otherwise." [102] It involves "true conviction" about an end and implies correctness about what is advantageous to achieving that end, but what is conducive to the end is open to debate.[103] Aristotle argues that "those who have experience" are "more skilled in acting than are others who…have knowledge."[104] The reason is that prudence, being concerned with action, is found at the intersection of universals and particulars,[105] and of the two it is more concerned with particulars, which are only known through experience.[106] Of particulars, "there is not a science but rather a perception."[107] Prudence allows us to perceive what is "opportune at the moment."[108] It involves deliberating well about the appropriate action given the facts on the ground.

Although Aristotle recognizes the limits of the political art, he nevertheless instructs his students in prudence. He acquaints them with a variety of possible regimes,

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[100] Ibid., 1140a25-32.

[101] Ibid., 1140a33.

[102] Ibid., 1140b25-28.

[103] Ibid., 1142b32-35.

[104] Ibid., 1141b4-18; See also ibid., 1143b11-14.

[105] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1141b22.

[106] Ibid., 1141b22-24, 1142a13-15.

[107] Ibid., 1142a24-29.

[108] Ibid., 1110a12.

so that they may pursue the best regime that the circumstances will allow.[109] Of the art of crafting political arrangements Aristotle remarks that “one must write in universal terms, but actions concern particulars.”[110] In writing laws and in making recommendations regarding political arrangements, there are limits to what can be set out in advance concerning what should be done in a given set of circumstances. But limitations of the political art do not prevent Aristotle from making political recommendations in light of particulars.

Aristotle also associates prudence with the political and legislative arts. He says that the “politician must be prudent” and that prudence “is a virtue proper to the ruler.”[111] Although “prudence that pertains to…the individual” is “prudence especially,” Aristotle says that “in fact the political art…and prudence are the same characteristic…though their being is not the same.” They are the same characteristic applied at the level of the individual and the city. Like prudence, the political art is “bound up with action and deliberation.”[112] It also seeks what is called for in a given set of circumstances. This might seem resistant to theory, insofar as theories are universal. Nevertheless, at the end the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle sets up the *Politics* as a work that will address “what sorts of things accord with which circumstances.”[113] Moreover, the political and legislative arts must keep in view both universals and particulars. Aristotle says that “the good legislator and true politician must neglect neither the regime that is simply best nor

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[109] See, for example, the beginning of Book IV. Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1288b27.

[110] Ibid., 1269a9-11.

[111] Ibid., 1277a16, 1277b26.

[112] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1141b24-33.

[113] Ibid., 1181b8-11.

the regime that is best under the circumstances." While Aristotle does describe the regime that is best by nature in Books VII and VIII of the *Politics*, he does not neglect lesser, more achievable regimes. It would be best if citizens could and did choose "to be ruled and to rule with a view to the way of life that accords with virtue," but we should not presume that we will encounter such citizens.[114] Furthermore, he subtly chastises those who study "merely the regime that is best" and ignore the "regime that is possible," thereby "entirely missing what is useful."[115] Political constraints will affect the sort of regime that is possible in a given situation.

Aristotle suggests that focusing on the best regime puts too much emphasis on the establishment of regimes and not enough on the perpetuation and reform of existing regimes. He says that "what should be done is to introduce the sort of arrangement that, given what people already have, they will easily consent to or could easily participate in."[116] In distinguishing between the founding of regimes and the reform of actual existing regimes, Aristotle suggests that the latter is the defining activity of the "good legislator and true politician."[117] Recognizing that the preservation of actual regimes may seem less glorious, he insists that "it is no less a work to put a regime right than to establish one in the first place."[118] Regimes are not founded in political abstraction. Any given regime is preceded by another, and Aristotle implies that gradual reform is to be preferred over starting from scratch. Along those lines, he advises legislators and

[114] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1284a1-4.

[115] Ibid., 1288b37-38.

[116] Ibid., 1289a2.

[117] Ibid., 1288b28.

[118] Ibid., 1289a4-5.

politicians to "study how any given regime might come into existence…and how, once in existence, it might be longest preserved." A broad political education is necessary, because legislators and politicians need to know how to deal with regimes that are neither the best simply nor the best given the circumstances. To achieve the latter, they must "get acquainted with the regime that is most in harmony with every city."[119] The implication is that the best regime cannot be sought in every city, so legislators must know "what sorts fit what sorts of people," an observation that prompts Aristotle to advise studying regimes that exist abroad.[120]

Prudence helps the legislator see not only "what the best laws are" but also "which ones suit each regime."[121] Although regimes themselves are either just or unjust,[122] in another sense the kind of regime determines what is "by nature just and advantageous."[123] The distinction between natural and conventional justice does not prevent Aristotle from recognizing the good in the latter.[124] In the *Rhetoric* Aristotle says that for advisory speakers "it is necessary to know how many specific forms of government there are, what is advantageous to each, and what things each is naturally destroyed by."[125] What is advantageous depends on the regime. Aristotle later impresses on his reader that this sort of knowledge is "the greatest and most decisive of all the

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[119] Ibid., 1288b25.

[120] *Rhetoric*, 1360a30-35.

[121] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1289a11.

[122] Ibid., 1282b9.

[123] Ibid., 1287b38-40.

[124] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1134b18-20.

[125] *Rhetoric*, 1360a20-22.

things that contribute to being able to be persuasive and to do a beautiful job giving advice," since "everyone is persuaded by what is advantageous, and what is advantageous is what preserves the regime."[126] Again, Aristotle demonstrates an interest in the perpetuation of political institutions.

Along these lines, he is promiscuous with his political teachings, giving advice even to tyrants. Admittedly, his advice seems designed to subversively reform them in the direction of kingship, but it is nevertheless striking that he speaks of "saving tyranny."[127] When Aristotle advises tyrants to play the role of a king or household manager as if they were actors in a play, we gather that playing the role will positively affect the tyrant's subjects and perhaps even improve his own character through habit. The tyrant who follows Aristotle's advice will "either be nobly disposed for virtue or half serviceable for that purpose." Aristotle assures the tyrant that rule is "more noble and more enviable" when it is "exercised over better people."[128] A little later he remarks that it is noble to imitate the Tarentines, who open "their properties for the common use of the needy," thereby securing the "kindliness of the multitude."[129] Such imitation will preserve the tyrant's regime, but in mentioning nobility and envy Aristotle presumes and makes use of the tyrant's desire to be known for gentlemanliness. Aristotle appeals primarily to the tyrant as someone who practices politics "for personal gain and advancement," but he also holds out the possibility of its coherence with the motives of

[126] Ibid., 1365b25.

[127] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1314a29.

[128] Ibid., 1315b6.

[129] Ibid., 1320b11.

the statesman "who chooses noble deeds for their own sake."[130] As with virtue, other concerns need not exclude self-love properly conceived.

In any case, Aristotle takes a gradualist approach. In contrast to the claim of Hobbes who argues that Aristotle justifies a revolutionary politics,[131] Aristotle does not call for revolution but for ostensibly small modifications in behavior. He presents himself as a publicist helping the tyrant with his image. The tyrant must "seem to be taking care of the common funds." He "should present himself as a guardian and steward,"[132] as a trustee, not an embezzler.[133] Moreover, "he must appear not harsh but dignified" and "furnish and adorn the city as if he were a steward and not a tyrant."[134] Instead of mistreating his subjects, he should be generous with honors.[135] Aristotle subtly shows the tyrant how his own good ultimately corresponds with the common good. The preservation of the tyrant's regime depends on its transformation into kingship. Instead of demanding that tyrants purify their motives, he first shows them how the public's good is consonant with their own good.

Although Aristotle especially prizes the virtuous,[136] he recognizes the justice of other claims to rule. In considering the claims of the multitude, the rich, the decent, the

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[130] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1216a25-26.

[131] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch. 46.

[132] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1314a40.

[133] Ibid., 1315b2.

[134] Ibid., 1314b18.

[135] Ibid., 1315a24.

[136] Ibid., 1283a23.

best, or the tyrant to rule, Aristotle says that "all of them appear unsatisfactory."[137] The just regime is one that preserves rather than destroys the city, and destruction would result if the many poor were allowed to redistribute the property of the rich.[138] And yet, although allowing the many to participate in the greatest offices "would not be safe," excluding them entirely from office would give rise to a city "full of enemies."[139] Full inclusion and full exclusion of the many in rule would be destructive of the city and therefore unjust, insofar as it neglects the "political good" and the "common advantage."[140] But Aristotle's case for the limited inclusion of the many is not limited to an argument from the political necessity created by their strength in numbers. The many, we find, contribute to the city by participating in "deliberation and judgment,"[141] and through their collective virtue.[142] While the argument the many make from their collective strengths involves "difficulties," Aristotle remarks that "it might also seem to have truth to it,"[143] and "some justice."[144] While justice requires distributing equal things to equal people, people are equal and unequal in different respects.[145] Aristotle finds that the well-born, the free, and the rich all make reasonable claims to rule.[146] Reconciling

[137] Ibid., 1281a11.

[138] Ibid., 1281a21.

[139] Ibid., 1281b28-31.

[140] Ibid., 1282b17.

[141] Ibid., 1281b31.

[142] Ibid., 1283b32.

[143] Ibid., 1281a42.

[144] Ibid., 1283b31.

[145] Ibid., 1282b20.

[146] Ibid., 1283a42.

these seemingly incommensurate claims is practically important because most cities are polities, combinations of oligarchy and democracy oriented by wealth and freedom.[147] For polities to last, they must be well mixed, such that the middle sort can thrive and become an arbitrator between the few and the many, the wealthy and the powerful.[148] While recognizing virtue's special purchase, Aristotle shows actual regimes how they can avoid the problem of faction by widening the scope of justice to recognize a variety of merits.[149] Apparently seeing that his readers might be inclined to equate wealth and virtue, Aristotle makes a case for including the multitude.[150] Aristotle advances stability as a good to be sought even in corrupt regimes, but it happens to correspond with their gradual reform.

The Good and the Education of Gentlemen

Aristotle uses the good to refer to the good for us, the moral good, and the common good, and while he recognizes these as distinct goods, he often shows how they are connected to one another. In part, he does this by explaining the gentleman (*kaloskagathos*) as a complex whole. Aristotle uses the noble (*to kalon*) to capture the uniqueness of the moral good. Noble deeds often derive nobility from their being chosen in spite of their personal cost.[151] Earlier I mentioned that in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle

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[147] Ibid., 1294a15.

[148] Ibid., 1296b38-1297a6.

[149] Ibid., 1301a35.

[150] Ibid., 1307a5.

[151] Aristotle notes that those who engage in praise and blame "make it a matter of praise that [Achilles] did some beautiful thing in disregard of what was profitable to himself." For Achilles, a death resulting from going to the aid of Patroclus "was a more beautiful thing, though living was advantageous." *Rhetoric*, 1359a5.

criticizes the old for caring more about their own good than the noble, and he likewise chastens the young, who “prefer…noble deeds” but are “dominated by desires” and “err on the side of excess and enthusiasm in all things.” The young are spirited and great souled but also naïve and too easily provoked.[152] Aristotle sees in rhetoric a way to bring the young and old towards the mean.

Anger, the passion toward which the spirited are particularly prone, can be useful or destructive. Anger can be an indicator of injustice,[153] but it can also lead us to misidentify injustice. One cause of injustice is rule of superiors by inferiors.[154] However, anger could lead us astray if through self-delusion someone overestimates his superiority and underestimates his dependence on the political community. The spirited are “in general in the grip of unfulfilled desire, are prone to anger and easily aroused.”[155] Spiritedness could lead us to overreact to a slight. Aristotle sees in rhetoric a way to stir up anger against injustice but also a way to keep it, through reasoned speech, from excess and misdirection.[156] Our passions are affected by our dispositions and ages,[157] but we are not imprisoned by them. Speech can be a way of “giving advice to [an] Achilles” or to those who aspire to be like him.[158] In accounting for ages and dispositions, rhetoricians can help us enter the “prime of life,” which is characterized by a mean with respect to

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[152] Ibid., 1389a–1389b.

[153] Ibid., 1380b16.

[154] Ibid., 1379a5.

[155] Ibid., 1378b30-35, 1379a18.

[156] Ibid., 1380a3-6.

[157] Ibid., 1379a28.

[158] Ibid., 1396a25.

spiritedness and by “living with a view not to what is beautiful or what is advantageous alone but to both.”[159] Rhetoric can direct anger toward the achievement of noble and good ends.

The rhetorician participates in this endeavor by not drawing too sharply the divisions between epideictic, deliberative, and forensic rhetoric. Aristotle explains that while these kinds of rhetoric aim at the noble, the advantageous, and the just, respectively, they should not focus on one to the exclusion of the others. For example, speakers of display care most about the noble, but they should also consider the just and the advantageous as “side-issues.”[160] Rhetoric can help achieve what Aristotle describes as the Greek mean between spiritedness and thought, which he takes to be the cause of the Greeks’ being “free and the best governed.” At the extremes are the nations in Europe, which are spirited and fiercely independent but ultimately ungovernable, and the nations in Asia, which are “endowed…with thought and art” but enslaved.[161]

Aristotle recognizes a tension between self-sufficiency and dependence on others. He takes the wise person’s ability to contemplate “even when by himself” as an indicator of self-sufficiency, but even there he suggests that it is “perhaps better to have those with whom he may work.”[162] Possessing the good makes us self-sufficient,[163] but that self-sufficiency must be understood to include the good of living in community with others.

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[159] Ibid., 1390b1.

[160] Ibid., 1358b22-29; See also Nichols, “Aristotle’s Defense of Rhetoric,” 665.

[161] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1327b32.

[162] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177b1.

[163] *Rhetoric*, 1362a25-26.

Aristotle contends that "no one would choose to have all good things by himself, since a human being is political and is disposed by nature to live with others." Even those blessed by good fortune need "those to whom [they] may do some good."[164] Aristotle shows the great or, perhaps more likely, those who believe themselves to be great that they are in need of others. After observing that we tend to seek out our own good, he remarks that "perhaps one cannot do well for oneself in the absence of household management or a regime."[165] He thus reminds us that finding our own good lies also in seeking the common good.

Though Aristotle holds out the contemplative life as the most godlike and self-sufficient, he gives us reason to doubt the possibility and desirability of a life devoted exclusively to contemplation. We should pursue such a life of leisure "to the extent possible for a human being."[166] Indeed, "one ought…to make oneself immortal, insofar as that is possible."[167] But Aristotle suggests that a life devoted exclusively to contemplation "would exceed what is human,"[168] and he remarks that it "would be strange…if a person should not choose the life that is his own but rather that of something else." And yet, the perplexity remains because "the life that accords with the intellect" would be proper for us and therefore "most excellent and most pleasant" for us, "if in fact [the intellect] especially *is* a human being."[169] That qualification is necessary

[164] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1169b15-20.

[165] Ibid., 1142a7-10.

[166] Ibid., 1177b22.

[167] Ibid., 1177b32-35.

[168] Ibid., 1177b26-28.

[169] Ibid., 1178a3-8.

because while reason is what is highest in us and sets us apart from beasts, we are not exclusively intellect but embodied creatures.

Human beings are similarly caught between their own good and the common good. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle remarks that "perhaps it is not the same thing in every case to be a good man and to be a good citizen."[170] In the *Politics* he says more directly that "the virtue of man and citizen are not simply the same."[171] Participating in a corrupt regime could be inconsistent with being a good human being. Moreover, the best regime is not something we are likely to encounter. The best regime seems to be the political equivalent of godlikeness, something wished for but never achieved. Rather, it belongs to *phronesis* to see both the best and what is fitting given the materials one is given.[172] We always face the difficulty of reconciling the individual with the political community.

As a result, Aristotle grapples with the problem posed by gentlemen, who have aspirations toward nobility or godlikeness that could prove dangerous to the political community. Nevertheless, he praises gentlemanliness (*kaloskagathia*),[173] which is the result of virtuous action and is itself "good as well as noble."[174] Moreover, those who "act correctly," that is, successfully act in accord with virtue, "attain the noble and good things in life."[175] Gentlemanliness is a prerequisite for greatness of soul, the peak of the

[170] Ibid., 1130b27-29.

[171] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1277a12.

[172] Ibid., 1289a11.

[173] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1248b10, 1249a16, 1249b23.

[174] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1099a23.

moral virtues.[176] Aristotle still offers the possibility of greatness while at the same time tethering true greatness to goodness. The political education he prescribes for making people decent involves speech but is not limited to speech.[177] Reason plays a part, but it cannot be reached without habit, since "it is by choosing the good or bad things that we are of a certain sort, not by opining about them."[178] Since gentlemanliness requires not only reason and speech but also habit, we look to the political art "to make the citizens of a specific sort—namely, good and apt to do the noble things."[179] Through laws and habituation "in a noble manner,"[180] the true politician makes citizens good.[181]

Aristotle recognizes the problem posed by spirited individuals who insist on their own importance at the expense of the political community, and he uses reason to remind them of their dependence on others and to lay the groundwork for an education that makes them into citizens and statesmen, capable of ruling and being ruled. Instead of rejecting self-interest, Aristotle elevates it and harnesses it for higher ends than preservation. He takes this strategy into politics, where in lieu of a revolutionary teaching, he gives corrupt regimes self-serving reasons for reform. This gradualist approach recognizes the good of peace and stability, which happily correspond with political improvement. Still, Aristotle's may be justly called a politics of prudence, one

[175] Ibid., 1099a6.

[176] Aristotle writes that "it is difficult…to be great souled, for it is not possible without gentlemanliness." Ibid., 1124a4.

[177] Ibid., 1179b5.

[178] Ibid., 1112a4-5.

[179] Ibid., 1099b30-32.

[180] Ibid., 1180a15-16.

[181] Ibid., 1102a7-9, 1103b4-6.

that keeps both universals and particulars constantly in view and which focuses its attention on the lived experience of the latter. In practice, it seeks the best possible regime given the circumstances, not the best regime simply.

CHAPTER FIVE

Aristotle and the Noble Citizen

In this chapter I respond to Kant's criticism of Aristotle by investigating Aristotle's use of the noble or beautiful (*to kalon*) to describe moral action. Although Aristotle does find a general correspondence between doing good deeds and doing well personally, he refers to the noble as an independent end, which reveals the importance of right motivation to virtuous action. Virtue must be chosen for its own sake, even when it appears to be at odds with our own good. Furthermore, Aristotle presents the political community in light of human beings' noble aspirations and makes educational prescriptions for cultivating noble citizens. I argue that Kant errs insofar as he associates Aristotle's moral and political theory with simple eudaemonism.

Virtue and Noble Ambition

According to philologist Walter Donlan, *kalon* was used in Archaic Greek to describe physical beauty, but in the fifth century it was joined with *agathon* (good) to refer to the gentleman (*kalosagathos*), freighting both words with ethical, social, and political significance.[1] Aristotle uses *kalon* to describe a variety of things, physical and immaterial.[2] In his political works he often uses *kalon* to describe praiseworthy speeches

[1] Donlan, "The Origin of Kalos Kagathos," 366–67.

[2] For instance, Aristotle says that the beautiful is also present in motionless things, such as mathematics, and he defines the beautiful as order, symmetry, and determinateness. Since the good and the beautiful describe action, but only the beautiful describes motionless things, Aristotle concludes that the good and the beautiful are different. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Joe Sachs, 2nd edition (Santa Fe, N.M: Green Lion Press, 1999), 1078a33.

and deeds. In the *Ethics,* Aristotle uses the noble to describe praiseworthy judgment and deliberation, commendable living, and even simply doing something well.[3] He also uses it to characterize right action, the action that is called for in a given set of circumstances,[4] what is correct, and what is best.[5] Shameful (*aischros*) deeds, by contrast, are those bad deeds that "seem to be ugly" and "bring one into disrepute."[6] In the *Politics* Aristotle uses the noble to positively describe rule, the condition of a city, the quality of a law, and the ordering of a regime.[7]

Donlan argues that "the gentleman" was invented by Greek aristocrats to preserve their social rank by assigning themselves special, unreachable ethical worth, but Aristotle distinguishes the noble from aristocratic rank and some aristocratic aspirations. That Aristotelian virtue generally presupposes a degree of material wealth is well known. Aristotle says that "it is impossible or not easy for someone without equipment to do what is noble."[8] Prosperity makes noble action easier.[9] Likewise, cities "must have leisure from doing necessary things" if they are "going to be nobly governed."[10] Nevertheless, Aristotle corrects the perception that all those who are well-off are also

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[3] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094b27-28, 1140a25-29, 1143a17, 1170b26-27.

[4] Ibid., 1120b1-6, 1121a1-4.

[5] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1265a12, 1252a24.

[6] Plato and Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1383b15.

[7] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1259b40, 1260b35, 1264a1, 1268b4, 1269a35, 1272b30, 1273b15, 1294b36, 1307a9, 1328b38.

[8] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1099a32-1099b1; See also, Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1331b39.

[9] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1243b1-2.

[10] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1269a35.

gentlemen, identifying the regime that aims at wealth as a deviant form of regime.[11] Furthermore, Aristotle sometimes seems to expand the number of candidates for noble action. Beyond a "measured" amount of material prosperity, wealth and its accompanying political influence do not seem to be the predominant factors in determining whether someone will perform noble deeds. Indeed, Aristotle says it is "possible even for someone who does not rule land and sea to do noble things."[12] This does not decisively show that someone who performs noble deeds could be deemed a gentleman, but it does suggest that Aristotle resists the exclusivity indicated by Donlan.

Moreover, Aristotle at times identifies moral worth as a quality that can exist independently of economic standing. The "serious man," Aristotle writes, "would use poverty and disease nobly as well as the other ills of fortune."[13] And, "we suppose that someone who is truly good…bears up under all fortunes in a becoming way and always does what is noblest given the circumstances."[14] While good fortune may grease the wheels of noble action and bad fortune could make life ultimately unhappy,[15] "great misfortunes" afford gentlemen opportunities for noble action.[16] Such people know that the "soul is more honorable than property" and that material goods are choiceworthy for the sake of virtue rather than the other way around.[17] Aristotle suggests that the

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[11] Ibid., 1289a30, 1293b40, 1294a15.

[12] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1179a3-5, 1179a10-13.

[13] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1332a19.

[14] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1100b36-1101a2.

[15] Aristotle cites Priam as one who encountered great misfortune in old age. Ibid., 1100a8.

[16] Ibid., 1100b30-32.

[17] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1323b13.

supposedly wellborn should not confuse wealth with nobility. Thus, he seems to use the noble in ways that are not simply reducible to the socioeconomic and political linguistic constraints described by Donlan.

Aristotle links the noble and gentlemanliness with virtue when, in the *Nicomachean Ethics,* he associates them with greatness of soul, the crown of the moral virtues. Greatness of soul, he says, presupposes gentlemanliness and complete moral virtue.[18] It is the virtue we would expect of those "most ambitious with respect to virtue."[19]As Robert Faulkner explains, this means that there is no "greatness without goodness."[20] Aristotle defines greatness of soul as a mean with respect to the longing for honor, the greatest of the external goods.[21] It is "the prize conferred on the noblest people."[22] But the love of honor leads to many "voluntary wrongs."[23] In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle cites those with an excessive concern with honor as an example of those who "contrary to reason, are either overpowered by or pursue something by nature noble and good."[24] He thus subordinates honor to reason. Even though Aristotle elsewhere associates the noble with virtue and personal advantage with

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[18] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1123b36-1124a4.

[19] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1324a31.

[20] Robert Faulkner, *The Case for Greatness: Honorable Ambition and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 20.

[21] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1107b22, 27.

[22] Ibid., 1123b18-21.

[23] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1271a15.

[24] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1148a30.

reason,[25] he here advocates the moderation of noble longings by reason.[26] As he explains in the *Politics*, "humans do many things by reason against habituation and nature if they are persuaded that something else is better."[27] As powerful as nature and habituation are, reason gives human beings the ability to not be imprisoned by them. With the help of reason courageous people are able to avoid dangerous situations where action would be "not noble but insane."[28] Aristotle thus seeks to persuade us to abandon misguided perceptions of the noble.

In the course of his description of the great souled man Aristotle progressively narrows the scope of those from whom the great souled man desires honor. Initially we are left to assume that the great souled desire any honor, but we soon learn that they want to be honored for their virtue and only by other virtuous people. Indeed, they seek honor only because "honor is the prize of virtue."[29] Although the wellborn, the powerful, and the rich deem themselves honorable, Aristotle insists that "only the good human being is honorable, though he who has both goodness and good fortune is deemed even worthier of honor."[30] In linking moral goodness to honor, he is doing what he recommends elsewhere, drawing "what is held in honor toward what is beautiful, since it is at least in that neighborhood."[31]

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[25] *Rhetoric*, 1389a34-37.

[26] However, the courageous person (and other virtuous people) acts "as reason commands." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1115b12-15.

[27] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1332b6-8.

[28] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1230a27-33.

[29] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1123b36.

[30] Ibid., 1124a21-26.

[31] *Rhetoric*, 1367b12-14.

Aristotle eventually casts doubt even on how much the great souled care for the honor of excellent people. Although Aristotle initially says that the "great-souled man…is concerned with honor and dishonor in the way that he ought to be" and that "even in the absence of argument, the great-souled appear to be concerned with honor, for they deem themselves worthy of honor most of all,"[32] Aristotle eventually says that honor is no great thing to the person for whom "nothing is great."[33] Indeed, "there could be no honor worthy of complete virtue."[34] The great-souled only appear to be concerned with honor, because greatness of soul itself is an internal sense of worth, with honor serving as only an incidental confirmation of that worth. Earlier in the *Ethics* Aristotle immediately qualifies his assertion that honor is the end of political life by pointing out that honor is actually "more superficial than what is being sought, for honor seems to reside more with those who bestow it than with him who receives it." This would make the person seeking self-sufficiency dependent on the praise of others. Rather, the refined think that "virtue is superior" when compared with honor.[35] In narrowing the great souled person's audience, Aristotle draws a closer relationship between honor and virtue. It is therefore not enough to be well-born and blessed by good fortune. The great-souled undertake "noble actions and pursuits" because they think themselves worthy of them, and in misfortune their "nobility shines through" because they do not depend on fortune

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[32] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1123b22-24.

[33] Ibid., 1125a2, 16.

[34] Ibid., 1124a6-11.

[35] Ibid., 1095b22-6, 29-30.

for their worth.[36] Their sense of their own worth allows them to transcend the vicissitudes of fortune.

Although Aristotle describes self-sufficiency as a praiseworthy quality, he warns against taking it too far. He says that one "who is in need of nothing through being self-sufficient is no part of a city, and so is either a beast or a god."[37] Over the course of Aristotle's description of the great souled man, the person Aristotle describes appears more and more self-sufficient, and we are eventually forced to wonder whether Aristotle has drifted away from the virtue he set out to describe and left the mean for excess. If honor is no longer of any concern, perhaps this person has fallen victim to what Lee Ward calls "the noble illusion of self-sufficiency."[38] Aristotle describes the great-souled as idle, contemptuous, and ultimately unable to recognize their dependence on the political community. Moreover, "he is necessarily incapable of living with a view to another."[39] We wonder, as Steven Smith asks, "Who could be a friend to such a man?"[40] But here, when the great souled person's self-sufficiency seems to reach its zenith, Aristotle adds, "except a friend," as if to remind us that we have left behind friends and the honor they bestow.[41] Later, in his description of friendship, Aristotle says that

[36] Ibid., 1100b30-32, 1125a26-28; Aristotle says that Socrates was great-souled in the sense of "being unaffected by good and bad fortune." Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 97b14-29, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015048764180; See also, *Rhetoric*, 1389a28-33.

[37] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1253a29.

[38] Ward, "Nobility and Necessity," 82.

[39] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1125a1.

[40] Smith, "Goodness, Nobility & Virtue," 21.

[41] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1124b24-1125a1; Later, Aristotle writes, "without friends, no one would choose to live, even if he possessed all other goods." Ibid., 1155a1-6.

friendship is helpful "in performing noble actions" and that "friendship is not only necessary but also noble, for we praise those who love their friends."[42] We see in greatness of soul not only that there is no greatness without goodness but also that there are limits to self-sufficiency.[43] Aristotle raises doubts about depending entirely on the praise of others and about leaving others completely behind.

In Aristotle's presentation, the noble is inseparable from the moral. Equipping us to do noble things,[44] the virtues themselves are "laudable for their own sake."[45] Aristotle says that "acting well is rare, praiseworthy, and noble."[46] Not only are "actions that accord with virtue" performed "for the sake of the noble," but they are themselves noble.[47] The noble characterizes virtuous deeds, and it serves as the end for which virtuous deeds are performed. Aristotle regularly speaks of virtue itself as noble.[48] In fact, "no deed, whether of a man or a city, is noble without virtue and prudence."[49] Furthermore, the things that produce virtue are noble. [50]

Although speeches of display, for example Gorgias's "Encomium of Helen," could be understood as misleading, Aristotle construes them them as praising the noble

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[42] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155a15-16.

[43] Aristotle also notes that to be a benefactor "the serious person will need those who may be done some good." Ibid., 1169b12.

[44] Ibid., 1101b32-33.

[45] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1248b19.

[46] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1109a30.

[47] Ibid., 1120a24-25; Aristotle says this of virtue in general and of particular virtues, such as liberality and courage. Ibid., 1115b20-23, 1120a25.

[48] *Rhetoric*, 1366a35-1366b6.

[49] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1323b32.

[50] *Rhetoric*, 1366b25-26.

and censuring the base, and to equip those who give speeches of display he undertakes an examination of the virtues and vices. Thus, Aristotle draws speeches of display in the direction of the noble and the noble in the direction of virtue. In another place he writes, "In itself, what is false is base and blameworthy, whereas what is true is noble and praiseworthy." In contrast to the Sophists, who promised preeminence in power and fame through speech, Aristotle offers the ability to illustrate the beauty of virtue.[51]

The Noble and its Ends

Chastening those who would seek preeminence exclusively through power or wealth, Aristotle associates the noble with sacrifice. Our individual good is desirable, but the common good is "nobler and more divine."[52] In the *Politics* Aristotle says that the city is prior to each one of us taken individually,[53] and in the *Rhetoric* he says that the "business of the public assembly is of greater nobility and greater civic importance than that involved in private transactions."[54] The noble points us away from private advantage and towards the common good.

As others have noted,[55] the noble becomes especially prominent in Aristotle's description of courage, which in the authoritative sense refers to someone who is

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[51] Aristotle says that "what is false is base and blameworthy, whereas what is true is noble and praiseworthy. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1127a29-30.

[52] Ibid., 1094b9-11.

[53] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1253a20.

[54] *Rhetoric*, 1354b23-27.

[55] Ward, "Nobility and Necessity"; Collins, "Moral Virtue and the Limits of the Political Community."

"fearless when it comes to a noble death,"[56] such as on a battlefield, where one faces the "noblest danger."[57] He notes that it can be considered praiseworthy to "endure something shameful or painful in return for great and noble things."[58] Sacrificing bodily comforts could be a way of achieving the good of nobility. In the *Rhetoric* Aristotle invokes Achilles, who reentered the war on behalf of Patroclus even though he knew it would be contrary to his own good, as an example of nobility. On this telling Achilles "did some noble thing in disregard of what was profitable to himself."[59] Even though "the end that pertains to courage would seem to be pleasant," Aristotle remarks that "courage is in fact a painful thing."[60] While "death and wounds will be painful," the courageous person "will endure them because it is noble to do so or because it is shameful not to." He chooses "what is noble in war" instead of the greatest goods, which leads Aristotle to admit that the "activity is not pleasant in the case of *all* the virtues."[61] Pleasure, then, could not be understood as the courageous person's motivation.

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[56] Courage is a mean with respect to confidence and fear, but fear should prevent rash deeds rather than noble ones.

[57] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1115a30-34.

[58] Ibid., 1110a20-22.

[59] *Rhetoric*, 1359a1-6. This tendentious interpretation of the *Iliad* draws attention to problematic character of Achilles' nobility. Indeed, his sense of his own importance was the reason he sat out of the Trojan War, even at his comrades' great expense, and was the reason Patroclus went to battle in Achilles' armor. Achilles reentered the war not out of public spiritedness but because of his wrath towards Hector. In the *Politics* Aristotle identifies the love of honor which aims at glory as a cause of war. It is not common, though, because it presumes disregard for personal safety. People who love honor in this way are apt to, as Aristotle at one point says of the great souled person, throw away their lives. Aristotle cites Dion who attacked Dionysus believing that, even if he advanced only a few steps, his death would be a noble one. We are left to assume that Aristotle finds this not noble but "insane." Dion illustrates the potentially problematic character of noble ambition. Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1312a22-39.

[60] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1117a34-1117b1.

[61] Ibid., 1117b9-16.

While Donlan seems to understand *kalon* chiefly as a marker of class, that is, of the aristocratic "style of life,"[62] both Aristotle and Plato's Socrates appear to take for granted the heroic status of "brilliant" Achilles in the moral imaginations of their Athenian audience, and they use his image for their own purposes.[63] Aristotle begins his account of the moral virtues with courage (*andreia*), which can also be translated as "manliness." The courageous, Aristotle says, "act like men." As Bartlett and Collins explain, the root of this verb, *andrizein*, is *aner*, "a male in an emphatic sense." The courageous person then, etymologically speaking, is a "real man."[64] Aristotle begins with a virtue that would catch the attention of aspiring gentlemen, who already looked up to the virtue or excellence (*arête*) of figures such as Achilles.[65] Even though Aristotle describes courage in a way that does not fit Achilles, his rhetorical purpose is served when the careful listener or reader notices these differences. For example, Aristotle distinguishes courage from spiritedness, the foremost attribute and driving motivation of wrathful Achilles. He admits that "the courageous are spirited," but they "act on account of the noble," from reason and choice rather than passion. Thus, "it is not courage to rush impulsively into danger," and those "who fight on account of anger or revenge…are not courageous, since they fight not on account of the noble or as reason commands but on

[62] Donlan does not treat Plato or Aristotle. Donlan, "The Origin of Kalos Kagathos," 372.

[63] Plato, *The Apology of Socrates*, in Plato and Aristophanes, *4 Texts on Socrates: Plato's Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, Crito and Aristophanes' Clouds, Revised Edition*, trans. Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 28b; Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles, Reissue edition (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Penguin Classics, 1998), XIX. 453.

[64] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1115b4.

[65] Donlan acknowledges that throughout "Greek aristocratic culture the notion of physical beauty (*to kalon*) was clearly associated with the ideal of *arete*," but he seems to think physical excellence is distinct from moral excellence. I suspect that such a clear distinction is not warranted. Donlan, "The Origin of Kalos Kagathos," 369.

account of their passion."[66] The courageous person will be characterized not by reckless abandon but by reason, choice, and prudence.[67] In his account of virtue, Aristotle subordinates the passions to reason. He preserves the attractiveness of courage, describing it in terms of the noble, at the same time that he connects it with a prudential assessment of the good achieved by the action.

Aristotle's use of the noble is not limited to military virtues. He says that war, however noble, "cannot be considered the highest of all ends" because "war is for the sake of peace."[68] Aristotle criticizes the Spartan regime for cultivating only those virtues the Spartans deem useful, which are "of a more grasping sort."[69] Becoming preoccupied with security concerns is "contrary to what is noble."[70] Aristotle can recommend instruction in music because the regime should cultivate citizens not for empire but for "noble leisure."[71] Nevertheless, the quality of nobility is needed in war because "it is neither the wolf nor any other wild beast but rather the good man that would enter the lists in the case of noble danger."[72] Even in terms of usefulness Aristotle prefers noble human beings to noble dogs. He also encourages us to reimagine self-defense as

[66] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1116b24-1117a9; See also Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1229a2-3. Aristotle says that reason "tells us to choose what is noble."

[67] Though not mentioned here, prudence characterizes moral virtue. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1107a1.

[68] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1325a5, 1333a35.

[69] Ibid., 1333b10.

[70] Ibid., 1330a21.

[71] Ibid., 1337b32.

[72] Ibid., 1338b30.

something not only physical but also as something that can be accomplished by speech.[73] By recommending the use of words, Aristotle introduces reason as a higher and nobler method of resolving disputes.

Aristotle links the noble to thinking long-term. Evoking Achilles, Aristotle says in Book IX that the serious person "would choose to feel pleasure intensely for a short time over living in a haphazard way for many years."[74] Nevertheless, as we saw previously in the case of courage, noble action sometimes requires abstaining from pleasures.[75] Even in this passage from Book IX Aristotle indicates that noble action requires a kind of sacrifice, whether of money, deeds, or even life itself, even if it is ultimately a way of acquiring "what is noble," which Aristotle identifies as the "greater good."[76] Nobility attaches itself to those who are willing to sacrifice for others, so we are led to doubt that the noble could be gained through a hedonic pursuit. But as I mentioned previously, such action must be circumscribed by reason in order for it to be noble rather than foolish. Aristotle reproves those who would "rush impulsively into danger…driven by pain and spiritedness, without seeing in advance any of the terrible things involved."[77] The prudent person will not throw away his life without regard for the good his deed will produce, since doing so would not be courageous.

Aristotle also deploys the noble in explaining the virtue with respect to giving and taking. Here, too, the noble points us from our own good toward the common good. The

[73] *Rhetoric*, 1355b1-4.

[74] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1169a22.

[75] Ibid., 1117a35.

[76] Ibid., 1169a29.

[77] Ibid., 1116b34-35.

prodigal's giving is not noble or done for the sake of the noble, and because prodigal people "do not live with a view to what is noble, they incline in the direction of pleasures."[78] Here the noble is both a quality of and end of virtuous action, and it leads away from the pursuit of pleasure. Aristotle introduces the noble as a final criterion in situations where the moral good and the good for ourselves appear to conflict.[79] Even though "most people wish for noble things," "they choose beneficial ones instead."[80] They "aim more at being done some good than at doing it,"[81] even though it is "not noble to be eager to be benefited."[82] Rather, noble actions "make others prosper rather than oneself."[83] In the context of giving and taking, nobility is associated with giving rather than receiving.

Aristotle regularly contrasts nobility with advantage. In the *Rhetoric* he explains that "the advantageous is good for oneself while the noble is good simply."[84] The latter is often obtained by setting aside the former. As a result, it is noble "to perform a benefit without expecting it to be requited,"[85] it is nobler "to provide sustenance…to parents" than "to provide for ourselves,"[86] and the decent person "acts on account of what is

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[78] Ibid., 1121b10.

[79] Aristotle admits that they sometimes do. Ibid., 1155b23-6.

[80] Ibid., 1162b35-1163a2.

[81] Ibid., 1167b27-28.

[82] Ibid., 1171b26.

[83] *Rhetoric*, 1367a5-6.

[84] Ibid., 1390a2.

[85] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1162b35-1163a2.

[86] Ibid., 1165a22-4.

noble…and for the sake of a friend, while disregarding himself."[87] The noble person is generous because "passionate devotion to companions is…more noble than passionate devotion to money."[88] In matters of foreign policy, private interest precludes us from "contributing nobly" to public deliberation.[89] Thus, whether on the battlefield, in personal interactions, or in politics, the noble points us away from our own advantage and often toward the good of others.

Aristotle further distinguishes gentlemanliness from advantage at the end of the *Eudemian Ethics*, where he makes a threefold division between the noble, the good, and the many who are not good. Gentlemanliness, Aristotle says, arises out of a combination of the particular virtues, which are goods chosen for their own sakes. He writes, "A person is a noble person because of possessing those goods that are noble for their own sake, and because of doing noble deeds for their own sake. What things, then, are noble? The virtues and the works of virtue."[90] Gentlemanliness, he says is "complete virtue."[91]

Aristotle names the Spartans as an example of those who are good without possessing nobility. They pursue virtue "only for the sake of the natural goods," and because of this their otherwise "noble qualities are not acquired for their own sake." As a result, they are neither perfectly virtuous nor noble "for things become noble when people's motives in doing and choosing them are noble."[92] They can still be considered

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[87] Ibid., 1168a33-5.

[88] *Rhetoric*, 1364b3-5.

[89] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1330a23.

[90] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1248b34-36.

[91] Ibid., 1249a16.

[92] Ibid., 1249a1-11.

morally good, however, "for the natural goods are good for them."[93] Among all good things, Aristotle distinguishes between those that are "laudable for their own sake" and therefore noble, and natural goods, which are good in the abstract but only good for the possessor if the possessor is virtuous. In this sense, the noble and the good "differ essentially."[94] Aristotle gives health, strength, honor, wealth, good fortune, and power as examples of natural goods, which are good in the abstract but do not in themselves warrant praise.[95] Insofar as the Spartans are morally good, the natural goods are also good for them. They choose the virtues, but they choose the virtues for the sake of acquiring natural goods. They therefore "do noble things only coincidentally," since "their noble qualities are not acquired for their own sake" but rather for external goods.[96] In the *Politics* Aristotle takes this as an indication that they think that natural "goods are better than virtue," which "is not noble."[97] To be noble, virtue must be chosen for its own sake rather than for advantage, which is "less pleasant and lovable."[98] People who are noble, by contrast, see external goods as useful to their pursuit of nobility. Because their motive in choosing the natural goods is noble, the natural goods become noble to them. The character of the person is for Aristotle the criterion of whether something naturally good is in fact good or noble to the person choosing them.

[93] Ibid., 1249a1.

[94] Ibid., 1248b17.

[95] Ibid., 1248b22.

[96] Ibid., 1249a3, 16.

[97] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1271b10.

[98] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1168a13.

Although the noble often points toward the common good, the noble is not exhausted by that good. Aristotle says that the noble is that which is "praised as being choiceworthy on account of itself."[99] He uses the term noble to refer not only to the common good but also, as Susan Collins helpfully explains,[100] to virtue as an independent end. For Aristotle virtuous action must be pursued "through choice and for the sake of the actions themselves."[101] Virtues are therefore "choiceworthy in themselves" and in choosing them "nothing beyond the activity itself is sought."[102] As Collins argues, when Aristotle says that virtue must be performed "for the sake of the noble,"[103] it is a kind of shorthand for saying that virtue is an independent end. While commentators have rightly emphasized the importance of the noble in the case of courage, Aristotle does speak of the noble as the end for other virtues. The proper target for both the rational and desiring parts of the soul is the noble.[104] Liberal and magnificent deeds are performed for the sake of the noble.[105] Later, in Book IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle says that the decent person "acts on account of what is noble; and the better a person he is, the more he

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[99] *Rhetoric*, 1366a35.

[100] Collins, "Moral Virtue and the Limits of the Political Community," 47.

[101] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1144a18.

[102] Aristotle here says virtuous actions "are held to be of this sort." That this is also his view is corroborated by other passages. Ibid., 1176b6-8.

[103] The noble, as opposed to the good, appears frequently as the end of courageous action. Ibid., 1115b12-15, 1115b20-23, 1116a10-13, 1116b2-4, 1116b31-34, 1117a7-8, 1117a16-18.

[104] Ibid., 1119b15-18.

[105] Ibid., 1120a25, 1122b6-8, 1123a25-27.

acts on account of what is noble."[106] In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle says that (moral) virtue makes a person choose everything for the sake of the noble.[107]

In using the noble to describe virtue as an independent end, Aristotle avoids simple eudaemonism. Like Kant, Aristotle thinks that virtue depends on having the right motivation.[108] In contrast to eudaemonism, Aristotle says that it "belongs to virtue more to act well than to fare well."[109] He explains that the person who performs a virtuous deed "acts knowingly," "acts by choosing," and "acts by choosing the [action] in question for [its] own sake."[110] Aristotle's examination of choice illuminates not only moral responsibility but also moral motivation. In choosing virtue we rise above necessity and self-interest, narrowly understood, and pursue higher ends. Choosing in this sense requires exercising reason in a way that sets human beings apart from non-rational animals.[111] One becomes a noble person by "doing noble deeds for their own sake."[112] Indeed, noble motivation is "common to the virtues."[113] Thus, while Kant's criticisms may be true of utilitarians, he errs insofar as he includes Aristotle in his critique of all previous moral theories.[114]

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[106] Ibid., 1168a33-35.

[107] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1230a27-33.

[108] Smith, "Goodness, Nobility & Virtue," 18.

[109] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1120a12-5.

[110] Ibid., 1105a32-3.

[111] Ibid., 1111b12-8.

[112] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1248b34-7.

[113] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1122b6-8.

[114] Aristotle writes, "For choice seems to belong very much to virtue and to distinguish people's characters more than actions do." Ibid., 1111b5-7.

And yet, in various places, Aristotle allows self-love to enter the virtuous person's motivation, albeit in a more elevated form. Although nobility precludes choosing virtue simply for our own advantage, Aristotle also teaches that we choose virtue both for its own sake and for the sake of happiness.[115] In a way similar to Kant, who describes duty as "often bitter" and nevertheless associates duty with a kind of pleasure,[116] Aristotle insists that "what accords with virtue is pleasant or not painful,"[117] while allowing that in some circumstances, such as in the case of courage, the practice of virtue is not pleasant. Happiness, Aristotle writes, "is the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing; and these are not separated."[118] Aristotle more clearly than Kant associates noble sacrifice with our flourishing as human begins.

Aristotle also argues that there is a kind of self-love that is praiseworthy, but it differs from blameworthy self-love as much as "longing for what is noble differs from longing for what is held to be advantageous."[119] He explains that the serious person who is willing to die for his friends and fatherland, give up money, honors, political offices, and even certain [noble] actions so that his friends can have them actually "allots more of the noble to himself" and is therefore a "self-lover," rightly understood.[120] But it is only in first setting aside advantage for the sake of the noble that such a person becomes worthy of self-love.

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[115] Ibid., 1097b1-6.

[116] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:377.

[117] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1120a27-30.

[118] Ibid., 1099a25.

[119] Ibid., 1169a5-7.

[120] Ibid., 1169a35.

The Necessary and the Noble in Politics

In the *Politics* Aristotle describes political life as both necessary and noble. What is noble transcends what is merely necessary. The city understood naturally seems subject to a criticism similar to the one Aristotle levels against the city in speech that Socrates proposes in the *Republic*. Of that city he says that it appears "as if the whole city were put together for the sake of what is necessary and not rather for what is noble."[121] Aristotle suggests that Socrates should have aimed at something higher. When Aristotle describes the city and its end of "living well," we see that human beings are not only natural but also political. In one sense, they are natural to cities just as bees are natural to hives. Neither can be fully understood without the other. But for Aristotle, the political capacity goes beyond this, since it involves the uniquely human capacity for reasoned speech. Humans may naturally and necessarily live together, but they also reason and thus freely choose how they will live together. Aristotle writes that "it is a peculiarity of humans…to have perception of good and bad…and community in these things makes a household and a city."[122] Even on Aristotle's natural account of the city, its origins in necessity give way to the activity of living well. Although the city "originates for the sake of staying alive, it exists for the sake of living well."[123] In cities human beings hold things in common and deliberate on what it means to live well.

After Book I, Aristotle shifts his emphasis from the necessary to the noble, elaborating what it means to live well. In Book III we find that humans would choose to

[121] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1291a6.

[122] Ibid., 1253a19.

[123] Ibid., 1252b30.

live together even apart from physical necessity. He says of human beings that "even when they are not in need of each other's help, they have no less desire to live together," since "the common advantage draws them into union insofar as noble living is something they each partake of."[124] In Book III, Chapter 9 Aristotle explains that intermarriage, clans, sacrifices, and cultured pursuits arise from the deliberate choice to live together, which, he says, is friendship.[125] According to Aristotle people come together not "for the sake of life alone but rather for the sake of living well," and this coming together is also the result of "deliberate choice."[126] The political community, he says, exists "for the sake of noble deeds and not merely for living together."[127] When the city is examined not from its origins but from its end, it becomes clear that the purpose of the city is not simply for keeping citizens from harming one another or for commerce but is rather a "community of families and villages in a complete and self-sufficient life, which we say, is living happily and nobly."[128] Although, as Nichols says, "human life is to a large extent ruled by necessity," "politics involves both the necessary and the noble."[129]

We should keep in mind that the moral freedom achieved in political life is still constrained by a form of necessity. For example, the city and its proper organization is necessary for human beings to live well. Human beings depend on the city for the

[124] Ibid., 1278b21.

[125] Ibid., 1280b32.

[126] Ibid., 1280a32.

[127] Ibid., 1281a2.

[128] Ibid., 1281a1-2.

[129] Mary P. Nichols, *Citizens and Statesmen: A Study of Aristotle's* Politics (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1992), 13.

cultivation of virtue. That implies that the freedom of living well is not a freedom of one's own making. The city necessarily exists for the sake of living well, although how a given people understands that end is not determined by nature. Aristotle recognizes that human beings exercise freedom in the pursuit of living well and disagree on its definition,[130] while arguing that they living well must be the city's end.

Education and the Noble Citizen

As Ward explains, Aristotle "presents himself as a teacher of statesmen." He wants to "be of service to the legislator."[131] He conducts his examination of virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics* "not so that we may know what virtue is, but so that we may become [morally] good."[132] As we will see, mere study cannot constitute the whole of a moral education, but Aristotle does indicate that his inquiry has a role to play. He says that "it does not belong to just any chance person to inculcate a noble disposition in whoever happens to be set before him." Rather, "[i]f this belongs to anyone it would be to a knower."[133] Political science could, then, guide legislators, and it could also guide political education, so that it gives attention to both the necessary and the noble. Of the two, Aristotle says that it is especially towards the goal of noble action that "citizens must be educated."[134]

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[130] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1337b2.

[131] Ward, "Nobility and Necessity," 72; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1109b34-5.

[132] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103b27-8.

[133] Ibid., 1180b26-8.

[134] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1333b2.

In part, the education of citizens must be conducted by way of speech. Aristotle divides rhetoric into three kinds: *epideictic,* advisory, and forensic, and he describes each in terms of a moral end: the noble, the good, and the just.[135] The good, first understood as advantage, is found to include happiness and the virtues, such that the moral good is advantageous.[136] This inclusive good is the aim of the public assembly, the business of which is of "greater beauty" than the lawcourts.[137] Aristotle takes speech, which could be viewed as a tool for achieving rule and preeminence, untethered from truth and morality, and explains it morally. In contrast to the sophists, Aristotle sees speech not as an opportunity to manipulate others or aggrandize oneself by dazzling others with beautiful words but as a means of teaching others what is beautiful or shameful.[138] Aristotle defends rhetoric in part by linking it to moral ends.

While speech and reason are central to Aristotle's understanding of morality, he does not equate knowledge with virtue. Simply hearing or reading speeches about the noble, the good, and the just is not sufficient for becoming good. To be able to "listen adequately to the noble things and the just things" one must first be "brought up nobly by means of habituation."[139] In another place Aristotle says that "the soul of the student must be prepared beforehand by means of habits so as to feel delight and hatred in a noble way."[140] Although Aristotle recognizes that laws with teeth in them are necessary for

[135] *Rhetoric*, 1358b.

[136] Ibid., 1362b10-15.

[137] Ibid., 1354b25.

[138] For Aristotle's references to the sophists, see ibid., 1355b17, 1404b35.

[139] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1095b4-7.

[140] Ibid., 1179b25-7.

those who "obey the governance of necessity more than that of speech [*logos*], and of punishments more than of what is noble," Aristotle seems to side with those who say that "legislators ought to encourage people in the direction of virtue and exhort them to act for the sake of the noble."[141] He recognizes that virtue cannot be coerced, but he holds noble action out as an attractive alternative to force. On this view, citizens who take legislators' advice will come to obey speech and will not have to be prodded by punishments like a beast.

But for the exhortations of a legislator to be effective, the citizen must have been previously "reared and habituated in a noble manner."[142] Aristotle claims that speeches have the limited but significant power "to make someone who has a wellborn character and is truly a lover of what is noble receptive to virtue."[143] A project like Aristotle's can bring clarification and knowledge but only in conjunction with an upbringing in character-forming habits. Aristotle's education requires a properly prepared student.

While it appears that some of Aristotle's discussion of education in the *Politics* may have been lost,[144] the text we do have does gives us an idea of its progression and content. Since spiritedness, will, and desire "are found in children as soon as they are born, but reasoning and intellect naturally develop in them as they grow older," he recommends that education begin with habituation of the body and only later progress to

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[141] Ibid., 1180a4-8, 10-13.

[142] Ibid., 15–16.

[143] Ibid., 1179b7-10.

[144] For Lord's discussion of this matter, see Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), xxxiii.

speech and reason.[145] A right relationship to passions must start early, but they are not easy to control. Aristotle writes: “In general, passion seems to yield not to speech but to force. So there must first be an underlying character that is somehow appropriate for virtue, one that feels affection for the noble and disgust at the shameful.”[146] Early habituation, it seems, must first make the noble attractive before speeches can have an effect. The noble must first attach students to virtue before reason can be of use.

Thus, early childhood education must include gymnastic and music as tools for the training of the passions.[147] We have already seen Aristotle presuppose and make use of Homer’s epic poetry, which the Ancient Greeks would have understood as a form of music. Whatever poetic depictions Aristotle has in mind for the young, he recommends the banishment of “unseemly pictures and stories,” which could corrupt them while they are at an impressionable age.[148] Because the noble is seen less in “what is done” than in “what it is done for,” an orientation towards the noble can be cultivated by the practice of even menial chores.[149] Due to motivation’s importance, virtue can be acquired even in humble tasks. Only by habituation will people develop a proper relationship to passions, pleasures, and pains. Like Kant, Aristotle recognizes that virtuous action can require pain, but he is not content with this state of affairs, since pain will prevent us from doing what is noble. He argues that “taking delight and feeling pain make no small contribution to

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[145] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1334b23-4.

[146] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1179b30-32.

[147] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1338b4, 1340a14, 1340b15.

[148] Ibid., 1336b14.

[149] Ibid., 1333a8.

our actions' being well or badly done."[150] Thus, Aristotle thinks, "one must be brought up from childhood, as Plato asserts, so as to enjoy as well as to be pained by what one ought, for this is correct education."[151]

Aristotle thinks education should avoid the Spartan tendency to privilege useful virtues. Education should encompass not only useful or necessary subjects but also subjects, such as music,[152] which can be taught for their own sake.[153] There is an education, then, that should be pursued not because it is "useful or necessary but because it is…free and noble." In contrast to the Spartan preoccupation with military virtue, Aristotle writes, "To be looking everywhere for what is useful is least becoming in the magnanimous and the free."[154] He thus presents noble leisure as an alternative to the Spartan understanding of nobility. Aristotle appeals to his readers' attachment to nobility in calling them to leisure and contemplation.

Preparation is also required for the study and practice of politics. In the last chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle criticizes the sophists for reducing politics to rhetoric, their claimed area of expertise. Those who actually practice politics do it "by dint of a certain capacity and experience rather than by means of thought."[155] Aristotle concludes that "those who aim at knowing about the political art seem to need experience

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[150] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105a7-8.

[151] Ibid., 1104b11-3.

[152] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1340b10.

[153] Ibid., 1338a12.

[154] Ibid., 1338b3.

[155] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1181a3-4.

in addition."[156] The treatise will be of little use to those who lack political experience, such as the young.[157] But to those with experience and, further, to those who are "capable of contemplating and judging what is noble (or its contrary) and what sorts of things accord with which circumstances," "collections of both laws and regimes would be of good use."[158]

Statesmen, too, have a role to play in the cultivation of noble citizens. Aristotle writes that the political art "exercises a very great care to make citizens of a specific sort—namely, good and apt to do the noble things."[159] The laws help habituate citizens towards gentlemanliness. Rulers can "judge nobly" only when they have first been "educated by the laws."[160] Justice, which appears only in law, causes us to think of others and is therefore noble.[161]

Conclusion

Although Aristotle is famous for associating virtue with *eudaemonia,* his use of the noble prevents us from associating his theory of virtue simply with self-concern. Aristotle upsets the prejudices of oligarchs regarding the noble and links the noble to virtue. Similarly, the noble supplies the city with higher ends than necessity. Aristotle shows and explains how true nobility can be inculcated. It must be a collective effort that

[156] Ibid., 1181a14.

[157] Ibid., 1095a3-4, 1181b3.

[158] Ibid., 1181b7-10.

[159] Ibid., 1099b30-2.

[160] Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1287b25.

[161] *Rhetoric*, 1367a17-25.

begins early with habituation and is continued by legislators and educators. The products are noble citizens, who set aside their own advantage, narrowly understood, in favor of the common good, but who are above all committed to their own virtue.

CHAPTER SIX

Aristotle and Kant on the Noble and the Good

As we have seen, Kant sees his project not as a continuation of the tradition of philosophy but as an attempt “to break into an entirely new field.” He claims that the empirically informed philosophies that preceded his do not even “deserve the name of philosophy.”[1] Kant distinguishes his own principle of morality from “all previous *material* principles of morality.”[2] He thus sees his philosophy as a pivot on which the history of philosophy turns. Although Kant claims to inaugurate an entirely new tradition in philosophy, I have argued that there is more concord between Aristotle and Kant than Kant acknowledges. Kant includes the ancients in his critique of all previous attempts at moral philosophy, but in light of the surprising agreement between Aristotle and Kant on the noble and the good, it is more useful to think of Kant’s moral and political philosophy as a response to early moderns, such as Hobbes. Reframing the conflict as an intramural dispute among moderns helps us to see the relationship between Aristotle and Kant in a new light. Kant responds to the Hobbesian tradition by incorporating aspects of the noble as Aristotle conceived it, but in other respects he sides with Hobbes against Aristotle. Although Kant’s response to Hobbes reveals Aristotelian sensibilities, Kant does not ultimately return to the philosophy of Aristotle. The relationship between Aristotle and Kant must be understood as one of disagreement and concord. In the first part of this

[1] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:390; Roger J. Sullivan, “The Kantian Critique of Aristotle’s Moral Philosophy: An Appraisal,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 28, no. 1 (1974): 29.

[2] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:39. The emphasis is Kant’s.

chapter, I situate Kant with respect to the ancients and early moderns. In the second part, I explore the various ways Kant's response to Hobbes does not involve a return to Aristotle, although he does in places harken back to Aristotle.

Kant's Relationship to the Ancients and Early Moderns

In his early writings Kant comments on the philosophies of the Epicureans and Stoics, often siding with the latter. The Stoics, he thought, offered "the most genuine doctrine of true morals," even if they overestimated virtue's connection to happiness and our ability to act out of duty, in defiance of our inclinations.[3] The Epicureans, by contrast, advised the satisfaction of inclinations, which on Kant's view fails as a moral theory, even if it better describes how we in fact act.[4] Kant says that the "theories of the ancients appear to be aimed at bringing together the two elements or essential conditions of the highest good, happiness and morality." Stoics and Epicureans elevate one over the other, but they preserve a connection between the two. Even the Stoics, in Kant's view, hold out happiness as the necessary consequence of virtue. Kant does not mention Aristotle here, but it is clear that Aristotle belongs with those who try to hold together happiness and morality.

The moderns, as Kant understands them, undertake a different project. The "systems of the moderns try to find the *principium* of moral judgment." The moderns attempt to discover morality's foundation, and this leads them to different moral

[3] Kant, *Observations*, 19:106-107. Even during his critical period Kant at various points casts doubt on the idea that we could locate an example of what by the standard of pure philosophy or metaphysics would count as a genuinely moral act. In the *Groundwork* he says that "what is at issue here is not whether this or that happened." Indeed, duty commands "actions of which the world has perhaps no given example." Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:408; See also ibid., 4:413, 4:455.

[4] Kant, *Observations*, 19:109.

conclusions. Of modern attempts at moral philosophy Kant writes, “Besides those that derive it from empirical sources (custom or authority), they divide themselves into the moral theorists of pure reason and those of moral sentiment.”[5] Kant sides with the former and opposes the latter.

Later, in the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant criticizes Aristotle’s theory of virtues as means between vices, since he does not see the difference between virtue and vice as a matter of degree. Rather, the distinction turns on one’s relationship to the law.[6] Kant says that prodigality consists not in excessive enjoyment but in making “the use of one’s means the sole end.”[7] However, on Aristotle’s account it is not simply the degree of passion that affects where the mean lies, virtue being a “a characteristic marked by choice, residing in the mean relative to us, a characteristic defined by reason and as the prudent person would define it.”[8] Aristotle, too, thinks morally good or noble people are in part characterized by their subordination of physical goods to virtue.[9] Moreover, as Mary Gregor notes, it may be that Kant’s criticism is misplaced since Aristotle is concerned with the prudent action in a given set of circumstances and not with the derivation of virtues and vices in abstraction from lived experience. Gregor remarks that Kant sounds almost Aristotelian in his description of wide duties, which require prudential judgment to fulfill.[10] For example, although Kant argues that we have a

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[5] Ibid., 19:116.

[6] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:404.

[7] Ibid., 6:404n.

[8] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1107a1.

[9] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1249a1-11.

[10] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, xviii.

narrow, moral duty not to lie, he allows that we could have a wide, prudential duty not to speak with complete candor. This latter duty does not issue directly from pure reason, but Kant nevertheless speaks of it as a kind of duty. While Kant focuses on the "basic principles" of morality that issue from pure reason, Aristotle concentrates on the application of principles such as courage. Aristotle includes prudential judgment in his understanding of moral reasoning, while Kant understands it as a separate kind of reasoning. For Kant, therefore, failing in the application of a principle of morality can be described as a fault but not as a vice.[11] He draws the boundaries of his inquiry more narrowly.

However, to Kant, the more grievous flaw in ancient ethics is its apparent equation of morality with the pursuit of happiness. On the view of "eudaimonism," a term with obvious Aristotelian connotations, "morality is seen as the necessary consequence of the prudent aim at happiness."[12] As we have seen, this conflation of morality with happiness constitutes the principal target of Kant's critique of previous moral theories. For Kant, to assign happiness a moral status is to misunderstand the nature of morality and reduce human beings to the level of beasts.[13] Indeed, Kant sees the pursuit of happiness as one of the chief obstacles to the practice of virtue. But as we have seen, Aristotle does not quite fit Kant's description of eudaimonism. Not only does *eudaimonia* mean something more complex than happiness and is therefore more appropriately rendered "human flourishing," but Aristotle does not simply derive moral virtue from

[11] Ibid., 6:433n.

[12] Kant, *Observations*, 19:109.

[13] William A. Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 182.

happiness. He presents virtue as acting for the sake our good and happiness but also, in the case of moral virtue, acting for the sake of the noble as an independent end. In rare cases the noble may require the complete sacrifice of one's life, but in many cases it means trading self-interest narrowly conceived for self-love in a more elevated form.

Kant's critique of selfishness as a basis for moral and political action better fits the thought of Machiavelli and Hobbes. Kant even singles Hobbes out as an example of what he opposes. In his notes on Kant's lectures, Herder writes:

> Hobbes followed the plan of Lucretius and Epicurus, whose principles were of less nobility, by far, than those of the Stoics. And likewise the majority of Germans relate everything to self-interest, since it is fine to derive everything from a single *principium*, however little they may do this in metaphysics.[14]

Kant takes Hobbes to be the modern equivalent of the worst of the ancients, the Epicureans, and an enabler of the lamentable German tendency to think of morality in terms of selfishness. Furthermore, Kant devotes a sizable portion of *Theory and Practice* to a response to Hobbes, an honor not paid to Aristotle or any other major philosopher. Although Kant resembles Hobbes in his opposition to revolution,[15] he departs from Hobbes insofar as Kant's understanding of reason allows human beings to make judgments of right independently of the state and to examine the justice of positive laws.[16] Kant rejects the idea that the passion of fear and the desire for self-preservation motivate reason and the social contract. He reacts against the idea that right and wrong could depend on the sovereign.[17]

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[14] Kant, *Observations*, 27:3.

[15] R.F. Atkinson, "Kant's Moral and Political Rigorism," in Williams, *Essays on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 241.

[16] Kant, *Political Writings*, 28.

[17] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 63–64.

For Kant, right proceeds from pure reason and cannot be tied to self-interested passions if it is to be properly moral. As Pierre Hassner argues, Kant reinterprets "modern political life with a view to the crucial and neglected issue of its moral dignity, deliberately sacrificed by the tradition of Machiavelli and Hobbes."[18] Kant establishes morality independent of and prior to the requirements of peace, even if peace is the felicitous result of obeying the moral law.[19] The desire for self-preservation is a base desire that we share with other animals, while morality is reserved for rational beings.[20]

Kant's conception of the state of nature is correspondingly not as bleak as Hobbes's. To be sure, the state of nature is by definition a "condition that is not rightful."[21] And, in the absence of a lawful political order "human beings, peoples, and states can never be secure against violence from one another, since each has its own right to do *what seems right and good to it* and not be dependent upon another's opinion about this."[22] Nevertheless, while the situation is one of insecurity and is, strictly speaking, "devoid of justice," it is not necessarily a state of *injustice*—in Kant's words, "of dealing with one another only in terms of the degree of force each has."[23] But the lack of legal justice is a great enough hardship to justify the creation of civil society and even to force others to enter that state.[24] As with Locke's state of nature, Kant's seems prone to slide in

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[18] Pierre Hassner, "Immanuel Kant," in Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, eds., *History of Political Philosophy*, 3rd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 619.

[19] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 65.

[20] Ibid., 234.

[21] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:305.

[22] Ibid., 6:312. The emphasis is Kant's.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 6:312, 6:334; Kant, *Political Writings*, 38.

to a Hobbesian state of war, and unlike Locke but like Hobbes Kant appears to locate sovereignty in the government rather than the people.[25] Still, as we have seen, sovereignty is not the end of the story for judgments of right, even if it is where the buck stops for the use of force. Kant thus takes a hybrid position, claiming both that the people have "inalienable rights against the head of state" and that they have given up their right to claim those rights with force.[26]

Both Hobbes and Kant credit the state with establishing peace. This leads Peter Simpson to conclude that Kant articulates a theory of morality that is "little more than an elaboration of Hobbesian peace."[27] Nevertheless, Kant understands himself to have surpassed Hobbes, who on Kant's terms did not have a moral theory worthy of the name, since morality for Kant cannot be related to self-interest. Kant claims to begin with the principle of morality found by pure reason and to build his political theory on that principle.[28] He sees politics as a moral enterprise, not simply as a calculation of means for achieving peace. For Kant, peace is a means toward moral freedom, not an end in itself. Likewise, self-preservation may be a necessity for us as phenomenal creatures, but our rational nature aims at the higher, distinctly human end of morality.

Kant finds a reason for pride in his elevated view of the human species that is missing in Hobbes, who is famous for his attack on pride and vainglory. For Hobbes,

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[25] R.F. Atkinson, "Kant's Moral and Political Rigorism," in Williams, *Essays on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 240; Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:320; See also ibid., 6:338.

[26] Kant, "Theory and Practice," in Kant, *Political Writings*, 84.

[27] Peter Simpson, "Autonomous Morality and the Idea of the Noble," *Interpretation* 14, no. 2 & 3 (1986): 366.

[28] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 197.

pride leads first to anger, then to the "Madnesse called Rage," and finally to "Fury" and an "excessive desire of Revenge."[29] Vain-glory, which produces in people a "foolish over-rating of their own worth," is for Hobbes one of the chief causes of crime.[30] It is an obstacle to peace that Hobbes aims to overcome; as Robert Faulkner points out, Leviathan is "King of the Proud."[31]

Kant takes a more ambivalent view of pride. As Galston explains, "whereas Hobbes condemns vanity unconditionally as the root of all the evils of the human situation, Kant comes close to praising it as the most salutary passion."[32] The resulting strife can be accepted because it leads to the development of the species.[33] Likewise, Kant is less critical than Hobbes of the love of honor. It, too, participates in the development of the species, preparing the way for moral reasoning.[34] As Christine Korsgaard says, "Honor, as Kant conceives of it, seems to be a natural tendency to live up to certain standards of conduct, not for the sake of any gain from following them but for their own sake, and out of a kind of pride."[35] It appears to bear some resemblance to morality. Faulkner overstates Kant's skepticism when he calls the love of honor "'a

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[29] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 8:36.

[30] Ibid., 27:154.

[31] Robert Faulkner, *The Case for Greatness: Honorable Ambition and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 220.

[32] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 234; Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective," in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, ed. Pauline Kleingeld, trans. David L. Colclasure (Yale University Press, 2006), 8:21, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1npwr1.8.

[33] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 235.

[34] Kant, "Idea for a Universal History," 8:21.

[35] Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Constitution of Agency: Essays on Practical Reason and Moral Psychology*, 1st edition (Oxford University Press, 2008), 197.

delusion' that hides one's desire to dominate."[36] Kant does not think of the love of honor as a delusion in all cases. Morally speaking, Kant attempts to, at least partially, rehabilitate the proper pride that we saw first in Aristotle's virtue of magnanimity. To act morally is to think of oneself as higher than a beast that inexorably acts on instinct. Pride helps us stand up for ourselves as ends rather than means. Faulkner interprets Kant's pride as a Hobbesian means of defense,[37] but Kant does not present it in those utilitarian terms. Characterizing an action as "noble and magnanimous" indicates some contamination by self-love, but Kant does not reject those motivations out of hand, since the sacrifice involved in a noble deed demonstrates our superiority to nature.[38]

Kant Responds to Hobbes without returning to Aristotle

While Kant's reintroduction of morality is accompanied by pride in a certain sense, it is a pride circumscribed by a principle of equality. Kant, by contrast, says that "every human being has a legitimate claim to respect from his fellow human beings." Owing respect to every other human being puts limits on our self-love. In the *Ethics* Aristotle describes the great souled human being as one who carries himself with dignity, but for Kant, "humanity itself is a dignity."[39] That dignity derives from the human being's status as a rational and therefore moral animal. Human beings are for Kant equal in their capacity for morality. Moral action is not the preserve of those blessed by fortune with external goods. Rather, the moral law is accessible by way of common reason and

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[36] Faulkner, *Case for Greatness*, 235.

[37] Ibid., 231.

[38] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:158.

[39] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:462; See also ibid., 6:449.

can be acted on by anyone.[40] This egalitarianism leads Charles Taylor to conclude that Kant in the most important respect rejected the traditional "ethic of honor" and repudiated the "aristocratic way of life," which depended on inequality and distinguishing oneself from others.[41] Faulkner agrees: "Kant's moral freedom permits no claim to superiority."[42]

However, Kant equivocates on whether dignity is universally possessed or earned.[43] Faulkner interprets Kant as saying that "even if depravity should make men not equal in dignity, one has the duty to treat them as being equal."[44] Kant therefore excludes dignity as a possible claim to rule. Likewise, in Kant's thought the "love of honor pales into 'equal respect;'"[45] the noble is purified and universalized.[46] But, as we have seen, what Kant seems most interested in opposing are aristocratic titles and privileges. He seeks to depreciate the importance of birth. In *Perpetual Peace* he points out that "it does not necessarily follow that a nobleman is also a *noble man*."[47] He thus separates nobility of merit from inherited and undeserved nobility, which in the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant calls "wholly unreal and fanciful."[48]

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[40] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:391, 404.

[41] Charles Taylor, "The Motivation Behind a Procedural Ethics," in Beiner and Booth, *Kant and Political Philosophy*, 352.

[42] Faulkner, *Case for Greatness*, 230.

[43] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:440-1, 429; See also Bayefsky, "Dignity, Honour, and Human Rights," 821.

[44] Faulkner, *Case for Greatness*, 232.

[45] Ibid., 231.

[46] Ibid., 235.

[47] Kant, *Political Writings*, 99.

[48] Ibid., 152.

Aristotle does not explicitly attack the injustice of aristocracy, but he does interpret it and nobility in a moral light, reading aristocracy as the rule of the virtuous and nobility as a primarily moral quality. Like Kant, Aristotle chastens the prejudices of aristocrats. Where Aristotle might break with Kant is on the accessibility of morality. Drawing on Judith Shklar, Peter Berkowitz writes:

> Whereas Aristotle's good man…is aristocratic, dependent on wealth and honor, aloof, and devoted to his own self-perfection, Kant's moral individual is democratic, egalitarian, and benevolent; requires no special intellectual endowment, material wealth, or social standing; and simply seeks to respect humanity in his own person and in that of others.[49]

There is truth to this formulation, but the contrast it draws may be too simple. In Aristotle, moral reasoning does presuppose a certain upbringing and education, whereas Kant makes morality universally accessible to every human being by virtue of his being human. As Galston explains, "Where Kant sees a universal moral conscience, Aristotle sees at most a widely shared moral aptitude."[50] However, as we have seen, Aristotle does not think we are determined by fortune. Indeed, Aristotle anticipates Kant in saying that bad fortune can be an opportunity for virtue. Fortune still leaves room for human agency.

Moreover, Shklar may overstate Kant's egalitarianism. For example, Kant does recommend property requirements for full civic participation, since he doubts whether those without property and who therefore must depend on others can be fully free.[51] Roger Sullivan notes that, despite Kant's seeming egalitarianism, he in various places "recognizes how important are natural goods [for example, skill, health, or wealth] as a

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[49] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 108.

[50] William A. Galston, "What is Living and What is Dead in Kant's Practical Philosophy?" in Beiner and Booth, *Kant and Political Philosophy*, 213.

[51] Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, 334.

‘means to the fulfillment of one’s duty.’”[52] As in Aristotle, one’s means do not determine one’s conduct, but they can constitute supports to virtue or temptations to vice. Kant himself anticipates Arthur Melzer’s critique that “people are not free to do and be what they will at every moment in the way that the doctrine of free will implies.”[53] There is for Kant an important sense in which autonomy must be achieved rather than simply possessed.

Kant’s emphasis on freedom, a concomitant of equality, also appears to distinguish him from Aristotle who focuses on virtue understood as character. Human beings are equal in their capacity for freedom, that is, they are not determined by the laws of nature but are able to reason freely and thus to access an independent moral law that applies to all other rational beings.[54] Under this conception of moral or inner freedom, Kant says, “only I myself can *make* something my end.” At first glance this freedom might seem boundless or radically arbitrary, but Kant also assumes that “I am under obligation to make my end something that lies in the concepts of practical reason.”[55] We impose the moral law on ourselves, but we do so with concepts of practical reason that we share with all other rational beings. Freedom in the highest sense is achieved by imposing a universal moral law on ourselves.[56] There may be, as Taylor says, “an

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[52] Sullivan, “The Kantian Critique,” 49n; Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:93.

[53] Arthur M. Melzer, “Character vs. Free Will: Aristotle and Kant on Moral Responsibility,” in Andrea Radasanu, ed., *In Search of Humanity: Essays in Honor of Clifford Orwin* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 440.

[54] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:213.

[55] Ibid., 6:381.

[56] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 114.

aspiration here to total liberation, which Kant helped to awaken and define for the modern world,"[57] but Kant himself does not make that leap.

Still, as Taylor notes, looking within for freedom contrasts sharply with a "notion of freedom quite common in the ancient world" that "saw it as consisting in the status of the citizen."[58] Politics makes it possible for us to achieve moral freedom and is therefore indispensable, but we as free beings transcend nature and the city. In that sense, "Kant's notion of freedom is recognizably that of a modern" since it is "concerned with self-determination."[59] Kant is especially concerned with self-determination because of the threat of natural determination. As Berkowitz explains, "inner or true freedom…is achieved when and only when one's actions can be seen as governed by a necessity beyond that of natural necessity."[60] Rising above nature to follow the dictates of reason requires a conscious act of the will. Although Kant's thought may contain the seeds for a much more radical freedom, Berkowitz is correct to emphasize that for Kant "it is only in acting out of respect for the moral law that one is free in the full sense."[61] We are for Kant both free from the constraint of nature and free when we formulate and obey the moral law. Being ends ourselves, we cannot be subsumed by the city as a mere means.

For Kant, moral obligation proceeds from our own independent encounter with the moral law and cannot be imposed from without by nature, by others, or by any other

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[57] Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, 325.

[58] Ibid., 318.

[59] Ibid., 325.

[60] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 114.

[61] Ibid., 118.

independent authority. We are therefore uniquely autonomous in our capacity for reason.[62] This might seem to resemble the social and political isolation that we find in Hobbes's and Locke's political teachings, but Kant instead argues for autonomy understood as substantive self-rule. As Ellis explains, Kant's understanding of autonomy "should not be confused with individualist autarky, libertarian minimalism, Jeffersonian localism, or any other view that celebrates individuals apart from their social and political relations."[63] In keeping with his thoughts on the material basis for the full exercise of freedom, Kant does not have in view an autonomy that requires or even allows for social isolation. We achieve substantive self-rule only with the help of others. As we will see, Kant teaches a freedom that is a freedom from constraint, but Kantian autonomy refers to freedom in constraint.[64] In contrast to Hobbes, for whom human beings are most free in the state of nature, Taylor notes that Kant's notion of freedom "requires that I understand myself as a human among other humans."[65] Kant thinks freedom must encompass a recognition of independence and dependence, which makes him difficult to plot on the contemporary liberal-communitarian spectrum.

For Kant, human beings possess contradictory inclinations, which Kant captures with the term "unsocial sociability."[66] The human being is "meant for society" and

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[62] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:436.

[63] Ellis, *Kant's Politics*, 189. For example, Kant argues in the *Rechtslehre* for a representative government chosen by what he calls "active citizens." Ellis finds that across his political writings Kant couples his republicanism with a concern for cultivating an active public sphere. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:315.

[64] Donath, "Liberal Art," 9.

[65] Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, 326.

[66] Kant, "Idea for a Universal History," 8:20.

"strongly feels the need to *reveal* himself to others," but another trait, unsociability, prevents him from becoming merely a part of the political whole.[67] The individual does not disappear into the political community as he might in Rousseau, but he cannot exist independently of the political community as he might in Hobbes. Hobbes presents a useful contrast in this regard, since, as Taylor notes, the "Hobbesian subject does not need other men to be free."[68] Since moral freedom can be practiced only in community with others, Kant argues that we have a moral obligation to associate politically.[69]

Although Aristotle uses different vocabulary, he grapples with similar problems. Whereas Kant emphasizes the importance of the free will, Aristotle makes choice an essential feature of moral action. Melzer argues that choice is for Aristotle an event while the free will is a faculty for Kant,[70] but both concepts, it seems, reveal a concern with the necessary role of human agency in moral action. Choice is for Aristotle "a deliberative longing for things that are up to us." A decision follows rational deliberation.[71] Aristotle is careful to distinguish natural virtue or natural inclination from virtue proper, precisely because he sees the cultivation of virtue as something that is up to us.

The question of freedom is related to the question of whether moral abilities are equally distributed. If moral actions depend in part on fortune, it would seem that we cannot hold people who do not possess that fortune responsible for not living virtuously.

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[67] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:471. The emphasis is Kant's.

[68] Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, 326.

[69] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:312; Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, 327.

[70] *In Search of Humanity*, 438.

[71] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a10-12.

For example, on Aristotle's presentation, it would seem that magnificence and by implication magnanimity, insofar as it contains all of the virtues, presuppose a certain degree of external prosperity that most do not possess. As Galston notes, Aristotle's inclusion of prudence in moral reasoning raises a further complication. He writes, "[I]f moral virtue depends for the performance of specific acts upon prudence, and if prudence is related to intelligence that is unequally distributed by nature, then the core of moral virtue must be distinguished from moral acts."[72] Both fortune and nature seem to circumscribe choice. Galston argues that this problem leaves us with two alternatives: "the close connection between morality and the sphere of the voluntary may be severed, or the sphere of morality must be redefined to include only that which is in the power of every man as man."[73] Galson suggests that Aristotle takes the former course, while Kant takes the latter. Indeed, Kant says that the "capacity…to overcome all opposing sensible impulses can and must be simply *presupposed* in man on account of his freedom."[74] But from what we have seen a case can be made that both thinkers allow tensions to remain. Kant does not completely sever the connection between fortune and virtue, and Aristotle attempts to hold together nature and choice.

Kant sees in habit another threat to moral responsibility, leading him to cast virtue in terms of free will. Melzer contrasts the Aristotelian notion of character with the Kantian free will. He explains, "Aristotle conceives morality as a form of *character*. The moral person is the person of 'good character' and not 'good will.' And character is

[72] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 165.

[73] Ibid., 164.

[74] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:397.

something rooted in habit." Whereas Kant speaks of the free will as the seat of morality, Aristotle focuses on character as where morality truly lies. The truly moral person is one who has been formed into the sort of person who is disposed to act virtuously. Melzer explains that a "disposition in this sense is not a desire, but rather a stance or posture toward desire—an attitude."[75] Acting courageously has become second nature for the person who possesses the virtue of courage. Melzer points out that "what comes to mind when we say 'character' is something very opposite of freedom."[76] And yet, Aristotle insists that virtue is a "state of character concerned with choice."[77] Setting character opposite freedom risks obscuring Aristotle and Kant's shared concern with preserving moral responsibility. Character does not completely replace freedom for Aristotle.

Nevertheless, Kant appears to set himself against classical virtue ethics when he criticizes those who construe virtue as a form of habit. For him, one must consciously "determine oneself to act through the thought of the law" in order to act virtuously. Only once this qualification has been added may virtue be defined as an "aptitude for free actions in conformity with law." A moral action cannot have become so second nature that it is not free. In the same passage Kant says that "this aptitude is not a property of choice but of the *will*, which is a faculty of desire that, in adopting a rule, also gives it as a universal law."[78] Kant builds the capacity for moral reasoning into his definition of the faculty of the will. It is designed to do more than Aristotle's choice, which seems to merely refer to a free, rational decision. That is to say, Kant includes the whole of moral

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[75] Radasanu, *In Search of Humanity*, 438.

[76] Ibid., 436. The emphasis is Melzer's.

[77] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106b36; Korsgaard, *The Constitution of Agency*, 188.

[78] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:407.

constraint in the faculty of the will. While Kant uses language like aptitude and desire, which seems reminiscent of Aristotle, he is especially concerned that freedom be preserved as a necessary precondition for moral action. He formulates a theory of morality that is designed to test individual acts for their moral purity, while Aristotle focuses on the underlying disposition that primes human beings for performing virtuous deeds. Kant engages in a kind of a thought experiment or what Berkowitz describes as a "purely philosophical inquiry of virtue" while Aristotle seems more concerned in his investigation with how we actually become good.[79] Both recognize that there are certain preconditions that make virtue more likely, but Aristotle is more inclined to see these goods as moral.[80]

In part, Kant's modified understanding of character follows from his deeper skepticism regarding human nature. Whereas Aristotle's virtuous person takes pleasure in the practice of virtue, Kant understands virtue to involve an "inner struggle."[81] Staying true to virtue's etymological root in *virtus*, which can mean strength or courage, he also construes virtue as a "moral strength of the will" we must work to acquire. Only when equipped with the strength of virtue can we overcome the "brood of dispositions opposing the law," which are the "monsters" we have to fight.

On the other hand, the possession of virtue implies self-mastery and something akin to *eudaimonia*. As if calling his reader to action, Kant says that moral strength is "the only true honor that man can win in war," and only with it can man be "'free,'

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[79] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 120.

[80] Ibid., 116.

[81] Kant, *Observations*, 27:13.

'healthy,' 'rich,' 'a king,' and so forth and can suffer no loss by chance or fate, since he is in possession of himself and the virtuous man cannot lose his virtue."[82] The virtuous human being has heroically overcome the flaws in his nature. Our most significant victory is internal and cannot be taken away from us. Kant thus moralizes the aristocratic ideal and its rewards. Using vocabulary that harkens back to the classic idea of the noble and thus appealing to the noble passions of his students, Kant encourages them in the "vigorous, spirited, and valiant practice of virtue," which also goes by the name of "moral *ascetics*."[83] Kant understands virtue in terms of conflict because he does not think a "rational creature could ever reach the stage of thoroughly *liking* to fulfill all moral laws." Since we can "never be altogether free from desires and inclinations," moral action will always require a conscious act of the will.[84] At the same time, though, Kant suggests that virtue requires a commitment of the passions, which in turn implies that virtue requires a certain sort of preliminary education of the passions.

Kant and Aristotle may have different understandings of what human beings can achieve.[85] For example, as Galston explains, Kant "denies that Aristotle's moderate man can exist."[86] He does not think human beings can arrive at a state that is simply pleasant and no longer requires struggle. Aristotle, by contrast, presents the virtuous person as one who no longer struggles against contrary desires. What Kant describes as virtue is for

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[82] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:405.

[83] Ibid., 6:484 The emphasis is Kant's.

[84] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:84 The emphasis is Kant's; Sullivan, "The Kantian Critique," 32.

[85] Sullivan, "The Kantian Critique," 37.

[86] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 180; Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:84.

Aristotle only self-restraint, that is, the moral resolve to overcome bad or excessive desires. As Sullivan says, "Kant's best man is Aristotle's second best man, because Aristotle affirms what Kant denies, that moral consciousness and appetition can achieve a state of rational harmony in this life."[87] Kant rejects the possibility that we could ever achieve such a harmony.[88]

The theoretical difference follows from Aristotle and Kant's differing conceptions of our relationship to nature. As we have seen, Aristotle presents morality as not only noble but also good for us.[89] Acting virtuously can, in general, be counted on to further our wellbeing. The morally virtuous person takes pleasure in virtuous deeds, which he performs for their own sakes and for his sake. Aristotle does not present these distinct motivations as mutually exclusive. As Sullivan points out, Aristotle does not sharply distinguish, as Kant does, between moral motivation and "enlightened self-interest" or "self-love."[90]

The temptation is to view Aristotle and Kant as neatly opposed to one another on opposite sides of a simple schematic when in fact each resists simple categorization. Kant recognizes in the ancient Greek schools different attempts to hold together virtue and happiness as elements of the highest good, and he judges both the Stoic and Epicurean attempts unsuccessful, although he thinks the former were on the right track. He accuses the ancient Greeks of trying to reconcile two "extremely heterogeneous concepts," which accorded with the "dialectical spirit of their times." He explains that

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[87] Sullivan, "The Kantian Critique," 51.

[88] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:157.

[89] Recall, for example, this passage from Book IX. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1168b–1169a.

[90] Sullivan, "The Kantian Critique," 28–29.

this spirit "sometimes misleads subtle minds even now, to suppress essential and irreconcilable differences in principle by trying to change them into disputes about words and so to devise a specious unity of concept under merely different names."[91] Kant, it would seem, aims to tease out this dialectical tension.

Kant differs from the Stoics, who at least emphasized duty and virtue, in multiple respects. For instance, he says that he follows Christian ethics in thinking that virtue, at least as the ancients described it, is not attainable in this life.[92] He also does not think that the practice of virtue reliably leads to happiness. Kant says the German lexicon is right to distinguish between the good, "*das Gute,*" and well-being, "*das Wohl*."[93] He associates well-being with bodily satisfaction and the good with reason and the will.[94] As we have seen, he separates duty, which proceeds from our noumenal nature, from happiness, which he sees as a part of our phenomenal nature.

But we have also seen that Kant does not necessarily think virtue and happiness (as a result rather than a motivation) are mutually exclusively. Virtue could in some instances bring about wellbeing. What Kant stresses is that "the moral law of itself does not *promise* any happiness."[95] This is so in part because the demands of happiness change according to circumstances and according to the person. Happiness can furnish "*general* rules but never *universal* rules, that is, it can give rules that on the average are most often correct but not rules that must hold always and necessarily." In other words, morality

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[91] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:111.

[92] Ibid., 5:127, 5:127n; See also, ibid., 5:129.

[93] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:59.

[94] Ibid., 5:60.

[95] Ibid., 5:128. The emphasis is Kant's.

could in general promote our wellbeing, but without the necessity we expect of moral laws, which must "hold for everyone having reason and will."[96] We can say with confidence that virtue constitutes "worthiness to be happy" but not, with the Stoics, that virtue inexorably leads to happiness.[97] Still, Kant seems to allow for more of a correspondence between virtue and happiness than we might expect. Only with respect to motivation does he, as Simpson claims, associate "the beneficial and satisfying with the low and selfish."[98]

Moreover, in addition to the morally good, Kant holds out the possibility of a highest good which encompasses both morality and happiness.[99] As Galston explains, "The desire for happiness, excluded from permissible moral motivation, is restored as a legitimate moral hope."[100] Although Kant identifies the "supreme good" with virtue, he admits that to achieve the "complete good…happiness also is required."[101] By happiness Kant does not mean internal self-satisfaction. Indeed, he criticizes the Stoics for having too narrow a conception of happiness and therefore of having too high a hope for what we can achieve in this life. As a result, the Stoics did not do justice to the full range of human longing.[102]

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[96] Ibid., 5:36.

[97] Ibid., 5:110.

[98] Simpson, "Autonomous Morality and the Idea of the Noble," 369.

[99] Nelson, "Prudence in Kant," 319; Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:93.

[100] *Kant and Political Philosophy*, 216.

[101] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:110.

[102] Ibid., 5:127.

Christianity, Kant thought, improved on the Stoic teaching insofar as it relocated the object of our longings beyond this life. Only there might we find a necessary correspondence between virtue and happiness. As Devin Stauffer explains, Kant recognizes that we long "to see moral worth coincide with or be rewarded by happiness" and even "goes so far as to defend the postulation of the existence of God and a future life in order to respond to our hope for happiness."[103] In some places Kant suggests that morality presupposes the existence of God. For instance, in Herder's notes we find an indication that religion provides the only "*truly* binding ground of motivation."[104] In any case, religion helps us make sense of our hope for a correspondence between virtue and happiness. It may be that the different between Aristotle and Kant on this point follows from what they think is achievable in the here and now. Aristotle thinks virtue can be counted on to contribute to our well-being in this life, while Kant thinks that, in at least some cases, we must resign ourselves to hoping that virtue will be rewarded in a life to come.

Aristotle and Kant differ significantly on what they consider the human being's highest good, but each casts doubt on whether that good can be completely attained. Aristotle holds out the life devoted to contemplation as the highest good, while Kant thinks the moral life is best. Both Aristotle's contemplation and Kant's virtue, however, point beyond our embodied existence. For Aristotle, even the philosopher is not pure *nous* and is limited in his ability to live a life of contemplation by the demands of bodily existence. As Galston notes, "Aristotle explicitly distinguishes 'contemplation' from

[103] Stauffer, *Plato's Introduction*, 14; Cf. Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 183; Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:124, 128-9.

[104] Kant, *Observations*, 27:19.

‘philosophy’; contemplation is not the yearning or quest for wisdom but activity in accordance with wisdom; it presupposes that the quest can come to an end.”[105] If complete happiness for Aristotle requires a life devoted to contemplation, it seems out of reach for human beings insofar as they remain embodied creatures. Kant, by contrast, has no such corresponding further highest good beyond moral life, since contemplation of that sort would require a grasp of the noumenal world that he thinks lies beyond our abilities.[106] Our hopes in the hereafter are for Kant not objects of reason. As we saw before, hoped-for happiness is an object of the imagination, and its content cannot be found in nature. If it were a natural desire, it could be satisfied by something in nature.

Aristotle and Kant also differ significantly in their politics. In the *Metaphysics of Morals,* Kant argues that liberal institutions that allow democratic representation are grounded in right. Because of this, his political writings are often viewed as derivative, following in the footsteps of Hobbes and Locke. Ronald Beiner, for instance, describes how Kant’s political philosophy has been viewed as surprisingly “pedestrian” in comparison to the novelty of his critical philosophy. Schopenhauer “observed of the *Rechtslehre*: ‘It is as if it were not the work of this great man, but the product of an ordinary common man.’”[107] Taylor remarks that his political theory is “disappointingly familiar” and “does not take us very far beyond utilitarianism.”[108] It is true that Kant arrives at political principles that are in effect similar to those of his predecessors.

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[105] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 137–38.

[106] Christine M. Korsgaard, “Aristotle and Kant on the Source of Value,” *Ethics* 96, no. 3 (1986): 503.

[107] Beiner, “Review of *Essays on Kant’s Political Philosophy* by Howard Loyd Williams,” 605.

[108] Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 372.

However, he differs from his predecessors insofar as he attempts to supply those principles with a moral basis. Galston explains:

> He is in an important sense the completer of liberalism. He provides a philosophic ground for, and codifies, the doctrine of the rights of man—the inviolable sphere of freedom and "privacy," secured and guaranteed through peace. He detaches these rights from their original basis in passion and self-interested calculation and furnishes them with a kind of sacred absoluteness and moral dignity.[109]

Instead of arguing that we enter political unions out of fear or self-interest, Kant argues that we are obliged by duty to associate politically.

Since internal freedom depends to a large extent on freely choosing to live morally, Kant distinguishes sharply between internal and external freedom and confines politics to the latter. To put it another way, because morality depends so much on having the right motivations, it cannot be externally coerced. Virtue lies beyond the scope of politics.[110] Furthermore, since what constitutes human happiness cannot be known with any certainty, politics should be ordered not towards happiness but towards freedom, understood as the power of choice. As Galston says, "Kant offers the model argument of the liberal state based on the priority of freedom over the good."[111] By limiting the freedom of individuals so that their actions do not interfere with the freedoms of others, external freedom sets the outer boundaries within which internal freedom is possible.[112] Politics therefore pursues the limited moral goal of ensuring that rational agents are

[109] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 26; See, for example, Immanuel Kant, "On the Common Saying: This May Be True in Theory, but It Does Not Hold in Practice, Parts 2 and 3," in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, trans. David L. Colclasure (Yale University Press, 2006), 8:289, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1npwr1.12.

[110] Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, 327.

[111] William Galston, "Defending Liberalism," *The American Political Science Review* 76, no. 3 (1982): 622, doi:10.2307/1963735.

[112] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:237.

treated as ends rather than as means. Although motivations cannot be externally supplied, the state can legitimately curtail our harmful actions. External freedom prepares the way for us to be self-legislators, morally and politically.

Although he does not think that politics should concern it itself with the virtue of citizens,[113] Kant does say that political institutions should be judged by their conduciveness to inner freedom.[114] Only in civil society can true moral freedom be achieved.[115] We must keep in mind, however, that Kant means virtue in a narrow sense, and as Berkowitz argues, even Kant's liberal state "presupposes qualities of mind and character in the individuals who live under and maintain it."[116] This is underdeveloped in Kant's thought but not altogether neglected.[117] As Galston points out, despite Kant's protestations against paternalism, a version of the tutelary state creeps back into Kant's politics insofar as virtue is for Kant something that can and should be taught.[118] Moreover, as we have seen, Kant recognizes the importance of habituation.[119]

What Kant allows only begrudgingly, as if through the back door, Aristotle embraces at the outset. Aristotle sees a much closer correspondence between our actions and the sort of people we become. As is well known, he is unafraid of allowing habit a prominent role in the formation of character. The regime, therefore, should care about the

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[113] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 108.

[114] Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, 331; See, for example, Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:237.

[115] Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, 329.

[116] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 125.

[117] Ibid., 128.

[118] Galston, "Defending Liberalism," 623; See, for example, Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:477.

[119] Strauss and Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy*, 617.

cultivation of virtue in its citizens. As we have seen, the city may come together for mere life, but it exists for the sake of living well, which is to say, virtuously. When the latter end should be sacrificed for the former end of self-preservation is not a problem that Aristotle attempts to solve, since it would require a prudential judgment in a particular circumstance. But this allows Aristotle to formulate a moral and political theory that fits ordinary circumstances, whereas Kant seems to take his bearings from the extreme circumstance, where virtue appears inconsistent with our wellbeing.[120]

Aristotle's and Kant's Difference with Respect to Method

Now that we have explored some of the theoretical differences between Aristotle and Kant, we turn to consider the extent to which these can be explained by a difference in method. Both seek to refine the moral judgments found in ordinary opinion.[121] As Stauffer explains, Kant claims that he alone "does full justice to the demands implicit in our ordinary understanding of morality."[122] As we have seen, the moral law is accessible to every rational person as such. But Kant admits that there are discrepancies in ordinary opinion, and he thinks philosophy has a role to play in purifying our moral principles.[123] But the logic of this process is relatively simple. Galston explains:

> [F]rom the simple experience of resisting self-aggrandizing impulses that are unjust to others or of resisting the lure of pleasure that demeans oneself without

[120] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "On the Possibility of a Philosophical Ethics," in Beiner and Booth, *Kant and Political Philosophy*, 366.

[121] Melzer explains that both "Kant and Aristotle begin by appealing to our moral intuitions in order to clarify what we mean by morality or what morality is." Radasanu, *In Search of Humanity*, 436.

[122] Stauffer, *Plato's Introduction*, 12.

[123] Ibid., 13.

> harming another, from the call of conscience and the mysterious inner sense of absolute obligation, the whole of morality can be developed.[124]

Not only is philosophy not required to make this deduction, but as Hans-Georg Gadamer explains, the "*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* leaves no doubt that moral philosophy can never displace 'common moral rational knowledge.'"[125] Along those lines, we have seen in the *Metaphysics of Morals* where Kant remarks that "all doctrine of virtue…becomes ridiculous if it is decked out in the scraps of metaphysics." As a result, he is content to see popular teachers rely on moral feeling rather than sophisticated philosophy.[126] After all, being morally good is not necessarily the same as being rational.[127] The reason involved in philosophy is not at cross-purposes with common sense. Gadamer persuasively argues that Kant's "foundation of morality only seeks to raise the common metaphysics of everyman to greater clarity and thereby to secure for it a greater moral steadfastness."[128] Kant sees himself as a refiner of common moral perceptions.

In some sense, this sounds similar to Aristotle's approach. As Stauffer explains, the "Socratic turn" we associate with Plato and Aristotle "is defined precisely by its refusal to begin by seeking some vantage point beyond the convictions and opinions of ordinary political life."[129] Aristotle does not derive each of the moral virtues from its

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[124] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 187.

[125] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "On the Possibility of a Philosophical Ethics," in Beiner and Booth, *Kant and Political Philosophy*, 362.

[126] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:376.

[127] Kant, *Observations*, 20:24.

[128] Beiner and Booth, *Kant and Political Philosophy*, 366.

[129] Stauffer, *Plato's Introduction*, 10.

conduciveness to happiness—although, to be sure, he suggests that they are—but instead treats common opinion as an authority and starting point for philosophical clarification.[130] Aristotle arrives at the virtues not by a natural scientific deduction but by a kind of phenomenological analysis and refinement of common opinion.[131] Certainly, Aristotle goes beyond common opinion. For example, he names previously unnamed deficiencies, excesses, and means, implying that common opinion errs with respect to fear, pleasure, and ambition.[132] Aristotle may start from common opinion, but only those with prudence can reliably identify the virtuous deed. The education in virtue that Aristotle offers presupposes experience and habituation in virtue wherein we learn to prudentially aim at the noble. He therefore does not expect universal acceptance.[133]

Although Kant thinks his moral theory is in keeping with common opinion, he does not use the same phenomenological method that starts with common opinion. Instead, he traces the moral law back to its roots in human reason and free will and begins there. He recognizes that a separate inquiry is required to explore the empirical or practical dimensions of morality and politics, but what we often find in Kant's writings is what he considers a strictly philosophical investigation that reveals what can be said about morality and politics using only a priori reason.[134] In seeking an "indubitable

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[130] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1173a1; Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 159.

[131] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 136.

[132] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1107b.

[133] Moreover, while prudence serves moral virtue and aims at the noble in the first part of the *Ethics*, it later appears among the intellectual virtues, where we find that it presupposes knowledge of universals and particulars. That suggests that true prudence would come from a coupling of habituation with a kind philosophical education. Cf. ibid., 1141b15.

[134] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 124.

beginning point" from which to derive morality, as Melzer says, Kant follows in the "anti-dialectical footsteps of Descartes."[135] Kant professes respect for common reason, but the substance of his theory follows from what Melzer calls his "hyper-rationalism."[136] Whereas Aristotle is content to present moral and political phenomena in a dialectical fashion that preserves their complexity, Kant attempts to refine these phenomena into clear and distinct ideas. Reaching a similar conclusion, Galston writes that Kant "provides a unifying ground and principle of virtue that claims to render it precise and rigorous, to reveal the required moral action in each case without complexity or ambiguity."[137] Aristotle, on the other hand, reminds us that we should not expect too much precision in political science.

Critics and defenders of Kant alike have noted a lack of foundation in his moral and political theory. Simpson says that in Kant we find only "the commanding of an 'ought' that has no ground or source other than one's own mysterious will." He alleges that Kantian morality is "essentially volitional, not cognitive."[138] We create morality for ourselves. Although Simpson acknowledges that Kant sought to restore something of the noble that had been lost in early moderns such as Hobbes, in Kant's picture "the noble is reduced to a sort of universalizing that differs from Hobbesian peace only because it is conceived as an unfounded and awesome command."[139] Hassner, too, notes Kant's

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[135] Radasanu, *In Search of Humanity*, 437.

[136] Ibid., 440.

[137] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 186.

[138] Simpson, "Autonomous Morality and the Idea of the Noble," 365.

[139] Ibid., 367.

failure to demonstrate the "moral bases of the rights of man."[140] On their views, Kant responds to Hobbes's grounding of morality and politics in self-interest by making morality and politics groundless.

It may be true that Kant failed to find a grounding for morality, but it was not for lack of effort. Whatever we may make of it, Kant did write a book on the "foundations of morality." It is true that the objects of reason, as part of the noumenal realm, must in some sense remain mysterious, but he does indicate that reason gives us access to indubitable moral principles, such as the inviolable dignity of the human person. Moreover, Kant thinks our reason accesses moral principles on our own without recourse to outside authority and thus permits us freely to impose obligations on ourselves. Taylor argues compellingly that this anticipates more radical versions of human freedom, but in Kant's case freedom seems still tethered to human reason, a universal faculty with a universally consistent logic. In any case, Kant's attempt to ground morality on a sure foundation leads him to limit reason's reach, insulating it from the contamination of experience. Aristotle, by contrast, is less concerned with the foundations of morality, and this allows him to stay true to the full range and complexity of human experience, even as he refines common opinion through philosophical analysis.

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[140] Strauss and Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy*, 619.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Aristotle and Kant's Agreement on the Noble and the Good

Kant and Aristotle differ in their moral and political conclusions and in the methods they use to arrive at those conclusions. The more striking revelations of this study, however, are their points of overlap. Despite Kant's indications to the contrary, Aristotle finds motivation a significant aspect of virtuous action, placing him closer to Kant than is sometimes realized. He also agrees with Kant that politics should serve moral ends. Although some have alleged that Kant opposes or neglects the passions, he in fact proposes a rational engagement with the passions, not unlike what we find in Aristotle. Finally, Kant allows more room for prudence than his Aristotelian critics sometimes allege.

We have explored the basis of Kant's critique of Aristotle. The object of Aristotle's inquiry is "both the human good and happiness."[1] Aristotle posits that the good in the authoritative sense and therefore human happiness is an "activity of the soul in accord with virtue."[2] Based on Book One of the *Ethics* it might seem that there is a necessary connection between virtue and happiness and that the former could be derived from the latter. Indeed, as Galston puts it, "the question of virtue emerges from the desire for happiness."[3] That is not, strictly speaking, what we find in Aristotle's description of

[1] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102a15.

[2] Ibid., 1098a16-17.

[3] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 139.

the moral virtues. In describing the particular virtues Aristotle begins not with nature or happiness but with ordinary opinion.[4] Nevertheless, in various places Aristotle indicates that virtue is consistent with a refined understanding of self-love, even though he also insists that virtuous action must be performed for its own sake, or in Aristotle's shorthand, "for the sake of the noble."[5] This motivation is especially significant in the case of courage, where, at least in the extreme circumstance, it is difficult to see how it is consistent with one's personal good. Still, courage involves an assessment of a complex set of goods, including, for example the common good. Aristotle makes prudence a defining aspect of moral virtue, and he says that we would consider prudent "that which observes the good condition for each sort of thing."[6] And yet, Aristotle presents the noble as one of the good things virtuous people wish to have.[7] Prudence therefore aims at the noble and puts the human being into a good condition. At the same time, it restrains us from recklessly and unnecessarily endangering our lives out of a desire to perform noble deeds, since reckless deeds, performed without regard for the achievement of a good, are not truly noble.

Kant agrees with Aristotle that virtue must be performed for its own sake, but Kant insists on excluding all self-interest from his account of moral action, which he indicates with his requirement that virtue be performed "from duty."[8] This, Aristotle is unwilling to do. He does admit in the case of courage that "there seems to be nothing else

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[4] Stauffer, *Plato's Introduction*, 11.

[5] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1115b12, 1116b3, 1117b9, 1117b15, 1119b16, 1120a24, 1122b6.

[6] Ibid., 1141a26.

[7] Ibid., 1136b22, 1168b30ff.

[8] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:409; Cf. Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:390, 426.

for the dead" and that the "activity is not pleasant in the case of *all* the virtues."[9] But more often than not, he seems engaged in the task of elevating our understanding of what is good. To sacrifice bodily goods or material possessions is also to choose the noble, which is the greater good. The noble person would "choose to feel pleasure intensely for a short time over feeling it mildly for a long one."[10] Although Aristotle rejects the pursuit of pleasure as the many understand it,[11] in this context he associates the choosing of pleasure with nobility. The great-souled man is "unsparing of his life, since he does not think life at all costs is worth living."[12] In both cases, the virtuous person is accounting for his good in one sense while sacrificing it in another.

In Kant's thought we find the tension between virtue and happiness resolved in favor of right motivation. He did this in response to the early contractarians who resolved the tension in the other direction, making self-interest the sole basis of virtually all human action. For Kant, virtue, as understood by pure reason, must be its own end and serve as its own reward.[13] Nevertheless, Kant does not exclude the possibility that virtue could bring practical benefits. For example, as we have seen, there is a kind of satisfaction that comes from acting in line with what is highest in us, and Kant is not ultimately indifferent towards political outcomes.

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[9] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1115a27, 1117b16.

[10] Ibid., 1169a22, 29.

[11] Ibid., 1095b20.

[12] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis, US: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2014), 1124b9, http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10843866.

[13] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:396.

Aristotle and Kant also agree that politics should serve moral ends. Aristotle more obviously thinks the regime should play a role in cultivating virtue in its citizenry. He teaches that rhetoric should be oriented towards the good, the noble, and the just. Kant says explicitly that politics cannot make us moral, but he ultimately suggests that it can prepare us to respect the moral law. In any case, politics provides the external freedom that is necessary for us to achieve inner freedom. Political association is by implication a duty. Kant is criticized for prioritizing the right over the good, but he is led to this move by his view that inner freedom depends on external freedom. As Taylor notes, Kant's procedural account of justice follows from a "positive doctrine of man" and the human good.[14] It is to Kant's credit, Taylor says, that he does not participate in the contemporary "delusion" that a procedural ethic does not rest on a "substantive vision of the good."[15] Aristotle and Kant disagree on the content of that good, but they each confront it and orient their politics by it. They see that philosophy and politics have roles to play in cultivating moral citizens.

In part, the cultivation of moral citizens requires a rational engagement with passions, pleasures, and desires. Although they differ in their understandings of reason, they are both rationalists in an important sense. They both think we can reflect on our actions and give reasons for them. As Korsgaard explains, "reason gives us the capacity to stand back, form a view of [a] course of action as a whole, and make a judgment about its goodness."[16] As rational beings we can use reason to sort through our passions and

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[14] Charles Taylor, "The Motivation behind a Procedural Ethics," in Beiner and Booth, *Kant and Political Philosophy*, 349.

[15] Ibid., 358.

[16] Korsgaard, *The Constitution of Agency*, 192.

desires. We are not slaves to our passions, desires, or instincts. Kant and Aristotle agree that we should not simply accept received customs or even our natural inclinations as the final word on morality. Rather, we must test them with reason. We have seen that both think acting virtuously requires consciously and therefore rationally choosing to act virtuously.

While Kant and Aristotle do ultimately disagree about the role of natural inclinations in morality, Kant is not as unyielding as he is sometimes made out to be. As Korsgaard explains, his position is only that the "presence or absence of a natural inclination makes no difference to the moral value of the action."[17] It is only when a natural inclination becomes a motivation for an otherwise virtuous action that it becomes a problem, because it then contaminates duty with self-love and tempts us to act unreflectively as slaves of nature. Aristotle does not say inclinations should be adopted unreflectively, but he does seem to think we should take them as a guide for what we should do. Certainly, we should not attempt to separate them from our understanding of moral motivation.

We have also seen that Kant does not completely cleanse moral action of emotion. While he does not think moral action can be motivated by interest or pleasure,[18] he does argue that acting morally will cultivate in us an interest in the moral law such that we like it and are attracted to it. Although he is careful to distinguish this from moral motivation, Kant says that we can recognize the moral law as beautiful and as a source of

[17] Ibid., 181.

[18] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:398.

satisfaction.[19] And while Kant warns that virtue involves "sacrificing many of the joys in life," we have seen that he says that otherwise virtuous actions have "no inner worth" when they are performed without pleasure. Indeed, the person who does not love virtue "shirks as much as possible occasions for practicing virtue."[20] Pleasure is subjectively experienced and does not reliably reveal the moral law, but in a certain sense it is a necessary corollary of moral action.[21]

Aristotle also speaks negatively and positively of pleasure, depending on its context. As we saw, he initially dismisses the life devoted to pleasure but later admits that pleasure is produced by moral virtue and contemplation. Indeed, the moral virtues are especially concerned with pleasures and pains.[22] The suggestion is that we must rationally differentiate between good and bad pleasures based on the activity that produces them. As Sullivan explains, the moral rightness of an action is more important to Aristotle than whether it produces pleasure.[23] Still, Aristotle presents the virtuous person as choosing pleasure insofar as virtue is pleasant. Moreover, both Aristotle and Kant see that pleasure has a practical effect in determining whether we will in fact act virtuously.

Kant and Aristotle reach rather similar conclusions on how we should relate to desires and passions. For Kant, desires and passions, like pleasures, arise from our

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[19] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:160.

[20] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:484.

[21] Korsgaard, *The Constitution of Agency*, 203; Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:211-212.

[22] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 160.

[23] Sullivan, "The Kantian Critique," 33.

phenomenal nature and therefore are distinct from morality.[24] They all too often lead us astray since we are naturally tempted to think of them as authoritative. What makes us distinctive as a species is the freedom we have through reason to say no to our inclinations and act according to or against them as we see fit.[25] Nevertheless, passions and desires are not for Kant simply opposed to morality. For example, while Kant warns that the love of honor can be a delusion, he also describes it as a "semblance" of morality and as the "constant companion of virtue." In *Anthropology* he sees a correspondence at least in outcome between sympathy and the requirements of duty and goes so far as to call sympathy a "temporary substitute for reason."[26] Likewise, Aristotle distinguishes the passions from virtue and calls us to critically assess our "natural longings."[27]

The critical posture that they take with respect to desires and passions similarly affects their views of education. Aristotle is better known for recommending an education based on habituation, but as we have seen Kant is led to a surprisingly similar position. Habituation may fit more naturally into Aristotle's theory. Aristotle does not suppose that the virtuous course can been seen by just anyone. Rather, people must be brought up nobly for them to see it. Not only are rightly trained passions necessary for remaining composed in the face of mortal danger, but they are necessary for seeing the courageous action in a given set of circumstances. We are not equal in our ability to see the virtuous course. How we live affects our ability to reason correctly about moral matters. Galston

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[24] Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, 323.

[25] Korsgaard, *The Constitution of Agency*, 187.

[26] Ibid., 197; Kant, "Idea for a Universal History," 8:26; Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 7:253, 257.

[27] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1149b4.

argues that Aristotle and Kant significantly part ways on education. He writes, “Since Aristotle held that moral virtue is the perfection of our dual nature, the peculiarly human interpenetration of mind and body, he was able to concede that it must have a bodily (sub-rational and involuntary) component, habit, which has to be formed by means other than rational argument.”[28] My findings, however, reveal their difference in this regard to be one of emphasis and terminology. For Aristotle morality still requires reason and choice,[29] and Kant still sees habituation as an important precondition for morality.

Although Aristotle, too, is concerned with moral responsibility and insists that virtue is accompanied by an exercise of prudential judgment, Kant’s concern that human freedom could be overcome by habit leads him to distinguish habit from virtue.[30] Kant concludes that “moral maxims…cannot be based on habit.”[31] This suggests that Kant thinks seeing the moral course can precede or be understood independently of doing the right thing. On the other hand, Kant does argue that actions can affect our dispositions, preparing the way for morality. For instance, in *Anthropology* Kant argues that pleasantries (that do not actually deceive), as “signs of benevolence and respect, though empty at first, gradually lead to real dispositions of this sort.”[32] Beneficent acts often produce genuine love for another human being.[33] Loving acts produce genuine love. Such

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[28] Galston, “Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy,” 243.

[29] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1107a. As we have seen, Aristotle does not reduce virtue to mere habit, since it is “marked by choice,” “defined by reason,” and arrived at through the exercise of prudential judgment.

[30] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:407.

[31] Ibid., 6:409.

[32] Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 7:152.

[33] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:402; Korsgaard, *The Constitution of Agency*, 199.

dispositions act as supports to morality by helping us treat human beings as ends rather than as means. In the *Metaphysics of Morals,* especially, we find a close connection between morality and what Berkowtiz calls "the qualities of mind and character" that it presupposes, such as "self-restraint, sober reflection, and the capacity to sympathetically enter into the outlook of another."[34] As Robert Louden argues, while Kant was more skeptical of emotion than Aristotle he nevertheless acknowledges that there are a "host of phenomenal emotions (the most important of which are joy, sympathy and love) which, while not the direct *Bestimmungsgrund* [determinant] of the will, must be present in a virtuous disposition."[35] Sullivan persuasively finds in Kant an interest in moral emotions, such as "feelings of humility, guilt, pain, remorse, and the feeling of self-satisfaction which follows on the consciousness of one's own virtue." Such emotions are close enough to morality that Kant says in the *Second Critique* that we have a "duty to establish and cultivate them."[36]

Kant thinks habit and example can help us work towards virtue.[37] As a consequence, he is not as egalitarian about morality as he might first appear. We saw before that a capacity for morality must be presupposed in all human beings, but Kant goes on to say that "capacity as *strength*" (that is, virtue) must be acquired. Kant argues that virtue is acquired in two ways: "by contemplating the dignity of the pure rational law

[34] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 117, 119.

[35] Louden, "Kant's Virtue Ethics," 487.

[36] Sullivan, "The Kantian Critique," 31n; Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:38.

[37] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 123.

in us…and by *practicing* virtue."[38] This latter step appears remarkably similar to what Aristotle recommends.

Kant does not say a great deal about how this habituation should take place. To some extent, this subject belongs to practical anthropology, an inquiry that Kant thinks necessary but does not systematically pursue.[39] Kant acknowledges but does not develop very thoroughly that there must be an empirical side to ethics that applies the universal principles of morality in particular contexts. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant writes that "a metaphysics of morals cannot dispense with principles of application, and we shall often have to take as our object the particular *nature* of human beings, which is cognized only by experience."[40] Kant excludes empirical observation from the philosophical derivation of moral principles but not from their application. Berkowtiz persuasively argues that Kant avoided practical anthropology not because he thought it unimportant but because he thought modesty required that he recognize the limits of theoretical reason.[41] For Kant, questions of application are better left to practitioners.

Hassner goes too far when he asserts that Kant replaces education with institutions.[42] It is true that Kant is sometimes Madison-like in his faith in institutions, but he does not neglect education entirely. The promise of liberal institutions tempts us to think they can be employed to the exclusion of education in virtue, but Kant does not see

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[38] The emphasis is Kant's. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:397.

[39] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 123.

[40] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:216-17. The emphasis is Kant's.

[41] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 115.

[42] Strauss and Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy*, 606.

these approaches as mutually exclusive. He may not attend as closely to virtue formation as Aristotle, but he does recognize that liberal institutions and even autonomy itself presuppose certain qualities of character and habits of mind that do not arise by a spontaneous act of the will.

Finally, we have seen that Kant is closer to Aristotle on the question of prudence than is sometimes thought. Both Aristotle and Kant have some sense that there are universal moral principles that we might call natural right. We have seen that Kant has a low view of nature, but he sometimes refers to the moral principles that proceed from the exercise of a priori reason as "natural right." We can judge the laws of a particular civil constitution against that standard.[43] That Kant articulates a universal standard of right has led some to accuse him of an inflexible "legalism."[44] Steven Smith says that "by emphasizing the inner side of action, the disposition to act, Kant is dangerously indifferent to objective moral accomplishment."[45] Steven Delue says that Kant's is "not a form of thought that determines, as in Aristotle, the best, most prudential way to proceed, given a particular commitment to a specific maxim."[46] These criticisms have a rich tradition dating back to Kant's contemporaries, and I do not pretend to have a decisive answer to them.

However, these critics neglect a more prudential side to Kant. As we have seen, Kant realizes that actual political regimes must be reformed through a gradual, stepwise

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[43] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:256.

[44] Strauss and Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy*, 607.

[45] Smith, "Goodness, Nobility & Virtue," 12.

[46] Delue, "Kant's Politics as an Expression of the Need for His Aesthetics," 411.

process, and that reform requires, as Berkowitz puts it, "both formal and empirical knowledge."[47] The formal imperatives apply everywhere and always and can be known through a priori reason, but their application must be guided by an understanding of the facts on the ground. It is true that Kant sometimes sounds cavalier in his demands for justice. On the other hand, Kant opposes revolution. As Galston explains, reform must be undertaken "in a manner compatible with the maintenance of the legal order of society that is the ground of all justice."[48] Justice should not be sought at the expense of justice. Nelson notes that Ronald Beiner accuses Kant of "a thoroughgoing renunciation of ancient practical philosophy," but what we have found is that he "retained significant elements of ancient moral thought" insofar as he allowed particular circumstances to affect the application of universal principles.[49]

It may be fair, however, to say that Aristotle places more emphasis on the moral significance of prudence, even if each application, by definition, cannot be spelled out. The exercise of prudence is a defining feature of moral virtue, and, given his higher view of nature, Aristotle does not approach *phronesis* as skeptically as Kant does *Klugheit*. They are different concepts in significant respects. Kant equivocates on whether prudence includes an end or is simply a means. They both suspect that prudence could be confused with cleverness, but Aristotle less ambiguously thinks it redeemable as a concept that encompasses both means and ends. When Kant does describe what Aristotle ultimately means by prudence, as in his discussion of provisional right, he does not often use

[47] Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*, 125.

[48] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 187–88.

[49] Eric Sean Nelson, "Moral and Political Prudence in Kant," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2004): 305, 319.

Klugheit. In any case, both recognize that the application of moral principles in particular circumstances is not something philosophy is especially equipped to do. They both say that for this step experience is required.

Whereas Kant's modesty seems to keep him from dealing with particulars, Aristotle's modesty appears to prevent him from insisting on the universal application of general principles.[50] As Taylor explains, "Aristotle thought that our moral understanding could never be fully explicit. It could not be stated in a set of rules, however long."[51] As we have seen, Aristotle holds in view both universals and particulars in his moral and political theory. Because both think particular circumstances should be factors in the application of moral principles, they both account for political necessity. Neither is ultimately otherworldly when it comes to political practice. However much Kant longs for perpetual peace and universal enlightenment, he confronts political reality when he recommends Madison-like institutions that protect rights by pitting people's interests against one another. Although he simultaneously advocates moral education, he is willing to cultivate and rely on enlightened self-interest to secure justice in the near term. Moreover, we have seen that Kant thinks preserving the existence of a commonwealth is an obligation of duty. While he does not frame it in terms of necessity, this does suggest that he recognizes the good of political order. Likewise, Aristotle considers the preservation of the regime a moral objective. As an end, it is ultimately subordinate to living well, but, as Galston explains, there may be extreme situations where preservation

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[50] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1109b20-26; Korsgaard, *The Constitution of Agency*, 193.

[51] Beiner and Booth, *Kant and Political Philosophy*, 350.

must take precedence.[52] Aristotle is more willing to admit that there is another principle at work in politics, even if he is hesitant to say when it must come into play, whereas Kant is concerned that it be traced back to a single rational principle with a consistent logic.

As we saw at the outset, this seems to be part of Kant's effort to break with the early moderns, who based morality and politics on self-interest and successfully, in Kant's view, reconceived nature in terms of mechanistic processes. Kant relocates the foundation of morality and politics from self-interested reason to pure a priori reason. Nevertheless, he does not break with the early moderns' prioritization of (external) freedom over the good, at least on the plane of politics. On important issues such as freedom, equality, the attainability of happiness, and the ends of politics Kant does not return to Aristotle in responding to Hobbes but rather incorporates significant aspects of the early moderns' understanding. His failure to return to Aristotle may be partly due to his refusal to return to Aristotle's methods. Perhaps Kant, like some contemporary interpreters of Aristotle, believed that Aristotle grounded his moral and political philosophy in a metaphysics that may no longer be tenable. Aristotle does indicate a harmony in nature between virtue and happiness, but his explanation of the virtues does not depend on that foundation. It could be that Aristotle's approach is more viable than Kant thought.

In any case, despite the substantial differences between Aristotle and Kant, they agree on the importance of the noble and the good. They both think motivations are a necessary component of moral action. At least generally speaking, they agree that politics

[52] Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History*, 149–50.

should serve moral ends. Moreover, they are both rationalists who nevertheless think that passions, desires, and pleasures still have a role to play in moral and political action. Finally, they realize that political practice must prudentially reconcile universal principles with what is possible in a given set of circumstances. Neither Aristotle nor Kant neatly fit into the categories into which they are often put. Instead of occupying positions entirely opposite one another, they are an indication to contemporary political theorists to take seriously the noble and the good.

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