

# ON THE RELATION OF MORAL WORTH TO THE KANTIAN GOOD WILL

Walter E. Schaller, Texas Tech University

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What is the relationship between two of the central concepts in Kant's moral philosophy--the good will and moral worth? That these two concepts are related is widely recognized; the nature of that connection is harder to specify, however. In seeking to explain this relationship, I shall consider the following questions: (1) Does a good will consist simply in acting from the motive of duty? Do people have a good will just because they fulfill their duties from the motive of duty? (2) Does acting from the motive of duty presuppose that one has a good will? (3) Does the fact that one has a good will entail that all of one's duty-fulfilling actions have moral worth (even if they are not [directly] motivated by duty)?

I shall argue that only persons with a good will are capable of acting from the motive of duty; nevertheless, it does not follow either that a good will consists in acting from duty or that if one has a good will, all of one's dutiful actions will be motivated by duty (and have moral worth).

## I. DOES A GOOD WILL CONSIST SIMPLY IN ACTING FROM THE MOTIVE OF DUTY?

According to what I shall call the Traditional View, a good will is defined in terms of the moral worth of actions. To have a good will is to act dutifully from the motive of duty. H.J. Paton articulates the Traditional View when he writes:

Under human conditions a good will is one which acts for the sake of duty, and only the actions in which such a will is manifested have moral worth.<sup>1</sup>

While the Traditional View is, I believe, also the dominant view, it is subject to the following objections. First of all, moral worth does not necessarily attach to all of one's actions or to none of them. Since individuals may fulfill some duties from the motive of duty and others from inclination, some of their actions may possess moral worth while others lack that quality. But having a good will is, according to Kant, an all-or-nothing matter: one's will is either good or evil; there is no middle ground or third possibility. This point is made most explicitly in *RELIGION WITHIN THE LIMITS OF REASON ALONE*, where Kant discusses the nature of the "disposition" [*Gesinnung*] and says that "[b]etween a good and an evil disposition . . . there is . . . no middle ground."<sup>2</sup> The following question therefore arises for the Traditional View: can a person have a good will if only some of her duty-fulfilling actions are motivated by duty? Or must it be the case that one's will is good only if one fulfills all of one's duties from the motive of duty?

I can see no grounds for saying that to have a good will only some of a person's duty-fulfilling actions must be

motivated by duty. Kant never suggests such an answer, and it only raises such questions as "How many?" and "Which ones?"--questions to which any answer must be arbitrary.

The other alternative--that all of a good-willed person's actions must be motivated by duty--is equally unsatisfactory, for it implies that a single act of wrongdoing, or even a single right action motivated by inclination and not duty, is inconsistent with the goodness of the will. But the implausibility of this rigorous conception of a good will need not detain us, for in the RELIGION Kant presents a more sophisticated (and agreeable) account of the good will. In that work, Kant says that the goodness of one's will depends upon one's supreme (or higher-order) maxim. To have a good will is to have adopted the moral law itself as one's supreme maxim, that is, to be unconditionally willing to do what is right--to require no nonmoral incentives for acting as duty requires. To have an evil will, on the other hand, is to be only conditionally willing to do what is right (because one has subordinated the moral law to a maxim of self-love.)<sup>3</sup>

The fact that one has adopted the moral law as one's supreme or higher-order maxim does not entail, however, that one will always act as the moral law requires or that one will always act dutifully from the motive of duty. Owing to frailty, a person with a good will may succumb to inclinations which cause her to adopt first-order maxims which are contrary-to-duty.<sup>4</sup> Kant also allows that a good will may be impure. Instead of being able to fulfill her duties (solely) from the motive of duty, a person may require the assistance of nonmoral (impure) motives (R 25). The goodness of one's will, in short, depends only upon one's higher-order (supreme) maxim and not upon either the legality (rightness) or morality (moral goodness) of one's first-order maxims. The Traditional View is therefore overly rigorous in its insistence that persons lack a good will unless they never (knowingly) act contrary to duty and/or their duty-fulfilling actions are always motivated by duty.

## **II. DOES ACTING FROM THE MOTIVE OF DUTY PRESUPPOSE THAT ONE HAS A GOOD WILL?**

The second question is whether only persons with a good will are capable of being motivated by duty (i.e., respect for the moral law). In this section I shall argue that although a good will does not consist in acting from duty, it is true that only actions performed by persons with a good will can have moral worth. It is tempting to argue for this thesis as follows: since persons without a good will do not respect the moral law (as is shown by the fact that they have not willed it as their supreme maxim), they cannot be motivated by that special feeling of respect--which is the motive of duty--to act as the moral law requires. But this argument is inconsistent with Kant's claim that everyone feels respect for the moral law: In [the evil person's] utmost depravity he can at most bring himself to the point where he no longer heeds [the moral law], but he cannot avoid hearing its voice.<sup>5</sup>

The possibility that everyone feels some respect for the moral law does not undermine the argument of this section that only persons with a good will are capable of being motivated by respect. For one thing, in the case of persons with an evil will, since the feeling of respect does not result from any (free) choice, it should not be the source of moral worth.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, an evil-willed person must still choose to do the right action. But this choice is not sufficient to justify conferring moral worth on the resulting action, for the evil person's willingness to do what is right is conditional. Even if a particular action is motivated by the feeling of respect, that does not imply that the agent chooses to do that action just because it is the right action. On the contrary, when the feeling of respect does motivate her to act according to duty, it is only because of the absence of any other (nonmoral) incentives (which could overpower this feeling).

My argument, in short, is that actions have moral worth for one fundamental reason: the agent is willing to do them--whether or not he always succeeds in acting on that intention--simply because they are morally required. And this is a requirement which persons with an evil will--whose commitment to morally right conduct is conditional--cannot fulfill.

### **III: DOES POSSESSING A GOOD WILL ENTAIL THAT ALL OF ONE'S DUTY-FULFILLING ACTIONS HAVE MORAL WORTH?**

In the first section of this paper I argued that the Traditional View is mistaken: the good will does not consist merely in acting from the motive of duty. In this section I shall turn to (and reject) an alternative view of this relation--let us call it the Alternative View--which holds that actions have moral worth just because they are performed by persons with a good will. Thus Kurt Baier, for example, maintains that "genuine moral worth of an action is due solely to the good will of the agent."<sup>7</sup> What confers moral worth on an action is the fact that the agent performing it has a good will.

The specific version of the Alternative View that I wish to consider is provided by Paul Benson in his article "Moral Worth."<sup>8</sup> On his view, "conditions of moral worth should focus on features of the will" rather than on the specific motive of the action.<sup>9</sup> Actions are morally good if and only if they satisfy three conditions: (1) the agent must have a good will; (2) the agent must understand that the action is morally required; and (3) that fact must "authoritatively govern" the decision to perform that action. If these three conditions are satisfied, then the moral motive (duty) need not be the direct or originating motive of the action; rather, nonmoral interests may motivate the action while duty serves as an indirect or limiting motive.<sup>10</sup>

There are at least two immediate problems with Benson's version of the Alternative View. First, on his account, actions need not be motivated by duty--either alone or jointly--in order to have moral worth. Indeed, Benson is willing to confer moral worth on actions motivated by self-interest and even by profit.<sup>11</sup> It is one thing, however, to argue, as have some of

Kant's critics,<sup>12</sup> that motives other than duty, such as sympathy, generosity, and benevolence, should be capable of conferring moral worth on actions, on the ground that they are moral virtues and ought to be included in any theory of moral goodness. It is quite another thing to maintain, as Benson does, that any direct motive is compatible with the moral goodness of the ensuing action, that the concept of moral worth does not exclude even the vices from being the direct motives of morally good actions. Benson's argument, in effect, drives a wedge between the moral worth of an action and its motive which goes far beyond anything ever suggested by Kant.

The second problem concerns the distinction Benson draws between direct (or originating) and indirect (or limiting) motives. On his view, all that is necessary for moral worth is that duty (a good will) be the indirect or limiting motive of the action.<sup>13</sup> While the distinction between direct and indirect motives has found support among other commentators,<sup>14</sup> it is nevertheless inconsistent with Kant's explicit requirement that the motive of duty must be the direct motive of actions having moral worth.<sup>15</sup>

Despite these objections to the Alternative View, we cannot put it to rest quite yet. I argued in Section I that a person could have a good will even though she sometimes acted contrary to duty. A good will can be a frail will. But the Alternative View holds otherwise. According to Benson, a good will cannot be frail; it must be indomitable.<sup>16</sup> So we must ask two questions: first, is it true that a good will must be indomitable, and second, does the moral worth of actions require an indomitably good will? To answer these questions we must first understand why Kant limits moral worth to actions motivated by duty. At several places in the *GROUNDWORK* Kant explains that when right actions are not motivated by duty, their conformity to duty is "very contingent and uncertain" since nonmoral motives may lead to wrong actions.<sup>17</sup> The same point is made in the *RELIGION*: when nonmoral instincts like sympathy and self-love are one's motives, "it is merely accidental" that they cause one to act in accordance with duty.<sup>18</sup>

These passages set forth what we may call the "no-accident" requirement for moral worth and a good will, and they force us to ask: (1) what does it mean to say that an action lacks moral worth unless its rightness is not "accidental" or "contingent," and (2) how can the "no-accident" requirement be squared with Kant's remarks about the possible frailty of the good will?

It might appear at first glance that any action which is motivated by duty satisfies the no-accident requirement: it is no accident that the agent performed the morally required action because his motive was simply and solely to do whatever was morally required. Only the motive of duty gives one a direct interest in doing what is right.<sup>19</sup> Any other motive (e.g.,

sympathy) might lead one to perform an action which is contrary to duty (because the sympathetic action is not necessarily the right action).

Matters are not so simple, however. According to certain interpreters of Kant, the no-accident requirement is satisfied only if, on the occasion of a right action, the agent would not and could not have acted wrongly, had circumstances been different. Thus, according to Paul Benson, "The performance of a right action is an accident . . . if it is not assured by the agent's motives over any possible circumstances" [my emphasis].<sup>20</sup> And according to Tom Sorell: "Kant has in mind a will which could under no circumstances form intentions that violated the principle of autonomy. . . . [The good will] must actually have good intentions and be unable to form bad ones<sup>21</sup> (i.e., it must be indomitable).

Let us call this the Strong Reading of the no-accident requirement. I shall focus my criticisms of this view on the question of moral worth but they can easily be extended to the nature of the good will. What I shall argue is that the no-accident requirement for moral worth, as set forth by Kant, should not be interpreted as requiring that the agent have an indomitably good will, i.e., that the agent be unable to act contrary-to-duty. The fundamental problem with the Strong Reading lies in its appeal to counterfactual questions. Consider what Benson says:

If the interest in the right on which one acts is not strong enough to overcome the resistance of interests which would challenge it in other possible situations, then one's commitment to morality is too weak to convey moral worth to one's conduct.<sup>22</sup>

What I shall argue is (1) that insurmountable problems arise in attempting to specify which interests the agent must, counterfactually, be able to overcome, and (2) that Kant's own account of moral worth does not make use of such counterfactual questions. Consider the following example.

Suppose that Irma has the chance to help her friend Irwin write a philosophy paper. Whether (and how much) Irma wants to help Irwin, however, depends upon whether she believes such help is morally permissible (for perhaps Irwin is supposed to work on the paper alone). If she thinks such assistance is wrong, then Irma has no desire to help Irwin; if she believes it is permitted, then she has a strong desire to do so. Let us say, then, that if in some circumstance C1 Irma believes it would be right to help Irwin, she would have a strong desire to do so, whereas if in C2 she believes such assistance would be wrong she would altogether lack that desire.

According to the Strong Reading, if Irma helps Irwin in C1 when she (correctly) believes such assistance is right, the rightness of her action is nonaccidental only if she would refuse to help him in some hypothetical C3 when she (correctly)

believes that such assistance is wrong. If, however, her desire to help Irwin would lead her to act wrongly in C3, then the rightness of her original action was only accidental.

This example gives rise to the following problem: what is the proper description of Irma's desires in C3? Suppose that in C1 the strength of Irma's desire to help Irwin is 18. We might understand Benson to be saying that Irma's right action in C1 is accidental if in C3 she would not be able to overcome an unlawful desire of strength 18 and would therefore act wrongly in C3. But this argument overlooks an important fact about Irma: (the strength of) her desires is a function of her moral beliefs. Since she would not want to help Irwin if such assistance were contrary to duty, it seems unfair to answer the counterfactual question of what she would do in C3 (when helping Irwin is wrong) by supposing that her desire would be of the same strength as it is in C1 (when such assistance is permitted).

Suppose, on the other hand, that we understand Benson to be saying that Irma must only be able to act rightly in the hypothetical C3 in the face of the desires she would have in C3 (rather than those she does have in C1). Consider the following example. Suppose that in C1 Aaron is motivated by duty to help Jacob study for his philosophy exam. On this revised understanding of Benson's requirement, Aaron's action is nonaccidentally right only if Aaron would refuse to help Jacob if such assistance were morally wrong, i.e., only if he were able "to overcome the resistance of interests which would challenge it in other possible situations" (in this example, when such assistance is wrong). But which interests must Aaron be able to overcome in C2? One answer is: any interests which cooperated with the motive of duty in C1.<sup>23</sup> The problem with this answer is that it rests upon a premise which Kant rejects, namely, that duty and inclination can cooperate as motives.<sup>24</sup> Actions are motivated either by duty alone or by inclination alone. And so, if Aaron's willingness to help Jacob in C1 is motivated solely by inclination, Kant would say it has no moral worth and there would be no point in asking what Aaron would do in some hypothetical situation.

The more interesting alternative, therefore, concerns actions motivated solely by duty. Let us suppose then, for the sake of argument, that it makes sense to speak of desires which are aligned with duty but do not actually cooperate with, or reinforce, the motive of duty. We may now ask: is the no-accident requirement satisfied only if in C2 Aaron would be able to resist the influence of any motive which is aligned with duty in C1 but would be opposed to duty in C2? I think it does not for the following reason. It is unlikely that in C1 Aaron has only a single desire D which is aligned with duty; more likely, there will be an indefinite number of desires which could motivate Aaron to help Jacob study for his exam. (This is even more obviously true in the case of duties of omission.) If this is the case, it raises the question whether the moral worth of Aaron's

right action in C1 requires that he be able to overcome all of these other desires if they were opposed to duty. And if so, must he be able to overcome each of them individually or (also) all of them simultaneously? To require that Aaron be able to overcome all of his duty-aligned desires collectively, were they simultaneously opposed to duty, seems excessively rigorous given that Kant allows the good will to be frail. To require, on the other hand, that Aaron need only be able to overcome a particular number of aligned desires raises the problem of specifying how many (and which ones) of them he must be able to overcome in C2. Any answer to this question seems arbitrary. More fundamental, however, is the following problem. Since Aaron's act of helping Jacob was (by hypothesis) motivated solely by duty, none of these aligned desires played a motivational role in his action in C1. But if the moral worth of Aaron's action depends upon what he would do in response to desires which play no motivational role in that action, it seems to be a short step to saying that the moral worth of his actions also depends upon how he would act in the face of desires which he could have in C2 but does not have at the time of C1. It could be argued, for example, that Aaron's action in C1 is only accidentally right if in C2 he would act wrongly (by helping) Jacob because he (Aaron) wanted to be Jacob's roommate next year (a desire which Aaron does not have in C1). The problem, in short, is that if the range of desires that the agent must be able to overcome in the hypothetical C2 is not limited to those that play a motivational role in C1, then there seems to be no limit on the range of desires the agent must be able to overcome in C2. We might as well ask: What would Aaron do in C2 if he had Charles Manson's beliefs and desires; would he still refuse to act wrongly in C1? But surely the moral worth of Aaron's action should not depend upon what he would do if he were a different person, i.e., if he had a different set of desires. How could the fact that Aaron-as-he-might-be would act wrongly in C2 (if he had the new desire to be Jacob's roommate) be a reason for denying moral worth to a right action by Aaron-as-he-is? To be sure, that Aaron does not, in C1, desire to be Jacob's roommate is a contingent fact (and that he acts rightly in C1 is in that sense contingent too), but surely the point of the no-accident requirement for moral worth is that the ability of Aaron-as-he-is to do what is right is not contingent--and Aaron-as-he-is (in C1) lacks the desire that would (in C2) cause him to act wrongly.<sup>25</sup>

The final objection to the Strong Reading of the no-accident requirement for moral worth is that it is not supported by Kant's own account of moral worth. Instead of speculating about what the agent would do in various counterfactual situations, Kant simply says that actions have moral worth if and only if (1) they are motivated solely by duty and (2) that motive is sufficient by itself to bring about the morally required action.<sup>26</sup>

It is this latter requirement (of sufficiency) that has led Benson, Sorell, and others to formulate various counterfactual

requirements for moral worth. But Kant's argument is much simpler: since duty and inclination cannot mix as motives, if the motive of duty alone is not sufficient to motivate the action, then it must be motivated by inclination alone--and inclinations only accidentally or contingently lead to morally right conduct. (That is also why morally good actions must be motivated solely by duty; otherwise, they are motivated solely by inclination.) On his account, then, an action is nonaccidentally right if and only if it is motivated (solely) by duty.<sup>27</sup>

To summarize very briefly. The fundamental flaw in the Traditional View lies in its failure to understand the good will as a higher-order disposition, as a disposition to be unconditionally willing to do what is right, whereas the moral worth of actions is a function of the agent's lower (first)-order maxims. It is this fact that explains why the good will cannot be defined in terms of morally good actions and why moral worth should not be attributed to actions solely because the agent has a good will. The Alternative View, on the other hand, must be rejected for two reasons. First, it confers moral worth on actions which are not motivated directly by duty. And second, on the Strong Reading of the no-accident requirement for moral worth, it denies that the good will can be frail or impure and is therefore unfaithful to the Kantian text.

#### FOOTNOTES

1.H.J. Paton, *THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 55. Similarly, Lewis White Beck writes: "An action having this motive [i.e., respect] is moral, and a being which acts from this motive has a good will"(A COMMENTARY ON KANT'S CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, p. 41). Beck also writes: "The goodness of the good will, for Kant, lies solely in the fact that every maxim it enunciates and follows must be under, and adopted for the sake of subsumption under, the supreme condition that the maxim be objectively valid (for all rational beings) regardless of the (human, or even merely private) purposes it may subserve"(STUDIES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF KANT (Indianapolis: Bonns-Merrill, 1965), p. 168). In addition, Robert Louden maintains: "A good will is a will which steadily acts from the motive of respect for the moral law" ("Kant's Virtue Ethics," *PHILOSOPHY* 61 (1986), p. 477.

2.RELIGION WITHIN THE LIMITS OF REASON ALO E, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 18n. Subsequent references will be included in the text (e.g., R 20). Also, in the RELIGION, Kant writes that "his disposition in respect to the moral law is never indifferent, never neither good nor evil" (20).

3.Kant explains the evil will in the following way: "If he took the latter [incentives of self-love] into his maxim as in themselves wholly adequate to the determination of the will [Willkur], without troubling himself about the moral law . . . he would be morally evil. . . . [H]e makes the incentive of self-love and its inclinations the condition of obedience to the moral law; whereas, on the contrary, the latter, as the supreme condition of the satisfaction of the former, ought to have been adopted into the universal maxim of the will [Willkur] as the sole incentive" (R 31, 32).

4.In the RELIGION Kant writes: "I adopt the good (the law) into the maxim of my will [Willkur], but this good, which objectively, in its ideal conception [in thesi], is an irresistible incentive, is subjectively (in hypothesi), the weaker (in comparison with inclination)"(25).

5. METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLES OF VIRTUE, trans. James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983, p. 438. Kant also writes: "Respect is a tribute we cannot refuse to pay to merit whether we will or not; we can indeed outwardly withhold it, but we cannot help feeling it inwardly" (CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON, trans. Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis: Library of Liberal Arts, 1956, p. 77). All page references to the GROUNDWORK, the CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON, and the METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLES OF VIRTUE will be to the Prussian Academy edition.

6. This argument is a twist on Kant's well-known argument that sympathy is not a morally good motive because people are not able freely to choose to act from sympathy.

7. Kurt Baier, "Moral Value and Moral Worth," THE MONIST 54 (1970), p. 24.

8. Paul Benson, "Moral Worth," PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES 51 (1987), pp. 365-382.

9. Benson, p. 376.

10. Benson writes that "morally worthy acts . . . are often prompted by nonmoral interests ruled by an overriding critical moral capacity" (378).

11. Benson, p. 378.

12. See Michael Stocker, "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories," JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY 73 (1976), pp. 453-466; Lawrence Blum, FRIENDSHIP, ALTRUISM AND MORALITY (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).

13. Benson writes: "The limiting function of a motive need not place it 'in the background' as far as its moral significance or its significance to the agent are concerned" (379).

14. See Barbara Herman, "On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty," PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW 90 (1981), pp. 359-382.

15. "What is essential in the moral worth of actions is that the moral law should directly determine the will" (CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON, p. 71).

16. Benson writes that "morally worthy actions are picked out by the conditions that the agent had an indomitable moral concern" (380).

17. "For in the case of what is to be morally good, that it conforms to the moral law is not enough; it must also be done for the sake of the moral law. Otherwise that conformity is only very contingent and uncertain, since the non-moral ground may now and then produce actions that conform with the law but quite often produces actions that are contrary to the law" (GROUNDING FOR THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS, trans. James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett, p. 390). And in the Second Section he adds that nonmoral motives "can only lead by accident to the good but often can also lead to the bad" (411).

18. "For when incentives other than the law itself (such as ambition, self-love in general, yes, even a kindly instinct such as sympathy) are necessary to determine the will [Willkür] to conduct conformable to the law, it is merely accidental that these causes coincide with the law, for they could equally well incite its violation" (R 26).

19. I take this formulation of Kant's idea from Barbara Herman (see n. 14 above).

20. Benson, p. 371 (see n. 8 above). Benson discusses weakness of the will in a footnote (n. 7) to this sentence. I shall discuss this problem below.

21. "Kant's Good Will and Our Good Nature," KANT-STUDIEN 78 (1987), p. 93. Also, "Intuitively, it seems that a 'no accident' principle is met when what is actually willed is right, and when something wrong would not have been willed in relevant counterfactual situations. Kant's text suggests a 'could' in place of the 'would,' and thereby demands more for moral worth than intuition does" (91).

In "Conditioned Autonomy" Stephen Engstrom also propounds the Strong Requirement: "to determine whether an agent acts autonomously, or for the sake of the moral principle, one would need to know whether the agent would act in accordance with the principle in all possible circumstances. For to say that morality is a necessary condition of the adoption of any maxim is to say that there are no possible circumstances in which the agent would adopt a maxim not in conformity with the principle" (PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH 48 [1988], pp. 445-446). And in a footnote he adds that "a subjectively autonomous agent, necessarily acting in accordance with the moral law, cannot act otherwise."

22. Benson, p. 378.

23. Benson writes: "The sufficiency of an agent's moral concern to prompt right action by itself does not establish moral worth when other cooperating interests would have outweighed the moral motive, yielding action contrary to duty, in other circumstances"(371).

24. In the GROUNDWORK Kant writes that "no other law precludes all inclinations from having a direct influence on the will"(80). In the CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON he argues that "all admixture of incentives which derive from one's own happiness are a hindrance to the influence of the moral law on the human heart" (156). And in the GROUNDWORK he maintains that "the pure thought of duty, and of the moral law generally, unmixed with any extraneous addition of empirical inducements, has by the way of reason alone . . . an influence on the human heart so much more powerful than all other incentives"(410-411). This reading of Kant is also supported by Tom Sorell (see n. 21 above).

25. This argument also explains why C2 must be a hypothetical situation and not an actual future one. The moral worth of an agent's present action should not depend upon what that agent will do in future similar situations. As Barbara Herman points out, to argue in this way is to confuse the question of the moral worth of actions with the question of the agent's virtue. (See n. 14 above.)

26. In the CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON, for example, Kant states that "the objective determining ground [i.e., the moral law] must at the same time be the exclusive and subjectively sufficient determining ground of action if the latter is to fulfill not merely the letter of the law but also its spirit"(72, my emphasis; cf. METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLES OF VIRTUE, p. 446).

The claim that for Kant the motive of duty must be the sole motive of morally good actions is supported by his discussions, in both the GROUNDWORK and the METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLES OF VIRTUE, of the impossibility of knowing whether one's action was motivated by duty and not by inclination. Such worries would be misplaced, however, if an action could be motivated by both duty and inclination and if such mixed motivation were compatible with moral goodness. They make sense only if the presence of an empirical motive entails that the action was not motivated at all by duty. (And if duty and inclination can mix, then Kant's worries are incomprehensible unless moral worth requires that actions be motivated solely by duty.)

27. My criticism of the Strong Reading is not directed solely against the assumption that duty and inclination can mix, or reinforce one another, as motives. For it might be argued that even if actions are motivated either by duty alone or by inclination alone, they have moral worth only if in some hypothetical C2 the agent would still have acted according to duty. That is, the strength of the motive of duty in C1 must be sufficient to overcome whatever desires would motivate the agent in C2 to act contrary to duty. But this argument only raises anew questions to which no satisfactory answer appears possible: Which desires must the agent be able to resist in C2 and of what strength are they? Must the agent be able to resist them collectively or individually? Are they desires which the agent has at the time of C1 or also

those which she could have? The fundamental problem, in short, is that once the idea of cooperating motives is rejected, then there are no constraints on the range of desires that the agent may be required to be able to overcome in C2.