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## **Kant, Moral Imagination, and the Pathologies of Reason**

**Abstract:** We argue that the relationship between Kant's theory of imagination and his moral philosophy has not been well understood. Missing is an adequate connection between his idea of *sensus communis* and the power of imagination to exceed the senses. This connection is close and important, and it has serious implications for how we are to apply and further theorize moral relations among human beings. Especially important in this regard is the ability among humans, in their social setting, to imagine other persons. We do this pre-cognitively, at the level of feeling. The effects of imagining other persons prior to all knowledge of them (as, for instance, rational agents), grounds the autonomy of other persons in a relationship that is far broader than knowledge.

**Keywords:** Kant, imagination, reflective judgment, *sensus communis*, persons

With a few exceptions, philosophical treatments of imagination have usually focused on its relationship with sensation, memory, or the power of making present what is absent to the senses. Neglected in such treatments are questions of the relationship between volition, autonomy, spontaneity, and the moral employment of our imaginative powers.<sup>1</sup> We grant that imagination, for the most part, works

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<sup>1</sup> The most important general treatment of imagination in its normative context is Mark Johnson's now classic study *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*, Chicago 1993. For-

with the sensuous manifold (what Kant designates as the relations among *Abbildung*, *Vorbildung* and *Nachbildung*, empirically). But, in the experience of the sublime (at least as far as Kant takes that analysis), we learn about the power of imagination as an independent “cognitive power.”<sup>2</sup> Our treatment of imagination in what follows is distinct from other studies in two specifics. First of all, we theorize strictly within (what we take to be) a Kantian vein, and secondly, we broaden the traditional Kantian discussion to include first, the independence of imagination from the other cognitive powers, second, the deep-seated connection between imagination and aesthetic as well as rational *sensus communis*, and third, we examine the question of the proper normative employment of imagination in light of reflective judgment, the constitutive problem of purpose in nature, and Kant’s teleological principle. Our central claim is that previous studies have not provided an adequate exposition of the full scope of Kant’s theory of imagination, especially in its moral employment. We take for granted that readers will remember Kant’s insistence that the moral law is experienced as sublime. But what is the practical significance of insisting upon imagination’s independence? The question is too big for one paper, but we can address one part of the question by examining the unusual (and often overlooked) role of imagination in symbolizing the moral law for our reflective judgment. In the experience of the sublime, imagination outruns the sensuous medium, that material with which it forms its schemata and symbols in our mundane experience. Yet, the transcending of the sensuous medium by imagination not only does not cancel its practical function, but indeed (one might well argue) the true practical function of imagination only finds its most fitting expression in the symbols that it gives to reflection without the encumbrances of sensuous mediums.

In his book *Moral Imagination*, Mark Johnson asserts that moral imagination bears upon knowledge in general, and moral understanding in particular, in ways that are both “structural” and metaphoric. In both cases he traces the function of imagination to sensuous experience, although he does make a strong distinction between cognitive experience and purely sensuous experience. As with so many theorists (and we take Johnson to be both typical and among the best), the idea of narrative is invoked to fill the gap between cognitive and sensuous experience. Eschewing overly intellectualized approaches to moral imagination, Johnson favors a developmental model that illustrates more than explains how *sense* experience comes to be interpreted as *moral* experience.<sup>3</sup> More recently,

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tunately, Johnson is a sophisticated interpreter of Kant and he brings to bear on his general treatment of imagination a full understanding of the Kantian theory of imagination. See also M. Johnson, *The Body and the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, Chicago 1987, particularly his discussions in Chapters 3–5 of the relationship between Kantian schemata, embodied reason, and the function of imagination.

<sup>2</sup> In the use of this phrase, “cognitive power,” we follow the translation of Werner Pluhar as a rendering into English of the German term *Kraft*, and, as Kant indicates, this term is intended to express what was meant in Latin by *facultas*. We do not intend to hypostatize the “faculties” into an *a priori* psychology but only to indicate with the term the real function of our imagination, our reason, and our judgment, and so forth.

<sup>3</sup> See M. Johnson, *Moral Imagination*, pp. 189–199, and Chapter 10, especially pp. 255–260.

John Kaag has taken up Johnson's line of thinking and has argued in a similar way for the centrality of imagination in Kant's philosophy and Kant's philosophy in the furtherance of our efforts toward a theory of imagination.<sup>4</sup> Our view agrees with Kaag's estimation that the third *Critique* is best understood through Kant's idea of *sensus communis*, although we might resist his characterization of this move as a "pragmatic" turn. Kant's introduction of the term "pragmatic" into the philosophical vocabulary (*Critique of Pure Reason* A824–B852) is dedicated to a much more restricted problem of what to believe when experience does not hold the promise of answering doubts. Kaag also emphasizes reflective judgment in interpreting Kant's account of imagination. He says, "[...] it seems wise to address each of the various forms that the *sensus communis* takes in the Kantian corpus. At certain points, Kant claims that it is equally a faculty, a feeling, and an exemplary norm."<sup>5</sup>

Our purpose bears some similarities to the project of Bernard Freydberg in his investigation of the relationship between imagination and practical reason. However, his primary focus is on the relation of imagination to determinate judgment, although he clearly recognizes the importance of reflective judgment. Indeed, he acknowledges the incompleteness of Kant's moral philosophy without a full account of reflective judgment. He states:

It then only remains for the astute commentator to read the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* and follow Kant's chart at its end to reach the conclusion that the notion of purposiveness is a product of imagination. Purposiveness bridges the sensible realm as determined in the first critique with the supersensible realm determined in the second, and so brings them to unity.<sup>6</sup>

While we endorse this view as far as it goes, we believe that Freydberg's reference to the architectonic may lead to a more complex story than he seems to be predicting. It requires, evidently, a commentator so astute as not to have been born in the 200 years following Kant, if the current literature is any measure, since no one before Freydberg, as far as we have discovered, has followed his advice.

In what follows, we will first provide a fairly thorough account of the various functions of imagination identified by Kant. We believe that a more unified theorizing of imagination than we find in Kant is within our reach. The questions to

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<sup>4</sup> J. Kaag, *Thinking Through the Imagination: Aesthetics in Human Cognition*, New York 2014, especially Chapter 2, pp. 25–56. Kaag's survey of the literature on Kant and imagination is admirable, and we refer readers to it for more detail.

<sup>5</sup> J. Kaag, *Thinking Through the Imagination*, p. 44. Kaag's claim that *sensus communis* is a "faculty," i.e., a cognitive power for Kant, depends upon his interpretation of §40 in the third *Critique*, and is drawn from a bad translation. He cites Werner Pluhar as his translator, but in fact uses the J.H. Bernard translation, which wrongly translates the term *Beurtheilungsvermögen* as "faculty of judgment," which Pluhar more accurately translates as simply "a power to judge," or, still more accurately, a possibility of judging. In spite of this problem, Kaag rightly discerns a distinction between an aesthetic and a rational *sensus communis*, although he finds the distinction confusing. That confusion does not prevent him from recognizing the form of *sensus communis* that serves as a norm. For more on the contrast between aesthetic *sensus communis*, which is a feeling, and rational *sensus communis*, which is an exemplary norm, see L.J. Mueller, "Transcendental *Sensus Communis*: Reflective Foundations of Cognition in Kantian Epistemology," dissertation, Southern Illinois University Carbondale (2015).

<sup>6</sup> B. Freydberg, *Imagination in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, Bloomington 2005, p. 134.

which we limit our inquiry have to do with pointing to functions of imagination based upon the indisputable results of imagination's fruitful engagement with what is no longer, what is not now, and what is not yet.

## I

One of the most puzzling aspects of Kant's second *Critique* is his assertion that the practicality of reason is a "fact of reason." Part of the puzzlement of Kant's discussion of this "fact" is the many ways in which he discusses it. Kant first states that this "fact [*Factum*]<sup>7</sup> of reason" is the "consciousness of this fundamental law," that "forces itself upon us as a synthetic a priori proposition that is not based on any intuition, either pure or empirical [...]."<sup>8</sup> Following this, however, he identifies the "fact" not as consciousness of the moral law, but as the law itself: "However, in order to avoid misinterpretation in regarding this law as *given*, it must be noted carefully that it is not an empirical fact but the sole fact of pure reason which, by it, announces itself as originally lawgiving."<sup>9</sup> We want to emphasize that pure reason has only a single fact by which it announces itself as lawgiving. Or, to put it in slightly more recognizable Kantian language, the legislating power of pure reason is known as and through a "fact," and hence the meaning and importance of this idea of "fact" cannot be overstated. Kant also states that "the moral law is given, as it were, as a fact [i.e., a creation] of pure reason of which we are a priori conscious and which is apodictically certain."<sup>10</sup> Later, Kant writes that the "fact of reason" is not consciousness of the law, nor the moral law itself,

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<sup>7</sup> Vico is famous for identifying what he calls the most basic principle of epistemology, *verum factum*, or "the true is the made." When we consider the range of meaning of *factum* in Latin, it is important to bear in mind that doing and making is of the essence of the denotation. The tendency in English to reduce the meaning of the word "fact" to what is indisputable and present to all observers is misleading. In the same way that Italian renders *factum* (*facere*) as *fare* and the French render the term *faire*, the tight constellation of meanings surrounds acting, doing, and causing, not the product acted upon, done, or caused. The "fact of reason" is not already accomplished; it is something that reason makes. See D.P. Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, New York 1983, pp. 36–64. See also B. Freyberg, *Imagination in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, pp. 103–104, and 116. Freyberg writes, "Insofar as the highest good is a duty, it issues from the very moral law that expresses the fact of freedom. The need for this belief, Kant says, is a necessary need. It is at least very difficult to detach it from the moral law itself. The freedom of our judgment must refer to a sense of freedom in excess of moral freedom, one that makes moral freedom itself possible. It is freedom as the creative act of imagination, the act that silently undergirds the entire critical philosophy as it continually effaces itself" (*ibidem*, p. 116).

<sup>8</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, transl. M.J. Gregor, [in:] I. Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, M.J. Gregor (ed.), Cambridge 1996, 5:31. The suggestion that reason is creative is scandalous only to those who insist upon its being exclusively analytic. See also B. Freyberg, *Imagination in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 103.

<sup>9</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:31. Again, see B. Freyberg, *Imagination in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, pp. 103–104.

<sup>10</sup> I. Kant *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:47. Vico says the *certa*, i.e., the "certains," which are none other than the particulars of our experience, are those elements without which no metaphysics can be a science. See D.P. Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, p. 44; also, B. Freyberg, *Imagination in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, pp. 116–117.

but rather autonomy: “This Analytic proves that pure reason can be practical, i.e., that of itself and independently of everything empirical it can determine the will. This it does through a fact wherein pure reason shows itself actually to be practical. This fact is autonomy in the principle of morality.”<sup>11</sup> If the reader suspects the implication that we have a hand (however invisible), in creating the moral law for ourselves,<sup>12</sup> then this supposition would not be wholly mistaken.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Kant speaks of this rather mysterious “fact” of reason in three distinct ways: as consciousness of the moral law, as the moral law itself, and as autonomy. As Lewis White Beck points out, however, Kant has already identified freedom as autonomy with the moral law, thus diminishing the number of distinctions at hand. We are left, then, with two ways of characterizing this “fact” (the certain results of reason’s creative contribution to self-knowledge): as the moral law (which includes freedom as autonomy), and as consciousness of the moral law.

The tradition of taking “fact” as uncreated and uncreative, apart from being etymologically mistaken, is scientifically bankrupt. Without committing ourselves

<sup>11</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:42, transl. L.W. Beck (Beck, Indianapolis 1956), p. 166.

<sup>12</sup> John Rundell points out that in diminishing the role of imagination in the B-Deduction, Kant also diminishes the “creative and reflexive dimensions of imagination” (J. Rundell, “Creativity and Judgment: Kant on Reason and Imagination,” [in:] *Rethinking Imagination: Culture and Creativity*, G. Robinson, J. Rundell (eds.), New York 1994, p. 95). These dimensions of imagination are “subsumed by the functional requisites of pure understanding, that is, to a notion of reason which provides rules transcendently for constructing judgments” (ibidem). Rundell criticizes such a view, stating that one of the consequences of this “lesser” role of imagination is that a “wedge” is driven between reason and imagination; reason now “contains no creative power, only a regulative power which gives rules and standards” (ibidem). If we limit our reading of Kant to the first *Critique*, we do not see the very robust nature of reason, which includes creativity, which, here at least, manifests as the “fact” of reason.

<sup>13</sup> Freedom is a “matter of fact,” the only idea of reason whose reality we can know as a matter of fact. Matters of fact, Kant tells us, are “objects of concepts whose objective reality can be proved” (I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, transl. W. Pluhar, Indianapolis 1987, AK5:468). We know the idea of freedom as a matter of fact through a special kind of causality, which “can be established through practical laws of pure reason and, [if we act] in conformity with these, in actual acts, and hence in experience” (ibidem, 5:468). Freedom, therefore, can be proved in experience. This, however, might be a surprising sort of proof; for, as Kant elaborates, in all cases, matters of fact are proved by means of “an intuition corresponding to these data [of reason]” (ibidem). However, as an idea of reason, freedom has no such intuition. How, then, can freedom be a matter of fact, which requires proof by means of intuition? In short, we learn by the actual acts—we learn by doing things, by building a collection of intuitions the experience of which is apodictic. In other words, practical reason is creative, and to know freedom as a fact (which we can), we must “just do it.” Agnes Heller points out, for Kant, the distinction between knowledge and ethics is more than a distinction between “kinds of discourses” (such as theoretical and practical) (A. Heller, “The Elementary Ethics of Everyday Life,” [in:] *Rethinking Imagination*, p. 49). Rather, Heller states, there is an absolute difference between knowledge and ethics; in morality, persons are related to transcendence, while in knowledge, everything is related to the immanent. Stating that the distinction between knowledge and ethics is simply a difference in discourse renders ethics as merely a kind of discourse; but, as Heller states, “Moral discourse says little about action, and even if it does, it is not an action. The most evil of men can have the best or most correct opinions in the situation of discourse” (ibidem, p. 50). It is not that one cannot have discourse concerning morality—we can, and currently are—nor is it the case that moral discourse is not a different kind of discourse—it most certainly is (see Kant’s discussion of methodology at the beginning of his second *Critique*, for example). Rather, in order to have moral discourse, you must first be moral, and that being or acting moral just is a matter of fact.

to an ontology of emergence, we insist that consciousness of “fact” involves not only subjectivity, but creativity on the part of the subject. To inhabit a world in which morality is concretely experienced is to participate in the creation of the moral character of that situation. The issue is not whether we inhabit such a world, but how it comes to be just the way it is, and whether that way of being does or does not contain maxims, principles, or even universals that guide or command our imaginative powers.<sup>14</sup>

There is, from a Kantian point of view, a clear difference between consciousness of something, and that “something” itself. Certainly (as Beck points out), consciousness of something can be said to be a fact; what remains under suspicion is whether that “something” itself—in this case, the moral law—can be said to be a fact.<sup>15</sup> Beck seeks to disentangle this rather thorny issue in Kant’s works by appealing to a distinction between “fact of” reason and “fact for” reason, a distinction that will become relevant to our interpretation of imagination’s independence. As Beck elaborates, a fact for pure reason “may mean a fact known by pure reason as its object, *modo directo*.”<sup>16</sup> A fact of pure reason, on the other hand, “may mean the fact that there is pure reason, known by reason reflexively.”<sup>17</sup> Beck points out that, as the first *Critique* demonstrated, no facts can be known by pure reason without intuition,<sup>18</sup> and yet, Kant’s first characterization of the “fact of reason” (or, in Beck’s terminology, fact for reason) was consciousness of the moral law that is forced upon us as a synthetic a priori proposition not based on any intuition. Moral imagination is neither dependent upon experiential circumstance nor de-

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<sup>14</sup> Hans Vaihinger points out that the moral world, “in the sense that in such a world there reigns” the system by which happiness is bound up with and in proportion to morality, is “only an Idea” (H. Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of ‘As-If’: A System of the Theoretical, Practical, and Religious Fictions of Mankind*, transl. C.K. Ogden, London 1934, p. 285). However, Vaihinger also points out that, for Kant, we must view ourselves as belonging to such a world. The “mere” idea of a moral universe has domain over the world of fact. This moral world is one of the many “as-ifs” of Vaihinger’s (and Kant’s) works. For Vaihinger (and for Kant), fictions do not have an objective reality that corresponds to them (for this would be merely a hypothesis); rather, these fictions rest on the improbability that anything objective corresponds to them, in a world we can expect to be confusing and hostile to our aims (see *ibidem*, p. 12). Thus, these fictions are not intended to map out our inner structure according to the outer structure, but rather “the psyche weaves this aid to thought out of itself; for the mind is inventive” (*ibidem*). A mere hypothesis presumes that there *will* be an experience that corresponds to and agrees with it. No such presumption accompanies the inventive powers of the psyche; fictions can be contradicted by experience, and, as Vaihinger states, remain undisturbed (*ibidem*, p. 89). The creative freedom we exercise in our fictions makes moral freedom possible, as Freyberg so nicely summarized above (B. Freyberg, *Imagination in Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 117).

<sup>15</sup> L.W. Beck, *A Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason*, Chicago 1960, p. 167. It is impossible to ignore the dialectic of *An sich Sein und für sich Sein* of which Hegel makes so much, and which comes down to us in present discourse in so many variations, e.g., the *en sui* and *por sui* of the existentialists. It is precisely the presumption of an uncreative power of pure reason that leaves European philosophy in such a bad infinity. Allow it once to be observed that reason is thoroughly practical and creative, even in its pure form, and the dualism is dissolved.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 168. Beck here does use the phrase “pure reason” as opposed to just “reason,” but so does Kant.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

pendent upon formal instruction. Moral insight, including its imaginative dimension, is independent of experiences of this kind. If this consciousness of the moral law is to be a fact, it is to be a unique fact, indeed, the sole fact for pure reason.

A less opaque characterization of fact is the fact of pure reason. Beck writes that “Kant’s point is that in *any* willing there is a principle which is purely rational,<sup>19</sup> and ‘if pure reason is really practical, it will show its practicality and that of its concepts in action.’”<sup>20</sup> The moral law (freedom as autonomy), Beck states, is a fact for pure reason “only inasmuch as it is the expression of the fact of pure reason, i.e., of the fact that pure reason can be practical.”<sup>21</sup> The fact of reason, then, is reason’s own practicality. Reason creates; reason is active. Reason’s creative activity is expressed by the moral law, which in turn is a fact for reason.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the moral law is a fact for reason, and it expresses the lawgiving of reason itself, which is the fact of pure reason. Or, “the fact of pure reason is reflected in the fact for pure reason.”<sup>23</sup>

Beck, then, has attempted to solve the riddle of how it is, for Kant, that pure reason’s practicality could be a “fact” of reason. At least one mystery, however, remains unsolved in his discussion: how is it that, even as a fact for reason, consciousness of the moral law can be a fact known by pure reason without intuition? A key to unlocking this riddle is the idea of freedom (not some mere concept). Freedom, we know, is identified as autonomy of pure practical reason,<sup>24</sup> that is, as autonomy of reason in its lawgiving capacity. This freedom, the autonomy of reason, is crucial not only to Kant’s practical works, but to his theoretical works as well. Theoretical reason, after all, assumes freedom to meet its own needs, an assumption that Kant claims is justified.<sup>25</sup> Theoretical reason “requires us to think of freedom as possible.”<sup>26</sup> As Beck states, this fundamental “fact” of pure reason—the lawgiving of reason itself—is “not left a naked and isolated assertion [...] it is precisely of the form required if the dialectic of theoretical reason is not to be irresolvable.”<sup>27</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, p. 169.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:3 (Gregor’s translation).

<sup>21</sup> L.W. Beck, *A Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 169.

<sup>22</sup> For those who would be tempted to think of this as a purely, or even partly, romantic interpretation of Kant, we refer those skeptics to an interpretation of *Macht* in transcendental *sensus communis*, as discussed in Mueller’s “Transcendental *Sensus Communis*,” pp. 151–152. We do not see this as a Promethean interpretation of the will.

<sup>23</sup> L.W. Beck, *A Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 170. Our emphasis.

<sup>24</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:33.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, 5:48.

<sup>26</sup> L.W. Beck, *A Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 174.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 175. Henry Allison does find this dialectic to be irresolvable. Allison discusses Beck’s distinction between “fact of” and “fact for,” stating that a “fact for” reason is subjective, and, as such, has no validity as a law. Allison equates the “fact of” reason with the “objective,” which belongs to the domain of nature (H. Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Freedom*, Cambridge 1990, p. 232). Like Guyer, Allison indicates a skepticism as to whether the domain of nature and the moral domain can be reconciled. Guyer consistently expresses his skepticism about whether Kant can reconcile pure reason, which Guyer always associates with the domain of nature and causal laws, with practical reason, which he always associates with autonomy and the moral law. Guyer states, for example, that in the second *Critique*, Kant “seems to be persuaded by his own association of all human ends with the merely natural rather than

As Kant recounts in the second *Critique*, the determination of the causality of beings in the world of sense can never be unconditioned; and yet, to avoid a regress, “there must be a causality that determines itself entirely on its own.”<sup>28</sup> The idea of freedom as “a power of absolute spontaneity”<sup>29</sup> (or, what Kant later—in the *Metaphysics of Morals*—refers to as *Willkür*) is at least possible as an analytic principle for pure practical reason. Because no example of this spontaneity can ever be given in experience, the thought of a freely acting cause can be defended—such a cause does not contradict anything that is in experience. This thought, however, is never “realized,” that is, “converted” into “cognition of a being acting this way.”<sup>30</sup> The cognition of a freely acting cause is, in sum, east of Eden.

Pure practical reason, however, fills this void of cognition with the “determinate law of causality in the intelligible world (causality through freedom),”<sup>31</sup> namely, the moral law. Speculative reason assumes spontaneity (*Willkür*), but we cannot cognize spontaneity. We can, however, cognize a *law*, even a law of freedom (*Wille*). A law of freedom, however, is cognized differently from any law of nature.<sup>32</sup> As Beck states, in Kant’s theoretical project, when the empirical material is

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moral objective of happiness that the content and even the value of the good will must be grounded in a formal law of willing independent of all ends whatever, is a deeper conception on which the form of the moral law is derived from a conception of the fundamental good for human beings after all, although one in which this good lies is no material end of the kind subsumed under the generic concept of happiness but rather in the exercise of freedom itself” (P. Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom*, Cambridge 1993, p. 250). In *Kant*, Guyer draws a hard distinction between the ultimate end of nature—an end *within* nature—and the final end of nature—an end outside of nature (P. Guyer, *Kant*, New York 2006, p. 352). While Kant does indeed make this distinction, it is not as irresolvable as Guyer or Allison seem to think. After all, the sole fact of pure reason is creative; it belongs to that special causality through which reason acts purposively in, if not Nature-*an-sich*, then nature as the communicative presence of other autonomous beings. After all, we are obliged to communicate with ourselves as natural beings as well as with others, and we succeed in doing so. A more sympathetic interpretation of Beck is offered by W.H. Walsh: “Kant’s thesis that mind makes nature so far as it exhibits order in general can thus be elucidated as follows: the world of nature is not independent of mind insofar as it is a world of facts, and facts are arrived at in judgment.”—W.H. Walsh, “Kant’s Transcendental Idealism,” [in:] *Kant on Causality, Freedom, and Objectivity*, W.A. Harper, R. Beerbote (eds.), Minneapolis 1984, p. 87. Here, Walsh interprets Beck as allowing a certain creativity to reason, through the operation of judgment. In this, we can see that the distinction between “mind” and “nature,” or “subjective” and “objective,” or “nature” and “freedom” is not so stark as Allison and Guyer seem to think. The creativity of reason blurs the line. As B. Freyberg says in *Imagination in Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason*, the sole fact of pure reason “dwells” “between the intelligible and sensible regions;” and is “pure image, as is freedom.” This sole fact, this image, is produced by imagination (p. 34). Much we have said turns on how one ought to interpret the idea of “form” in Kant. This is beyond the scope of our current inquiry, but our argument might be continued as a kind of dialogue with Robert Pippin’s interpretation of form in Kant (R. Pippin, *Kant’s Theory of Form*, New Haven 1982).

<sup>28</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:48. Pluhar’s translation.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, 5:49.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>32</sup> As Kant states in the third *Critique*, the concept of freedom and the concept of nature are different domains. The two domains are united by the power of judgment. See *Critique of Judgment*, 5:174–179.



eliminated, “we are left with a pure empirical form,”<sup>33</sup> we are left with the “schema of a case according to laws.”<sup>34</sup> However, in the second *Critique*, when we eliminate the empirical material, we “are left only with the mere form of ‘ought.’”<sup>35</sup> The concern of pure practical reason is not the schema of a law, but rather is the schema of law itself. A law, such as any particular law of nature, needs a corresponding schema, “a universal procedure for the power of imagination,”<sup>36</sup> in order to be cognized. However, for the law of freedom—a causality *not* sensibly conditioned—neither intuition nor schema “can be laid at its basis for the sake of its application *in concreto*.”<sup>37</sup> The symbol is, indeed, the product of a subjective synthesis that can only become a schema under significant strain and painful reduction. Symbols, for Kant, are those products of imagination that retain subjective as well as objective reference, even if their validity cannot be demonstrated. The strain we mentioned above is that which is brought to bear on the symbol forced to operate under the extreme restrictions of understanding as it attempts to apprehend a series of actions as having been determined by a law. But, in the case of the sole fact of pure reason, not a law, but the *form* of law in general is the source of the order. Hence, the schema seems empty to understanding.<sup>38</sup> Only by denuding the symbol of purpose does it serve as a schema, and likewise, the symbol itself does violence to the experience comprehended as *sensus communis*, since it cannot determine the whole but is rather the product of that fundamental and purposive rationality. We will elaborate on this radical reduction in subsequent discussion.<sup>39</sup>

Any *in concreto* exhibition of a law is given through empirical intuition. For example, learning that burning a cat is morally wrong through witnessing a cat’s suffering—or, for Kant, witnessing the moral degradation of the cat burners<sup>40</sup>—is an instruction that occurs through empirical intuition. The law of freedom, which cannot be exhibited *in concreto*, cannot be given by empirical intuition. And yet, the law of freedom also cannot be given through pure intuition; the law of freedom,

<sup>33</sup> L.W. Beck, *A Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 173.

<sup>34</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:69. The meaning of the term “schema” here is quite specific and will be explained later.

<sup>35</sup> L.W. Beck, *A Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 173.

<sup>36</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:69.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> Speaking of empty understanding, this might be the best characterization of Guyer’s efforts to shoehorn a creative fact of pure reason into a formal account of nature and its causes.

<sup>39</sup> Discussion could be limitless on the topic of whether Kant allows empirical intuition to play a constitutive role in judgment. Here we take no position on that topic. Clearly there would be no judgment in the absence of all experience. Similarly there would be no imagination in the absence of all experience. Whether judgment commands imagination, or vice-versa, in the examples at hand is not crucial to our case. Yet, we acknowledge that the primacy of judgment, as the ground of the unity of all synthetic *a priori* knowledge is not to be despised or minimized. Yet, we are confident that the independence of imagination is sufficient for our purposes, whether that independence be attributed to the motives of architectonic, or merely to empirical experience.

<sup>40</sup> In his *Lectures on Ethics*, Kant states, “If he is not to stifle his human feelings, he must practise kindness towards animals, for he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men. We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals” (I. Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, transl. L. Infield, Indianapolis 1930, p. 240).

after all, is not sensibly conditioned at all. Intuitions need not and cannot apply to any cognition of the moral law. And yet, the supreme principle of morality must be known as a synthetic *a priori* proposition, for Kant. The question is: how is such a proposition possible with no intuition given? We do know right from wrong without witnessing the destructive habits of neighborhood miscreants, without particular formal or empirical intuition.

Though the moral law, this very peculiar “fact” of reason, is given without intuition, that is not to say that imagination is not functional in the act of “knowing” this “fact.” As the first *Critique* states, imagination is of sensibility, and is the “power of presenting an object in intuition even without the object’s being present.”<sup>41</sup> In this capacity, of presenting objects in intuition, imagination serves understanding.<sup>42</sup> Kant states that imagination gives “concepts of understanding a corresponding intuition,”<sup>43</sup> and that the synthesis involved is still “an action of the understanding upon sensibility.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, in the transcendental synthesis, as aided by imagination, understanding is the operative faculty, and any intuition provided by imagination serves understanding. However, imagination need not always serve understanding, and, as Kant establishes in the third *Critique*, does not serve understanding in reflective judgment, except insofar as symbols can be shoehorned into schemata, in a most uncomfortable and unsatisfying reduction.<sup>45</sup> Thus, any lack of intuition in a discussion of a special “fact” does not necessarily imply that imagination is not functioning, and, in fact, serves to demonstrate that imagination itself has its independence, specifically in the moral domain. Imagination, in short, transcends the sensible realm. Still, an intuition for the experience of freedom is wanting.

The idea of freedom, required by theoretical reason, also has, in the second *Critique*, a role *analogous* to that of intuition in the first *Critique*. As Beck states, in Kant’s practical philosophy, the idea of freedom is a “substitute for intuition.”<sup>46</sup> Freedom, like intuition, “has an independent warrant,”<sup>47</sup> can be known *a priori*, and is purely intellectual. Kant’s discussion of freedom is problematic (in a non-technical sense), and Beck attempts to clarify Kant’s rather tricky characterization by approaching freedom in its relation to *Wille* and *Willkür*. We will not recount Beck’s argument in its entirety or in all of its intricacy, but we will provide a brief synopsis to get at the heart of the matter.

<sup>41</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B151.

<sup>42</sup> Clearly Kant inherited this basic relation among the faculties from Descartes. For example, in his *Regulae*, Descartes writes that the intellect applies itself with imagination in order to see and touch. For scientific knowledge—to know corporeal things—imagination serves the intellect. R. Descartes, “Rules for the Direction of the Mind,” transl. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch, 1:416, [in:] *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch (eds.), Cambridge 1985.

<sup>43</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B151.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, B152.

<sup>45</sup> The feeling of resistance that we have to the analysis of poetry or music, that it “kills” the poem, or song, or symphony, is the experience of this unsatisfactoriness as a reduction of symbol to schema.

<sup>46</sup> L.W. Beck, *A Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 173.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*.

Intuition is necessary for any object to be given in experience, but it is not necessary for ideas beyond experience to be thought. Freedom is one such “Idea” of reason which, as Beck points out, has “reference to a whole which is unconditioned but which contains all conditions of its parts.”<sup>48</sup> There are, however, in Kant, two seemingly distinct—and yet interdependent—senses of “freedom,” corresponding to the *Wille* and *Willkür* (which are two operations of the same will), respectively. Freedom in “the practical sense is the independence of *Willkür* from coercion through sensuous impulses.”<sup>49</sup> This is the “negative” definition of freedom Kant provides in the *Groundwork*, in which he states, “freedom would be that property [*Eigenschaft*] of such causality that it can be efficient independently of alien causes determining it [...]”<sup>50</sup> However, this definition of freedom alone does not imply autonomy, for “will,” in its ordinary, most general sense, could be independent of external causes, and yet still be arbitrary. Such a concept of freedom of the *Willkür*, by contrast, accounts for the spontaneity, but (yet) not the autonomy, of the will (in the vulgar or most general sense).

However, as the “fact” of reason establishes, we are conscious of our obligation, not just our spontaneity.<sup>51</sup> Thus, we are conscious of the *Wille* as autonomous, as having not just a spontaneous operation, but also its own special type of causality.<sup>52</sup> As Beck points out, “consciousness of the moral law, and not obedience to it, is the evidence of freedom in the positive sense.”<sup>53</sup> Consciousness of the moral law “gives a law to *Willkür* which it has freely legislated [...]”<sup>54</sup> As Kant states, to think we are free is to be practically free, even if we cannot theoretically “know” freedom as an object.<sup>55</sup> What does it mean, then, to think we are free? Spontaneity itself is not binding, “for we are not directly obligated to do anything, to initiate a specific causal series in time.”<sup>56</sup> Rather, we think we are practically free, in the sense that we think we are autonomous, bound to follow and give to ourselves a certain law.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibidem, p. 183.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem, 189.

<sup>50</sup> I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, transl. M.J. Gregor, [in:] I. Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, M.J. Gregor (ed.), Cambridge 1996, 4:446.

<sup>51</sup> In the first “Introduction” to the third *Critique*, Kant argues that even though our cognitive power presents experiences according to their lawfulness as legislated by the power of understanding (or more broadly, thinking/cognition), still, these thoughts are shot through with and presuppose both purposiveness and obligation, which is to say that cognition never operates without judgment (feelings of pleasure and displeasure), or without reason (the power of desire) (I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 5:245’). The full discussion of these associations would take us far beyond the scope of the present article, but suffice to say that the interdependency of the principles of knowing is at topic worthy of continued consideration. See, for example, the dissertation of J. Royce, “On the Interdependency of the Principles of Knowledge,” Johns Hopkins University, 1877.

<sup>52</sup> I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:446. Kant says: “For the will, as the power of desire, is one of the many natural causes in the world, namely, the one that acts in accordance with concepts” (ibidem, 5:172). Here we see how lawfulness and purposiveness are combined in obligation for Kant (see also ibidem, 5: 245’).

<sup>53</sup> L.W. Beck, *A Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 197.

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>55</sup> I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:447, n.

<sup>56</sup> L.W. Beck, *A Commentary on Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 197.

As Beck elaborates, “The thought of obligation is, therefore, self-guaranteeing in a way in which the feeling of spontaneity is not self-guaranteeing. Hence one can say that freedom in the sense of self-legislation is real [...]”<sup>57</sup> This is pure reason’s practicality as a given “fact” for reason. It is important to remember that while the autonomous employment of reason culminates our lives, it is not constitutive of our lives. Human beings can live without mediating the power of reason, but never to their betterment.

In other words, we cannot “know,” in any theoretical sense, that we are free. Rather, we think and act as if we are free. Intuition is not necessary here, for freedom can never be an object for understanding in any case. Thus, understanding alone fails to provide any conceptual knowledge of freedom. The autonomous *law* of *Wille* that binds the spontaneous *Willkür* is symbolized by imagination, but schematized only with great effort, distortion, and perhaps even violence. Imagination, freed from understanding’s lure, symbolizes morality, a symbolization which does not require a sensuous medium. Understanding is bypassed in imagination’s moral and independent function. Similarly, when time and space are “broken,” so to speak, in sublime experiences, there is no intuition—or at least, no intuition we can determine with the powers of understanding or reason—imagination “exhibits” (*darstellen*),<sup>58</sup> without schematizing. Rather, there is a “display” of the object, whether sensible or supersensible, which serves as a basis for the “construction of a concept,” assuring us of the objective reality of the concept. This is how experiences that exceed our capacities of understanding and reason nevertheless come to be symbols in our consciousness.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 198.

<sup>58</sup> When speaking of the sublime, Cassirer writes, “But this sphere here no longer touches the region of the understanding and intuition [...] but rather that of the Ideas of reason and their supersensory meaning” (E. Cassirer, *Kant’s Life and Thought*, transl. J. Hayden, New Haven 1981, p. 329). As Cassirer explains, even in a judgment of the beautiful, there is no need for schematizing: “according to a basic insight of that *Critique*, which is enlarged on [...] in the chapter on the schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding, even the spatiotemporal connection of the perceptions of the senses and their unification into objects of experience rests precisely on cooperation between the understanding and the imagination” (*ibidem*, p. 314). However, in aesthetic judgment the “free play that is required concerns not [presentation] but the powers of [presentation]; not the results in which intuition and understanding are made concrete and in which they both come to rest, but rather the living excitation that occupies them. In this way every utterance of this sort [the aesthetic], wherein a particular image is not compared with a particular concept but rather the totality of the powers of the mind is first disclosed in its true completeness, lays hold immediately of the ‘life-feeling’ of the very subject” (*ibidem*, pp. 315–316). In the sublime, not only is there no need for schematizing, but schematizing is impossible to achieve, for understanding is surpassed, inner sense is violated, and space is “broken.” As Kant states, “if anyone goes so far as to demand that we establish the objective reality of the rational concepts (i.e., the ideas) for the sake of their theoretical cognition, then he asks for something impossible, because absolutely no intuition can be given that would be adequate to them” (I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §59, p. 351). Rather than schematic hypotyposis, the exhibition is symbolic and symbolic only. Certain symbols can be schematized, if those symbols are objects in intuition. Peacock feathers, for instance, are objects of theoretical knowledge, that can symbolize the might of Hera. However, some symbols—moral symbols—are never objects in intuition to begin with. Freedom, for example, which practical reason uses analogously to intuition, is never a theoretical object, and thus is a symbol only.

<sup>59</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §57, p. 343.

Accordingly, the rational concept of the supersensible substrate of all appearances generally, or the rational concept of the supersensible that must be regarded as underlying our power of choice in relation to moral laws, i.e., the rational concept of transcendental freedom, is an indemonstrable concept and a rational idea, simply because of the type of concept it is [...].<sup>60</sup>

We realize that the thought may seem at first jarring in a Kantian context, to suggest that we have rational concepts that are indemonstrable and, indeed, merely constructed for our cognition by means of a display, i.e., something less stable than a schema. Yet, this is the process by which we get a conceptual hold upon some of our most important rational ideas, such as freedom. There is also no intuition of God or immortality. In such cases, displays are constructed as concepts and thought as symbols of the supersensible substrate, for which “there is not even an intrinsic possibility for anything corresponding to it in quality to be given in experience.”<sup>61</sup> Symbols are, as the etymology of the word suggests, partial, broken, incomplete. They point to something beyond themselves. Creating symbols is the particular work of imagination once it is freed from the demands of understanding. “Just as in the case of a rational idea the imagination with its intuitions does not reach the given concept, so in the case of an aesthetic idea the understanding with its concepts never reaches the entire inner intuition that the imagination has and connects with a given presentation.”<sup>62</sup> In addition to being incomplete, symbols also are not wholly analyzable.<sup>63</sup>

The symbol also does not have to be sensuous. Moral imagination, rather than being based on any sensuous symbol, is based on the symbolism of freedom, which is “known” as a “fact” without intuition—in this case the moral law which is, after all, sublime. This process of symbolizing may seem liberating until one considers seriously its effects upon reason’s ambitions for gaining a complete account of the World. Learning, as it does here, that reason must rely upon vague and incomplete symbols for a supersensible substrate it can never know, reason finds itself severely restricted. Its speculations become antinomies quite easily, and thus reason must restrict itself to expanding those symbols according to a reflective purposiveness only. “[R]eason could never bring itself to accept such a principle that so greatly narrows the area in which it could speculate and could never bring itself to make sacrifices that have to involve the complete destruction of so many

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<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, §57, p. 343. Our emphasis.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>63</sup> As Rudolf Makkreel states in his classic work, as the constructed concept—the symbol—expresses the aesthetic idea, the play of imagination must be apprehended and unified into a concept. Makkreel speaks of this in the context of spirit, specifically that of the artist. Imagination functions, he states, as a mode of *Ausbildung*, and “produces an aesthetic idea that gives an intuitive approximation of the totality of reason” (R. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment*, Chicago 1990, pp. 122–123). Makkreel continues, stating that “The expression of aesthetic ideas through symbolic presentation helps to focus reflection and specify given concepts of reason” (ibidem, p. 127). We can now reflect on things that surpass nature (ibidem, p. 129). We take our reading of imagination in Kant to be consonant with that of Makkreel, and we are endeavoring to add to his analysis.

hopes that were so brilliant otherwise.”<sup>64</sup> In short, we want to know our world as it is, but still more ardently do we propose to know our freedom and our God and our eternal destiny. As Aristotle says, not getting what one aims at is like not getting anything at all.

Thus, reason chooses to aim beyond the limits of the symbol. And, if it is to avoid antinomies, it must place its imaginings under norms of some sort. We cannot get a deduction of these norms, according to Kant, but we can get something like it.<sup>65</sup> We can offer a deductive trajectory for limiting our aesthetic concepts. The upshot is that we can have aesthetic concepts of God, freedom, and other supersensible ideas that conform to reason’s limits, but we cannot allow these aesthetic concepts to be fully certified substitutes for concepts that conform to the categories of understanding. Here, we learn therefore something about the way that the special concept of purpose operates. There is a something-that-it-is-like to have a symbol of freedom, but that symbol does not provide us with knowledge of our freedom, only a semblance of what such knowledge might be for a mind with cognitive powers exceeding our own. Both the moral law and our predisposition for morality not only retain their force when given without intuition, but even, in fact, gain strength. Any such imaginative exhibition—freed from understanding’s expectations—“expands the soul,”<sup>66</sup> once unfettered from sensuous chains. Yet, this kind of unfettering aggrieves our reason. It seems like a cold kind of freedom.

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<sup>64</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §57, p. 344.

<sup>65</sup> The historical argument over Kant’s removal of the subjective side of the Transcendental Deduction of the B-Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* may never be resolved. We prefer to think of the decision as indicative of an insight into the structure and limitations of reflective judgment, such that Kant became aware, gradually, that the logic of determinant judgment is inapplicable to the constitution of objects of knowledge that depend upon the special concept of purpose. We take this to be the essence of Cassirer’s point when he says, “The *Critique of Reason* achieves [the universal and essential form of knowledge] by reflective thought upon the function of knowledge instead of upon its content. It discovers this function in judgment, and to understand judgment in its universal structure, and in its specification in different lines, becomes one of the main problems of the critique. Here it is that Kant found the strictly unifying, systematic, and organizing principle of knowledge. He can show the special structure of metaphysical and mathematical thinking and of the general and special sciences, and of physics and biology, all by reference to the distinction between analytical and synthetic judgments, between empirical and a priori propositions, and between causal and teleological judgments” (E. Cassirer, *The Problem of Knowledge*, transl. W.H. Woglom, Ch. Hendel, New Haven 1950, pp. 14–15). Yet, “Kant declared that philosophy would have to renounce the proud name of an ontology that presumed to furnish in a systematized doctrine synthetic a priori judgments on all existence. This claim would have to give way to the more modest one of a simple analysis of pure understanding. But the post-Kantian systems brushed this warning aside. They started from ontology and metaphysics, and every critique of knowledge that came within their purview was instinctively transformed into an ontological inquiry” (ibidem, p. 26). We would emphasize that the “more modest” viewpoint requires not only a move away from old fashioned ontology, but also a restriction of knowledge to that which can be reflectively comprehended. Even if we can never demonstrate to anyone’s historical satisfaction that this insight was responsible for the excision of the subjective side of the Transcendental Deduction, we nevertheless maintain that it makes conceptual sense to think of the change in this way. See Robert Paul Wolff’s interpretation of the A-Deduction (R.P. Wolff, *Kant’s Theory of Mental Activity: A Commentary on the Transcendental Analytic of the Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge 1963).

<sup>66</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §29, p. 275.

In the third *Critique*, Kant discusses the moral law (and our predisposition for morality) as “deprived of presentation,”<sup>67</sup> yet still symbolized by imagination, stating:

It is indeed a mistake to worry that depriving this presentation of whatever could commend it to the senses will result in its carrying with it no more than a cold and lifeless approval without any moving force or emotion. It is exactly the other way round. For once the senses no longer see anything before them, while yet the unmistakable and indelible idea of morality remains, one would sooner need to temper the momentum of an unbounded imagination so as to keep it from rising to the level of enthusiasm, than to seek to support these ideas with images and childish devices for fear that they would otherwise be powerless.<sup>68</sup>

This is Kant’s iconoclasm of the sensible symbol. The symbol of what is moral, personal, and free is far more salvific of reason’s hopes than any beautiful scene that spreads before our senses or even our minds. This sort of scene is arranged for the soothing of the soul. It is a rational version of beatific vision, wherein no essences are divined and none would be sought.

## II

Not only does Kant foreclose reason’s direct and fulfilled access to the intuitions of certain crucial ideas, i.e., God, freedom, and immortality, but also (and more troubling), other persons and our own souls are denizens of the supersensible; that is unacceptable to reason. We are tempted to employ this power of reason to demand symbols of other persons and of ourselves of a sort that we can treat as determinate concepts, ignoring the antinomies that abound, not to mention the pointless dialectic. To treat an “aesthetic concept” (the “constructed concept,” such as symbols that are at bottom aesthetic, although they seem to function as determinate concepts) as if it had the objective validity of an empirical or theoretical cognition is a self-deception that opens the doors to every pathology of reason. We may dehumanize ourselves and others by acting as though the sublimity of their place in the kingdom of ends, of their autonomy, and of their dignity were but the function of their species or social standing or even race.<sup>69</sup> Identity politics is not far behind these errors of an aggrieved reason as it misuses

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<sup>67</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, §29, p. 274–275.

<sup>69</sup> For a survey of Kant’s writings on race brought together for contemporary assessment, see *Kant and the Concept of Race: Late Eighteenth Century Writings*, J.M. Mikkelsen (ed. & transl.), Albany 2013. We readily grant that Kant’s views on race are problematic; however, in the *Groundwork*, Kant offers a critique of any anthropological basis for ethics (including race), writing that moral philosophy is based entirely on its pure part, and “does not borrow the least thing from acquaintance with him (from anthropology)” (I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:389). He also says that “if we look more closely at the intentions and aspirations in [our actions] we everywhere come upon the dear self, which is always turning up, and it is on this that their purpose is based, not on the strict command of duty” (ibidem, 4:408). Kant’s *Groundwork* is littered with criticisms of anthropological ethics; see especially the first section of Part II (ibidem, 4:407–4:412). We are not defending Kant’s racial views, only pointing out what role he gives them in the critical philosophy, which is very little or none at all.

our untamable imaginations.<sup>70</sup> The pathologies of reason are many, but the essential powers by which they originate are few. The misuse of imagination is surely one of the most common sources of “bad reasoning.” But that phrase seems far too tepid for what we are describing. “Bad reasoning” is morally bad, not just as a source of error, but of atrocities like genocide, colonialism, and any other horror we can license with a pseudorational argument.

Most offensive to reason, and indeed, one point in Kant’s theory that has raised a great hew and cry, is his prohibition upon rational knowledge of the deepest interior self or, as we would call it, the soul. We construct concepts of our souls in the way we have described above, but Kant refuses to allow us to call such constructions “knowledge.”<sup>71</sup> They are analogies at most. What is the point of having such an elaborate moral system when the yield of all that brain-work is something less than full self-knowledge? Yet, we would need no imperatives in our moral lives if once our wills were not merely good, but holy.<sup>72</sup> These failures of self-knowledge must, we assert, supply the limits from which we draw our norms for imagining. In plainer words, the limits of imagination must be drawn from what we cannot know about ourselves. Why, one might ask, is this the designated limit? This fundamental question grows from our sense of what we ought not imagine, but as a first norm, it is not so prohibitive as all that.<sup>73</sup> The norm simply comes down to remembering that “aesthetic concepts” are not real concepts, but merely constructed concepts that are displayed as symbols for our understanding. In short, thou shalt not subrept.<sup>74</sup> However, when we simply remember that symbols are

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<sup>70</sup> An example of how the confusion between the empirical (anthropological) and the moral orders may have an adverse effect upon one’s understanding of Kant is to be found in, for example, S. Kofman, “The Economy of Respect: Kant and Respect for Women,” transl. N. Fisher, [in:] *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant*, R.M. Schott (ed.), University Park 1997, pp. 355–372. Cf. H. Schröder, “Kant’s Patriarchal Order,” transl. R. Gircour, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 275–296.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Kant’s First Paralogism, which he identifies as “That whose presentation is the absolute subject of our judgments and hence cannot be used as determination of another thing is substance. I, as a thinking being, am the absolute subject of all my possible judgments, and this presentation of myself cannot be used as predicate of any other thing. There I, as thinking being (soul), am substance” (I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A348). Substance is, in short, an unwavering concept; it is ridiculous, as Kant says, to infer that “I, as a thinking being, continue by myself and do not naturally either arise or pass away” (*ibidem*, A349). But, symbols arise and pass away, and what knowledge we have of our deepest interiority, of our soul—and the souls of others—will not yield itself, fully, to any analysis.

<sup>72</sup> “Hence no imperatives hold for the divine will and in general for a holy will: the ‘ought’ is out of place here, because volition is of itself necessarily in accord with the law. Therefore imperatives are only formulae expressing the relation of objective laws of volition in general to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being, for example, of the human will” (I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:414).

<sup>73</sup> If we had no moral failings, then no imperatives would arise in our moral reasoning. But, the humility we learn from our moral failings, in both acting and thinking, provides for us a solid sense of the limitations of our moral imaginations. That is why we feel a certain kind of humility in the presence of our moral betters that we do not experience in the presence of people who are simply more powerful or more famous than ourselves. Moral humility is the genuine of limits in our efforts of self-knowledge. See J. Grenberg, *Kant and the Ethics of Humility*, Cambridge 2005, especially Part 3 and Chapter 8.

<sup>74</sup> Subreption is a fallacy, a trick performed by the intellect of “slipping in a concept of sense as if it were the concept of an intellectual characteristic” (I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §27, p. 257, n. 22).



entertained (*unterhalten*), reflectively, we also become aware that the norms of unfettered imagination are reflective norms. Kant says,

[...] if it be granted that our deduction is at least on the right track, even if not yet sufficiently clarified in all details, then we are led to three ideas: first, the idea of the supersensible in general, not further determined, as the substrate of nature; second, the idea of the same supersensible as the principle of nature's subjective purposiveness for our cognitive power; third, the idea of the same supersensible as the principle of the purposes of freedom and the harmony of these purposes with nature in the moral sphere.<sup>75</sup>

Here, we find the needed constructions about how we ought to imagine. The third of these ideas is the Vocation of Reason, its calling in our lives. Kant has earlier indicated that the role of imagination in fulfilling our supersensible vocation is analogous to what it does in contributing a schematized manifold of sense to our understanding. He says:

[T]he feeling it [our contemplative experience of the sublime in nature] presupposes is already different again [from the feeling of being overwhelmed]: it is a feeling of our supersensible vocation which, however obscure it may be, has a moral foundation [...]. The only difference [between such contemplativeness and ordinary sensible experience] is that in the case of ordinary experience the imagination has to engage in this procedure[of apprehending the manifold] in order [for us] to [obtain] an empirical objective concept, whereas in the present case (in aesthetic judging) it has to do so merely in order to perceive that the presentation is adequate for [giving rise to a] harmonious (subjectively purposive) activity of the two cognitive powers in their freedom, i.e., in order [for us] to feel the presentational state with pleasure.<sup>76</sup>

Hence, we see that our supersensible vocation is not cold freedom; it is pleasant. Yet such pleasure might even accompany cruel acts toward others, where we substitute the constructed concept—the symbol—for a determinate concept and then merely apprehend it. That an enemy ought to suffer or that a profit ought to be made from clear-cutting a forest would be harmonies of our cognitive powers that refuse to imagination its role in the supersensible. After all, the supersensible in which the soul of my enemy suffers is, or I must think it is (if I am to be sane), the same heaven I hope to inhabit when I imagine my deepest self. One would think, although one does not say so, that the contradiction of a contemplative pleasure and the endless suffering of another in the supersensible is plain enough that any reasonable being would avoid inflicting such suffering upon either other persons or nature in the sensible domain. Yet, we like to pretend that the souls of others and the soul of nature will occupy a different supersensible substratum, if we allow to them any supersensible standing at all. When we forget that our experience of “personhood,” or, one might say, “soul,” is conceptual only insofar as it is symbolic, reason reverts to its original hopes of knowing objects of sense as things-in-themselves.<sup>77</sup> This cognitive habit of forgetting is a denial of the vocation of reason and uses imagination too narrowly to fuel moral growth. We stagnate, we founder in the doldrums of a moral sea, awaiting Coleridge's seasnakes.

<sup>75</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §57, p. 346.

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem, §38, p. 292. Our emphasis.

<sup>77</sup> We are reminded of the passage about how painful it is for reason to accept such limitations (I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §57, p. 344).

While a narrow use of imagination limits moral growth, an excess of imagination also limits us, insofar as it can feed the hungry pathologies of reason, pathologies “presented” as fantasies upon which we will not act practically, but from the imagining of which we gain some pleasure. Recall that, when speaking of reason’s lost hopes, Kant states that reason compensates for its loss by the prospect of “proportionately greater employment in a practical respect.”<sup>78</sup> That is, while reason’s hopes of fully knowing appearances are dashed by the antinomies, the antinomies allow reason greater practical employment. However, this greater proportion of practicality does not mean that reason is fully assuaged, that its pathologies and grief do not petition to be addressed. In fact, we imagine scenarios which must not ever be enacted; such scenarios are, indeed, the work of imagination alone, for imagination is the “power of presenting an object in intuition even without the object’s being present.”<sup>79</sup> The darkest of our desires are presented by imagination alone; when we imagine that the enemy ought to suffer, we also imagine how the enemy will suffer. For example, when we indulge our imaginations in the literature of dark romanticism, whether it be Poe’s “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” or a contemporary television series such as *Dexter*, we give “legs” to our imaginings, which would never be educative in the moral world. These indulgences, these excesses of imagining, flout the norms suggested by the antinomies we find in the second and third *Critiques*.<sup>80</sup> That certain presentations of possible moral action should find their full conceptual meaning, whether determinate or reflective, in spite of their moral character, is no surprise. The question is whether any moral progress of the soul results from such contemplations. Imagination’s likelihood of outrunning a narrow conceptualization of “the other,” a narrow thinking of “the other,” leads as easily to the darkest of reason’s practical prospects. Our practical frustrations with being unable to act upon the fantasy may also lead to monstrous mistakes in order to justify to ourselves the fantasies that result from such narrow conceptualization. If something is morally wrong to do, then it is probably morally wrong to imagine, and reinforcing such imaginings with thinking leads to the kind of frustration previously mentioned.

Consider Kant’s discussion of fanaticism and enthusiasm. Kant tells us that when we consider sublimity as a characteristic of the action itself, our minds are “attuned to nothing but moral fanaticism and enhancement of self-conceit.”<sup>81</sup> In such cases, I think of my own action as the singular (functioning as universal) that justifies a history of some (mythological) kind: in this, and only this, instance, is such-and-such an action justified. To do something once “doesn’t count,” according to this logic. Yet, actions can be understood, and known thoroughly; it is our interiority and motivation that cannot be so known.<sup>82</sup> And yet, reason desires to

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<sup>78</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>79</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B151.

<sup>80</sup> See the antinomies of the second *Critique*, 5:115–119, and those of the third *Critique*, §56.

<sup>81</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:85.

<sup>82</sup> Recall Kant’s statements in the *Groundwork* that we cannot ever know fully the motivations of our own actions: “From love of humanity I am willing to admit that even most of our actions are in conformity with duty; but if we look more closely at the intentions and aspirations in them we every-

know appearances—including actions—as things-in-themselves. When we exhort the action itself as sublime, we assume that it is the action itself that can be known fully, and that the action is all there is to know. Considering actions in such a way is “pathological”<sup>83</sup> and “delusional,” Kant holds; we are led to believe it is not duty that is the basis of actions, but the lawfulness of the action itself that makes the act sublime. Yet, acts are never sublime, and are not morally worthy merely due to their form. This delusion of taking the act for a sublimity that can belong only to its supersensible origin leads to a “fanatical” way of thinking.<sup>84</sup> Kant delineates two kinds of fanaticism: speculative, and practical. “Fanaticism” (*Schwärmerei*), “in the most general meaning is an overstepping of the bounds of human reason undertaken according to principles.”<sup>85</sup> Consider our previous example of the enemy who ought to suffer. We forget, in our imaginings, that this enemy has a soul, and that our concept of the enemy is only a constructed concept—a symbol, not wholly yielding to analysis. In this forgetting (intentional or not), in treating the narrow conception of the person as sufficient, we appease reason’s desire to know appearances as things-in-themselves; we think we can know everything, or at least everything we must know. And yet, in doing so, we have overstepped the bounds of reason—we think we know what we in fact cannot. We become, we might say, “speculative fanatics.” Rather, the proper employment of imagination in relation to thinking must be humble in its assessment of our cognition.

Moral fanaticism, therefore “is such an overstepping of the bounds that practical pure reason sets for humanity.”<sup>86</sup> The formulation “practical pure reason” indicates that even pure reason must acknowledge a moral teleology that, in the end, is wholly practical. While conceptual fanatics only overstep the bounds of pure reason—of what we can know—moral fanaticism oversteps the bounds of what we can know about what we can do. Moral fanaticism posits the determining basis of actions in the form of the actions themselves, rather than in the subjective basis of the action—moral incentive. Moral fanatics “rove among fancied moral perfection.”<sup>87</sup> In the third *Critique*, when speaking of the sublimity of the moral law, Kant also speaks of fanaticism: fanaticism is “the delusion [*Wahn*] of wanting to SEE something beyond all bounds of sensibility, i.e., of dreaming according to principles (raving with reason).”<sup>88</sup> While imagination is unbridled in mere enthusiasm, in fanaticism, which is “a deep-seated and brooding passion,” imagination is rule-less; Kant also refers to this as “mania,” which “deranges” understanding.<sup>89</sup> Consider the television series character Dexter, for example.<sup>90</sup> It

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where come upon the dear self, which is always turning up” (I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:407).

<sup>83</sup> Recalling that reason’s pathology is that it must know everything, that “objects of sense are things in themselves” (I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §57, p. 344).

<sup>84</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:85.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, 5:86.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*. Dostoevsky’s Raskolnikov comes to mind.

<sup>88</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 5:275.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>90</sup> See *Dexter and Philosophy*, R. Greene, G. Reisch, R. Robison (eds.), Chicago 2011.

is not that he does not operate by certain rules; in fact, he considers his acts as complete and “right” only if they are in accord with a certain set of rules. In spite of his persistent self-criticism, he avoids considering the subjective determining basis for his actions, but considers only the form of the actions themselves. What he imagines as the crimes of his victim must be cognizable; he does not perform “the kill” until his victim has admitted (not necessarily verbally) the supposed crime. It is not that Dexter cannot cognize; it is that his understanding is ruled by imagination, and becomes deranged.

Eli Friedlander states that the fanatic “craves for a vision of the unconditioned,” and is “empowered by the illusion that he can partake in the unconditioned.”<sup>91</sup> The fanatic, in short, is one whose reason is not subject to the antinomies, one who thinks he knows the unconditioned. The fanatic seeks to, and thinks he succeeds in, knowing moral perfection, and thus believes he can “intuit the ultimate grounds of [the] will.”<sup>92</sup> Dexter seeks to intuit the ultimate grounds of his victims’s will (perhaps his own as well), and believes he can do so. The fanatic, to paraphrase Friedlander, thinks he can possess morality.<sup>93</sup>

We can see, now, how the pathologies of reason and the lack of an intuition of freedom (as a formal stand-in for empirical intuitions) can lead to certain unbecoming activities of imagination, in both its speculative and practical pure use. While it is true that imagination imitates the structure of teleological reason when it analogizes from the determinate employment of judgment to the reflective employment of judgment, one cannot reverse the course of such an analogy without opening the door to monstrous applications and variations of imagination. Examining the argument of §59 of the *Critique of Judgment*, we note that the analogy Kant insists upon, repeatedly, that beauty is the symbol of morality, borrows, for reason’s use, judgment’s rule, substituting a feeling for a concept. In satisfying reason’s demand for some kind of determination, a determination of the subject is thus substituted for a determination of the object. The form of such a judgment becomes an intuition, in the absence of any empirical or even formal intuition of freedom. However, this substitution comes at a very high cost—at the cost of its moral moorings. Intuitions born of the determinate use of judgment in the domain of reason will not retain their moral teleology when applied reflectively, unless they find their limit in the purposiveness we learn to respect in rational *sensus communis*. In sort, judgment, here, is free of the fetters of reason, but not of purpose.

Recall our previous discussion in Part I of this paper; one cannot intuit freedom, for freedom can never be an object for understanding. Rather, *Wille* and *Willkür* are symbolized by imagination.<sup>94</sup> However, without certain “guidelines” for imagination, imagination can fall prey to excesses and deficiencies, as we have illustrated earlier. Reason, after all, seeks to know everything, and this quest for certainty can, without the interference of the antinomies, extend to mistaking ob-

<sup>91</sup> E. Friedlander, *Expressions of Judgment*, Cambridge 2015, p. 57.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 59.

<sup>94</sup> See I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §57–59.

jects as things-in-themselves; indeed, by such a distortion of the form of knowing, we could imagine we know the soul of another. This case of mistaken, insistent certainty includes considering symbols of freedom—and other Ideas of reason—as unapproachably supersensible, on the one hand, while we surreptitiously appropriate these ideas as if they were schemata rendered conformable to our acts of understanding: subreption. But, as Kant makes clear, the unity of that which exceeds understanding with that which exceeds reason with that which exceeds judgment, is a unity irresistible to our power of imagination, which traverses and even plays in the supersensible. The unity of the supersensible substrate is not an object of knowledge, and cannot become so; but it does not follow that there is no experience of the supersensible substrate. Imagination goes there, and then it comes home. But what guides that adventure?

The antinomies of judgment and practical reason norm imagination; they guide imagination's use when there is no perception, perhaps even no intuition, apart from a borrowed intuition employed analogically, which the idea of freedom symbolizes. The antinomies teach us what dialectic always teaches us, for Kant, which is how our efforts to step beyond the limits of possible experience can, at the same time, indicate the limits of experience and how to think the idea of the supersensible. The idea of supersensible in general—"not further determined"—must be considered as the substrate of nature; the idea of the supersensible is the "principle of nature's subjective purposiveness for our cognitive power," and as the idea of the supersensible, "as the principles of the purposes of freedom," and as the harmony of these purposes with nature.<sup>95</sup> In short, the supersensible cannot be determined, it cannot be cognitively known, and must never be taken as such. We cannot possess the supersensible, and we must follow the ultimate commandment of the third *Critique*: Thou shalt not subrept.

As Kant points out, subreption "relieves" one of the "trouble, yet also of the ability, to expand his soul's forces beyond the barriers that one could choose to set for him so as to reduce him to mere passivity and make him more pliable."<sup>96</sup> Governments, for example, as surely as advertising agencies take advantage of subreption, and so "gladly permitted religion to be amply furnished with [...] accessories."<sup>97</sup> Citizens remain "in the minority" (to invoke "What is Enlightenment?")<sup>98</sup> and in a state of "passive reason."<sup>99</sup> The general will is indiscernible by such quasi-citizens.<sup>100</sup> Those who would be citizens remain. We must never replace the unconditioned or (Kant adds) the moral law; the infinite, and not the sensible, "expands

<sup>95</sup> Ibidem, §57, p. 347.

<sup>96</sup> Ibidem, §29, p. 275.

<sup>97</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>98</sup> "Minority," Kant says, "is the inability to make use of one's own understanding without direction from another;" (I. Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?," transl. M.J. Gregor, [in:] I. Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, M.J. Gregor (ed.), Cambridge 1996, 8:35).

<sup>99</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §40, p. 295. Passive reason, the need to be guided by others, is revealed by "superstition," which is a prejudice, a "blindness" that "seems to demand an obligation." Liberation from this superstition, from this blind and passive reason, is enlightenment (ibidem).

<sup>100</sup> Commentators commonly underestimate the influence of Rousseau's concept of the general will on Kant's moral philosophy. For a clearer sense of the relation, see E. Cassirer, *Rousseau, Kant*,

the soul.”<sup>101</sup> Yet, we need not, as Kant states, fear that “once the senses no longer see anything before them,”<sup>102</sup> we will be left with only a cold morality. Rather, once imagination is no longer tied to the sensuous medium, we must take care to “temper the momentum of unbounded imagination,” to prevent it from enthusiasm or fanaticism. Yet, we must not dull our power of sensibility to imagination’s play as it encounters the possible in all its immediacy. The ideas must not be replaced with “images and childish devices for fear they would otherwise be powerless.”<sup>103</sup> And so, when we seek to replace ideas with images, when we take the appearance for the idea, we must pause, and ask: What are you really afraid of anyway?

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<sup>101</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §29, p. 275.

<sup>102</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>103</sup> Ibidem.

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