

Is Kant Afraid of Emotions? An Empirically Informed Analysis

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The paper aims to show the psychological feasibility of Kant's theory with respect to the role of emotions and their interaction with reason within moral deliberation.

Various scholars claim that developments in the cognitive sciences (1) challenge the psychological feasibility of Kant's ethics because of its negative stance on the value of emotions. According to them, Kant's view entails the removal of emotions from the process of moral deliberation in favor of an all-encompassing role of reason (2). Contrary to this exclusively rationalistic Kantian approach to moral deliberation, more recent evidence (3) pushes in the direction of integrated models, in which reason and emotions interact in the determination of moral judgment (4).

The paper pursues two goals.

The first is to show how latest works on the elucidation of Kant's texts regarding the nature of emotions and their relation to practical reason (5) provide support for the psychological feasibility of Kant's view of moral deliberation. Indeed, emotions are not negative per se and have a constitutive role in the determination of the agent's will.

The second goal is to illustrate how Kant is also able to account for the reciprocal interaction between emotions and reason. Reasoning can affect emotion. Indeed, empirical evidence shows how conscious reasoning can educate our emotions (6). The process of cultivation of non-moral feelings by practical reason in Kant anticipates what is known, within the contemporary debate on emotion regulation, as the "reappraisal" strategy (7). Conversely, emotion can affect reasoning. Numerous studies reveal the influence emotions can have on reasoning, directing the agent's attention to specific aspects of the situation. According to Kant, certain moral feelings (8), but also non-moral feelings cultivated by practical reason (9), provide what «the representation of duty alone might not accomplish» (10) and act as an affective moral-deliberation engaging alarm, directing the agent's attention and motivating her to reasoning.

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