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KANT ON DUTIES REGARDING NATURE

I

In the *Lectures on Ethics* which he gave at the outset of the critical period, Kant reported to his students a typical conception of the philosophical basis for our duties to non-human nature:

> Baumgarten speaks of duties towards inanimate objects. These duties are also indirectly duties towards mankind. Destructiveness is immoral; we ought not to destroy things which can still be put to some use. No man ought to mar the beauty of nature; for what he has no use for may still be of use to some one else. He need, of course, pay no heed to the thing itself, but he ought to consider his neighbor. Thus we see that all duties towards animals, towards immaterial beings and towards inanimate objects are aimed indirectly at our duties towards mankind[1].

Aside from the passing reference to beauty, the assumptions expressed in this remark were characteristic of a widespread attitude towards nature. The foundation of any duty to conserve non-human nature which we might acknowledge is our duty of consideration towards the needs of our fellow humans, and the indirect duty regarding nature to which this underlying duty can give rise is a duty to ensure that natural objects, whether animate or inanimate, are available for legitimate use by other persons as well as by ourselves.

A similar attitude, although founded upon explicitly theological reasoning absent from Kant's brief discussion, was also expressed in Locke's famous proviso restricting our appropriation and accumulation of the useful fruits and beasts „produced by the spontaneous hand of nature". Locke argued, first, that the earth and all its gifts have been given to men in common for use in the satisfaction of their needs –

[1] I. Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, tr. L. Infield, Methuen & Co., London 1930, p. 241.

discussion of natural beauty is actually offered as a case-study of the operation of sympathy: it is sympathy with the needs and satisfactions of others which leads us to take pleasure in the utility-based beauty of a field or plain even if we are not its owner. Buty the key point remained that it is the utility of non-human nature with respect to human needs that grounds our moral attitude to nature.

In the final phase of his career, however – the period opening with the *Critique of Judgment* and closing with the *Metaphysics of Morals* – Kant suggests a very different foundation for duties regarding non-human nature. On this account, while the respect that we may owe to non-human nature is still grounded in our duties to mankind, two key differences emerge. First, the basis for such respect lies not in the utility of fruits, beasts and fields but in nature's aesthetic properties, the beauty of individual natural forms; and Kant's critique of aesthetic judgment clearly distinguishes judgments of beauty from any judgments of utility, no matter how veiled or supplemented by sympathy. Second, in an even more striking reversal of the sort of view reported in his lectures, Kant grounds the duty to which the beauty of nature may give rise not in our duties to *others* but in our duties to *ourselves*, and, indeed, not in duties we may have regarding the well-being of our animal nature, such as the cultivation of our bodily powers and talents, but in our duty to preserve and cultivate our moral character or disposition.

This reversal of attitudes is clearly summed up in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. First Kant observes that it is important not to confuse duty *regarding* other beings – he here provides us with an extensional definition of nature by listing the three realms of minerals, plants, and animals – with duty *toward* such beings[6], so that he may then argue that although the fundamental principle of morality – to respect rational being as an end in itself – cannot give rise to duties directly *toward* non-rational nature, a duty that we have *toward* ourselves as rational beings may give rise to duties *regarding* non-rational nature. He then briefly characterizes such duties – actually by describing their violation – and the ground on which they rest:

> A propensity to the bare destruction (*spiritus destructionis*) of beautiful though lifeless things in nature is contrary to man's duty to himself. For such a propensity weakens or destroys that feeling in man which is indeed not of itself already moral, but which still does much to promote a state of sensibility favorable to morals, or at least to prepare for such a state – namely, pleasure in loving something without any intention of using it, e.g. finding a disinterested delight in beautiful crystallizations or in the indescribable beauty of the plant kingdom.

[6] I. Kant, *Metaphysical First Principles of Virtue* [hereafter abbreviated: *MPV*], § 16, tr. J. Ellington, Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis 1964; the volume and page number as in the *Akademie* edition of *Kants gesammelte Schriften* will precede the page number from the translation for this and other works by Kant.

> Even more intimately opposed to man's duty to himself is a savage and at the same time cruel treatment of that part of creation which is living, though lacking reason (animals). For thus is compassion for their suffering dulled in man, and thereby a natural predisposition very serviceable to morality in one's relations with other men is weakened and gradually obliterated. However, man is authorized to put animals to adroit and painless slaughter or to make them do hard work, as long as it is not beyond their strength... On the other hand, physical experiments involving excrucitating pain for animals and conducted merely for the sake of speculative inquiry (when the end might also be achieved without such experiments) are to be abhorred. Even gratitude for the long-performed service of an old horse or dog... belongs indirectly to a man's duty, namely his duty *regarding* these animals; but directly considered, such a duty is always only his duty *to* himself[7].

The utility of non-human nature hardly loses all importance, and Kant continues to express the Judaeo-Christian attitude[8] voiced by Locke that we are „authorized" to make use of such nature. But, at least in the cases of the mineral and vegetable realms, it is clearly beauty rather than utility which is the salient ground of our indirect duty ragarding nature; and in all cases it is clear that it is our duty concerning our own moral attitude and development rather than any direct responsibility to the claims or needs of others which generates this duty regarding nature.

Certain questions naturally arise in reflection upon Kant's introduction of duties regarding nature into the scheme of the *Metaphysics of Morals*. Perhaps the most obvious question concerns the reason for Kant's transformation of any sort of aesthetic response – which is, after all, supposed to be marked by disinterestedness before all else – into something susceptible to moral evaluation and fit to found a species of duty. In addition to this basic issue, however, one must also ask whether anything more can be said about the actual content of these duties beyond what Kant so briefly states. Third, one may consider what might be inferred from the position of these duties in Kant's general classification about the scope and strength of their claims regarding nature in realtion to our other, more direct duties regarding ourselves and others. Most of what follows will concern the first of these questions; but some light will be shed on the other two as well.

II

As late as the *Critique of Practical Reason* of 1788, only two years prior to the publication of the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant characterized aesthetic response as a subjective state of pleasure which could not be seen as having any

[7] *MPV*, § 17, 6:443; Ellington, p. 106.

[8] See J. Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1974, p. 3–15.

direct moral significance. In the second critique Kant considers an attraction to natural beauty a state of mind which, although commendable and perhaps even gradually productive of a morally good disposition, is not something which can be required as any sort of duty.

> Now there is no doubt that this exercise and the consciousness of cultivation of our reason which judges concernig the practical must gradually produce a certain interest even in its own law and thus in morally good actions. For we ultimately take a liking to that the observation of which makes us feel that our powers of knowledge are extended, and this extension is especially furthered by that wherein we find moral correctness, since reason, with its faculty of determining according to *a priori* principles what ought to occur, can find satisfaction only in such an order of things. Even an observer of nature finally likes objects which first offend his senses when he discovers in them the great design of their organization, so that his reason finds nourishment in observing them; Leibniz spared an insect which he had carefully examined under the miscroscope, and replaced it on its leaf, because he had been instructed by viewing it and, as it were, had received a benefit from it.
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> But this occupation of the faculty of judgment, which makes us feel our own powers of konwledge, is not yet interest in actions and their morality itself. It only enables one to entertain himself with such judging and gives virtue or a turn of mind based on moral laws a form of beauty which is admired but not yet sought... It is the same with everything whose contemplation produces subjectively a consciousness of the harmony of our powers of representation by which we feel our entire cognitive faculty (understanding and imagination) strengthened; it produces a satisfaction that can be communicated to others, but the existence of its object remains indifferent to us, as it is seen only as the occasion for our becoming aware of the store of talents which are are elevated above the more animal level[9].

Thus, Kant suggests, although a virtuous disposition may grow out of aesthetic sensitivity to natural beauty, there is no direct moral content to aesthetic contemplation; and apparently the causal connection that there may be between aesthetic contemplation and what it reveals about our cognitive powers is not sufficient to license any direct claims of duty. Instead, Kant continues, the „methodology of moral cultivation and exercise" can only work by „calling to notice the purity of will by a vivid example of the moral disposition in examples"[10]. Kant's view seems to be that only our subjective responses to examples of moral behavior itself – such as our admiration for the fortitude of a (fictional) honest man's refusal to betray Anne Boleyn to the accusations of Henry VIII[11] – directly enter the methodology of practical reason and thus, presumably, become connected to any actual duties.

In the *Critique of Judgment* two years later, several passages seem to suggest a closer link between aesthetics and morality. In the first of these, Kant introduces a notion of „intellectual interest" in the „beautiful *forms* of nature"

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[9] I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:159–60, tr. L. White Beck, Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis 1956, p. 164.

[10] *Ibid.*, 5:160, 161; Beck, p. 164, 165.

[11] *Ibid.*, 5:155-6; Beek, p. 159.

which, he says, is „always a mark of a good soul" and, where habitual, „at least indicative of a temper of mind favorable to the moral feeling"[12]. The use of the term „interest" might suggest that Kant now means to bring our response to natural beauty more directly into the sphere of practical reason than he seemed willing to allow in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. But there are two grounds for caution here.

First, the discussion of possible interests in beautiful objects is preceded by an explicit reference to duty which is far from unequivocally recognizing any aestheticallygrounded interest as an actual duty of practical reason: if, Kant says, we could „assume that the mere universal communicability of our feeling must of itself carry with it an interest for us... we should then be in a position to *explain* [my emphasis] how the feeling in the judgment of taste comes to be exacted from every one as a *sort of* [*gleichsam* (my emphasis)] duty"[13]. But this comment, while obviously reflecting a favorable attitude to aesthetic response, does not say that an interest in beauty is an actual duty, nor does it say that exacting aesthetic response from others *as if* it were a duty can actually be *justified* by the possibility of connecting an interest with it. Instead, it seems as if Kant's point is precisely to suggest that he can *explain* why we may *respond* to the appreciation of natural beauty as if it were a genuine moral duty even though it is not.

Second, it should also be noted that even if Kant had meant to argue that intellectual interest in natural beauty could transform our attachment to it into a genuine duty of morality rather than just something like one, the mechanism of this intellectual interest which he then goes on to describe might not suffice for this purpose. Kant argues as follows. A pure judgment of taste is neither founded upon an antecedent interest in, i.e. a reason for a desire for, the existence of its object, nor does it produce such an interest. Moral judgment – i.e. „the power of intellectual judgment for the mere forms of practical maxims" – is analogous in being independent of an antecedent interest in the existence of its object, but it does produce a consequent interest. However, Kant adds, reason has a *general* interest in its ideas having objective reality – that is, presumably, being actually instantiated or at least approximated in external existence – and this general interest extends to the existence of naturally beautiful objects which satisfy the conditions of our aesthetic response as well as to the existence of external circumstances complying with the direct interests of morality. As he puts it,

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[12] I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment* [hereafter abbreviated: *CJ*], § 42, 5:298–299, tr. J.C. Meredith, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1911, 1928, p. 157.

[13] *CJ*, § 40, 5:296; Meredith, p. 154.

> But, now, reason is further interested in ideas (for which in our moral feeling it brings about an immediate interest) having also objective reality. That is to say, it is of interest to reason that nature should at least show a trace or give a hint that it contains in itself some ground or other for assuming a uniform accordance of its products with out wholly disinterested delight... That being so, reason must take an interest in every manifestation on the part of nature of some such accordance. Hence the mind cannot reflect on the beauty of *nature* without at the same time finding its interest engaged. But this interest is akin to the moral[14].

Kant's idea seems to be that since (practical) reason is inevitably interested in nature complying with the demands of morality, it is interested in all signs that nature complies with any of our – at least not immoral – ideas and expectations at all. So although natural beauty has no directly moral content, and our disinterested contemplation of it has no immediately obvious moral value, nevertheless the very existence of natural beauty, which, unlike artistic beauty, cannot be conceived of as having been intentionally created for our own gratification, shows that nature is not hostile to our own ideas and endeavors; and it should therefore give us encouragement in our effort to be moral as well – assuming that we have set ourselves to undertake the latter effort.

The problem with this argument, however, is that although it may give an explanation of our quasi-moral *interest* in natural beauty, it does not transform such interest into a *duty*. A comparison of this explanation of intellectual interest with Kant's concept of the *summum bonum* inevitably suggests this conclusion. The *summum bonum* is the complete and bipartite object of rational willing for beings like ourselves who are both animal yet rational. One component of the highest good, which Kant refers as to as the *supreme* or *unconditioned* but not *complete* or *consummate* good[15], is the maximal worthiness to be happy, or virtuousness, which of course consists in willing to do what duty requires for the reason that duty requires it. The other component of the highest good is happiness, indeed the maximal amount of happiness, which is not only naturally but also rationally willed by a rational being with desires (happiness being nothing but the satisfaction of desires), conditional only upon the being's worthiness to be happy.

> Happiness is also required, and indeed not merely in the partial eyes of a person who makes himself his end but even in the judgment of an impartial reason, which impartially regards persons in the world as ends-in-themselves. For to be in need of happiness and worthy of it and yet not to partake of it could not be in accordance with the complete volitional of a... rational being[16].

What is important for our present purposes is that Kant insists that the connection between happiness and virtue is synthetic rather than analytic; that

[14] *CJ*, § 42, 5:300; Meredith, pp. 159–160.

[15] See Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:110; Beck, p. 114.

[16] *Ibid.*; Beck, p. 114–115.

is, that willing happiness is not identical with willing compliance with what duty requires, but is an independent object rationally willed as long as it is not in conflict with duty and is proportionate to one's worthiness[17].

Kant makes this point clear in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, but stresses it even more forcefully in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone:*

> But that everyone ought to make the highest good *possible* in this world a *final end* is a synthetic practical proposition *a priori* (and indeed objectively practical) given by pure reason; for it is a proposition which goes beyond the concept of duties in this world and adds a consequence (an effect) there of which is not contained in the moral laws and therefore cannot be evolved out of them analytically... That is, the proposition: Make the highest good possible in the world your own final end! is a synthetic proposition *a priori*, which is introduced by the moral law itself; although practical reason does, indeed, extend itself therein beyond the law. This extension is possible because of the moral law's being taken in relation to the natural characteristic of man, that for all his actions he must conceive of an end over and above the law (a characteristic which makes man an object of experience)[18].

The point is that we do not will the satisfaction of our objectives as part of willing to do our duty. We will the satisfaction of our objectives or happiness, as one form of practical willing, independently of willing our duty, and we will to do our duty, as another form of practical willing, independently of any promise of happiness; it is just that a fully rational will has an interest in the maximal satisfaction of its two distinct objectives, happiness and duty[19].

The lesson that is then to be drawn from this analysis of the highest good is that practical reason has *interests* in the satisfaction of its objectives which are not identical with its *duties*. Indeed, since dutiful action must be undertaken without regard to the bearing of its outcome on one's own happiness, it would seem as if practical reason's interest in happiness as a component of the highest good *must* be independent of practical reason's interest in the performance of duty. And this in turn suggests that reason's interest in nature's compliance with our objectives, which is supposed to be expressed in our interest in the natural existence of beautiful objects, is connected with practical reason's interest in happiness rather than duty. If this is so, then it would seem that the

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[17] This „synthetic" interpretation of the derivation of the concept of the highest good is in opposition to the „analytic" account suggested by J. Silber in *The Importance of the Highest Good in Kant's Ethics*, „Ethics" 1963, No. 28, p. 178–187, especially p. 190–192.

[18] I. Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 6:7n.; tr. Th. M. Greene, H. H. Hudson, Harper & Row, New York 1960, p. 6–7n.

[19] In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant similarly argues that the connection between worthiness to be happy (duty) and happiness must be synthetic, but then also assumes that it must be causal, as if a causal connection were the only candidate for the basis of a synthetic judgment (5:111; Beck, p. 115). This is obviously meant to pave the way for his argument that the postulation of the existence of God is necessary to establish a causal connection between virtue and happiness which is otherwise literally unnatural; but does not undercut the basic point made in the *Religion*.

intellectual interest in natural beauty is something which must be *conditioned* by morality, as even happiness in the complete good must be conditioned by the supreme good of the worthiness to be happy, but is not something the interest in or pursuit of which can itself be considered a duty. Intellectual interest in the beautiful may reflect an interest of practical reason, but if it is analogous to practical reason's natural but only conditionally valid interest in happiness, then it is not the direct ground of any duty.

The question remains, then, how does our attachment to natural beauty, even if akin to an interest of practical reason, become transformed from something merely *like* a duty to a genuine duty toward oneself? To solve this puzzle, two pieces must be brought together. First, we must consider another line of thought in the *Critique of Judgment*, namely Kant's claim that the beauty of individual natural forms can be considered a symbol of the freedom which underlies morality; and we must then see how acknowledgment of symbols of morality can contribute to the development of a moral disposition. Second, we must consider Kant's position, clarified if not in fact introduced only in the *Metaphysics of Morals* at the end of his career, that the cultivation of a moral disposition is not irrelevant to, let alone in conflict with, the performance of duty and thus worthiness to be happy, but is itself a specific duty of virtue toward oneself. Only when we have seen that Kant thinks that attraction to natural beauty does not just *express* a morally good disposition but *contributes* to it, and also that he recognizes the cultivation of such a disposition as a discrete duty, will we be able to understand his claim that we have duties toward ourselves but regarding the objects of nature.

III

It is in its theory of beauty as the *symbol* of morality that the *Critique of Judgment* suggests a link between beauty and morality which is an alternative to that expounded in the theory of intellectual interest. The two chief claims in this theory are first, that beautiful objects can function as a symbol of morality not because of any directly moral *content* in them – as Kant puts it, they are not *schemata* of moral ideas – but because of parallels or analogies between the reflective response to beauty and moral judgment. Second, since moral ideas, as ideas of pure reason, cannot be presented to the senses at all, the analogical or symbolic presentation of the idea of morality through the experience of beauty is the *only* form available for the presentation – or „hypotyposis" – of moral ideas to sense. Thus, if it could be shown that the system of virtues requires any presentation of morality to the senses at all, it could then be argued that the response to beauty can give rise to a duty and not just an intellectual interest.

In fact, there are really two layers to Kant's theory of beauty as the symbol of morality. In his doctrine of aesthetic ideas, he argues that *specific* ideas of morality or virtue, such as the „kingdom of the blessed"[20], can only be presented through aesthetic symbols; in the exposition of the theory of beauty as the symbol of morality, however, the argument is rather that aesthetic experience in general is the symbol of morality in general. Since it is only in light of the latter connection that Kant suggests that taste for the beautiful may be demanded (though still „from others") as a duty[21], we may restrict our attention to the general connection. The basis of the analogy or symbolism is that in responding to beauty and making a judgment of taste the faculty of judgment „does not find itself subjected to a heteronomy of laws of experience as it does in the empirical estimate of things – in respect of of the objects of such a pure delight it gives the law to itself, just as reason does in respect of the faculty of desire"[22]. Kant then expands upon this analogy:

> (1) The beautiful pleases *immediately* (but only in reflective intuition, not, like morality, in its concept). (2) It pleases *apart from all interest* (pleasure in the morally good is no doubt necessarily bound up with an interest, but not with with one of the kind that are antecedent to the judgment upon the delight, but with one that judgment itself for the first time calls into existence). (3) *The freedom* of the imagination... is, in estimating the beautiful, represented as in accord with the understanding's conformity to law (in moral judgments the freedom of the will is thought of as the harmony of the latter with itself according to universal laws of reason). (4) The subjective principle of the estimate of the beautiful is represented as *universal*, i.e. valid for every man, but as incognizable by means of any universal concept (the objective principle of morality is set forth as also universal... and, besides, as cognizable by means of a universal concept)[23].

Response to beauty is like the judgment of morality in being immediate, disinterested, free, and universal. It is unlike the latter in being represented to sense rather than through concepts. But since the pure idea of morality is not itself directly representable to sense, this disanalogy does not undermine the analogy between beauty and morality but is rather what requires that the former become the symbol of the latter.

That aesthetic response is the *only* form available for the sensuous representation of morality is less explicitly asserted by Kant. But several remarks in his discussion of „aesthetic ideas" suggest such a premise. There, for instance, he says that „It is easily seen, that an aesthetic idea is the counterpart (pendant) of a *rational idea*, which, conversely, is a concept, to which no *intuition* (representation of the imagination) can be adequate"[24]. This

[20] *CJ*, 49, 5:314; Meredith, p. 176.
[21] *CJ*, § 59, 5:353; Meredith, p. 223.
[22] *CJ*, § 59, 5:353; Meredith, p. 224.
[23] *CJ*, § 59, 5:353–354; Meredith, p. 224–225.
[24] *CJ*, § 49, 5:314; Meredith, p. 176.

may suggest that the aesthetic is indispensable to the sensible representation of morality, and if the latter is itself in some way a matter of duty, the argument for duty regarding natural beauty might be started here.

But perhaps there is actually no need for Kant to establish that beauty, or more accurately our response to it, is a *unique* symbol of morality; if he could establish that the experience of beauty is an instrument toward morality at all, and then introduce a general duty to cultivate *all* means towards the development of moral disposition, he would also have an argument generating duty regarding natural beauty. There can be no doubt that Kant does regard beauty's symbolization of morality as one means towards the development of a morally good disposition:

> Taste makes, as it were, the transition from the charm of sense to habitual moral interest possible without too violent a leap, for it represents the imagination, even in its freedom, as amenable to to a final determination for understanding, and teaches us to find, even in sensuous objects, a free delight apart from any charm of sense[25].

Taste prepares us for disinterested attachments; that is, even if the content of objects of taste is independent of morality, the experience of taste is a cause of a disposition favorable to the performance of duty. The same causal language is used in an earlier remark as well: „The beautiful prepares us to love something, even nature, apart from any interest: the sublime, to esteem something highly even in opposition to our (sensible) interest"[26]. Thus, Kant clearly believes that experience of the beautiful can be an instrument or means for the development of a subjective disposition – he here calls it „love" – which is intimately connected to moral duty.

The question now becomes whether the cultivation of such a disposition is itself a moral duty. This question must be pressed since, as we saw, the *Critique of Practical Reason* and many of Kant's other earlier presentations of his moral theory suggest the contrary. This question is finally addressed only in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. The key to its solution is Kant's recognition that cultivation of a sensible disposition favorable to the performance of duty, which in his earlier writing may have seemed irrelevant to the meritorious performance of duty or even, at least in the eyes of his critics, inimical to it, is in fact part of our general duty toward ourselves to advance the perfection of our whole character in respect of the end of morality. That is, although

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[25] *CJ*, § 59, 5:354; Meredith, p. 225.

[26] *CJ*, § 29, *General Remark*, 5:267; Meredith, p. 119. I have explored Kant's contrast between the beautiful and the sublime in *Kant's Distinction between the Beautiful and the Sublime*, „Review of Metaphysics" 1982, No. 35, p. 753–783 and his reasons for treating the moral significance of the two sorts of aesthetic objects differently in Nature, Art, and Autonomy: A Copernican Revolution in Kant's Aesthetics, [in:] *Theorie der Subjektivität*, eds. K. Cramer et al., Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1987, p. 299–343.

a sensible disposition favorable to duty is not itself either a necessary condition for the performance of duty nor, in itself, a sufficient condition for willing our duty, Kant clearly recognizes that our character as a whole includes a sensible side, and that our overall moral duty to perfect ourselves includes the perfection of this, i.e. its development in behalf of morality. The cultivation of a respectful attitude regarding nature then becomes part of this duty: though we have no duties directly toward non-rational being, since it is respect for rational being which is the source of all duties, the fact that the appreciation of natural beauty can contribute to the development of feelings favorable to morality in us, combined with the acknowledgment of a general duty to cultivate all such feelings, generates a duty toward ourselves but regarding nature.

The development of Kant's ethical thought in this direction may first become evident in his eloquent reply in the *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* to Friedrich Schiller's attack on him in *Anmut und Wirde*. Schiller, Kant says, accused him of „representing obligation as carrying with it a monastic frame of mind". However, Kant denies that he and Schiller have any disagreement about the „most important principles". To be sure, he holds, the graces must keep a „respectful distance" when duty alone is the theme: „The attendants of Venus Urania become wantons in the train of Venus Dione as soon as they meddle in the business of determining duty and try to provide springs of action therefor". But he immediately adds that an irremediable conflict between duty and desire is not really possible, but would rather represent a lingering denial of the law of duty itself:

> Now if one asks, What is the *aesthetic* character, the *temperament*, so to speak, of *virtue*, whether courageous and hence *joyous* or fear-ridden and dejected, an answer is hardly necessary. The latter slavish frame of mind can never occur without a hidden *hatred* of the law. And a heart which is happy in the *performance* of its duty (not merely complacent in the *recognition* thereof) is a mark of genuineness in the virtuous disposition... This resolve, then, encouraged by good progress, must needs beget a joyous frame of mind, without which man is never certain of having really *attained a love* for the good, i.e. of having incorporated it into his maxim[27].

In other words, the kind of example which Kant imagines in the *Groundwork* in order to illustrate the true worth of motivation by the thought of duty – that is, the case of outright conflict between the demands of duty and the indifference of a deadened heart – is, in the end, neither permissible nor even possible. Kant will expand upon this theme in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. He will also take up the point suggested in the last sentence of this reply to Schiller: that although he has always argued that our real incentive in an action must ultimately remain inscrutable to ourselves, we nevertheless have a duty to

[27] Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 6:23–24n.; Greene and Hudson, p. 19n.

at least strive for moral self-knowledge; and the sensible or, as he says here, aesthetic character of our moral disposition is in fact our best clue for such self-knowledge. Surprising as it may seem, it is in precisely this context that Kant's explicit discussion of our duty regarding nature occurs in the *Metaphysics of Morals.*

Kant introduces his discussion of duties to oneself by considering a contradiction which may, at first glance (as he says), appear to undermine the very idea of such a duty: „If the 'I' who obligates is taken in the same sense as the 'I' who is obligated, then the concept of a duty to oneself is self-contradictory"[28]. While one might be tempted to brush this aside as a pseudo-problem, like Kant's earlier opaque paradox about self-affection in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant's solution to the paradox is actually very important. For what he claims is that the solution lies in man's twofold nature as both sensible and intellectual, as both *Sinnenwesen* and *Vernunftwesen:* the idea of a duty toward – and thus a constraint of – oneself makes sense because as a being who is both sensible – or animal – and also rational, man's reason can place his sensible being under an obligation[29]. Contrary to what sometimes seems the view at least of the *Groundwork,* that the realm of the feelings must simply be ignored in ethics because it is not amenable to moral control, this suggests that the „pathological" domain of man's sensible being can be made to answer to reason and is thus an appropriate object of duty. Thus, duties to oneself can be duties to have – or preserve and develop – certain kinds of feelings. Or, to put the point another way, while it may earlier have been Kant's view that one's sensible nature is a *given,* and that the determination of one's capacity of choice by the moral law must simply proceed *independently* of one's sensible nature – whether that puts feeling and duty into harmony or discord – that is not his final view; one's sensible being can and even must be made harmonious with one's duty. One cannot *rely* upon nature for the graceful state so prized by Schiller, but out of the incentive of duty one can *make* one's nature gracefully harmonious with duty. And, Kant now argues, one falls short of the demands of virtue if one does not try to do just this[30].

Kant's next step is to introduce his customary distinction between „formal", „restrictive", or „negative" duties to oneself and „material",

[28] *MPV,* § 1, 6:417; Ellington, p. 77.

[29] *MPV,* § 3, 6:418; Ellington, p. 78.

[30] One might argue that the *Critique of Practical Reason's* sublime contention that „every action and, in general, every changing determination of [one's] existence according to the inner sense, even the entire history of his existence as a sensous being, is seen in the consciousness of his intelligible existence as only a consequence, not as a determining ground of his causality as a noumenon" (Kant, *Critique of Pracitcal Reason,* 5:97–98; Beck, p. 101) already implies that one's feelings may literally be remade to accord with duty. Perhaps it does, but it does not make this explicit; and it certainly does not imply, as Kant argues in the *Metaphysics of Morals,* that one's feelings *should* be so made, or remade, as the case may be.

„ampliative" or „positive" duties. „The former forbid man to act contrary to his natural *end* and, accordingly, involve nothing but his moral self-preservation; the latter bid him make as his end a certain object of choice, and such duties involve his perfection of himself". In other words, duties of the former sort require one to do what he can to preserve one's moral character or protect it from dimunition; the latter, to develop or improve it. In a colorful metaphor. Kant glosses this point by saying that the former duties „appertain to the moral *health*... of man and have as their object.. that his nature in its perfection (as receptivity) may be preserved; the latter duties appertain to man's moral *affluence* [*Wohlhabenheit*]... which consists in his having a capacity for realizing all ends (as far as this is attainable) and belongs to the cultivation of himself (as an active perfection)"[31]. Finally, in his organization of the subsequent discussion, Kant suggests that this distinction is congruent with the distinction between pefect and imperfect duties, that is, between those duties for which it is fully determinate what constitutes their fulfillment (usually omissions) and those duties the fulfillment of which (usually commissions) is indeterminate, and therefore leaves open to judgment what actions and how much is required for fulfillment. We shall see that this last claim causes some trouble: although Kant introduces the duty to oneself regarding non-human nature as a case of negative or restrictive and therefore perfect duty, it displays features of an imperfect duty as well.

Kant's division of duties toward oneself begins clearly enough with an enumeration of perfect duties toward oneself „either as at once an *animal* (physical) being and a moral being, or else *as a moral being only*"[32]. The perfect duties toward oneself as both animal and moral proscribe any conduct which would destroy or damage one's physical capacity for rational action; thus, suicide, self-abuse, and self-stupefaction through the immoderate use of food and drink are contrary to duty because they destroy or damage one's capacity to at all times act as a rational agent[33]. Next, Kant enumerates perfect duties toward oneself solely as a moral being; these proscribe any instance of certain actions alleged to necessarily demean oneself as a rational being without actually destroying or damaging the physical basis of rational conduct. Here Kant proscribes any instance of lying, avarice, or servility: lying shows disrespect to the „natural purposiveness of [one's] capacity to communicate his thoughts"[34]; avarice is simply irrational because „restricting [one's] own enjoyment of the means of living well to a point below the measure of his true need conflicts with his duty to himself"[35]; and servility is proscribed because to

[31] *MPV*, § 4, 6:419; Ellington, p. 79–80.
[32] *MPV*, § 4, 6:420; Ellington, p. 80.
[33] *MPV*, § 6–8.
[34] *MPV*, § 9, 6:429; Ellington, p. 91.
[35] *MPV*, § 10, 6:432; Ellington, p. 93.

be servile is to fail to recognize the dignity of rational being in oneself when comparing oneself to others[36].

Kant's next step, it would seem, should be to turn to the imperfect duties toward oneself, which can only be described as broad duties to adopt certain ends or policies in one's behavior toward oneself rather than duties to avoid (or perform) any instance of specific forms of action. Using the same distinction as before, Kant distinguishes two such duties. First, as both animal and moral, one has a duty to „cultivate his natural powers (of the spirit, of the mind, and of the body) as a means to all kinds of possible ends"[37]. This is a duty because it is clearly a policy enjoined by respect for rationality, but it is broad or indeterminate because it is not possible for any agent to cultivate all of his potential talents; instead, „reflection and evaluation" on one's circumstances and even desires are required to make judgments about which talents to develop and to what degree[38]. Kant could also have added the development of talents may only be pursued as a general policy because there may be occasions on which the actual implementation of the policy may have to give way before the requirements of perfect duties to others or, for that matter, to oneself. Second, Kant adds an imperfect duty toward oneself as a moral being alone. This is the general duty always to strive to make the moral law itself one's incentive in the performance of actions required by duty, or to „Be holy!"[39]. One might wonder why Kant lists this as a specific „duty of virtue" (*Tugendpflicht*) as opposed to the general „obligation of virtue" (*Tugendverpflichtung*)[40] to perform all duties, whether of virtue or of right, from „internal legislation"[41]; in fact he virtually concedes that his classification is misleading when he says that this duty to oneself is imperfect not because it is „in quality" anything less than „strict and perfect", but rather only because the „fragility" of human nature means that we can only hope for a „constant progression" to holiness and thus at best an impefect compliance with what is in fact a strict duty always to make the moral law our incentive[42].

IV

Falling between the cracks of this classification, however, are two additional duties: a general duty to „moral self-knowledge"[43] and, finally, the

[36] *MPV*, § 11, 6:434–5; Ellington, p. 96–97.
[37] *MPV*, § 19, 6:444; Ellington, p. 108.
[38] *MPV*, § 20, 6:445–6; Ellington, p. 109–110.
[39] *MPV*, § 21, 6:446; Ellington, p. 110.
[40] *MPV*, *Introduction XVIII*, 6:410; Ellington, p. 70.
[41] Cf. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, *Introduction III*, 6:220–221; Ellington, p. 20.
[42] *MPV*, § 22, 6:446–447; Ellington, p. 110–111.
[43] *MPV*, § 15, 6:441; Ellington, p. 104.

specific duty that we have to avoid the „bare destruction... of beautiful though lifeless things" and the „cruel treatment" of animal but irrational beings[44]. These duties are included as a second part of the chapter on perfect duties toward oneself as a moral being, but it is not clear that they belong there rather than with the discussion of imperfect duties. The first of these, a general duty to try to know one's real motivations as well as to „test one's heart", which could mean to try out the actual strength of one's commitment to morality, seems as if it should belong with the general duty to make progress toward a holy will, perhaps as the epistemological presupposition of the latter, and as if it should be a strict though imperfect duty for the same reason as that duty.

The case of the duty regarding nature, however, is more problematic. Kant discusses it it an „episodic section", a title which can hardly but reflect uncertainty as to the real status of this duty. The argument for the various forms of this duty do reflect the underlying rationale of perfect duties yet converge upon his treatment of imperfect duties as well. Thus, what Kant finally argues is that a destructive spirit toward inanimate beautiful objects

> ...weakens or destroys that feeling in man which is not of itself already moral but which still does much to promote a state of sensibility favorable to morals, or at least to prepare for such a state – namely, pleasure in loving something without any intention of using it, e.g. finding a disinterested delight in beautiful crystallizations of in the indescribable beauty of the plant kingdom[45].

This reflects the proscriptive nature of the perfect duties toward oneself: Kant here proscribes an attitude of indifference toward natural beauties which „weakens or destroys" a feeling or disposition favorable to morality rather than prescribing a general policy of aesthetic contemplation which might develop rather than just maintain this disposition. This is analogous to the requirement ot preserve and respect one's rationality rather than cultivating oneself in behalf of rationality. At the same time, however, the nature of the disposition itself – that is, one which is not unconditionally necessary for the performance of other duties to oneself or others but rather one which „promotes" or „prepares for" a state of sensibility favorable to morals – suggests the idea of an openended improvement of moral character associated with the imperfect duty to moral self-knowledge and holiness rather than the determinacy characteristic of the perfect duties to oneself. On the one hand, then, Kant suggests a duty of conservation of an already given element of our moral disposition, but on the other hand a duty to develop what must be one means to the improvement of this disposition among others. The latter form of duty can be only imperfect, both because of its open-endedness and

[44] *MPV*, § 17, 6:443; Ellington, p. 106.
[45] *MPV*, § 17, 6:443; Ellington, p. 106.

because the cultivation of what is one causally significant but not obviously unique or indispensable means to the development of a disposition approximating a holy will may on occasion have to give way to the cultivation of other means to the same end or other, perfect duties.

The same complexity is even more evident in Kant's treatment of our duty regarding the third component of the natural rather than human realm, the animal as contrasted to the mineral and vegetable. Here Kant argues that savage and cruel treatment of irrational animals dulls one's compassion for their suffering, „and thereby a natural predisposition very serviceable in one's relations with other men is weakened and gradually obliterated". Compliance with this duty is compatible with man's „authorization" to painlessly slaughter animals or pul them to work, but is incomptaible with, for example, the experimental infliction of pain upon animals for purely speculative purposes which can be accomplished by other means[46]. Here Kant suggests, on the one hand, that men have a „natural predisposition" which is useful for morality and which must be conserved, and that inhumane (as we say) treatment of animals tends to destroy this disposition and must therefore be avoided; this parallels the structure of his arguments for perfect duties toward oneself. On the other hand, Kant also makes it clear that the feeling of compassion toward animals and even other men is neither a form of action nor an incentive which is required by morality itself, but rather a causal condition which is conducive or serviceable to morality; thus, it seems as if compassion, like attachment to natural beauty, is one means among many to the preservation and improvement of moral character, and that for that reason our duty to either conserve or improve it must be both open-ended and weighed against our other duties, and for that reason like an imperfect duty. The last point is also suggested by Kant's position that animals themselves have no rights and that our duty of compassion to them must coexist with our freedom to use them for our legitimate purposes. Although Kant does not explicitly argue this, our duty to avoid suicide or, for that matter, avarice, can clearly require the slaughter or other use of animals under readily imagined circumstances. Even under those circumstances, obviously, compassion can be maintained and unnecessarily incompassionate behavior avoided; but clearly our duty to avoid destruction or injury to animals cannot be given the form of an absolute prohibition. Again, the conclusion seems unavoidable that our duty of compassion to irrational animals is most reasonably construed as an imperfect duty.

At this point, we can finally say something more about the actual content of the duties regarding nature which Kant has generated from the underlying principle of duty toward oneself. As far as our duty concerning mineral and

[46] *MPV*, § 17, 6:443; Ellington, p. 106.

vegetable nature is concerned, it is clear that our duty must be to conserve beautiful instances thereof in their natural state so far as possible. This is implied by Kant's characterization of the way in which attachment to such beauty prepares us for moral conduct properly speaking: it does so by teaching us to find „pleasure in loving something without any intention of using it". Discovering the value of the beautiful object independent of any use of it is the key to its moral value. But the same point also emerges from Kant's underlying account of the experience of beauty itself. Kant characterizes a beautiful object as one by means of which „imagination (as the faculty of intuitions *a priori*) is undesignedly [*unabsichtlich*] brought into accord with understanding, (as the faculty of concepts), by means of a given representation, and a feeling of pleasure is thereby aroused"[47]. His idea is that the unity of the manifold of intuition presented by a beautiful object, which must be detectable if our underlying purpose of cognition is to be served, must be detected independently of the subsumption of the manifold under any concept if it is to be unexpected and therefore pleasurable[48]. *A fortiori*, the form of a beautiful object must strike us as beautiful independent of any concept of its use – thus our pleasure in it must be disinterested; and this remains true even where we clearly *have* a concept of its use, such as in the case of a racehorse or sanctuary – even in such cases, though our concept of the use of an object may *constrain* our sense of acceptable forms for it, it cannot fully or uniquely determine it. And this applies not only to uses we might make of natural objects; it also applies to their own uses of their parts or capacities: even our judgment of the beauty of a flower must be independent of recognition of its use (to the plant) as a reproductive organ. As Kant puts it, „no perfection of any kind – no internal finality, as something to which the arrangement of the manifold is related – underlies this judgment"; natural beauties „are self-subsisting beauties which are not appurtentant to any object defined with respect to its end, but please freely and on their own account"[49]. Now, this requirement gives Kant some difficulty when it comes to the case of *artistic* beauty, for „art has always got a definite intention of producing something", but Kant attempts to overcome this precisely by insisting that „fine art must be clothed *with the aspect of nature*, although we recognize it to be art"[50]. Thus, the point remains that for an object to please us as beautiful, it must please us not only independent of any inference from its usefulness but independent of any conception of it as having *been intended* to please us at all – thus, in its natural

[47] *CJ, Introduction VII*, 5:190; Meredith, p. 30.
[48] See *CJ, Introduction VI*, 5:187; Meredith, p. 27.
[49] See Kant's treatment of the notion of „dependent beauty"; *CJ*, § 16, 5:229–231; Meredith, p. 72–74.
[50] *CJ*, § 45, 5:306–307; Meredith, p. 167.

state. (This will obviously create a problem about *cultivated* natural objects, e.g. a garden or Hume's hills of olives instead of furze. Obviously Kant must treat these as cases of fine art rather than purely natural beauty – but then argue that they please us as beautiful precisely insofar as they strike us *as if* their unity of form were natural rather than intended.) Finally, we should note, the same point emerges from Kant's description of the analogy between the judgment on beauty and moral judgment, from which the value of aesthetic experience for the development of a moral disposition arises: it is the „*freedom* of the imagination... in estimating the beautiful" that symbolizes the freedom of the will as the will in harmony „with itself according to universal laws of reason"[51].

That our duty to conserve our own predisposition to morality gives rise to a duty to conserve natural beauty, however, also makes it clear that in the end this duty must be conceived as an imperfect rather than perfect one. Just as Kant plainly believes that our duty to be compassionate to animals must be compatible with our freedom to use such animals and slaughter them, obviously for consumption, so he must also believe that our duty to conserve natural beauty must be balanced against our morally permitted or even required use of natural materials for our own preservation and for the advancement of the happiness of others. As with all imperfect duties, what we have is a *claim* which must always be respected but not a specific form of action (e.g. consumption) which must always be avoided. Judgment must be used to decide when material needs must outweigh the aesthetic and morally symbolic as well as instrumental value of natural beauty – and as Kant always emphasizes, though judgment must always be founded on principles it cannot be furnished with precise rules, on pain of infinite regress[52]. As with the cultivation of one's talents, the cultivation of one's moral disposition necessarily „allows a latitude for free choice"[53].

That we have a duty to conserve natural beauty without being able to say that in every case this duty must triumph seems to me exactly right, and to explain why there is never a mechanical procedure for deciding between the claims of conservation and development. But we must be careful to avoid one potentially misleading implication of the analogy with the imperfect duty to cultivate one's talents. In the latter case, Kant can argue that the choice of which of one's talents to develop can be fairly arbitrarily „left to one's own rational reflection upon his desire for a certain mode of life, and his evaluation of the powers requisite for it"[54], because it is obviously, or at least normally, impossible for one individual to develop all of his potential talents, there may

[51] *CJ*, § 59, 5:354; Meredith, p. 224.
[52] See *CJ*, *Preface*, 5:169; Meredith, p. 5.
[53] *MPV*, § 20, 6:446; Ellington, p. 110.
[54] *MPV*, § 20, 6:445; Ellington, p. 109.

be no moral reason arguing for the development of any particular talents, and the individual is therefore free to rely on personal preference. But this is not the kind of latitude that is normal for imperfect duties: the latitude that we must be allowed in fulfilling imperfect duties is not simply the latitude of personal preference or even whim, but the latitude requisite to balance the fulfillment of imperfect duties with the performance of other duties and with the uncertainties of moral judgment[55]. The claim of an imperfect duty is not one which can simply be dismissed with a promise to honor it on some other occasion; it is one which must always be honored, but which does not always dictate a specific action both because of other claims of duty and because of indeterminacy and uncertainty in judgments as to how best to fulfill it.

Perhaps one rule of thumb might be added, however. In the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant describes duties to oneself as duties to perfect oneself, and duties to others not as duties to perfect them, since only they can do that, but rather as duties to advance their happiness[56]. He does not give one of these forms of duty priority over the other. In his earlier *Lectures on Ethics*, however, Kant did suggest that our duties to ourselves actually have priority over our duties to others – that our first duty must be to maintain our own moral worth and that only if this is satisfied can we successfully perform our duties to others.

> Our duties to ourselves constitute the supreme condition and the principle of all morality... Only if our worth as human beings is intact can we perform our other duties; for it is the foundation stone of all of our other duties. A man who has destroyed and cast away his personality, has no intrinsic worth, and can no longer perform any manner of duty[57].

The basis for Kant's assertion is not entirely clear, and perhaps all that he could persuasively argue is that fulfillment of our duties to ourselves is a necessary condition for acting out of the incentive of duty, but not that it is a necessary condition for all action in outward compliance with duty. But if the argument could be made out, then it might provide some support for a further inference that in a choice between action in behalf of one's own moral perfection – e.g. conservation of natural beauty – and action in behalf of the happiness of others – the success of which is always so uncertain anyway, because of the difficulty both of knowing what would really please another and of knowing what the effect of any action is ever going to be anyway – then the duty toward oneself, i.e. action in behalf of the maintenance and development of one's own moral character, must be given a certain priority. Such an argument would give at least some sense of the position of our duty regarding natural beauty in the hierarchy of our duties.

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[55] See especially *MPV, Introduction VIII*, 6:392; Ellington, p. 51.

[56] *MPV, Introduction VIII*, 6:392–394; Ellington, p. 50–53.

[57] Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, tr. Infield., p. 121.

V

I think I have now gone as far as is reasonable in the effort to elucidate a detailed doctrine of duty regarding nature from Kant's powerful but brief statements on the subject. Before concluding, however, one potential objection to the very idea of Kantian duties regarding nature must be considered. Kant has argued that the beauty or of individual forms in the mineral and vegetable realms and the capacity for suffering of beasts in the realm of irrational animals give rise to duties regarding them which are based in our duty toward ourselves to cultivate our own moral dispositions. These duties require that, at least *ceteris paribus*, we conserve these beautiful objects in their natural form, for it is precisely in light of the naturalness – i.e. unintendedness – of their beauty that they serve as symbols of morality and in turn as means to the development of the disposition to morality. By positioning these duties on the border between perfect and imperfect duties to ourselves, Kant has also at least suggested some conclusions about the relations of these duties to other forms of obligation. But now we must be struck by another argument in which Kant apparently concludes that nature as a whole exists solely to serve the purposes of man which might seem to undercut the very idea that man can have any obligation to the conservation of nature or humane use only of its other inhabitants. Does Kant undermine the whole argument we have just considered?

This argument at issue is found in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment*, where Kant argues that the system of nature as a whole can be seen as purposive only if „teleologically subordinated" to man. Does this mean that man can put nature to use for whatever purposes he may have? Though much about Kant's purposes in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment* is opaque, it is clear that this is not at all the point he wants to make. For what Kant actually argues is that nature can be seen as „teleologically subordinated" to mankind only in the latter's purely moral capacity, and this seems naturally to suggest that mankind's uses of nature (as of anything else) must be subordinated to the conditions of his *moral* use of it – which certainly includes those duties to the self but regarding nature which have already been established. If anything, then, the argument of the *Critique of Teleological Judgment* provides a general foundation for the argument of the *Metaphysics of Morals* rather than undermining it.

The *Critique of Teleological Judgment* does not include a clear statement of its own purpose, but as it culminates in another statement of Kant's practical theology it seems primarily intended to give an account of the moral significance of our reflective judgments about nature. As at least an inter-

mediate step in this larger design, Kant argues that the system of nature can itself be seen as final or purposive only in relation to the moral end of mankind. Kant begins his discussion by distinguishing between the „intrinsic finality" of „physical ends" on the one hand and the „extrinsic finality" of „final ends" on the other. Intrinsic finality characterizes the relation of the parts of organism to itself which constitutes it a physical end, i.e. a thing which is *„both cause and effect of itself"*[58]. Kant illustrates this opaque conception at the level of the species rather than the individual organism: a species of tree, for instance, both produces itself and is produced by itself (individual trees are produced by progenitors in the same species and produce further instances thereof). There is no suggestion of any moral relevance to the concept of a physical end, however, so we are spared from considering it further. We must instead consider what Kant means by extrinsic finality and the concept of a final end. Extrinsic, or relative, finality, is ascribed to „a means which other causes use in the pursuit of ends", and Kant illustrates the notion by the two cases of „utility, where it concerns human beings, and adaptability where it concerns any other creatures"[59]. Such a notion is clearly a conditioned notion of reflective judgment – that which is the end relative to which one means is extrinsically final can itself be a means extrinsically final to a further end. A final end, however, seems to be an „unconditional condition", or an end for which other things are means but which is not itself a means to any further end[60]. Kant then seems to treat it as an inevitable task of reason – analogous to its pursuit of the unconditioned in such other forms as the cosmological ideas or the idea of the highest good – to seek for such a final end, or some conception which „necessarily leads us to the idea of aggregate nature as a system following the rule of ends, to which idea, again, the whole mechanism of nature has to be subordinated on principles of reason[61].

Kant claims that such a conception self-evidently belongs to reflective rather than constitutive judgment, i.e. is a regulative rather than constitutive idea, but nevertheless seems to see the task of finding some conception in light of which nature as a whole can be seen as a final end as inevitable. So he eventually argues that there is only one candidate for an unconditional end in light of which nature can be seen as a final end: mankind's own unconditional end of freedom, the intrinsic value of which underlies the unconditonal claim of morality. The only end which nature can serve as a whole is man, but man only insofar as he in turn serves an unconditionally valuable end, his own freedom, rather than any of the conditionally valuable ends which generically constitute his happiness. Thus Kant argues:

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[58] *CJ*, § 64, 5:371; Meredith, p. 18.
[59] *CJ*, § 63, 5:367; Meredith, p. 13.
[60] *CJ*, § 67, 5:378; Meredith, p. 28.
[61] *CJ*, § 67, 5:379; Meredith, p. 28.

Now we have in the world beings of but one kind whose causality is teleological, or directed to ends, and which at the same time are beings of such a character that the law according to which they have to determine ends for themselves is represented by them as unconditioned and not dependent on anything in nature, but as necessary in itself. The being of this kind is man, but man regarded as noumenon. He is the only natural creature whose peculiar objective characterization is nevertheless such as to enable us to recognize in him a supersensible faculty – his *freedom*...

Now it is not open to us in the case of man, considered as a moral agent... to ask the further question: For what end (*quem in finem*) does he exist? His existence inherently involves the highest end – the end to which, as far as in him lies, he may subject the whole of nature, or contrary to which at least he must not deem himself subjected to any influence on its part. Now assuming that things in the world are beings that are dependent in point of their real existence, and, as such, stand in need of supreme cause acting according to ends, then man is the final end of creation. For without man the chain of mutually subordinated ends would have no ultimate point of attachment. Only in man, and only in him as the individual being to whom the moral law applies, do we find unconditional legislation in respect of ends. This legislation, therefore, is what alone qualifies him to be a final end to which entire nature is teleologically subordinated[62].

Whatever the exact nature of reason's underlying impulse to see nature as final as a whole, it is clear that it is only in service of man's moral end – freedom or autonomy – and not in service of man's ends in general that nature can be seen as ultimately final; for only the end of morality is unconditional or ultimate for man himself. Thus, it seems natural to conclude, just as the unconditional end of morality is an ineliminable constraint on man's own pursuit of any of his other ends, so the moral finality of nature as a whole is an ineliminable constraint on other uses of nature which man may propose. Kant makes this clear by his explicit exclusion of happiness – as always, his generic term for the satisfaction of whatever desires individuals may happen to have – as a source of the finality of nature:

But where in man are we to place this *ultimate end* of nature? To discover this we must seek out what nature can supply for the purpose of preparing him for what he himself must do in order to be a final end, and we must segregate it from all ends whose possibility rests upon conditions that man can only await at the hand of nature. Earthly happiness is an end of the latter kind... Hence it is only culture that can be the ultimate end which we have cause to attribute to nature in respect of the human race. His individual happiness on earth, and, we may say, the mere fact that he is the chief instrument for instituting order and harmony in irrational external nature, are ruled out[63].

Obviously nature is not to be made subordinate to any of our purposes whatever.

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[62] *CJ*, § 84, 5:435–6; Meredith, p. 99–100.

[63] *CJ*, § 83, 5:432; Meredith, p. 94–95.

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KANT O OBOWIĄZKACH WOBEC PRZYRODY

Autor zbiera i przedstawia poglądy Kanta dotyczące natury, tj. przyrody nieożywionej, roślin i zwierząt. Obowiązki te – unikanie niszczenia piękna przyrody nieożywionej i roślin oraz unikanie wyrządzania cierpień zwierzętom – zdaniem Kanta – należą do obowiązków człowieka wobec samego siebie, bowiem mają one wpływ na rozwój uczuć sprzyjających moralności. Obowiązki dotyczące natury nie mają jednak charakteru bezwzględnego, a jedynie względny, muszą bowiem być zgodne z wolnością człowieka do korzystania z dóbr natury dla ludzkich potrzeb. Obowiązki wobec natury mają być uważane wszakże za ważniejsze od obowiązków wobec innych ludzi, gdyż należą one do obowiązków człowieka wobec samego siebie, a te są zdaniem Kanta najważniejsze.