

KANT ON THE UNITY OF THEORETICAL
AND PRACTICAL REASON

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KANT FAMOUSLY ASSERTS THAT REASON IS ONE AND THE SAME, whether it is applied theoretically, to the realm of what is, or practically, to the realm of what ought to be. His view that theoretical and practical reason are two different applications of "one and the same reason"¹ is known as the doctrine of the unity of reason. Yet Kant himself seems to contradict this doctrine in two ways. In some passages in the very same works in which he asserts the unity of reason, he also states that this unity has yet to be demonstrated. According to the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, demonstrating the unity of practical and theoretical reason is one of the tasks of a critique of practical reason.² In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant further postpones this task by saying that we can expect this unity only to be demonstrated "some day."³ Moreover, Kant also claims that theoretical and practical reason are "united" through the idea of the purposiveness of nature, suggesting an original disunity.⁴ Thus, it seems that Kant defends three

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¹ *Critique of Practical Reason* (hereafter "CPrR"), 5:121; see *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:391. All references to Kant are to the standard volume number and pagination of *Kants Gesammelte Schriften. Ausgabe der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1900-). Translations are my own.

² *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:391. Kant here speaks of "speculative" reason. For purposes of terminological clarity, I shall use the term "theoretical reason" throughout, although Kant uses both the terms theoretical reason and speculative reason (see for example, CPrR, 5:5, 50, 54-5, 89, and 119-121). He sometimes labels the use of speculative reason as a subset of the use of theoretical reason, but this distinction is not important for the purposes of this paper. See for example, *Critique of Pure Reason* (hereafter "CPR"), A805/B833 (references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the pages of the first [A] and second [B] editions); with regard to theoretical versus speculative cognition, A633-5/B661-3.

³ CPrR, 5:91.

⁴ For example, CPR, A815-6/B843-4.

incompatible claims regarding the unity of reason. It would seem that he cannot consistently hold at the same time that (1) theoretical and practical reason are one and the same reason, applied differently, (2) that he still needs to show that they are, and (3) that they are united.

The assessments in the literature are as divergent as Kant's statements. Some authors have argued that Kant does not give a coherent account of the unity of theoretical and practical reason at all. In his article, "The Unity of Reason: Pure Reason as Practical Reason in Kant's Early Conception of the Transcendental Dialectic," Paul Guyer argues that early in the critical period, Kant wisely realized that the notion of a unity of reason can refer only to completed systematicity in the sphere of practice, thereafter gradually giving up the idea of a unity of theoretical and practical reason, and finally reassigning theoretical reason's regulative ideal of systematicity to reflective judgment.⁵ Others, most recently Jürg Freudiger, have argued that Kant does present a coherent account of the unity of theoretical and practical reason, but not until the *Critique of Judgment*.⁶ This view that Kant does not present an account of the unity of reason until the third critique is often based on a stylized view of the three critiques, according to which the first critique establishes the a priori laws of nature, the second critique the a priori law of freedom, and the third critique the harmony between the laws of nature and freedom. In this vein, Henry Allison argues that before the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant defends "a rigid separation between the realms of freedom and na-

⁵ Paul Guyer, "The Unity of Reason: Pure Reason as Practical Reason in Kant's Early Conception of the Transcendental Dialectic," *The Monist* 72 (1989): 139-67. Guyer nonetheless speaks of Kant's doctrine of "the unity of reason," but not as the unity of theoretical and practical reason. Rather, he uses the phrase to refer to reason's "single domain of application" and its introduction of "a single special sort of unity into whatever it is to which it is appropriately applied" (139). This interpretation of the phrase also lies behind Guyer's recent claim that Kant states "his theory of the unity of reason as the culmination of a theory of reflective judgment." Paul Guyer, review of *The Unity of Reason*, by Susan Neiman, *Philosophical Review* 106 (1997): 292.

⁶ Most recently, see, Jürg Freudiger, "Kants Schlußstein: Wie die Teleologie die Einheit der Vernunft stiftet," *Kant-Studien* 87 (1996): 423-35. Eckart Förster has argued that the third critique contains Kant's attempt to show the "unifiability of theoretical and practical reason," in "Was darf ich hoffen? Zum Problem der Vereinbarkeit von theoretischer und praktischer Vernunft bei Immanuel Kant," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 46 (1992): 170.

ture," whereas in the third critique, he "now insists on the necessity of a mediating concept (the purposiveness of nature), which would make possible the transition from the concept of nature to the concept of freedom."⁷ Despite their differences, these assessments share one assumption, namely, that before the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Kant does not adequately address the relationship between theoretical and practical reason.

Other commentators, by contrast, argue that Kant does present a coherent account of the unity of reason in his critical work of the 1780's. Susan Neiman and Klaus Konhardt maintain that Kant develops this account in the first two critiques. On their view, the unity of theoretical and practical reason consists in the fact that they share structural and functional features.⁸ Konhardt also argues that because Kant's account of the unity of reason was in essence ready as early as the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Critique of Judgment* brings "no essential modifications" in this account at all.⁹

In this paper, I propose a new reading of Kant's doctrine of the unity of reason. I argue that this doctrine should be viewed as reaching a coherent form in the 1780's, but for reasons other than those asserted by Neiman and Konhardt. I start by showing why their accounts fail to establish the unity of reason. I then discuss the tensions between Kant's three seemingly contradictory statements on the issue, mentioned at the beginning of this essay, and I propose a solution as to how to interpret them as compatible. In section 2, I argue that the first and the second statements are compatible if the first is interpreted as a regulative principle, and I argue that there are compelling reasons for interpreting it as such. In sections 3-7, I argue that the first two statements are compatible with the third, by showing that they bear on very different issues. In the final section, I argue that this interpretation necessitates a radical re-evaluation of the relationship

⁷ See Henry Allison, "The Gulf between Nature and Freedom and Nature's Guarantee of Perpetual Peace," in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress*, ed. Hoke Robinson (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995), 37-8.

⁸ Susan Neiman, *The Unity of Reason: Rereading Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Klaus Konhardt, *Die Einheit der Vernunft: Zum Verhältnis von theoretischer und praktischer Vernunft in der Philosophie Immanuel Kants* (Königstein: Forum Academicum, 1979).

⁹ Konhardt, *Die Einheit der Vernunft*, 10.

between Kant's 1780's doctrine of the unity of reason and his position in the third critique.

I

The Failure of the Argument from Similarity. Neiman and Konhardt argue for the unity of reason by providing an analysis of the functions Kant ascribes to theoretical and practical reason, and by stressing the many similarities between them. Without actually arguing for this explicitly, they assume that these similarities prove that theoretical and practical reason are one and the same reason, applied differently.¹⁰

Such similarities certainly exist. The two that are most important for the purposes of this paper are the following. First, both theoretical and practical reason strive for systematization. Kant defines the systematization of something as "[exhibiting] the interconnection of its parts in conformity with a single principle."¹¹ Theoretical reason strives for the systematic unity of knowledge and practical reason for the systematic unity of our maxims for action. Kant assumes that a systematic order can be achieved only when one employs an antecedent idea of such order.¹² That in turn means that this unifying idea cannot be derived from nature or from our maxims but has to be provided by reason itself.¹³

Accordingly, a second characteristic that theoretical and practical reason share is the use of 'ideas.' For its systematizing activity, theoretical reason employs the ideas of the soul, the world, and God as regulative principles.¹⁴ Practical reason uses the very same three ideas as postulates.¹⁵ Moreover, in its systematizing efforts, practical reason constructs the idea of an intelligible moral world (a realm of ends) as a systematic whole, in which there is harmony between our

¹⁰ Neiman, *The Unity of Reason*, most clearly, p. 128; Konhardt, *Die Einheit der Vernunft*, 11.

¹¹ CPR, A645/B673.

¹² CPR, A645/B673.

¹³ See Konhardt, *Die Einheit der Vernunft*, ch. 1.

¹⁴ For example, CPR, A682-6/B710-4. I leave aside the regulative ideas mentioned in the first part of the appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic, which are based on the idea of a supreme intelligence; CPR, A642-68/B670-96.

own moral maxims and those of others.¹⁶ Finally, Kant argues that both from a theoretical and from a moral perspective, we have grounds to assume (subjectively) that nature is a purposive order.¹⁷

It is worth noting that the fact that theoretical and practical reason share the use of ideas does not imply that the epistemic status of these ideas is the same in both cases. Theoretical reason is entitled to use these ideas only as regulative principles to guide empirical investigations. From a moral point of view, by contrast, the ideas can be given the stronger epistemic status of practical postulates. I return to Kant's description of the two uses of reason, and the primacy of practical reason, in sections 3-7.

Neiman and Konhardt are right to point out that there are similarities between theoretical and practical reason, but it does not follow from this fact that they are different uses of "one and the same reason."¹⁸ Showing that they perform similar activities or use similar ideas does not suffice to show that they are the same entity employed differently. There could very well be two separate but similar faculties, each operating in its own sphere. Theoretical and practical reason could be two similar kinds of reason, or two reasons, instead of being two modes of application of a single faculty. In order to prove that there is only a single faculty at work, more argument is needed than Konhardt and Neiman provide.

The problem at issue here is not that of the identity of theoretical and practical reason. Kant's claim is not that they are indistinguishable. As different uses of one and the same reason they are nonidentical. Rather, the question is whether or not there is one faculty (reason) that is employed in two different ways (theoretically and

¹⁵ Kant is fond of pointing out that theoretical and practical reason employ the same three ideas (the ideas of the soul, of the world or freedom, and of God): see *CPR*, A329/B386; *CPrR*, 5:3-12, and 134-8. There are notorious problems with this claim of Kant's as well as with the (unstable) roles he assigns to the three ideas, but since these problems are not directly relevant to the present topic, I leave them aside here.

¹⁶ For example, *CPR*, A808/B836; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:433.

¹⁷ Neiman fails to recognize the importance of the concept of purposiveness, but Konhardt brings it out well. See, Konhardt, *Die Einheit der Vernunft*, 150-82.

¹⁸ In his review of Neiman's book, Paul Guyer has recently made an analogous criticism regarding Neiman's discussion of the relationship between the realms of nature and freedom. See above, note 5.

practically). The argument from similarity does not suffice to answer this question.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant himself is keenly aware that he has not yet demonstrated the unity of theoretical and practical reason. The structural analogies between the first two critiques "rightfully give rise to the expectation" that "we may perhaps gain insight into the unity of the entire pure rational faculty (both theoretical and practical) and be able to derive everything from one principle."¹⁹ In other words, in order to demonstrate the unity of the two Kant would have to move to a higher level of analysis.²⁰ He would have to discuss reason as such, and subsequently explain its dual application in terms of this general analysis. Nowhere, however, does Kant provide such an explicit analysis and discussion of reason. Instead, he always discusses it in one of its two employments, as either theoretical or practical reason.

Yet one might perhaps think that Kant's claim that reason is the faculty of principles²¹ could be read as such a general statement about reason. Kant makes this claim in the context of his discussion of the theoretical reason in the first critique, and in investigating its a priori ideas he explicitly "puts practical reason aside."²² At least one commentator has taken the claim to also express his implicit doctrine of reason as such. Lewis White Beck, after noting the contradiction between Kant's assertion of the unity of reason and his admission that he has not shown it yet, cheerfully brushes the interpretative quandaries raised here aside, saying "it is fortunately not difficult" to state the "one principle" warranting the unity of reason.²³ On Beck's view,

¹⁹ *CPR*, 5:91, emphasis mine.

²⁰ It might be suggested that when Kant says that theoretical and practical reason are two uses of one and the same faculty, he is merely claiming to know that this is so, whereas the admission that he must still achieve insight into this unity refers to further insight into the justification of the first claim. This attempt at reconciling the two statements, however, faces the problem that Kant cannot consistently claim the status of knowledge for the first claim as long as he cannot justify it.

²¹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, A299/B356; see also *Critique of Judgment* (hereafter "CJ"), 5:401.

²² *Critique of Pure Reason*, A329/B386.

²³ Lewis White Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 47. Allison notes the contradiction, too, but he does not discuss it: Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 245, 284 n. 28.

this is the idea that reason is the faculty of principles. Kant himself may not always have been clear about this, and in the first critique he applies the statement only to theoretical reason because he has not yet fully developed his second critique view of moral autonomy. Yet given Kant's later view that practical reason provides universal moral principles, Beck argues, we can easily broaden the application of the statement and take it as a statement about reason as such, whether in its theoretical or its practical mode.

Appealing though it may be, this strategy leaves two important questions unanswered. First, it fails to explain why Kant would so severely understate his own achievements. If it is so easy to show the unity of reason, and if the first and second critiques provide the building blocks for doing so, why does Kant claim in the second critique that he can only hope to do so in the future? Beck provides no explanation for this.

Second, Beck does not address the issue of what justifies Kant's statement that "it is only one and the same reason which judges a priori by principles, whether for theoretical or for practical purposes."²⁴ A full account of the unity of reason should also show what grounds Kant has for believing there is only one reason, especially in light of both his explicit denial that he has proven this and his explicit bracketing of practical reason in the investigation of the transcendental ideas. The fact that, in both of its modes, reason provides us with a priori principles does not provide the necessary grounds. Instead, it merely constitutes a similarity between theoretical and practical reason, and as I showed above, the argument from similarity is insufficient to show the unity of reason.

II

In Defense of a Regulative Reading. These problems can be solved if we take Kant's statement that theoretical and practical reason are uses of one and the same reason as a regulative claim. A regulative reading of the statement also makes it possible to reconstruct Kant's grounds for assuming the unity of reason before he has actually

²⁴ *CPrR*, 5:121.

shown it. This will make it possible to reconcile the first two of the three statements mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

In justifying the use of regulative ideas of the soul, the world, and God, Kant generally appeals to theoretical reason's interest in systematic unity. His basic view is that although it is impossible to prove or disprove objectively the existence of things that correspond to the transcendental ideas, we are nevertheless justified in using these ideas as regulative principles, since their use is necessary to guide reason's effort to establish a systematic unity of knowledge.²⁵ A systematic unity of knowledge can be achieved only when one employs an antecedent idea of such order. Thus, for example, Kant defends the use of the regulative idea of God by saying that "its speculative interest, and not its insight, gives reason the right" to use this idea.²⁶

Now if striving for systematic unity is one of the hallmarks of reason, then it would be only natural if this striving were also extended to reason itself. Kant does indeed call "insight into the unity of the entire pure rational faculty (both theoretical and practical)" an "unavoidable need of human reason, as it finds complete satisfaction only in a perfectly systematic unity of its cognitions."²⁷ Then reason's interest in its own unity would seem to justify the use of the regulative idea necessary for that purpose.

This regulative idea is that of the soul. The use of this idea involves, among other things, that we "represent . . . all [mental] powers, so far as possible, as derived from a single fundamental power."²⁸ Because the idea of the soul includes the notion of the unity of all mental powers, and because theoretical and practical reason are mental powers, use of the idea of the soul involves representing them as two manifestations of a single power, instead of as two independent entities. Kant says in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

²⁵ See *CPR*, A676/B704, and A686-7/B714-5. On the use of regulative ideas, see Thomas E. Wartenberg, "Reason and the Practice of Science," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 228-48.

²⁶ *CPR*, A676/B704. See also Kant's discussion of reason's "right of need" to "presuppose and assume as a subjective ground something that she is not allowed to claim to know through objective grounds," in "What is Orientation in Thinking?," 8:137.

²⁷ *CPrR*, 5:91.

²⁸ *CPR*, A683/B711.

At first glance the various appearances of one and the same substance show so much dissimilarity that initially one cannot but assume almost as many powers as there appear effects, as in the human mind there are sensation, consciousness, imagination, . . . and so forth. Initially a logical maxim requires that we reduce this seeming variety as far as possible by detecting hidden identity through comparison. . . . Although logic does not at all determine whether such a power actually exists, the idea of a *fundamental power* is at least the problem of a systematic representation of the diversity of powers. The logical principle of reason demands that this unity be brought about as far as possible. . . . But this unity of reason²⁹ is merely hypothetical. One asserts not that it must actually be found, but rather that one must seek it in the interest of reason, in order to set up certain principles for the many rules that experience may supply us with, and thereby to bring systematic unity into cognition whenever this is possible.³⁰

The heuristic assumption of the unity of mental powers also applies to theoretical and practical reason. Hence, Kant's claim that they are different modes of application of one and the same reason should be regarded as an expression of this more general regulative idea of a fundamental power.³¹ Given that the problem of the unity of reason is itself a theoretical, not a moral problem, the unity of reason is a regulative idea, not a practical postulate.

This interpretation makes it possible to reconcile Kant's claim that theoretical and practical reason are one and the same reason, applied differently, with his statement that he has not yet shown that this is so. If the first claim is read as an expression of a regulative assumption, instead of as a claim to knowledge, it is compatible with the lack of theoretical insight expressed in the second statement.

At this point, however, the regulative reading of the unity of reason raises a new objection. Recall that Kant expresses hopes of demonstrating that reason is one and the same in its two employments. Yet if the unity of reason has the status of a regulative idea, in particular, if it is to be subsumed under the regulative idea of the soul, this

²⁹ "*Vernunftseinheit*" here refers to the unity established by reason.

³⁰ *CPR*, A648-9/B676-7.

³¹ In his analysis of the unity of the subject's cognitive powers, Dieter Henrich has argued that this unity has the status of a subjective principle. The reading of the unity of reason I present in this essay is compatible with Henrich's analysis, although he argues for it differently and discusses all cognitive powers, not merely reason. See "On the Unity of Subjectivity," trans. Günter Zöllner, in Dieter Henrich, *The Unity of Reason: Essays on Kant's Philosophy*, ed. Richard Velkley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 26-33.

might seem to doom his hopes from the start. For he also claims that the idea of the soul transcends the limits of possible experience.³² That would seem to make the regulative reading of Kant's statement about the unity of reason incompatible with his declaration that we may one day gain insight into this unity.

This objection can be easily answered, though. Although complete conformity to the regulative idea of the soul will never be found, one cannot know a priori to what extent things will turn out to conform to it.³³ Therefore, one should not set a limit a priori to what insights might be gained, except where one can demonstrate that such insight is impossible. Although the unity of reason cannot be ascertained by empirical means, as reason itself is not a possible object of experience, Kant leaves open the possibility that its unity may be discovered by philosophical means. Moreover, establishing the unity of reason would not exhaust the scope of the regulative idea of the soul, because its scope is much broader. Accordingly, in his discussion of the idea of a fundamental mental power, Kant suggests that it is impossible ever to discover whether there is an "absolutely" fundamental power, but that one may be able to find "comparatively" fundamental powers.³⁴ Demonstrating that there is only one reason, then, requires identifying a comparatively fundamental power, not the absolutely fundamental power.

So far I have argued that Kant has grounds to defend the unity of reason as a regulative principle. This does not yet suffice, however, to defend the regulative reading of the particular passage in the text in which Kant asserts reason's unity.³⁵ If the context clearly indicated that Kant presents the statement as a claim to knowledge, this would invalidate a regulative reading. Thus, it needs to be shown that the context of the statement allows or even invites a regulative reading. To this end, I here add two supporting considerations that pertain to the passage in question.

³² For example, *CPR*, A682-3/B710-1.

³³ This point is also made, in a different context, by Paul Guyer, "The Systematic Order of Nature and the Systematic Union of Ends," in *Vernunftbegriffe in der Moderne: Stuttgarter Hegel-Kongress 1993*, ed. Hans Friedrich Fulda and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 206.

³⁴ *CPR*, A649/B677.

³⁵ *CPR*, 5:121.

The first point to note is that while Kant does not indicate in the text that the statement should be read as regulative, this is no argument against reading it in such a way. Other regulative principles, for example, the teleological maxim that "everything in nature originates from the wise intentions of an intelligent author of the world,"³⁶ are not formulated explicitly as regulative principles either. The regulative epistemic status of such principles becomes clear only in the discussion of their justification.

Second, in the same sentence in which Kant claims that theoretical and practical reason "are" uses of one and the same reason, he also states that our consciousness of the moral law "shows" that pure reason can be practical. It is clear from the context, however, that this showing does not lead to theoretical knowledge of pure reason's being practical, but rather, to a subjective practical certainty which is not (and cannot be) objectively secured. In other words, the very same passage in which Kant claims that theoretical and practical reason are different uses of one and the same reason contains another assertion that looks like a claim to theoretical knowledge but must be interpreted as having a weaker status when read in context. In this situation it is natural to use a similar interpretive strategy for the statement about the unity of reason. This resolves the tension between Kant's claim that theoretical and practical reason are different applications of one and the same faculty (now understood as a regulative statement) and his claim that he has not shown this yet (in the sense of not having proven it).

It lies beyond the scope of this article to pursue the many methodological questions that are raised by Kant's assertion that reason's interest in unity is also directed towards itself, questions that go to the heart of his transcendental philosophical project as a critique of reason by reason.³⁷ I here limit myself to his account of reason's unity. Therefore, after having shown that Kant's first two claims about the unity of reason are compatible, I now move to the third claim, that theoretical and practical reason are united.

³⁶ See *CPR*, A687-8/B715-6.

³⁷ I discuss some of these issues, as well as Kant's quasi-hypostatizing descriptions of reason, in "The Conative Character of Reason in Kant's Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36 (1998): 77-97.

III

Theoretical and Practical Reason as United. We can now ask how there could be a need to unite theoretical and practical reason. If Kant assumes—as a regulative principle—that they are one and the same reason, used differently, what could it possibly mean to say that they are united? The very notion of unification presupposes an antecedent disunity, which seems to go against Kant's doctrine of the unity of reason.

The answer to this question can be found by pursuing some of the questions that arise from Kant's account so far. If, in line with the results of the previous section, one assumes (regulatively) that theoretical and practical reason are two different uses of one and the same reason, it is still possible that these uses are in conflict. If there is a radical division of labor between them, as Kant suggests, the question arises as to whether their activities are compatible. Should they be in conflict, this would threaten the very possibility of representing reason—and thus our mental powers in general—as a systematic unity.

Kant indeed mentions the possibility of a "conflict of reason with itself," a conflict which would arise if theoretical and practical reason "were arranged merely side by side."³⁸ Under such circumstances, he suggests, a scenario could emerge in which theoretical reason would "close its borders and admit into its domain nothing from [practical reason], while the latter would extend its boundaries over everything and, when its needs required, would seek to comprehend the former within them."³⁹ What Kant seems to be saying in this difficult passage is that it is conceptually possible that reason in its theoretical use, which strives for systematic knowledge of what is, would reject the normative moral claims of reason in its practical use, and thus would reject the postulates that Kant says are connected with morality. After all, theoretical reason has nothing to do with claims about what ought to be or with postulates that are based entirely on such claims. Practical reason, on the other hand, which determines how we ought to act, would not let itself be constrained by questions of what can or cannot be known. It would disregard the limits of knowledge and pass off postulates as facts.

³⁸ *CPrR*, 5:121.

³⁹ *CPrR*, 5:121.

Given that Kant attributes to reason an interest in its own systematic unity, though, he can be expected to argue that the two modes of reason can be reconciled. Indeed, Kant argues that theoretical and practical reason not only do not contradict each other but even converge on important propositions. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he calls this the "unification" of theoretical and practical reason, in the *Critique of Practical Reason* their "combination in one cognition."⁴⁰ Here I shall first indicate briefly the main steps in Kant's argument. In the next sections, I fill in some of the details.

To support his claim that the uses of theoretical and practical reason are in harmony, Kant points out that both lead to the assumption that nature is ordered and owes its rational order to a highest intelligence. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he first discusses the importance of this assumption for theoretical reason (in the Transcendental Dialectic). He later argues that morality, too, leads to this assumption,⁴¹ and that this makes it possible to regard nature and morality as being in harmony. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant argues similarly that we must assume that a moral author of the world has brought about a purposive harmony between nature and morality—a belief which is also "in unison with the theoretical need of reason."⁴²

When seen in this context, it becomes clear that Kant's talk of uniting theoretical and practical reason refers to the harmony of the two uses of reason, and not to the singleness of the one faculty whose uses they are. This makes it possible to see that there is no conflict between Kant's statements regarding the unity and the unification of reason. The problem of the unity of reason discussed in the previous two sections was the problem of whether theoretical and practical reason could be said to be two modes of employment of one and the same reason. The problem of the unification of theoretical and practical reason, on the other hand, is the problem of whether these two uses are in harmony with each other.

This reading of Kant's claim regarding the unification of theoretical and practical reason calls for more clarification, though, especially as to the role of the assumption that nature is ordered by a highest in-

⁴⁰ *CPrR*, 5:121. The term "cognition" (*Erkenntnis*) should not be read in the sense of an empirical cognition, of course, but in the sense of a conceptual cognition as explained in *Critique of Pure Reason*, A320/B376–7.

⁴¹ *CPrR*, A815/B843.

⁴² *CPrR*, 5:146.

telligence. I shall argue that the view of nature as designed is not merely a view on which theoretical and practical reason concur (since that is also true of the three transcendental ideas), but that it connects the two uses of reason. The nature of this connection is the subject of the next three sections. We shall see that the problem Kant addresses here is in essence the problem that he formulates in the *Critique of Judgment* as the well-known problem of the "immense gulf" between the realms of nature and freedom, a problem that many commentators (erroneously, in my view) believe Kant does not pose until the third critique.

In section 4, I examine the role of theoretical reason. This examination serves a preparatory role by providing some necessary elements for clarifying the nature of the unification of the two uses of reason in section 5.

IV

Theoretical Reason. This section contributes to solving the problem of the unification of theoretical and practical reason only indirectly, and its contribution will become fully clear in the discussion of practical reason. To anticipate, however, the point is this. Kant claims that practical reason provides grounds for regarding nature as being in harmony with its demands. Before this claim can be taken as unifying theoretical and practical reason—as Kant claims it should be—it needs to be shown that practical reason's assumption of such harmony does not conflict with theoretical reason's essential endeavors. Because much of the most influential literature on the *Critique of Pure Reason* does not deal with the Transcendental Dialectic or the Doctrine of Method in much detail (typically focussing on the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic instead), it is necessary to provide some background on the role of theoretical reason.

In Kant's account of the function of theoretical reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the concept of systematicity plays a central role. Kant distinguishes between two kinds of systematic unity of nature. The first consists in the formal coherence and hierarchical order of a multitude of empirical laws, which is what he later will call "formal purposiveness" in the *Critique of Judgment*. The second consists in a teleological order of nature. I shall discuss each in turn.

Theoretical reason strives to bring about a systematic unity of experience, thereby combining the material given by the understanding to a higher unity.⁴³ The Transcendental Analytic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* shows that all experience conforms to a set of systematic principles a priori and that it is experience of a single nature.⁴⁴ These results, however, do not yet explain the possibility of forming a systematic whole of empirical knowledge. For example, the synthetic a priori principle that every event has a cause does not by itself imply that our finite cognitive powers can grasp particular causes and events and subsume them successfully under identifiable empirical laws, let alone that we can organize these laws into a systematically unified body of knowledge. Kant has not yet established the conditions of the possibility of transforming an aggregate of empirical cognitions into a systematic body of empirical knowledge.

Kant formulates this problem in the Transcendental Dialectic, especially in the Appendix. There he argues that our very search for a systematic unity of knowledge presupposes that nature will enable such unity, that is, that nature is systematizable for our cognitive powers. For instance, it presupposes that the things in nature can be organized in terms of genera and species, and that it is possible to discover and organize empirical laws. In other words, it presupposes that systematic unity is "inherent in the objects" and given by nature itself.⁴⁵ We cannot begin scientific research without employing this assumption. Given that this assumption is operative before any particular research is undertaken instead of being a posteriori derived from nature, it must stem from reason itself and thus be transcendental.⁴⁶

To the uncritical mind, the assumption of the systematicity of nature looks like a constitutive principle. Kant's aim in the Transcendental Dialectic is to show that this is the result of a transcendental

⁴³ See Neiman, *The Unity of Reason*, 48–62. This is what Kant claims, but it is by no means unproblematic. The precise relationship between reason and the understanding is the subject of much recent debate. See Michael Friedman, "Causal Laws and the Foundations of Natural Science," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, 161–99; Henry Allison, *Idealism and Freedom*, 80–91; Paul Guyer, "The Systematic Order of Nature and the Systematic Union of Ends;" Martin Bondeli, "Zu Kants Behauptung der Unentbehrlichkeit der Vernunftideen," *Kant-Studien* 87 (1996): 166–83.

⁴⁴ CPR, A216/B263.

⁴⁵ CPR, A650–1/B678–9, see also A653–4/B681–2.

⁴⁶ CPR, A651/B679.

illusion.⁴⁷ The critique reveals that although this assumption is transcendental, it is not constitutive (in contrast to the categories of the understanding), but merely regulative. It is transcendental in the sense of being a necessary a priori principle that is always already employed by the cognizing subject. Rather than determining experience it helps organize the experiences presented to reason by the understanding. Thus, the assumption that nature can be systematized by us is not a piece of knowledge about the world, but a perspective that we naturally take up to guide our investigations.

Kant further argues that regarding nature as a systematic unity means regarding it as a rational order, which in turn means regarding it as if its order were created by a higher, rational cause. In looking for systematic unity in the universe, we "represent all connections as if they were the arrangements of a highest reason, of which our reason is a faint copy."⁴⁸ This is not the same as believing that such a highest cause exists; it is merely an idea that we implicitly or explicitly use when we look for order in nature.⁴⁹

The similarities between this notion of systematicity in the first critique and the concept of formal purposiveness in the third are striking.⁵⁰ For in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant argues that "through this concept [of the formal purposiveness of nature] we represent nature as if an understanding contained the ground of the unity of the manifold of nature's empirical laws."⁵¹ As in the first critique, he argues that this principle is transcendental even though it is not constitutive.⁵²

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the transcendental illusion, see Michelle Grier, "Kant on the Illusion of a Systematic Unity of Knowledge," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 14 (1997): 1-28.

⁴⁸ CPR, A678/B706.

⁴⁹ CPR, A670/B698.

⁵⁰ The fact that there is continuity between the first and the third critiques in this regard is important for the purposes of this paper. I do not wish to suggest, however, that the third critique is simply a continuation of the first. Rudolf Makkreel has emphasized the discontinuity between the roles of theoretical reason and reflective judgment, in that the latter, but not the former, includes aesthetic judgment. Rudolf Makkreel, "Regulative and Reflective Uses of Purposiveness in Kant," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 30, Supplement (1991): 49-63 and *Imagination and Interpretation: The Hermeneutic Import of the "Critique of Judgment"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁵¹ CJ, 5:180-1.

⁵² CJ, 5:181-86.

Taking the use of the idea of a highest intelligence one step further, Kant also justifies a teleological view of nature, on the grounds that this makes possible the "greatest systematic unity" of things.⁵³ The teleological principle states that everything in nature serves some good purpose,⁵⁴ and Kant emphasizes that this principle, like the idea of a highest intelligence on which it is founded, is merely regulative. In the first critique, Kant also applies this principle to all of nature. We should "not merely consider certain parts of nature" from the teleological point of view, but "make this systematic unity of nature completely *universal*, in relation to the idea of a highest intelligence."⁵⁵

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant does not fully develop his argument regarding the use and justification of teleology. He fails to explain why teleology leads to the "greatest systematic unity" or, conversely, why conceiving of nature as a mechanistic system does not suffice.⁵⁶ Moreover, it would seem that the introduction of final causation into the sciences, whatever the merits of the argument might be, would raise the question of the interrelation of final causes. It would seem to follow from the logic of Kant's argument concerning reason's quest for systematicity that the teleological maxim that everything in nature serves some good purpose motivates a search for a single end towards which all of nature is oriented. If reason strives for systematicity, it cannot rest content with viewing nature as containing a mere aggregate of teleological relations. However, Kant fails to raise this issue in the first critique.

⁵³ CPR, A686-7/B714-5. On teleology in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, see J. D. McFarland, *Kant's Concept of Teleology* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1970), 25-42, and Klaus Düsing, *Die Teleologie in Kants Weltbegriff*, 2nd rev. ed. (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1986), 38-50.

⁵⁴ CPR, A688/B716.

⁵⁵ CPR, A691/B719. Kant claims that one can make many discoveries with the help of the teleological principle. In contrast to the *Critique of Judgment*, however, Kant does not yet distinguish here between external and internal purposiveness. He applies the teleological principle to the shape of the earth, to mountains and seas, as well as to organisms; CPR, A687-8/B715-6.

⁵⁶ He develops the argument in the second part of the "Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic," but because nothing in the first part indicates that a systematic unity in terms of mechanical-causal laws is insufficient, the introduction of teleology comes unexpectedly. It is no surprise that it has eluded many commentators.

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant does solve precisely this problem in sections 82–4.⁵⁷ There he argues that if we assume (regulatively) that there is teleology in nature, we need to ask for an “ultimate end of nature,” in order to be able to regard nature as a system of ends,⁵⁸ and a “final end of creation,” in order to provide a “complete grounding” for the teleological order.⁵⁹ He borrows from his practical philosophy the claim that humans, as moral beings, are the final end of creation, and he argues that the ultimate end of nature is to further the development of the end-setting capacities of humans.⁶⁰ This ultimate end of nature Kant calls “culture,” using that term—in a sense still closely tied to its etymological origins—as synonymous with “development” (namely, of the rational predispositions of humankind).⁶¹ Culture is the gradual development of the aptitude to set ends for oneself, to be receptive to “higher purposes” (namely, moral ones),⁶² and to use nature as a means to those ends. Kant conceives of this as a historical process of humankind’s rational and moral development.

For purposes of this essay, however, it is important that this argument is already found in Kant’s first essay on history, published a few years after the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In this essay, “Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View” (1784), Kant raises the question of whether the seeming aggregate of human history can be presented as a systematic whole.⁶³ The argument in the “Idea for a Universal History” is supposed to make it pos-

⁵⁷ Again, the fact that there is continuity in this particular regard should not be taken to suggest that the differences between the two critiques are negligible. Importantly, the very justification of teleological judgment changes from the first critique to the third. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant justifies the teleological view of nature by appealing to reason’s interest in systematic unity, and he immediately applies the teleological principle to all of nature. In the *Critique of Judgment*, by contrast, he first justifies the use of teleological judgments in the case of organisms, and subsequently broadens their scope of application.

⁵⁸ *CJ*, 5:427, 429.

⁵⁹ *CJ*, 5:435–6.

⁶⁰ *CJ*, 5:431, 435. Nature cannot be oriented toward *making* humans moral, of course, since morality can be the result only of a free decision by individual agents. On this issue, see Allison, “The Gulf between Nature and Freedom,” 47.

⁶¹ See *CJ*, 5:431, 432.

⁶² *CJ*, 5:433–4.

⁶³ “Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View,” 8:17–18, 29.

sible for reason to avoid the conclusion that "that nature is purposive in parts but purposeless as a whole."⁶⁴ Kant argues that it is possible to regard nature as being teleologically arranged so as to promote the development of the human capacity to use reason. This should lead to a point at which humankind is able to go beyond what nature can accomplish and transform itself into a "moral whole."⁶⁵ This is a world in which humankind has reached its destiny as a community of rational beings, legislating and obeying moral law.

The specifics of Kant's teleological idea of history need not concern us here. In the present context, the important point is that this idea of the course of history provides the very same teleological ordering principle that Kant later provides in the *Critique of Judgment* in his discussion of "culture" as the "ultimate end of nature." Already in the "Idea for a Universal History," Kant fleshes out the principle of the teleological order that was lacking in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Thus, he dealt with the problem of the internal order of the teleological system of nature as early as the mid 1780's.

Although we have seen that, on Kant's view, theoretical reason borrows the idea of humanity's moral vocation from practical reason to provide an ordering principle for a teleological conception of nature as a whole, the account thus far does not yet explain how theoretical and practical reason are united. For that we now need to turn to Kant's account of practical reason.

V

Practical Reason. In this section, I return to the issue of the unification of theoretical and practical reason. In Kant's work, this issue comes up in the context of the question of the possibility of a moral world (realm of ends). Already in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that because the a priori laws of nature and of morality are radically different and independent of each other, there is no guarantee that moral agency will be able to have any impact on nature (where

⁶⁴ "Idea for a Universal History," 8:25; see also 30.

⁶⁵ "Idea for a Universal History," 8:19-21. On the idea of moral development and its compatibility with Kant's moral philosophy, see my "Kant, History, and the Idea of Moral Development," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 16 (1999): 59-80.

nature includes our own inner nature). Kant argues that the approximation of a moral world, demanded by practical reason, is possible only if nature is designed to harmonize with morality, and that our unconditional duty to promote such a world justifies our believing that nature is so designed.⁶⁶ Given that the idea of the order of nature as the product of intelligent design is also an idea used by theoretical reason, practical reason's idea of the world as it ought to be harmonizes with theoretical reason's idea of the world as it is. Thus, the two uses of reason are united by the notion of nature as ordered by a highest intelligence, that is, as purposive. This design need not be conceived of as involving natural teleology, but because theoretical reason already defends the teleological view of nature as promoting the moral development of humankind, practical reason can use this teleological idea for its own purposes. Let me sketch the steps in Kant's argument.

Like theoretical reason, pure practical reason strives for systematic unity. The categorical imperative commands us to act only on maxims that are compatible with other maxims of our own and with the moral maxims of others.⁶⁷ Thereby, it organizes all moral maxims under one general principle.

Moreover, practical reason constructs an idea of the world that would result if all individual agents always acted perfectly morally. Kant says we arrive at the idea of a moral world when we abstract from human weaknesses and conceive of a world in which all members always obey the moral law.⁶⁸ The members of such a world regard each other as ends, and because they all act on the moral law, their moral ends form a systematic unity. In such a world, "the free will of each, under moral laws, is in complete systematic unity with itself and with the freedom of every other."⁶⁹ This notion of a moral world returns in the *Foundations* as the realm of ends, which Kant calls the "systematic union of different rational beings through common objective laws."⁷⁰

⁶⁶ CPR, A807-19/B835-47.

⁶⁷ See Paul Guyer, "The Unity of Reason," and "The Systematic Order of Nature and the Systematic Union of Ends," and Onora O'Neill, *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 81-104.

⁶⁸ CPR, A808-9/B836-7.

⁶⁹ CPR, A808/B836; see A815/B843.

⁷⁰ *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* 4:433.

The moral world is an idea of a world that ought to be.⁷¹ This idea is constructed by abstracting from the shortcomings of humans, and it cannot be empirically instantiated. Kant claims that although the idea cannot be fully realized, we ought to "bring the sensible world as much as possible into conformity with the idea of the moral world" through moral agency.⁷²

We can do that, he suggests in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, only if we view nature as a purposive system: "this systematic unity of ends in this world of intelligences [that is, in the moral world] . . . also leads inevitably to the purposive unity of all things that constitute this great whole [namely, the world], in accordance with universal laws of nature."⁷³ Furthermore, the laws of nature and of morality are so radically different that they can be regarded as being in harmony only if such harmony is thought to be brought about by an intelligent creator.⁷⁴ "[T]he world must be represented as having originated from an idea if it is to be in harmony with . . . the moral employment [of reason]." This unites theoretical and practical reason, and "thereby, all investigation of nature tends towards the form of a system of ends, and in its widest extension becomes a physico-theology."⁷⁵ Thus, the conception of nature as purposive and as the result of divine design is the linchpin that unites theoretical and practical reason.

Kant does not spell out what it means to say that the study of nature "tends towards the *form* of a system of ends." In the first critique, it remains unclear whether Kant thinks the harmony between nature

⁷¹ Many problems plague Kant's account of the moral world. One difficulty is that Kant works with two notions of the highest good. In the passages quoted he speaks of it as a moral world of virtuous beings who produce their own and each other's happiness. In different passages in the same work, he defines it as happiness in proportion to virtue in an individual. Regardless of which of these conceptions of the highest good he discusses, Kant needs the assumption that nature and morality are brought into harmony by a highest intelligence.

⁷² *CPR*, A808/B836. On this notion of the actualization of the moral world, see Richard L. Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason: On the Moral Foundation of Kant's Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), ch. 5.

⁷³ *CPR*, A815/B843.

⁷⁴ On Kant's doctrine of moral faith, see Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970). On Kant's precritical conception of the harmony of the laws of nature and of morality, see Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason*, ch. 4, esp. pp. 89–95.

⁷⁵ *CPR*, A815/B843.

and morality requires a teleological natural order, or whether a systematic unity of mechanical causal laws might do as well. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant states that we have a "choice" as to how we think of the harmony between natural laws and the laws of morality and that reason naturally opts in favor of the assumption that a moral author of the world has established an exact harmony between the realm of nature and the realm of morality.⁷⁶ Yet Kant fails to indicate whether this harmony has to be conceived of as involving natural teleology.

In the *Critique of Judgment*, however, we find an indication of why Kant may have found it unnecessary to settle this issue in the first two critiques. He states explicitly that there could be a harmony between the laws of nature and the laws of freedom without there being natural teleology. He argues that the moral proof for the existence of God is not dependent on the existence of empirical material for teleology, and that even without natural teleology we could still postulate that nature harmonizes with the laws of freedom:

[T]he moral proof . . . would still retain its force if we did not find in the world any material at all, or only ambiguous material, for physical teleology. . . . And yet reason . . . would still find in the concept of freedom, and in the moral ideas based on it, a practically sufficient basis for postulating the concept of the original being as adequate to these ideas, that is, as a deity, and for postulating nature . . . as a final purpose that conforms to the concept and the laws of freedom.⁷⁷

The fact that a harmony between nature and morality does not require natural teleology does not mean there is no natural teleology. Indeed, in the same passage in which Kant says that we have grounds to believe in such harmony, even if there were nothing in nature that could be judged teleologically, he also claims that the fact that there is "ample material for physical teleology" presents a "*desired confirmation*" of the harmony between nature and morality.⁷⁸

Earlier in the "Critique of Teleological Judgment," of course, Kant already argued that it is defensible to regard nature (regulatively) as a teleological order. There, the impossibility of understanding organ-

⁷⁶ *CPrR*, 5:145.

⁷⁷ *CJ*, 5:478-9.

⁷⁸ *CJ*, 5:479, emphasis mine. Although it confirms the moral proof, the possibility of regarding nature teleologically does not itself suffice to justify the assumption of the existence of God, and hence it cannot replace the moral proof; *CJ*, 5:479.

isms without regarding them as ends is said to provide the justification for introducing teleological concepts into the study of nature. Once parts of nature are judged teleologically, we are also justified, at least for heuristic purposes, to broaden the scope of the teleological principle to all of nature.⁷⁹ As we saw above, Kant looks to morality to conceive of the teleological order as providing a fit between the ends of nature and the moral vocation of humans. He conceives of nature as teleologically oriented towards promoting the development (culture) of the human rational predispositions, preparing humanity for fulfilling its moral vocation.⁸⁰

This is a view that, as we also saw in the previous section, is already expressed in Kant's 1784 essay, "Idea for a Universal History." In that essay, Kant expressly states that the teleological view of nature and history is of both theoretical and practical importance. The account of nature as teleologically directed towards the rational and moral development of humankind does not merely help guide theoretical reason's pursuit of systematic unity of the phenomenal world, but it also opens up a "consoling view of the future," namely, the prospect of a human race having developed its rational predispositions and fulfilling its moral destiny here on earth. If there were no such prospect, despair would force the moral agent to hope for "another world." The fact that his view of nature and history makes it possible to avoid such moral despair, says Kant, provides a second reason for adopting the teleological view of history.⁸¹

We are now in a position to draw some conclusions with regard to the unification of theoretical and practical reason. First, this unification is achieved, on Kant's view, by the fact that practical reason leads to the assumption that nature is purposively organized by a wise creator. This makes it possible to regard moral agency as able to influence the empirical world, and hence to regard practical reason's idea of the world as it ought to be as harmonizing with theoretical reason's idea of the world that is.

Second, according to Kant, practical reason does not require that we conceive of nature, as created by God, in terms of natural teleology. He maintains that there are independent arguments that support

⁷⁹ *CJ*, secs. 67, 82-4.

⁸⁰ *CJ*, 5:432-4.

⁸¹ "Idea for a Universal History," 8:30.

regarding nature as a teleological system, and this makes it possible to give a teleological account of how exactly nature harmonizes with morality, namely, by promoting the rational, and especially moral development (culture) of humankind.

VI

The Primacy of Practical Reason. Kant's talk of uniting theoretical and practical reason should not be taken to suggest that they have equal standing. Kant argues that practical reason has "primacy." There are two respects in which practical reason reaches results that lie beyond the power of theoretical reason. First, from the moral point of view, the belief in the harmony between morality and nature as well as the belief in the existence of God are justified unconditionally, since these beliefs are directly connected with the consciousness of duty, and duty is unconditional. By contrast, theoretical reason justifies merely the use of the ideas of God and the systematicity of nature to guide the study of nature and its order. Because we are not unconditionally required to examine nature, the use of these ideas is only conditionally justified. It is justified only "with respect to the worldly use of our reason" (*respektiv auf den Weltgebrauch unserer Vernunft*), namely, "when we study nature."⁸²

Second, practical reason leads to much stronger assumptions than theoretical reason. It justifies the (subjectively certain) belief that God exists (as a practical postulate) and the associated belief that nature is purposively ordered. Theoretical reason, by contrast, justifies merely the use of the idea of nature as systematically ordered by a highest intelligence (as regulative principle). Theoretical reason cannot prove or disprove the existence of God, but according to Kant this also means that as soon as practical reason justifies the belief in the existence of God, theoretical reason cannot reject it. As Henry Allison has aptly put this, "our practical interest (in morality and the conditions of its possibility) is entitled to override our speculative interest in avoiding ungrounded claims and the latter must therefore submit to the former."⁸³

⁸² CPR, A698/B726; see "What is Orientation in Thinking?," 8:139.

Thus, practical reason has "primacy."⁸⁴ What Kant means by this is that theoretical reason is subordinated to practical reason in the sense that it must accept and seek to integrate certain theoretical positions justified by practical reason—such as the belief in the existence of a God who has purposively ordered nature—even though justifying these positions transcends the capacities of theoretical reason.⁸⁵

VII

"Thin" and "Thick" Unification. There is one issue that still requires further discussion, namely, the fact that Kant in effect seems to give two different accounts of the unification of theoretical and practical reason. We should distinguish—better than Kant did—between a "thin" and a "thick" account. The thin account is more abstract than the thick account, which provides concrete details as to how this harmony is to be conceived of. The thin account states that, from a moral point of view, we need to believe that nature is the product of a wise God who has brought nature and morality into harmony. The thin account does not further specify how this harmony should be conceived of, and therefore does not include (or exclude) natural teleology. For a moral agent it is strictly speaking not necessary to provide such specifics: the mere faith that morality can be effective in the world suffices.

The thick account builds on the thin account. On the thick account, viewing nature as a teleological realm of ends oriented towards human rational development provides a concrete representation of how nature harmonizes with morality. This teleological account of nature is defended by theoretical reason, which uses the notion of the moral vocation of humanity as a systematizing principle. The thick, teleological account is not strictly necessary to conceive of the

⁸³ Henry E. Allison, *Idealism and Freedom: Essays on Kant's Theoretical and Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19.

⁸⁴ *CPrR*, 5:121.

⁸⁵ On the primacy of practical reason, see also Roger J. Sullivan, *Immanuel Kant's Moral Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 95–113 and Frederick Rauscher, "Kant's Two Priorities of Practical Reason," *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 6 (1998): 397–419.

conditions for the possibility of the moral world, and its justifiability depends on whether the empirical world gives us occasion to regard nature as a teleological order. Because Kant argues there are good reasons for viewing nature as a teleological order, he regards the thick account as justified.

As a result, Kant is drawn to comparisons between the role of teleology for theoretical and for moral purposes. For example, in a footnote in the *Foundations*, he describes the relationship between the notion of a realm of ends in natural teleology and in moral theory as follows:

Teleology considers nature as a realm of ends; morals regards a possible realm of ends as a realm of nature. In the former the realm of ends is a theoretical idea for the explanation of what exists. In the latter it is a practical idea for bringing about that which does not exist but which can become actual through our conduct, in accordance with this idea.⁸⁶

When the teleological natural order is conceived as oriented towards human moral development, it provides a representation of how the practical idea can be approximated, by representing nature as conducive to rational development in general and moral development in particular. At the same time, representing nature as teleologically oriented towards the rational and moral development of humans provides an organizational principle for regarding nature as a whole as a teleological system.

In sum, the two uses of reason are not only not in conflict, but they both lead to the (thin) view of nature as divinely designed.⁸⁷ Theoretical and practical reason are united or combined through the belief that nature harmonizes with morality. Their unification does not depend on whether there is any ground for judging nature from a teleological point of view. Kant's conviction that teleological judgments are justified (if only regulatively) enables him to defend, in addition, a thick version of their unification.

⁸⁶ *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:436, note; see "On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy," 8:182-3.

⁸⁷ Of course, it should be kept in mind that the epistemic status of this view is that of a regulative idea in one case, and of a practical postulate in the other.

VIII

The Unity of Reason and the Critique of Judgment. Part of what the preceding discussions show is that, contrary to what many commentators assert, the famous passage in the introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*,⁸⁸ about the "immense gulf" between nature and freedom, does not state a new problem. Rather, it is a restatement of the problem of the unification of theoretical and practical reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the third critique, Kant states that while no transition from nature to the realm of freedom is possible, it is practically necessary to conceive of freedom as having an influence in the world of sense, because such influence is morally demanded. Kant concludes: "it must be possible to think of nature as being such that the lawfulness in its form will harmonize with at least the possibility of the purposes that we are to achieve in nature according to laws of freedom."⁸⁹ In the rest of the introduction, he argues that the transcendental concept of the purposiveness of nature provides the connection between nature and freedom: "[T]hrough this concept we cognize the possibility of the final purpose [set by the concept of freedom], which can become actual only in nature and in accordance with its laws."⁹⁰ This transcendental concept of the purposiveness of nature, however, is nothing else than the concept of nature as a product of the final causality of an intelligent designer. This concept appears already in the first critique.

Despite this and the many other continuities between Kant's account of the 1780's and that of the *Critique of Judgment* discussed above, there are also some very significant differences. Commentators who claim that Kant here argues for the unity of reason (either for the first time or as an elaboration of his earlier views)⁹¹ overlook the fact that the third critique does not seem to offer an account of the unity of theoretical and practical reason at all. As Paul Guyer has rightly observed, in reassigning the concept of purposiveness to the faculty of judgment, Kant strips theoretical reason of an important function. This reassignment, however, does not represent Kant's last step on the long road towards a coherent doctrine of the unity of

⁸⁸ *CJ*, 5:175-6.

⁸⁹ *CJ*, 5:176.

⁹⁰ *CJ*, 5:196.

⁹¹ See notes 6 and 9 above.

reason—as Guyer suggests—but rather a radical alteration of this doctrine. After having developed the doctrine of the unity of theoretical and practical reason in the 1780's, Kant now seems suddenly to reduce reason to practical reason,⁹² erasing theoretical reason from his charts of mental powers.⁹³ The notion that there is one and the same faculty of reason that is used theoretically and practically virtually disappears, and instead Kant now focuses on the relationship between the understanding, (practical) reason, and judgment.⁹⁴ Instead of unifying theoretical and practical reason, the concept of the purposiveness of nature now “connects the legislations of the understanding and reason.”⁹⁵

Despite the many continuities, then, the *Critique of Judgment* seems also to depart from Kant's previous account of the unity of reason.⁹⁶ It lies beyond the scope of this essay, however, to work out the details of the later view. I have mentioned it here to underscore the fact that if the proposed account of Kant's 1780's doctrine of the unity of reason is convincing, it necessitates a reevaluation of the relationship between this doctrine and the third critique.

Conclusion. Kant's three claims about the unity of reason are consistent. The claim that theoretical and practical reason are one and the same faculty, merely applied differently, should be seen as a regulative principle based on reason's own interest in systematicity, and not as a claim to knowledge. This makes it consistent with the claim that we do not yet have insight into reason's unity. Furthermore, the claim that theoretical and practical reason are united should be read as referring to the compatibility of and connection be-

⁹² Kant does not discuss what, if anything, is left of theoretical reason and its three ideas. He occasionally seems to presuppose its continued existence (for example, at *CJ*, 5:342, and 401), but he does not provide a revised account of its function.

⁹³ *CJ*, 5:198; see also 20:245–46.

⁹⁴ *CJ*, 5:195–8.

⁹⁵ *CJ*, 5:195.

⁹⁶ Kant's reorganization of the cognitive faculties may have been motivated more by his discovery of an a priori principle that could ground his aesthetic theory, and less by a dissatisfaction with his own previous theory of the unity of reason. In that case, the newly prominent faculty of judgment introduces a problem for Kant by unsettling his previous doctrine of the unity of reason. I shall not investigate these deeper motives here, however, as the main argument of this paper does not depend on the motives for the change in Kant's view.

tween the two uses of this one faculty. This reading not only resolves the apparent tension between Kant's three claims, but it also brings into view Kant's account of the unity of reason before the *Critique of Judgment*.⁹⁷

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⁹⁷I would like to thank Joel Anderson, Thad Metz, Fred Rauscher, Fred Rush, and Allen Wood for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.