Modern sentimentalism is generally ‘Kantian rationalism in sentimentalist clothes’: Potential redundancy of affects to moral motivation in light of properly cultivated moral feeling

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Potential redundancy of affects to moral motivation in light of properly cultivated moral feeling

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Introduction

Sentimentalists and rationalists bicker about what the constitutive capacities for moral agency are: reason or emotion? Which capacity motivates us to act on moral norms? Which moral motive represents the core of moral agency?

Traditional sentimentalism as defended by David Hume, argues that we are morally motivated by our empathic feelings for others. Therefore, empathy is the necessary and the most important capacity for moral agency. Immanuel Kant introduced the traditional rationalist response, which claims instead that we need to be responsive to normative considerations to be morally motivated: we need moral feeling. Our rational capacities and proper cultivation of them are necessary for moral agency. Although Hume and Kant have long passed, the debate has not been settled. What most modern sentimentalists and rationalists have been able to agree on, however, is that the idea of one responsible capacity for moral agency, as one 'core moral motive', is implausible. They agree with each other that both our emotion and our rational capacities are relevant to our moral agency. What they still disagree on, however, is which capacity is the most relevant. In my view, there does currently seem to be a preference for sentimentalism. Although most theories leave room for rational capacities in moral agency, almost none plead for moral feeling as the necessary capacity for moral agency. The only one that I'll discuss in this paper that truly commits herself to do so, is Jeanette Kennett.

Whereas some modern sentimentalists still argue like Hume that empathy is the most important to our moral agency, most of them have enlarged the kinds of emotional capacities that can be responsible for such motivation. Our emotions play an important part in our motivation. With moral emotions we can, for example, value others as equals, concern ourselves with societal cooperation, and have affective affiliations with specific goals. As such, we are morally motivated through sentiments. Awareness of moral norms and other rational capacities are not sufficient to motivate us like emotions do. Modern rationalist Kennett disagrees. She believes that if we are aware of the moral norms and value the reasons for which we have such norms, we'll be motivated to act on those norms because we

have respect for and are responsive to the duty they impel on us. Considering both modern sentimentalist and modern rationalist theses, then, most modern sentimentalists seem to adjust traditional sentimentalism and steer away from Hume's original notion, whereas modern rationalist Kennett stays close to Kant.

As cases of exceptional or arguably absent moral agency, psychopaths and autistic individuals could be valuable empirical support for either modern sentimentalist or rationalist theories. If they lack moral agency or fail to be motivated by moral norms and we can point to the capacity that constitutes this abnormality, then that capacity might be what's necessary for moral agency. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that both modern sentimentalists and rationalists have used results from research on both psychopaths and autistic individuals in support of their theories.

But what makes these cases such great examples in support of moral agency theories and how are they different? In short, psychopaths are often highly intelligent, impulsive, vicious, and predatory beings. They know the moral norm and understand what others value, but they don't care. Hence, we have no trouble denying them moral agency, regardless of a preferred theory of moral agency: the psychopath seems indifferent to both other people's feelings and reasons for moral norms. Autistic individuals, on the other hand, pose a problem following this line of reasoning. They are also empathically impaired, but unlike the psychopath, they fail to understand or recognize other people's feelings. Whether autistic people are also unable to feel for others and care about other people's feelings, like the psychopath is incapable of doing, remains to be a point of discussion, partly due to the spectrum that autism entails. Regardless of the extent to which autistic individuals are emotionally impaired, following our line of reasoning used in deciding on moral agency in the psychopath, this empathic deficiency in autistic people could warrant a similar conclusion.[1] Unlike denying that the psychopath is a moral agent, however, we feel guilty of

[1] Shaun Nichols disagrees (2001). He claims that a minimal sense of mindreading is sufficient for ethical reasoning, to which autistic individuals might be capable. The cognitive empathic impairment in autistic individuals, therefore, perhaps does not constrain them from being moral agents. Some philosophers that I'll regard in this paper entertain a similar idea, namely that people with autism might develop alternative cognitive methods to gather similar information to that which people discern through perspective-taking. Because most philosophers still deny their capacity for cognitive empathy and because their inability to perspective-take in the end doesn't affect my proposal for a potential defence of Kant and Kennett's rationalism, I won't elaborate on Nichols' argument.

denying the autistic individual such agency: it seems like he means well and isn't preying on others. In fact, autistic people reliably stick to moral norms and are sensitive to consistency between their behaviour and these norms, precisely in ways that are opposite of psychopathic behaviour. So, if the difference between the autistic individuals' impairments and those of the psychopath is such that the empathic deficiency in autistic individuals is not detrimental to moral agency like it is in the case of psychopaths, why is that so? Both modern sentimentalists and rationalists use different strategies and point to different constitutive capacities for moral agency, to be able to grant autistic individuals moral agency.

For traditional sentimentalism, the general objection is that if empathy is necessary for moral agency and autistic individuals lack certain empathic capacities like understanding another's emotional reaction, then they don't qualify for moral agency. The rationalist theory faces other challenges. Although autistic individuals often show consistent and rule-conform behaviour, their motivation to do so might not come from a respect for moral duty, but rather from their love for rules. They could just as well be following rules for rules-sake, which motive we don't label as moral.

Although there are many differences between modern sentimentalist theories and their explanations of autistic moral agency, I believe they unite against this rationalist claim mentioned in the previous paragraph: autistic individuals have (a properly cultivated) moral feeling and are therefore moral agents, which can be inferred from their consistent and often rule-conform behaviour. Kennett supports this argument, but is criticized by modern sentimentalists for its lack of support and implausible account of moral motivation: moral feeling remains insufficient for moral motivation.

In my view, this refutation by modern sentimentalists of Kennett's rationalist claim is especially interesting in connection to Heidi Maibom's criticism of Victoria McGeer's sentimentalist account. In short, McGeer argues that apart from our empathic concern for others, other concerns can also generate emotions that motivate us to act on the right ends. Although autistic individuals might not be motivated through an empathic concern but rather through a certain concern for structure and order, they are able to rationally subject their personal desires to larger ends. Combined, they can be motivated to act on those rational ends because their emotions especially value them, even if these emotions don't

come from empathy or social concern. So, they can autonomously establish which ends are worth acting on, and they're not motivated to act on those ends for the sake of their rule-nature. Therefore, autistic individuals qualify for moral agency: they can be morally motivated by affect to act on the right ends. According to Maibom, through McGeer's acknowledgement of the importance of rational capacities to our moral agency, she accidentally makes the morality of our action depend on our rational ability to view the right ends as reasons for action. So, Maibom accuses McGeer of presenting as a sentimentalist, while actually advocating a rationalist theory of moral agency that is in line with Kennett and Kant.

I believe that Maibom's criticism of McGeer may apply to all modern sentimentalist theories discussed in this paper. Ironically enough, that includes Maibom's own proposal. If we have sufficient rational capacities to subordinate our personal-interests to universal ends which entail for us reasons for action, then positing sentiments or affects to be motivated to act on those ends of which we already think they're reasonable to act on, might be a redundant addition. If Maibom's criticism applies to more modern sentimentalist theories than just the one of McGeer, then their refutation of Kennett's claim might be paradoxical in combination with their emphasis on rational capacities. Then, our moral feeling might be the capacity that's more important to our moral agency than our sentiments, and the rule-conform behaviour of autistic individuals could be connected to such a rational capacity. Also, the issue that sentimentalists have with moral feeling and its supposed insufficient capacity to morally motivate, could stem from their partial understanding or miscomprehension of Kant's moral feeling. Specifically in sentimentalist John Deigh's case, this, again, might lead to the redundant suggestion of affective capacities for moral motivation. To investigate this possibility properly, I'll elaborate on Kant's idea that these moral feelings require cultivation. I'll focus on the cultivation of our duties to sympathize and our duties to respect others that are subjective conditions to our feeling of respect for the moral law, as opposed to sentiments of empathy. Thus, by comparing sentimentalist theses with Kennett's argument in favour of autistic moral agency, along with a deeper explanation of Kant's duties of virtue to others, I'll investigate whether Maibom's argument can be enlarged to apply to all sentimentalist theories in this paper. If so, by presupposing rational

capacities to be part of their moral agency theory, sentimentalists might accidentally have argued for moral feeling to be more constitutive to moral agency than affect.

To explore the plausibility of this claim in the current paper, I'll proceed as follows. First, I'll explain the moral psychological descriptions of psychopathic and autistic disorders in terms of cognitive and affective empathy (chapter 1). Second, I'll explain the traditional sentimentalism of David Hume, along with Immanuel Kant's rationalism (chapter 2). Third, I'll look into modern sentimentalist theories and Kennett's rationalist theory, and their explanations of psychopathy and attempts to account for the moral agency of autistic individuals. I'll start with Kennett's rationalist theory and her followup on Kant (chapter 3).[2] I will continue with several sentimentalist theories and their responses to Kennett and general rationalism (chapter 4). I'll discuss John Deigh, Victoria McGeer and Heidi Maibom.[3] These theories are not only critical to their sentimentalist or rationalist opponents, but also differ significantly in how they account for these exceptional disorders among their fellow sentimentalists. Explanations vary from granting a constitutive character in moral agency to emotional capacities like empathy (Deigh), or different concerns (McGeer & Maibom). After having explained both sides of the debate and the various and significant differences between these sentimentalist and rationalist theories, I'll analyze by using my further interpretation of Kant's moral feeling, whether Maibom's argument can be applied to all discussed sentimentalist theories and whether the suggested motivational emotions can be compared to moral feeling: whether positing motivational affects is redundant if a rationalist theory can already encompass such capacities in a cognitive setting (chapter 5).

[2] I will not discuss any other modern rationalist theories of moral motivation, as I think Kennett's is the most influential one. This seems to be supported by many of the modern sentimentalist theories, as they often mention Kennett or direct their theory specifically in opposition to her proposal.

[3] I've chosen these theories because they all take very distinct positions in modern sentimentalism. The theories differ in their outlook on the role of sentiments in our moral agency, but also in their view on cooperation of these affective capacities with rationalist capacities. I'll elaborate more on their differences in chapter four. In this chapter I'll also argue distinctively why I believe these philosophers defend mainly sentimentalist theses, and not rationalist ones. What also mattered is that a lot of this discourse is collected in Sinnott-Armstrong's "Moral Psychology: The Neuroscience of Morality: Emotion, Brain Disorders, and Development" in chapter five. This concerns McGeer, Kennett, Maibom, De Vignemont, and Frith. I'll focus on this dialogue, along with additional papers by Kennett and Maibom for elaboration, Deigh and Prinz for important and distinct theories of moral agency, and of course Hume but especially Kant's original claims.

I won't be discussing whether one or the other capacity, meaning emotion or reason, can be sufficient on its own for moral motivation, as few philosophers believe that's the case. I'll stick to the discussion which capacity is (more) necessary, believing that both are of importance to moral agency. I won't conclude on one 'core' moral motive.

1. The psychopath and the autistic individual

With a short explanation of the deficits and alternative workings of the minds of psychopaths and autistic individuals and how that relates to their behaviour, understanding the differences between sentimentalism and rationalism and their attempts to account for those impairments becomes easier. So, I'll start with moral psychological explanations of psychopaths and people with autism, in order to clearly follow up with the moral philosophical accounts. In moral psychology, empathy is understood as divided into two capacities: cognitive and affective empathy.

1.1 Cognitive and affective empathy

As I pointed out in the introduction, psychopaths generally behave differently from autistic people. At least, we tend to categorize psychopaths as impulsive, careless, and vicious, whereas we would define autistic individuals more as indifferent, awkward, and rigid. According to many, this difference is the result of their different empathic deficits: they're impaired in different kinds of empathy. This refers to the widely shared idea of empathy that deconstructs it into two capacities: cognitive empathy and affective empathy. With cognitive empathy, we are able to take the perspective of another, correctly analyze their distress cues, and draw inferences about their mental state. This, however, doesn't yet make us feel sorry for the other in the general sense that people think of when asked about empathy. This emotional reaction is constituted by the other part: affective empathy. Through the internal representation of the mental state of the other with our cognitive empathy, we are able with affective empathy to experience similar emotions or other emotions in response to that representation, because we understand the other and resonate with their distress (Aaltola, 2014, 77; Blair, 1995, 4). Merely having the capacity for cognitive empathy is insufficient to be truly empathetic. We need to know other people's interests and view them as valuable and equal to our own, instead of inferior (Aaltola, 2014, 88).

From this moral psychological distinction within empathy, everyone seems to agree that the psychopath has adequate cognitive empathy but lacks affective empathy. They have cognitive empathy, so they are able to perspective-take and can accurately assess another's mental state. However, they don't regard the other's emotions and interests as equally important to their own (Kennett, 2002, 349). Because they lack affective empathy, the information extracted through their cognitive empathy facilitates the possibility for manipulation and instrumentalisation of others to their own use (Aaltola, 2014, 79; 81)

In the case of the autistic individual, most believe that they lack cognitive empathy, as opposed to the psychopath. They struggle to discern other people's mental states, emotions and interests, and even have problems understanding that other people really have mental states beyond their own mind (Kennett, 2002, 347). Because they lack an understanding or even awareness of other people's feelings and their existence, they consequently fail to take these interests into account when considering their actions. This sometimes makes them come across as indifferent, similar to the psychopath, while their motivation to do so might not be as predatory (Kennett, 2002, 347; 349). In comparison, the psychopath seems to use others for personal gain because he intentionally doesn't care for other people's interests and emotions. He can adequately assess another's mental state, but only regards the resulting information important as a means to his personal ends. Autistic people are not intentionally indifferent to another's emotions: they don't get to the point of understanding the emotions of another, let alone in some cases even fathom that the other could have such emotions and interests. Their indifference is the result of a literal misunderstanding (Kennett, 2002, 348).

This doesn't mean, however, that some autistic individuals can't develop other ways to make up for their cognitive empathy impairments. Some people with autism have reported that they try to discern other people's mental states and predict their consequential behaviour through reasoning and logical inference from past experiences of such behaviours (Kennett, 2002, 351-352; McGeer, 2008, 237). Others claim that such logical inference might not even be necessary, as some research shows that autistic individuals often seem perfectly capable of recognizing emotions in others through some kind of automatic emotion recognition (De Vignemont & Frith, 2008, 275). As a last explanation, this deficiency in autistic people to process other people's emotions could also be the result of their incapacity

to have very complex emotions and to adequately regulate them and reflect on them, instead of their inability for cognitive empathy (De Vignemont & Frith, 2008, 274). In that sense, it could very well be the case that they are responsive to other people's emotions, but are overwhelmed by such emotions and have poor tools to adequately process them.

However, because autistic individuals generally lack cognitive empathy and because making up for this capacity through trial and error and logical inference is probably still less reliable and successful than taking the perspective of another (even if they succeed and if the general autistic individual is able to do so), their lack of cognitive empathy arguably influences their lack of affective empathy. After all, if I can't understand or figure out your mental state and current feelings, how am I supposed to resonate with them and consider them when making up my behavioural principles? If they lack affective empathy on top of that, then their empathy skills might be even worse than those of psychopaths (Kennett, 2002, 349; McGeer, 2008, 233). Whether they do or don't have affective empathy, remains to be a speculative discussion.

2. *Humean* sentimentalism and *Kantian* rationalism

As mentioned in the introduction, sentimentalists and rationalists point to different capacities that are necessary for moral motivation. Roughly speaking, to be motivated by moral norms we must be able to feel certain emotions, in the traditional sense specifically through empathy, or we need to be responsive to the reasons that support these norms. In other words, either our emotional or our rational capacities are more important to our moral agency. Even though there are many different kinds of modern sentimentalist and rationalist theories, their origin can be traced back to David Hume and Immanuel Kant.

2.1 "*Morality is more properly felt than judg'd of*": The Empathy Thesis

According to Hume, moral judgements are grounded in sentiments, which is obviously where the term sentimentalism comes from. We distinguish between vice and virtue through our experience of sentiments: we rather *feel* what is moral than *know* what is (Deigh, 2018, 130; Selby-Bigge, 1896, 245). Specifically, we're confronted with certain circumstances and behaviour of others that give us feelings of approbation or disapprobation, which feelings cause us to praise or condemn those situations and motivate us to act accordingly. This sentimental origin of moral judgements makes them very different from other kinds of judgements that we base on reason. Also, the sentiments that constitute these moral judgements shouldn't be conflated with all other kinds of sentiments, as not all sentiments give rise to praise or condemnation (Deigh, 2018, 131; Selby-Bigge, 1896, 246). When I stub my toe, I don't condemn the table for treating my foot in a morally reprehensible manner.

To be able to adequately evaluate such behaviour and generate these resulting feelings and complementary judgements, Hume claims that we need sympathy. In his view, it's not an emotion in itself, but a capacity to experience another's mental state: we don't feel sympathy, but with sympathy we're able to experience emotions like sadness, pity, or infuriation as a reaction to our knowledge of someone's mental state. These emotions of, in

this case, disapprobation give rise to our condemning judgement (Deigh, 2018, 131; Selby-Bigge, 1896, 294). For example, we can experience emotions like compassion towards someone's mental state of grief, someone's crying. We imagine the other's state of grief, and in turn experience feelings of compassion for that grief, which is aroused by the operation of our sympathetic capacity. Through sympathy, we experience the sentiments of 'pleasure or uneasiness' of the other that generates our feelings of approbation or esteem and disapprobation or contempt for a state or an action (Selby-Bigge, 1896, 190). It is, therefore, through the capacity for sympathy that we in the end experience moral sentiments: we have feelings of approbation or disapprobation to actions that benefit or worsen society and the people (Selby-Bigge, 1896, 295).

This notion of sympathy is comparable to the earlier discussed twofold theory of empathy as cognitive and affective capacities that provide us with knowledge of another's mental state and the consequential experience of feelings as a reaction to that knowledge. Therefore, people generally read his mention of 'sympathy' as meaning 'empathy', and I'll also continue to do so (Deigh, 2018, 132). So, if moral judgements are constituted by feelings of approbation and disapprobation, and we can only have these feelings towards someone's behaviour or mental state if we're able to discern someone's mental state and experience the fitting emotions, then it only makes sense for Hume to believe that empathy is a precondition for moral approbation and disapprobation, and in turn for making moral judgements and being morally motivated (Deigh, 2018, 132; Selby-Bigge, 1896, 295). This characterisation of empathy as a necessary capacity for moral agency is also known as 'the empathy thesis', 'Humean thesis', 'sentimentalist thesis' or 'Humean sentimentalism' (Aaltola, 2014; Deigh, 2018). From now on, I'll stick to the term 'empathy thesis' when I refer to this preconditional character of empathy to moral agency and the traditional sentimentalism that Hume introduced.

Hume acknowledges the possibly problematic empathic bias to his claim that this capacity plays a preconditional role in moral agency: if my empathy is biased to certain groups that are culturally, ethnically, or geographically similar to me, but my moral judgements are generally consistent, then, empathy and feelings of approbation and disapprobation might

be dissociated (Selby-Bigge, 1896, 167; 296; Prinz, 2011, 228). Empathy can't, then, be a precondition for morality.

To counter this argument, Hume argues that we use empathy with the adoption of a general point of view (Selby-Bigge, 1896, 297). He believes that these feelings of moral approbation and disapprobation don't come from our own interests and whether certain actions benefit them or not. After all, our daily feelings constituted by empathy don't necessarily have to do with our own interests, let alone affect them at all. We can feel moral approbation towards actions or persons that don't concern our interests. For example, at present it might not be in my direct interest that Palestinian people are properly fed. Also, those people generally hold very different religious beliefs or cultural habits in comparison to my Dutch atheist ones. Regardless, I experience strong feelings of moral disapprobation towards Israel's obstructions of humanitarian aid. So, we apply our capacity for empathy in a general and disinterested way, to correct our sentiments (Deigh, 2018, p. 131). On that view, to prevent our judgements from becoming partial and contingent instead of universal and vast, when we use our empathy to take the perspective of the other, we do so from a general point of view and abstract from our own situation and the relation of ourselves to the other.

2.2 Respect for duty and respect for others

Kant believes that we're motivated by 'maxims', not sentiments. This is his fancy word for subjective action-guiding principles (Kant, 1996, GR 4:401n, 56). In order to create the right maxims, in other words, to judge which principle is the right one to guide your action, we need to abstract from our inclinations and focus on the remainder: pure reason. In so doing, we get a clear rational vision of the moral law (Kant, 1996, GR 4:401n, 56). Once we are aware of the moral law, we incorporate it into our maxim and endorse that moral law. My subjective and practical principles become conformed to the objective, universal, and rational principles. This goes for everyone: it becomes categorically imperative to incorporate the moral law in corresponding maxims after my awareness of it, because we would want those principles to be universal principles for action (Kant, 1996, GR 4:421n, 73).

In this process, we ask ourselves whether our action-guiding principle, or our maxim, is a rule that could be universalised. Is it a maxim that everyone could hold without exception, and if everyone could, would that be a desirable situation? If so, then we should respect it and not make exceptions for ourselves. For obviously, we wouldn't like it if someone broke it at the cost of us, so we don't break it at the cost of others (Deigh, 1995, 749-750). So, if we establish our maxims with pure reason instead of being guided by self-interested desires, they will be in accordance with moral duty and for the sake of that duty (Kant, 1996, GR 4:406, 61). To sum up, through the combination of awareness and endorsement of the moral law in our own maxims, we're motivated to act accordingly.

To some, it remains ambiguous how this awareness of the moral law motivates us to incorporate corresponding action-guiding principles and act accordingly. We can imagine people that understand what the moral law prescribes us to do, but fail to be motivated to do so. So, what motivates us to incorporate this moral law into our maxims once we become familiar with it? Hume would answer by pointing out the difference between normal judgements based on reason and moral judgements based on feelings of approbation and disapprobation. Because moral judgements are grounded in sentiments, they're motivational as opposed to regular judgements that can fail to motivate me at all.[4]

According to Kant, those that are not convinced by his idea that awareness of the moral law is sufficient for moral motivation, have miscomprehended or have understood only part of his notion of 'awareness' of the moral law. In order to be motivated to act in accordance with and from moral norms, we must be receptive to their moral duty. To have this responsive attitude, Kant believes that we need moral feeling (1996, MM 6:399, 528). After having read the word 'feeling', it's easy to compare it to Hume's sentiments, but that's not the kind of feeling Kant's referring to. As Kant describes it, moral feeling is the subjective condition for receptivity to duty. So, we can only be obligated by the moral law once we have moral feeling. Unlike our duty to act in conformity with moral rules, it's not our duty

[4] Some philosophers argue that Hume can be read as an externalist, like Charlotte Brown (1988). According to externalism, moral judgements don't internally motivate without an external motivating factor. Hume's sentiments could be interpreted as such external motivating factors. On such an interpretation, Hume could believe that we can genuinely make moral judgements without being motivated. However, there are also still lots who interpret Hume to be an internalist, to which I'm referring mainly in this paper. Because this debate is not relevant to my discussion in the current paper, I won't elaborate on it further. I'm questioning which capacity is more morally motivational, reason or emotion, not whether those capacities are internal or external to making moral judgements.

to have moral feeling. Instead, it's a disposition of our mind: we don't acquire it, we have it (Kant, 1996, MM 6:399, 528).[5] This means that our mind is predispositioned to be affected by the normative considerations of the moral law, once we've become aware of it: we're affected by the duty it impels on us and as a result we're motivated to act accordingly.

Kant explains how this necessary capacity for moral feeling to our moral motivation to incorporate the moral law into our maxims, also applies to our motivation to respect and value other people's interests as equal to ours in establishing what the right action-guiding principle is. After all, if we're responsive to reasons for action and evaluate whether a certain principle is objective and should apply universally, we come to the conclusion that behaving towards other people as ends in themselves, including their interests, is one of those principles for action. Kant explains how everyone necessarily thinks of him- or herself as an end in itself. We don't think we're only valuable when we contribute to someone else's goals. Instead, we're valuable just how we are: as rational and autonomous human beings (Kant, 1996, GR 4:429, 79). We're all rational and autonomous moral agents in the sense that we can become aware of the moral law, incorporate the right maxims for ourselves, and do so completely by ourselves. We all share this intrinsic worth. In my respect for the other, then, I recognize the dignity or worth of the other. Therefore, because we all view ourselves as ends in ourselves, and because we can all legitimately claim respect from the other because of our intrinsic worth that follows from our rational and autonomous nature, this mutual respect requires everyone to treat others as ends in themselves instead of means or instruments to personal ends (Kant, 1996, MM 6:462, 579). In other words, it becomes imperative that we treat others as ends in themselves, just like we ought to be treated as ends in ourselves (Kant, 1996, GR, 4:429, 79-80). From this imperative to view and treat others and their interests as ends in themselves, it follows that other people's intentions and interests should provide the moral agent (who has moral feeling) with reasons for action, like his own interests do.

Because everyone's mind is built in the same way, because everyone has moral feeling, it's true that in a sense our motivation to act according to the moral law follows from our preceding awareness of that law (Kant, 1996, GR 4:389, 45; 4:411, 65). The explanation of

[5] Even though we are all equally dispositioned to have moral feeling and be receptive to moral duty, Kant emphasizes that we need to cultivate this capacity in order to be moral agents. Because this detail is of great importance to his argument, and because it's relevant to Maibom's criticism on McGeer and in turn my own discussion, I'll dedicate a separate section to it in chapter five.

Kant's moral motivation is incomplete and less convincing, however, when one focuses on this claim, without having understood what role moral feeling plays in this awareness. Mere moral understanding without this moral feeling remains insufficient for moral motivation. In that case, I don't feel obligated.

Before I cover the modern sentimentalist theories, I'll start with Kennett's rationalism, because most of these sentimentalists react to hers and Kant's notion of reverence for reason or moral feeling, claiming that it's an insufficient capacity for moral motivation.

3. Modern rationalism: moral sensibility

Before explaining modern rationalist, and in the next chapter sentimentalist, theories, I want to be clear that either of those parties generally agree that emotion and reason are both important to our moral agency. Few argue for an account of moral agency that focuses on a 'core' moral motive. Instead, lots believe these two motives cooperate as parts of our moral agency (McGeer, 2008, 229). Sentimentalists Deigh, McGeer and Maibom along with rationalist Kennett, acknowledge the roles of both reason and emotion in our moral agency. How these three sentimentalists somewhat differently do so among themselves, is something I'll discuss in the next chapter. For Kennett, acknowledgement of emotion in her rationalist theory of moral agency is important to be able to account for the affective nature of humans. She explains how emotional capacities are important in three respects.

First, affective concern can be a manifestation of our moral feeling: our disposition to be receptive to reasons for action can manifest a concern for and an emotional response to others' situations (Kennett, 2008, 259-260). For example, I'm aware that I should treat other people as ends in themselves, which reason for action additionally manifests an empathic concern for people that are instrumentalized and subjected to forced labour. Second, Kennett acknowledges that an adequate capacity for cognitive empathy and affective empathy is of informative value to our moral agency: to make appropriate moral judgements that take mental states of others and their interests into consideration, it's obviously convenient to know those states and interests, which we achieve best through using empathy (2002, 356). Third, empathy is of moral significance to the development of our sense of self. With the capacity for empathy, we're better equipped at understanding our own mental states, at using introspection, and with those abilities, at creating an idea of ourselves or 'our self' (Kennett, 2002, 236). What remains to be the morally motivational capacity for Kennett, however, is moral feeling, not my additionally manifested empathic concerns for others, nor the information I gather about another's mental state and the fact that my feelings are similar to those of another.

Although rationalists and sentimentalists alike agree on the shared importance of emotion and reason to moral agency, they disagree which of these capacities is the most important. So, in a moral motivational theory of cooperation between motives from reasons and emotions, which motive or capacity should be granted a more primary and crucial function than the other, given that the two are both important and insufficient on their own for our moral agency?

The challenge that a modern rationalist theory has to overcome to account for moral agency in the autistic individual is to prove that autistic individuals have moral feeling. If Kennett follows Kant and claims that our awareness of the moral law motivates us to incorporate corresponding subjective principles for action, because we respond to the reasons for this law and view them as reasons for action through our moral feeling. Then, Kennett needs to point to characteristics of autistic individuals that show this capacity for moral feeling and moral understanding, in order to account for their moral agency: behaviour in people with autism must show their respect for duty. In other words, Kennett needs to substantiate the argument that autistic individuals can be motivated by normative considerations that constitute reasons for action.

In short, Kennett argues that autistic individuals seem to have moral sensibility because they show a strong pull towards morality. Kennett points out that autistic individuals reliably stick to moral norms and are sensitive to consistency between their norms and between norms and their behaviour, precisely in ways that are the opposite of psychopathic behaviour towards norms. There is a connection between this consistent, rule-abiding, and kind behaviour of people with autism, and their capacity for moral feeling. Kennett doesn't have to deny that the cognitive and supposed affective empathic incapacities still complicate their moral knowledge and understanding. She just claims that it isn't detrimental to their moral agency considering their moral 'drive'.[6] In the next section, I'll elaborate on her substantiation of this argument.

[6] Attributing moral feeling to autistic individuals has, however, been under fire by sentimentalists, for it often refers to connections drawn between autistic behaviour and their motives that may be ill-supported. It's up for debate whether the motives of autistic individuals to stick to moral norms are best explained as the result of their moral sensibility. We will see this counterargument in more detail in chapter four, brought to our attention by sentimentalists Deigh and McGeer.

3.1 Reverence for reason - Jeanette Kennett

Kennett elaborates on Kant's moral feeling by making explicit how its dispositional nature differs from a general feeling, and how moral feeling can be explained as and compared to moral conversability.

As I've already explained, Kant's receptivity to reason is a disposition to take normative considerations as reasons for action and not the immediate satisfaction of personal desires or inclinations (Kennett, 2008, 260). Kennett emphasizes that Kant's reverence for reason is not a single motive, as some sentimentalists tend to interpret: they sometimes think of moral feeling as a *feeling of respect* for the moral law. The idea that reverence for reason is a disposition and not a single motive, makes it very distinct from such affective motivation. For example, I'm not motivated by my experience of awe for the moral norm that you shouldn't lie. Reverence for reason shouldn't be interpreted as a single motive of awe or respect that motivates me not to lie because I have these feelings of respect: I can have feelings of respect for Arabic culture that obligates women to cover themselves up, but at the same time fail to be motivated by the reasons for this conventional rule. After all, those religious conventions are not normative objective principles that universally constitute reasons for action. My moral feeling doesn't respond with a feeling of obligation to Arabic convention. To further explain, I really like red velvet cakes, but that doesn't make me claim that I (and everyone) should eat red velvet cakes. Valuing or respecting something refers to feelings that can be tied to short-term inclinations or conventions and can be experienced by psychopaths, whereas engaging in normative thought and being motivated by normative considerations is reserved for moral agents (Kennett, 2008, 261). Like empathy, Kennett explains, moral feeling is a disposition. Empathy is our disposition to feel emotions similar to another, but empathy itself is not a feeling, something also Hume has made clear. In that same way, moral feeling is our disposition to respond to certain normative considerations with a feeling of obligation, but moral feeling is not itself a motivating sentiment of respect (Kennett, 2008, 262).

To further explain Kant's notion of moral feeling in yet another way, Kennett refers to Karen Jones, who explains that the capacity for moral conversability with moral concepts is required for moral agency (2006). In more detail, she explains that in order to make moral judgements and be internally motivated, one has to be responsive to the reasons in support of this judgement by understanding the moral concepts they use (Kennett, 2010, 246). This assessment of the requisites of moral agency by Jones are compatible with Kennett's reverence for reason. Combined, to be motivated by the moral law to incorporate it into a corresponding moral judgement that we want to act on, a moral agent needs to be competent with the used or relevant moral concepts in that judgement, which competence he acquires through his capacity for understanding of or being receptive to the reasons for which he should uphold this judgement. If there are inconsistencies between the use of moral concepts in a person's moral judgement and their behaviour, so, if they don't act according to their moral judgements, then this lack of motivation is the result from their inability for moral conversability: they don't have the appropriate moral concepts, because they lack sufficient understanding of the normative considerations as reasons for action.

Now that Kennett has elaborated on the notion of moral feeling, she characterises and analyses autistic behaviour before she connects this to a theoretical explanation of moral feeling and moral agency. But first, she explains the notion of cognitive dissonance.

Generally speaking, people like consistency and avoid cognitive dissonance: we look for the reasons behind our actions and feel uncomfortable when actions and reasons for those actions or moral judgements conflict (Kennett, 2010, 255). This unpleasant experience of a moral feeling that something doesn't feel right, motivates us to make our principles for action and our actual actions compatible in order to reduce this cognitive dissonance, or better, remove it (Kennett, 2010, 255). Research has supported the proposal that the moral 'unpleasant' feeling that results from this cognitive dissonance is distinct from (empathic) feelings in response to someone else's distress cues (Kennett, 2010, 255-256). For example, after a wild night out with friends that ended in an all-nighter, I decided to lie to my mom: I told her I slept over at a friend and went to bed at a reasonable time. I judge lying to be morally reprehensible, but I knew my mom wouldn't be comfortable with the idea that I was out all night. Now, my uncomfortable feeling after having lied to my mom about where I

stayed after a night out, is a different kind of feeling and comes from a distinct place than my feelings in response to her disappointed look that she gives me after she's seen through my made up story. The former seems to be a moral feeling of unpleasantness with the awareness of my conflicting beliefs and actions, whereas the latter seems to be a feeling of shame and guilt for betraying the trust of my mother. If that is so, then the feelings sentimentalists refer to, like sympathy, fail to encompass moral motivation completely. Reasons that support our moral principles must be motivating to rational people that have a reverence for this reason: that are able to respond to it (Kennett, 2010, 256).

Kennett believes that this cognitive dissonance is to a high extent present in people with autism. Even though people with autism lack the cognitive empathic or emotional tools to easily discern other people's mental states and interests, they show motivation to stick to moral rules: they absolutely detest inconsistency between behaviour and maxims. They avoid cognitive dissonance at all costs. Although their maxims might sometimes be adverse to the interests of others as a result of their incomplete information on those interests, people with autism show willingness to adapt to other behavioural principles if enlightened on the matter, because they don't want to intentionally disregard others. I'll first explain why Kennett believes that psychopaths lack respect for duty, because this clearly leads to her conclusion why autistic individuals don't.

Following Jones' explanation, Kennett believes that psychopaths don't make moral judgements because they don't have the appropriate moral concepts (2010, 246). They know the moral law, but they fail to grasp the reasons for this moral law, which in turn is detrimental to their incorporation of such reasons into binding action-guiding principles. Because they don't understand the moral concepts they use when they reiterate moral norms, they lack moral conversability to use these concepts in moral judgements and be internally motivated. This assessment of psychopaths as lacking competence with moral concepts due to an insufficient understanding of the reasons that support moral norms, is often believed to be empirically supported by their inconsistent behaviour. Sentimentalists too say that psychopaths show inconsistent and manipulative behaviour because they're both impaired in their empathy and in their practical reason. They're unbothered by or don't recognize inconsistencies between norms and behaviour because they don't look for rational justifications or reasons that support their action (Kennett, 2010, 247). Psychopaths don't

seem to show, nor report discomfort as a result from such cases of cognitive dissonance. In other words, because psychopaths are unbothered by cognitive dissonance and experience no resulting motivating feelings of discomfort, they don't look for reasons that support their moral beliefs and used concepts, and are left with an insufficient understanding of those reasons and concepts. Taken together, it's highly plausible that psychopaths lack moral feeling: they seem unresponsive to reasons for action (Kennett, 2010, 256).

Through this denial of psychopathic moral agency based on their inconsistent behaviour and unbothered attitude towards cognitive dissonance, Kennett infers the opposite from the consistent behaviour of autistic individuals. So, if psychopaths show inconsistent and careless behaviour because they don't understand the reasons for norms that would regulate such behaviour as they lack moral feeling, and if autistic individuals show very consistent behaviour and the motivation to do so, then this consistency is a plausible indication of their moral feeling and capacity to understand reasons for action, have moral concepts, and be morally conversible.

For Kennett, the cognitive empathic impairment in autistic individuals, or their struggle with perspective-taking, that complicates their moral autonomy, is not detrimental to their moral agency. Because they have more difficulty to simulate people's mental states and imagine their responses to certain actions, they can arrive at inappropriate moral judgements (Kennett, 2002, 351). In other words, they can figure out for themselves what appropriate actions are, based on their own mental state and they can generalise those actions to universal norms. Those judgements are, however, not always in line with the interests of others or with justifiable moral offences, which information we take into consideration through our perspective-taking. The difference between normal people and autistic people is, then, that autistic people structurally apply moral principles without taking any damaged parties into account. Importantly, Kennet claims that this is due to their inability to take other perspectives, not thanks to their disregard for moral value and reasons for action (McGeer, 2008, 241).[7] In other words, Kennett believes that autistic people have

[7] Because there are, however, varieties to the intensity of the autistic disorder, some people with autism have reported adequate abilities to discern people's feelings and predict their behaviour. Instead of drawing conclusions from distress cues, these autistic individuals reported to reasonably infer people's mental states and potential reactions from past experiences of shown behaviour: they know what others responded like in the past to this action, so it's plausible that others will do so as well in similar circumstances (Kennett, 2002, 351-352).

moral feeling regardless of their excellence in moral autonomy (2002, 350). She believes that being responsive to normative reasons is disconnected from emotional, and in specific empathic, capacities (Kennett, 2002, 353). According to Kennett, autistic individuals are qualified: they are free from inclination and receptive to duty (2002, 350). Contrary to the psychopath, they seem to show moral conversability: if they are helped to arrive at the appropriate moral judgements, or acquire them through other manners, then they understand the moral concepts that these judgements use, because they show consistent devotion to these judgements. On top of that, the motivation in autistic people to get to know the mental states and interests of others, even though that's difficult for them, testifies to their motivation to take other people's interests as reasons for action. Their motivation to adapt their action to one that considers another's interest, and prevent uncomfortable social circumstances and repulsive reactions from others to their actions of which they're convinced are right, must come from the application of moral feeling. It can't be from empathic emotional concern, as autistic individuals lack that capacity. Autistic individuals, in Kennett's view, seem to have a sensibility for moral duty that motivates them to adapt their behaviour (2002, 352).

Now that I've extensively covered Kennett's interpretation of Kant and her rationalist explanation of moral motivation, along with her account in favour of autistic moral agency, it's time to go over the sentimentalist criticisms and alternative theories.

Therefore, some people with autism seem to be quite morally autonomously capable, just not via cognitive empathy.

4. Modern sentimentalism: empathy, cosmic & social concern

To refresh, sentimentalists believe that moral judgements are constituted by feelings of approbation or disapprobation, which feelings we experience through our capacity for empathy. Therefore, empathy is the necessary capacity for moral agency. This claim is also known as the empathy thesis. Because psychopaths have cognitive but lack affective empathy, they are not moral agents. They don't meet the required standard of empathy for moral agency. Unfortunately, this also goes for the autistic individual: they are incapable of cognitive empathy and arguably also of affective empathy. Thus, both psychopaths and autistic people lack the prerequisite capacity for moral agency: complete adequate empathy.

The three modern sentimentalist theories and criticisms that I'll discuss in this chapter, all play very different roles in the discourse. All three introduce a variety of attitudes towards the empathy thesis and its implication for the moral agency of autistic individuals. I'll start with Deigh, both because he very much holds on to this empathy thesis and because he adopts a lot of Kant's moral theory. Unlike Deigh, McGeer stays further away from Kant and closer to sentimentalism, although she does leave room for our rational capacities to control our personal desires. She also refutes the empathy thesis and claims instead that our moral agency is grounded in more emotional capacities than just empathy: there are several kinds of concern beyond our empathic concern that can generate various emotions that morally motivate us. I'll end with Maibom. She fiercely criticizes McGeer's suggestion of affective motivation for cosmic order by terming it unnecessary. Maibom does at the end of her criticism, however, suggest an adaption of McGeer's theory, or at least concedes that McGeer has rightly illuminated that social concern is an important part of our moral agency.

4.1 The importance of empathy - John Deigh

To be clear, Deigh argues against Kantian rationalism. According to him, just knowledge of the moral law and the reasons for action that support it, don't enable us to make moral

judgements that internally motivate. This means that our awareness of moral norms and our receptivity to their reasons for action, is insufficient for moral motivation (Deigh, 1995, 747-748). Instead, Deigh proposes that we need an additional motivational component that stems from emotion (1995, 747-748). Specifically, to make internally motivational moral judgements, we require empathy.[8] Otherwise, there's no guarantee that we value the interests of others as equally reason-giving as our own interests (Deigh, 1995, 758). If we fail to do so, we won't be susceptible to genuine comparison of interests in light of finding universal and objective action-guiding principles: if we can't compare interests because they're of unequal importance, resulting conclusions of what's in everybody's (best) interest will be subject to debate (Deigh, 1995, 754). In the following, I'll give a more elaborate account of Deigh's theory.

Although Deigh argues against Kantian rationalism, he does endorse an important part of his theory. As I've explained before, Kant believes that it becomes categorically imperative to incorporate the moral law into our maxims once we've become aware of this moral law. This means that when we consider our action-guiding principles, we critically assess whether they are for the benefit of everyone or whether they are only beneficial to my desires or personal interests. If I establish my maxims in service of gratifying my personal interests, they're hypothetical imperatives: they're only compelling to me in order to fulfill a specific desire. If, however, my maxims are categorically imperative in the sense that everyone could and should hold those maxims without exception, then they pass the universalizability test (Deigh, 1995, 749-750; Kant, 1996, GR 4:414, 67). Because the moral law is obviously objective and universal, testing my maxims to their universality also entails testing them on their compatibility with this moral law. Deigh endorses this process of the universalizability test, to question whether a principle is objective and universal and should therefore be incorporated into my maxim. He, however, believes that this consideration is insufficient to establish the right subjective action-guiding principle.

[8] To investigate this rationalist internalist moral motivation, Deigh will conform himself to categorical imperatives. For in the case of hypothetical imperatives, desires that are additional to or separate from pure cognitive operations could explain the motivational factor, whereas Deigh wants to know whether the cognitive process of making a moral judgement following Kantian rationalism is internally motivating, the general question of this thesis (Deigh, 1995, 747-748).

Although Deigh acknowledges that this rational capacity is important to moral agency, it's not sufficient to internally morally motivate us. The rationalist makes it seem like the resulting moral judgements internally motivate, because he presupposes a social attitude towards others concerning an equality of interests, which is necessary to effectively understand the motivational reasons for moral norms as a partial consequence of our application of the universalizability test. In other words, if our awareness of the moral law and incorporation of that law into our maxims through our realisation that those rules are objective and universal, internally motivates us , then we must've presupposed that other people's interests are of equal value in comparison to ours (or at least to a significant degree), in our application of the universalizability criterion. If we value our interests already higher than those of others. If we have discerned the interests of others through cognitive empathy but grant them less importance and worth than we do our own. So, if we fail to truly understand the reasons for someone else's interests, then comparison for the sake of universalisation is futile. If I believe from the start that my interests are more important than those of others, there's no sense for me to test such an interest to a universalizability criterion, because other people's interests won't become reasons for action for me like my own interests do, and especially not reasons that could outweigh those that support my own interests (Deigh, 1995, 753). So, Deigh believes that in order for us to be motivated just by our awareness and incorporation of the moral law into our maxims, a certain social attitude must be presupposed.

Therefore, Deigh concludes that having adequate cognitive functions to be able to be aware of the moral law and be responsive to the categorically imperative reasons for action this law presents to us and everyone else, is still insufficient to be morally motivated. In order to adequately apply the criterion of universalizability, we need to view the other person as an autonomous agent, for which we require empathy: we need to both be able to take their perspective towards the action to understand the feelings they experience, but we also need to know and understand their interests (and see them as equally valuable as they're too the result of an autonomous agent) (Deigh, 1995, 758). The conclusion that someone else's freedom shouldn't be interfered with because they're also rational beings that in turn produce valid interests, stems from empathy and makes this in turn motivating to refrain from interference (Deigh, 1995, 762).

Although I would characterize Deigh's theory of moral agency as sentimentalist, because he emphasizes the constitutive motivational importance of empathy, he differs from the original empathy thesis because he argues that literal 'feeling for the other' is not required for moral motivation. Instead, we need to value them and their situation as equal to our own in a reasonable assessment, which refers to a different kind of empathic capacity.

His explanation of the psychopathic disorder, on the other hand, is very much in line with the traditional sentimentalist tradition: he fails to be motivated by the moral law or other people's interests, because he doesn't have the sufficient capacity for empathy. The psychopath lacks affective empathy, which constrains him from viewing others as equal, autonomous human beings (Deigh, 1995, 761).

Concerning autistic individuals, Deigh doesn't specify whether he denies or grants them moral agency. He does criticize Kennett's argument in favour of their moral agency, by inferring from their tendency to show consistent behaviour and rigidly stick to rules, a capacity for respect for duty and moral feeling and in turn moral agency. According to Deigh, Kennett provides an inadequate justification for this inference (2018, 138-139). McGeer has a similar problem with this argument from Kennett that I'll also refer to in the next section. Although Deigh doesn't clearly state his opinion, I expect him to be hesitant to grant autistic individuals moral agency. From his emphasis on the importance of empathy in moral motivation, I suspect he would suspend such a conclusion until it's proven that autistic people do or don't have this empathic capacity. Until autistic individuals show that they view other people's interests as equal reasons for action instead of alien and inferior, in comparison to their own interests, they're in Deigh's theory unlikely candidates for moral agency, similar to psychopaths. Because they're often assumed to have an impaired cognitive empathy that obstructs them from understanding how anyone else's interest could be different than theirs, or how anyone else could have any interests at all, this will be difficult. There are those that argue that some autistic individuals might use alternative methods to discern the mental states of others, like McGeer. If that's proven, perhaps Deigh might be persuaded.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Deigh criticizes Kant and Kennett's rationalism: our awareness of the moral law and our receptivity to its reasons is a rational capacity that's both insufficient on its own and not more constitutive to moral agency than our emotional capacities. Specifically, there's one emotional capacity that's necessary for our moral agency, and that's empathy. Victoria McGeer agrees with the former and disagrees with the latter. The problem that haunts Deigh's account, similar to the problem for a traditionalist account like that of Hume, is that impaired empathy in autistic individuals becomes detrimental to their moral agency. In a directed attempt to acknowledge autistic individuals' moral agency from a modern sentimentalist theory, McGeer refutes this premise that empathy is the only emotional capacity that's constitutive to moral agency. According to her, this incapacity for adequate empathy is not crucial to whether or not people with autism possess moral agency. Other emotions can also constitute moral motivation: empathy is not singularly constitutive of moral agency. McGeer suggests that moral motivation is constituted in disinterested moral concerns that encompass empathy but also other concerns connected to other emotions. Basically, McGeer enlarges the prerequisite emotional capacities for moral motivation, to argue in favour of the moral agency of autistic individuals.

4.2 Moral disinterested concern - Victoria McGeer

In order to account for the moral agency of autistic individuals, McGeer emphasizes that empathy doesn't encompass what's necessary to be a moral agent: empathy is not singularly constitutive to our moral judgements and morally motivational feelings. She, however, does acknowledge that empathy is an important capacity to our moral agency. She explains how it's part of our sources of morality: empathy's one of those sources. As opposed to a single core moral motive or constitutive capacity, McGeer suggests that our moral agency entails a multifaceted capacity. Our moral judgements are constituted in emotions that are elicited by 'concerns' and these concerns refer to different capacities, like empathy or social capacities (McGeer, 2008, 229; 265). So, although McGeer refutes the idea that empathy is constitutive to moral agency on its own and moves away from Hume's sentimentalist tradition, she does clearly show that her theory is sentimentalist. After all, regardless of the fact that these

emotions can be generated through different kinds of concerns, what constitutes our moral judgements are these emotions (McGeer, 2008, 251). To specify, she explains that these dispositions can be categorized into three sources that shape our moral agency, which she calls the three spheres of disinterested concern. In McGeer's usage, *'disinterested'* means not driven by self-interest or personal gain, something she picked up from Jonathan Haidt (2003b). It's an impartial or even altruistic attitude towards action, as abstracted from and not governed by personal interest and therefore seen as 'moral'. This abstraction from our personal-interests and attempt to clarify the right goals, seems to show a rationalist aspect. As I've explained in the introductory section to chapter three, McGeer does make concessions towards a rationalist theory of moral agency. She clarifies that she's not proposing a sentimentalist theory of moral motivation that argues for an emotional core moral motive. She agrees with Kant that rationality is necessary for moral agency in three respects. First, we need reason to control our impulses that look for immediate satisfaction of inclinations, in favour of pursuing larger ends. Second, reason enables us to understand the value of these larger ends and view them as more valuable than other ends. With reason we can value universal ends over short-term ends geared towards personal interest. Third, we need reason to determine what action is best to achieve these rational ends (McGeer, 2008, 245). However, McGeer emphasizes that this importance of reason to moral agency doesn't surpass this instrumental function. Instead, what motivates us to make certain moral judgements and act accordingly, remains to be affect: we act on those reasonable ends that we find particularly affectively salient. Our affect determines which end we value over another. So, through our rational capacities we're presented with different reasons for action. Which reason for action we choose to act on in the end is determined by which reason for action we affectively want the most (McGeer, 2008, 246). In turn then, which reason for action we have the strongest emotional reaction to, so, which reason for action we are motivated to follow, depends on the concern that elicits this emotion and to what extent this concern is cultivated. The more we've developed a concern for something, the stronger the emotion it produces that motivates us (McGeer, 2008, 251). Before I explain this importance of cultivation and the difference it makes to our moral motivation, it's necessary to discuss in more detail what these concerns are and what motivational emotions they generate. Because McGeer doesn't elaborate too much on the content of and distinctions between these

concerns, these are mostly my interpretations. According to McGeer, the three moral concerns we have are (2008, 229):

1. A '*concern or compassion for others*'
2. A '*concern with social position and social structure*'
3. A '*concern with "cosmic" structure and position*'

In more detail, McGeer's first concern is a concern or compassion for the well-being of others, which emotions we mostly experience through our capacity for affective attunement between our own feelings and the feelings of others (2008, 229). In my view, this seems to be mostly comparable to what has been called affective empathy, as it elicits emotions that resemble the emotions of others, or that we experience ourselves in response to another's mental state or the circumstances they endure. 'Affective attunement' seems to refer to a sense of equating my emotional experience to that of another. This clearly differs, for example, from the capacity for empathy that Deigh claimed was necessary for our moral judgements to internally motivate us. In his view, we only need empathy to remind us of the equal value of others and their interests. To give us this insight on equality, so that we adequately view what's necessary for a principle to be universal. Such empathy does not require feeling for the other, like the affective attunement McGeer's concern for others seems to refer to. McGeer's second concern has to do with social position and structure. We're concerned for our social status: we're motivated by other people's perception of us, for example in our compliance with societal norms. We want to gain approval of fellow citizens and maintain social relationships. We're concerned with the opinions of other members of our community, which concern elicits motivational affects in us to act according to societal norms. McGeer explains that for such social concern to be motivational, we need the capacity for perspective-taking: we get a concern for social position and structure from our ability to take other perspectives and learn what other people think of us or how they will respond in the future to certain actions we perform (2008, 229). In that sense, it's comparable to cognitive empathy. McGeer's description of the third concern for cosmic structure and position is a little more ambiguous and less easily related to previous moral psychological or philosophical explanations. That is because she introduces a new source of moral

motivation. We're motivated through this cosmic concern to a kind of abstract moral commitment. We're motivated because we care for certain abstract standards of morality like balance or justice in our universe, independent of their relation to our social position or our personal experience of others (McGeer, 2008, 229).

These three spheres of concern elicit different emotions, which means that they motivate different actions. So, concern *A* can generate an emotion that motivates you to act on end *p*, while concern *B* can generate an emotion that wants you to act on end *q*. We resolve such conflicts by listening to the stronger emotion, which is dependent on our cultivation of our spheres (McGeer, 2008, 251). As I previously mentioned, the higher a specific concern is cultivated, the stronger the emotion is that it generates. It also depends on the concerns which reasons for action they're sensitive to and react with motivational affect. So, one individual can be more concerned with the well-being of others than with social position: he has cultivated his concern for compassion more than his concern for fitting into society. This causes him to be inclined to react more strongly to situations where people are harmed than situations where people show disapproval of his actions or as a result shun him from friendgroups. This doesn't deny, however, that everyone has these three spheres of disinterested concern that make up their moral agency. They're all equally dispositioned, but may have stronger and weaker responding dispositions due to differing cultivation (McGeer, 2008, 252). McGeer thinks that in general, the second sphere of our concern for social structure is the most dominant (2008, 252). Although she doesn't really elaborate on why she claims so, it's imaginable that she thinks most human beings are social human beings and that living in large communities like we do and being raised like we were, has cultivated our concern for societal convention and our desire to fit in, to which we respond strongly. Also, such perspective-taking capacities and caring for other people's beliefs and interests is in line with what we generally think of as motivating moral behaviour. Because autistic people often fail to understand such conventions on the reasons for certain norms, because they are cognitively impaired in their capacity for perspective-taking, they are probably less prone to such emotions of alienation and abandonment.

In the section on Deigh, I briefly mentioned his criticism of Kennett's argument in favour of moral agency in autistic individuals. He questions whether her inference of moral feeling

from the consistent, rule-conform behaviour of autistic individuals along with their good intentions, is sufficiently supported. McGeer vocalizes the same problem: she's sceptical about the moral feeling of people with autism. The question is whether autistic individuals value the moral end of the norm and are as a result motivated to act according to that norm, or whether they value the moral rule just because they value 'rules' in general. In other words, do autistic individuals understand the reasons that support and show the importance of the moral law and are they therefore inclined to follow it rigidly, or are they clinging to moral rules for rules-sake (McGeer, 2008, 240-241; 266)? If their motivation stems from their admiration of rules and not from awe for moral ends and societal values, then they are not receptive to the feeling of obligation that their awareness of the moral law should elicit, and don't qualify for moral agency. She does, however, agree with Kennett that the tight connection of autistic people to moral rules, for whatever reason, and their feeling for these rules as universally binding, distinguishes them from psychopaths, who show no such relation to moral rules nor a continuous pattern (McGeer, 2008, 242). So, because autistic people enjoy rules, they're more fit for a moral duty kind or deontological kind of thinking and consequent application of those rules than the impulsive psychopath with no regard for such rules. But, what looks like moral feeling may just be affiliation with rules and structure.

McGeer goes further than criticizing Kennett's qualification, like Deigh does. She argues that autistic individuals are differently motivated than general people. However, this doesn't take away from their moral agency. Although autistic individuals and general people can show the same moral behaviour, that moral behaviour is motivated by emotions that are elicited by different concerns (McGeer, 2008, 247). McGeer proposes that autistic people generally have a highly cultivated cosmic concern and a lesser developed concern for social position, like general people have.

At the foundation of her own proposal lies McGeer's characterisation of our moral agency as a multifaceted capacity. Apart from our three spheres of concern that can motivate different actions, reason plays an instrumental role in support of that affective motivation, which makes such a multifaceted moral agency vulnerable to both cognitive and affective impairments. Whether it's an impaired capacity for empathy, or whether it's an incomplete

understanding of the reasons for moral norms, moral agency doesn't fit a description or explanation through a singular cognitive or affective capacity and can be influenced by both (McGeer, 2008, 229). Taken together and applied to cases of the psychopath and the autistic individual, their exceptional behaviour can be explained by pointing both to their difference in either cognitive or affective impairments and to their different cultivation of specific concerns.

Along those lines, the psychopath's careless behaviour for other people's interests and their well-being is probably the result of his affective impairment that obstructed him from adequate development of his concern or compassion for others. He's aware of the moral law, so he's presented with those reasons for action, but he lacks emotions that motivate him to act on those ends, because the concern responsible for those emotions has remained uncultivated. This probably influences both his concern for others and his concern for social position. He doesn't experience strong emotions as a reaction to the distress of others, nor does he experience strong emotion as a result of social repulsion or pressure. However, because the psychopath is equipped with adequate perspective-taking, which capacity is in part necessary for our concern for social position, McGeer does speculate that the psychopath has some concern for social position, because emotions elicited by this concern can motivate behaviour that doesn't have to trump his personal interests.Psychopaths often strive for and achieve high social and commercial positions. In that sense, a psychopath is less likely to be motivated by distress cues in others that are harmed, than he is by a chance of promotion (McGeer, 2008, 254). He can use his perspective-taking skills to anticipate the responses of others to the benefit of his personal interests, while deep down remaining indifferent to what they think of him if their approval was of no value to the achievement of his own goals.

In the case of autistic individuals, McGeer explains their consistent behaviour through their highly cultivated *passion* for cosmic order (2008, 144). Because autistic people experience their (social) surroundings as alien and incomprehensible, they have a desire to follow and be motivated by abstract moral principles, independent of their role or other people's roles in specific circumstances (McGeer, 2008, 246). They have cultivated their cosmic concern to a large extent to actualize an understandable and structured outside and social world, because of which they hold on to abstract principles. Therefore, their emotions

respond to circumstances that bring this order into disarray: they react to actions or occurrences that violate this order that's held together by these principles. They will react strongly to unjust treatment, because it violates the important principle of justice, independent of whether there are legitimate moral justifications present. For example, if a kid in high school gets skipped in line to get lunch, some kids might be motivated to say something or to let the kid go before them because they pity him. They're motivated by feelings that were generated by their compassion for the kid. The autistic kid may be equally motivated to say something. However, for McGeer it's more likely that he does so because he's motivated to restore the balance of sequence and fairness, than of kind treatment. In comparison, autistic individuals are likely to react to the distress of others or to be motivated by social inclusion, because they lack both cognitive and empathic capacities that have negatively influenced their cultivation of concerns for others and social structure. (McGeer, 2008, 244; 253). They are motivated to act on rational ends from their concern for cosmic order, instead of from a concern for others or social status. Because of this, McGeer claims that autistic people are qualified for moral agency: they are motivated to act on rational ends because these ends trigger their highly cultivated concern for cosmic order, not because these ends are rules to be followed for rules-sake. Their motivation supersedes following rules for the sake of itself (McGeer, 2008, 246). The sole fact that they follow these rules out of cosmic concern instead of out of empathic concern, with which moral motivation is usually associated, doesn't negate their moral agency. McGeer refutes Kennett's idea that autistic individuals and normal individuals must share a similar source of motivation for it to be moral motivation, for them to be moral agents: in Kennett and Kant's sense, this is their mutual receptivity to reason. McGeer doesn't deny that autistic individuals often have great rational capacities, and that they tend to solve ethical dilemmas with those rational capacities. But, that doesn't mean that these rational capacities are at the core of (their) moral motivation (McGeer, 2008, 247). McGeer believes that it's entirely possible that autistic people reach the same moral behaviour and norms for different motivational reasons than normal people do. She argues that a resemblance in the behaviour of autistic individuals and generally normal moral agents, doesn't necessarily mean that this behaviour is elicited through the same process. Referring to the previous example on page 31, concern A can also generate an emotion that motivates you to act on end q. Certain concerns are not necessarily tied

to specific emotions and specific actions. So, different concerns can indirectly motivate the same action and can be, most importantly, equally moral.

4.3 Cosmic or redundant concern? - Heidi Maibom

Maibom criticizes McGeer's third disinterested concern for cosmic order. According to Maibom, cosmic order doesn't play an important part in our moral agency and it's not responsible for eliciting the passion for order and rule-conform behaviour that we witness in autistic individuals. She starts by refuting McGeer's idea that this concern for cosmic order can morally motivate us to act. After refuting the moral motivational capacity of cosmic concern, she argues that autistic passion for order is better explained through McGeer's social concern. Apart from this misconception, Maibom claims that the sentimentalist character of McGeer's theory of moral agency is mostly pretense: it comes closer to a rationalist theory of moral agency that adds passions without correctly arguing for their additional value. Maibom ends by pointing out that actions motivated by obedience to authority and social pressure can still be morally praiseworthy if the agent remains responsive to the moral law.

Before starting with Maibom's criticism and suggestions, I want to point out that I experienced difficulty with categorizing her theory of moral agency to either sentimentalism or rationalism. As I've made clear previously, and as has been argued for by many preceding rationalists and sentimentalists, a theory of moral agency can acknowledge the worth of both. I definitely think that's what Maibom's doing. What Maibom believes to be 'more' necessary, however, to moral motivation (reverence for reason or emotional 'receptivity' as a result of social concern) is vague to me. Through my discussion of her theory, I'll make remarks to specific parts that seem more rationalist or more sentimentalist to me. If I have to choose, I would say she believes our emotions are in the end what motivates us and would label her theory therefore as sentimentalist.

Maibom concurs that seeking a meaningful life is a familiar notion of motivation. In that sense, she doesn't claim that there can't be anything like McGeer's concern for cosmic order as wanting to understand the world we live in and what we live for. What's problematic for Maibom about McGeer's account, however, is her absent explanation or argument for the moral character of this motivation to seek cosmic order (2008, 266). Why and in what way is our cosmic concern specifically *morally* motivating? For which reasons *should* emotions elicited by cosmic concern to uphold the order and abstract principles of the universe be action-guiding, and to what kind of *moral* actions do they motivate us (Maibom, 2008, 267)? For example, cleaning your room and reading about Newton's Law of Universal Gravitation can both be motivated indirectly by such a cosmic concern: they fulfill my urge to understand the order and my surroundings and to maintain that order. The other way around, however, it doesn't seem like you could affect the order of the universe, for example by not cleaning your room or by throwing your phone off the roof terrace. Nor does it seem morally reprehensible if someone would do so. Even if it motivates an action that can be characterised as moral after, like helping the kid that's skipped in line, it's unlikely that we qualify the motivation of the autistic kid to do so as moral (Maibom, 2008, 267).

Instead of explaining autistic moral motivation through a concern for cosmic order that generates this passion for structure, Maibom argues for pointing to the second concern. McGeer herself emphasizes that autistic people generally have a passion for consistency and order because miscomprehending social circumstances makes them anxious (Maibom, 2008, 267). Their resulting motivation to understand those social circumstances, to be able to engage in those social happenings, and in so doing to prevent having anxiety, doesn't stem from their motivation for cosmic concern: it can already be explained through their concern for social position. By seeking structure and organising their surroundings, autistic individuals can make more sense of an alien world and can function better socially in such a place. Maibom adds, therefore, that cosmic concern is redundant to a description of moral agency, because it doesn't account for autistic behaviour in a sense that social concern can't already (2008, 268).

Apart from McGeer's mistaken claim about the origin of the autistic passion for order, Maibom calls McGeer out for posing as a sentimentalist while actually defending a very

rationalist theory of moral agency. Although McGeer claims to reduce reason to an instrumental function in service of our moral emotions elicited by concerns, reason in McGeer's theory determines the morality of the motivation (Maibom, 2008, 271). What again was McGeer's description of reason's function in moral agency? According to McGeer, reason is of instrumental value because it controls our impulses, makes us understand the reasons for larger ends, subordinates our personal-interests to such ends and recommends the right actions to pursue those ends. After reason has given us these ends on a silver platter, emotion determines which end we will act on because we find some ends more affectively salient than others. So, reason remains to be instrumental and inferior to the real motivational push by affect

Now, Maibom points out that what seems to be necessary for people to be moral agents, is to be able to subject their personal-interests to these larger and universal ends, not their ability to emotionally respond to these ends through cultivated concerns. Even if our affect determines which end to pursue, our reason presents us with the ends we get to choose from, and that those ends are reasonable instead of desirable makes us moral agents. In other words, even if one believes that affect motivates, it doesn't in McGeer's theory morally motivate. What makes the action moral is the reason for the action or the larger end that reason presented to us. If that's fundamental to moral agency, then McGeer doesn't seem to necessarily refute Kant and Kennett's proposals. Instead, she adds affects that are elicited by concern to our capacity to view what provides us with a reason for action (Maibom, 2008, 271-272). So, Maibom argues that introducing disinterested concern as a constitutive to moral agency isn't essentially sentimentalist, nor does it explain moral motivation in a way that rationalism doesn't already.

If McGeer's theory is insufficiently sentimentalist, it remains ambiguous to me whether Maibom complains as such because she believes moral agency requires a better sentimentalist explanation, or whether she tries to show how the rationalist theory can sufficiently explain moral motivation without the need for concerns or emotions. The former would demonstrate her preference for sentimentalism, whereas the latter would exhibit her rationalism.

What Maibom does emphasize is that McGeer's social concern illuminates an important part of our moral psychology. Maibom explains that social concern encompasses our motivation for obedience to authority. Such motivation is often dismissed as not morally praiseworthy: if your action to donate to charity was motivated by your boss who obliged you to do so and blackmailed you with laying you off if you refused, we condemn his action of blackmail, but we don't really praise your donation either. We want to do what's right because it's right, not because someone told us to or because we want to fit in. This also follows in a way from Kant: because we're all rational and autonomous, we should use these capacities to determine for ourselves what the right action-guiding principles are, instead of incorporating governmental rules just because they told us to. Maibom disagrees. According to her, our actions can be morally praiseworthy even though they have been motivated by our concern for social order and authority, as long as we remain responsive to the moral law (Maibom, 2008, 272). So, if someone's motivated by social concern to listen to the authoritative command by the police not to bring fireworks to the football match, such an action doesn't immediately lose its moral praiseworthiness. If the agent that obeys the command remained responsive to the moral law and contemplated whether the command was in line with the right moral norm (not to harm others), the action can still stem from moral motivation (Maibom, 2008, 272). If, upon reflection, there does appear to exist conflict between the action the person is being motivated to do and the reasons for action the moral law calls forth, the moral agent must be motivated to act otherwise. So, for an action to be morally praiseworthy, its initial motivation doesn't have to stem (only) from the categorical imperative. In that sense, Maibom distinguishes herself from traditional rationalism. She disagrees with Kant that awareness of the moral law is sufficiently motivational, and does see the realistic explanation of our motivation in terms of social concern for authoritative commands considering the way our lives are structured in a constant social interaction in big societies (Maibom, 2008, 271-272). Maibom believes that this is in line with McGeer's claims, although McGeer herself might object in defending a sentimentalist account. According to Maibom, McGeer's social concern encompasses motivation from social conformity or obedience to authority, and motivation from intentions of others that we derive through perspective-taking. So, actions motivated by social concern are morally praiseworthy not just for taking perspectives of others, because psychopaths can do so as well, but for considering

these perspectives as reasons for action and genuine ends (Maibom, 2008, 271). In that sense, Maibom suggests that although such reverence for reason is not a motive on its own. Rather, it seems to be grounded in social concern. For her, Kant's practical reason that concerns itself with the universalizability of principles, could be derived from our social concern. Again, it's unclear whether this argument supports Maibom's rationalist or sentimentalist thesis. On the one hand, Maibom clearly criticizes the idea that moral feeling can be motivational on its own, and that it's more likely grounded in social concern than an independent motivation. This could be interpreted as more on the sentimentalist spectrum. On the other hand, Maibom emphasizes the importance of reverence for reason of the moral agent to the morality of their motivation or action. Because Maibom in the end seems to state that what motivates us to act on certain ends, are emotions that result from our social concern, I prefer to label her theory as sentimentalist. Whether I find it plausible, is a question I'll return to in the third section of chapter five.

Applied to the question of moral agency in autistic individuals, Maibom seems to offer an optimist conclusion with her suggestion. She believes that autistic individuals' structural application of moral norms and their urge to order their external world is motivated by their social concern to fit in and prevent themselves from experiencing emotions of distress as a result of incomprehension. The fact that their motivation to abide by norms because they 'like' consistency, social conformity, and maybe even authority, doesn't dismiss the moral praiseworthiness of their motivation as long as they have remained responsive to the moral law and understand the reasons for action that these norms give them. If they, for example because of their bad perspective-taking skills, at a certain point lack knowledge of these reasons for action and follow rules for the sake of rules, their motivation is not moral. But that doesn't mean that it can't become moral; their action can be moral even if its initial motivation wasn't grounded in the categorical imperative. Because they're motivated to fit in and prevent experiences of anxiety, they'll be eager to learn the reasons that justify moral norms and authoritative commands, and can become aware of and remain reverent to them. Then, their actions (whether changed or not) from authority can still be morally motivated.

5. Rational capacities in sentimentalist theories

Now that I have elaborated on these modern moral agency theories, I want to evaluate whether Maibom's criticism on McGeer's theory could also hold for the other sentimentalist theories in the current paper. So, all of these sentimentalist theories have encompassed rational capacities in their theories of affective motivation. What motivates us, however, remains to be affect. The question is whether their acknowledgement of those rational capacities influences the sentimentalist nature of their theory. As Maibom has pointed out to McGeer, the affective motivation is directed towards rationally established ends. If those ends are already moral, it's debatable which capacity constitutes the moral value of this motivation: affect or moral feeling. To adequately test whether Maibom's argument can be expanded and applied to other sentimentalist theories, including her own, it's important to dive deeper into Kant's notion of moral feeling, and in specific the moral feelings of sympathy and respect. These sentimentalists criticize the motivational capacity of this moral feeling, but acknowledge its ability to provide us with proper ends.

5.1 Kant's duties of virtue to others: sympathy and respect

As I explained in the second section of chapter two, in order to be motivated to action upon our awareness of the moral law, Kant claims that we need to be receptive to its duty. To be responsive to these normative considerations, we need moral feeling. This moral feeling is a disposition, not an obligation. So, we are motivated by the moral law to act because we are dispositioned to respond to its duty in that manner. If we have moral feeling, we're responsive to the normative considerations that the moral law impels on us. In other words, we're responsive by manner of our action to the obligation that those categorically imperative principles put us under. This is a short summary of Kant's moral theory from chapter two section two.

What I did not further elaborate on, however, is the nature of this disposition. That we are all equally endowed with the ability of moral feeling to be motivated by the moral

law and its reasons for action upon our awareness of it, doesn't mean that we can carelessly lean back. Obviously, if merely having this disposition to respond to obligations of the moral law with feelings of duty and resulting incorporation in duty-conform maxims, was sufficient for making the right moral judgements and being accordingly motivated, why do we still witness differing moral judgements? Why does our motivation differ? Sentimentalists would argue that reverence for reason is insufficient for moral motivation: even though we are dispositioned to be receptive to these normative considerations with feelings of duty, they don't motivate us to act. Kant would probably object that such an interpretation of reverence for reason only partly acknowledges the role of moral feeling in moral agency. For him, this disposition to be receptive to duty and the experience of feelings is separated from our disposition to use this duty in the contemplation of our maxims and setting ourselves proper ends. The former is given, whereas the latter requires cultivation.

In more detail, Kant distinguishes between active and passive duties concerning these moral feelings. As mentioned numerous times, we are all equally dispositioned to be receptive to moral feelings. In other words, our capacity to experience such moral feelings is passive in the sense that everyone is given this receptivity to feelings and duty (Kant, 1996, MM 6:456, 575). There's, then, no duty to cultivate this receptivity: it's not a duty to feel for others, but it's a fact that you feel for others. That our capacity for these moral feelings is not a duty but a given, however, also reflects how these feelings don't tell us what's right and what's wrong. Otherwise, obviously, if everyone would be receptive to moral feelings that tell us the right from the wrong actions, we wouldn't have moral disputes so frequently. So, we need to do something with this given capacity. In order to be a true moral agent that's guided by the moral law in his actions, we are under the active duty to use our receptivity to these moral feelings to inform us about reasons for action: to create the right maxims. In order to so accurately, we need to cultivate these moral feelings. Concluding, it's insufficient for true moral behaviour to be responsive to normative considerations in a passive way. We need to use the information that we've received through our moral feeling, to actively strive for moral behaviour by incorporating it into our maxims. For Kant, several duties are encompassed by moral feeling. For example, Kant divides his duties to others into duties of love and duties of respect (1996, MM 6:449, 568-569). Among duties of love is the duty of

sympathy (Kant, 1996, 6:456, 574). For the current debate, both these duties of sympathy and respect are the most important.

Applying this idea of the cultivation of our moral feeling in relation to our duty of sympathy, for example, gives a clearer idea of Kant's view. He explains sympathy as generating pleasure or displeasure with someone else's mental state or circumstances: we feel sorry for them when they lose their football match and are happy for them when they get the job they applied for (Kant, 1996, MM 6:456, 574-575). Having such shared feelings of pleasure or displeasure is not a duty, but happens to us: no one expects me to feel sorry for you when you lose, but we catch ourselves doing so. Also, these pleasures or displeasures can't tell us what's right or wrong; I may feel sorry for a pedophile's sexual preferences, but still condemn his actions done from these preferences.

To be a moral agent, to be motivated by the moral law and adopt the right maxims, Kant believes that we need to cultivate moral feelings in order to view certain normative considerations as reasons for action and sincerely use them in creating our maxims. In other words, as opposed to our passive duty of, for example, sympathy through which we experience feelings of pleasure or displeasure, it's an active duty to use these feelings of pleasure and displeasure and consider them in the process of setting ourselves ends or action-guiding principles. When we come to the point where we have to decide on which maxim we're going to adopt, we can rationally determine whether in this specific circumstance those feelings that originated from sympathy constitute reasons for actions for us. We decide whether it's required to actively sympathize with the fate of others in our actions or not (Kant, 1996, MM 6:457, 575).

If we fail to cultivate our moral feelings, on the other hand. If we don't actively sympathize with other people's fate but remain passive, then we won't know what's in the interests of others. If we don't know what other people need, so, what their objective universal ends are or should be, then we can't consider them in our contemplation or incorporate such ends into our maxims and be truly morally motivated. Considering the pedophile again, for example. I experience feelings of displeasure with the mental state of the pedophile. I feel sorry for his sexual preference for which he didn't ask and with which I can't help him. However, if I don't cultivate my moral feeling, then I don't feel obligated to take his ends into consideration when I contemplate the right moral judgement. A judge that

has to decide on the sentence of a pedophile that has sexually assaulted a minor, is not wrong to condemn this action. However, in contemplating the right sentence, she should take his interest into account: besides from a prison sentence, a mental health facility or psychiatric trial that can help him control his sexual preferences would be the end he should act towards, and would be an end that she needs to take into account when she decides on the case. If the judge hasn't properly cultivated her moral feelings, then she won't use her feelings of displeasure and sadness with the pedophile's circumstance in order to set herself proper ends and actively sympathize with his situation. She'll passively experience these feelings and nothing more. For Kant, that's not moral agency, and I think many would agree it's not the right moral judgement.

In conclusion, Kant believes that we need to cultivate our moral feelings in order to view the right ends as reasons for action and take them into consideration in the adoption of our maxims. Specifically for sympathy and respect, we need to actively sympathize with others' interests and respect them to set ourselves proper ends. So, our duties of sympathy, contain for us the obligation to view the other's interests as reason-giving. As Kant says, the duty of love can give me '*the duty to make another's ends my own*', or to make '*the well-being and happiness of others my end*' (1996, MM 6:450, 569 ; 6:452, 571). Respect, on the other hand, obliges me to view the other as an equally autonomous and rational being and therefore constrains me from subjecting the other as a means to the actualisation of my own ends (Kant, 1996, MM 6:450, 569). My passive experience of respect for another's attempt to reach one of his ends is insufficient for me to be motivated to constrain myself from obstructing him in attaining this end. If I have cultivated my moral feeling and am receptive to duty, I will have taken into account not only his ends (that we do under our obligation to sympathize) but also his rational autonomy and equal status to me that obligates me to leave him be.

5.2 Dissecting *moral* from motivation

From the elaboration on Kant's moral feeling in the previous section, two things should be clear. First, although moral feeling is a disposition that we all have, we are not moral agents if we don't actively adopt the right maxims that listen to those feelings of obligation. Second, being responsive to our duties of sympathy and respect, so having properly cultivated our moral feeling, makes us actively adopt maxims that endorse other people's interests and refrain from interference with others. To clarify, sympathy entails a positive obligation, while respect rather creates a negative obligation.

In light of this further clarification, I now want to consider the question whether we can apply Maibom's criticism that was directed towards McGeer's sentimentalist theory, to the other sentimentalist theories that I've discussed: Hume's traditional sentimentalism, Deigh's modernisation, and even Maibom's own theory. Can the accusation that McGeer's theory is disguised rationalism, be generalised to other sentimentalist theories? In specific, does the sentimentalist argument in favour of affective motivation presuppose rational capacities that ground the morality of this motivation?

I think the answer could be positive. At least, I believe part of the sentimentalist critique on Kant could be the result of insufficient understanding of his idea of moral feeling. I want to point out two ideas that were inspired by Maibom's criticism along with Kant's notion of moral feeling. First, I believe that proper cultivation of our moral feeling, specifically regarding the adoption of maxims in line with our duties of sympathy and respect, shows a very similar ability in comparison to what Deigh wants an empathic ability to do. Deigh's emphasis on the importance of valuing the other and their interests as equal to my own, in my application of the universalizability criterion, could perhaps already be encompassed in being receptive to these duties. If our moral feeling is properly cultivated, we feel obligated by our duties to respect and sympathize, which could perhaps be able to motivate the moral actions that Deigh believes we need empathy for, because we feel the obligation to set ourselves these right ends. If the sentimentalist is not convinced by this argument and wants to hold on to the claim that affect is the capacity that motivates us, then, second, I believe that Maibom's criticism to McGeer's theory could apply similarly and in

general form to the rest of the sentimentalist theories: Hume and Maibom herself. Following her critique, that what makes affective motivation moral is our moral feeling, or more generally, our rational capacities. Hume and Maibom also presuppose certain rational capacities to which the moral value of the motivation might be reduced. Then, all the sentimentalist theories discussed in the current paper might be, like Maibom accused McGeer's theory of being, '*Kantian rationalism in sentimentalist clothes*' (Maibom, 2008, 271).

Before engaging in these two arguments, it's helpful to briefly refresh McGeer's argument and Maibom's criticism. According to McGeer, reason is instrumental to the moral motivation of affect. Reason subordinates our personal desires to larger ends and tells us how to act and reach those ends. Up until this moment, McGeer believes that we are not yet motivated to act on those ends. That moral motivation comes from affect: if our concerns are properly cultivated, they will respond to these ends and generate motivational emotions that make us act on those ends. Importantly, McGeer explains that those concerns are disinterested concerns: they're abstracted from our personal interests. That is why they react to the universal ends that our reason presents to us, instead of generating motivational emotions as a response to desires.

What Maibom illuminates about this sentimentalist claim by McGeer, is that the morality of the action seems to be the result of our rational capacity to subordinate our personal interests to larger ends, instead of our affective capacity to be motivated through our responsive concern. If you lack this rational capacity, then there are no moral ends that your concern can respond to with motivational emotions that find these reasons for action particularly important. The ability to emotionally respond to these ends through cultivated concerns doesn't make the motivation moral if the ends were already moral. Even if our affect determines which end to pursue, our reason presents us with the ends we get to choose from, and that those ends are reasonable instead of desirable or to the benefit of personal interest, makes us moral agents. In other words, even if one believes that affect motivates, it doesn't in McGeer's theory *morally* motivate: that moral aspect is grounded in our rational capacities.

Maibom, instead, proposes that we can be morally motivated by social concern and obedience to authority, if we remain responsive to the moral law. So, the morality of our

motivation doesn't stem from the rational and moral reasons for action: we're not always directly motivated by the categorical imperative. That doesn't, in Maibom's view, necessarily deny the moral praiseworthiness of the action: that the action wasn't directly motivated by our maxim that originated from our consideration of the moral law, doesn't deny the morality of the action necessarily. In comparison to McGeer, our emotion that motivates our action is not always in pursuance of an already established rational larger end. This way, Maibom tries to avoid being susceptible to her own criticism: the morality of our motivation doesn't always stem from the rational ends that our affective motivation was geared towards. We can be morally motivated without having responded to such an end. However, if we're motivated by obedience to authority to an action that is in conflict with the moral law and with what our feeling of obligation would tell us, then that motivation is not moral.

5.2.1 Deigh's 'cultivation' of empathy

For Deigh, the only way to be motivated to incorporate the moral law into my maxims, is to understand its universal and objective application. In other words, to be able to create the right subjective action-guiding principles, we need to be able to adequately apply the universalizability criterion: should my subjective action-guiding principle be a principle for everyone or would that create an undesirable situation? In order to do so, in order to grasp the idea that the moral law holds equally for you and me, we need to view you and your interests as equally valid in comparison to me and my interests. Deigh believes that such consideration of everyone's rational and autonomous nature, makes us see the accurate way to incorporate the universal law into my maxims and motivates us to refrain from interference with other people's interests. Thus, to adequately apply the universalizability criterion to a hypothetical maxim, we need to consider others as valuable instead of inferior and subjected to my own goals. For Deigh, such a view results from our perspective-taking, which is part of our empathic capacities. Importantly, Deigh emphasizes that this necessary capacity for empathy to moral agency is not the capacity to literally feel for the other: taking the perspective of the other and valuing that perspective as autonomous and equally valuable in comparison to my own, doesn't necessitate having compassion for that

perspective or an internal experience of responsive emotions to that perspective. Concluding, empathy is more constitutive to our moral motivation than our rational capacities, because it corrects them.

It confuses me why Deigh believes that our rational capacities are insufficient to adequately apply the universalizability criterion. Although he acknowledges a big part of Kantian rationalism in his theory of moral motivation, it seems as though he doesn't properly or completely understand Kant's notion of moral feeling. In my view, Kant's proper cultivation of moral feeling, and as such being receptive to specifically duties of sympathy and respect, already encompasses these insights and abilities. To know what other people's interests entail and to actively sympathize with those interests and incorporate them into our maxims, we require cultivated moral feelings: we show our receptivity to the feelings of obligation that our duty of sympathy gives us. In that same way, to view the other as an equally autonomous and rational being and to actively respect him by constraining myself from interfering with him, we must be receptive to the duties to respect others. Deigh's sketch of a situation where we fail to consider other people's interests as valuable to the contemplation of our maxim because we don't see them as equally autonomous and rational, is a situation that can be explained as a result of uncultivated moral feeling. Specifically, it shows a lack of receptivity for the moral law that encompasses duties of sympathy and respect. It's unclear to me why Deigh argues that moral feeling is insufficiently capable to provide us with this insight. It doesn't seem like he specifically argues that proper cultivation of moral feelings doesn't actively make us incorporate into our maxims those ends that are in line with what those duties of sympathy and respect tell us. Rather, he argues that Kant's theory was incomplete. However, his description of what he assigns empathy to do, and Kant's description of the function of our moral feelings and proper cultivation of it, seem similar to me. So, it seems to be more likely that Deigh doesn't consider the complete Kantian notion of moral feeling, especially the cultivation of it. In that case, the morality of our motivation doesn't have to depend on empathy, because we can already consider other people's interests and their autonomous nature and take both into consideration in the adoption of our maxims, through our properly cultivated moral feeling. So, the morality of our motivation could still depend on our moral feeling.

5.2.2 Hume's general point of view

In chapter two, I explained how Hume tries to avoid criticism based on the empathy bias: if our empathy is biased, then it can't be a reliable precursor to morality, let alone a precondition for moral agency. To get around this critique and support his empathy thesis, Hume argues that these empathic biases don't corrupt our moral judgements, because we use our empathic capacities from a general point of view: we apply our capacity for empathy in a general and disinterested way. In this way, any empathically biased emotions that we experience will not motivate us to action, because they will be corrected when we abstract from our own situation, our personal interests, and view the circumstance in an impartial manner. So, when we use our empathy to take the perspective of another, we take that perspective independent of their situation and my situation. This way, we arrive at universal moral judgements.

Upon reading this argument, this correction of our empathic biased emotions looks a lot like the rational capacity to subordinate our personal interests to larger ends: the capacity that McGeer talks of and that Maibom labels as the constitutive rational capacity for McGeer's moral agency theory. To take on such a general perspective and abstract from our own situation, our beliefs, our personal-interests, and desires, in favour of the grand scheme of things, at least refers to some rational capacity that corrects our emotional motivation. This rational capacity could be, for example, compared to Kant and Kennett's moral feeling. After all, our feeling of obligation as a result of being responsive to the normative considerations at hand, seems to motivate us contrary to what our empathic bias at first motivated us to do.

If a universal and rational criterion corrects our sentiments, if reverence for reason corrects it, however, then that capacity seems to be what's responsible for the moral value of the action, rather than our capacity for empathy. If our empathy only systematically motivates us to moral action if it's being controlled by our ability to abstract from our own situation and adopt a general point of view, then not necessarily our motivation but at least the morality of that motivation is the result of our rational capacities. We set ourselves the right ends by establishing which reasons are reasons for action and which are not, instead of by experiencing feelings of approbation or disapprobation through empathy. Empathy

doesn't make our motivation or action moral, because it's biased and can be immoral or guide us to wrong actions if not corrected by moral feeling. Empathy can motivate us, but it can't *morally* motivate us.

5.2.3 Maibom's realism

Third, Maibom believes that she provides a more realistic explanation of our motivation in terms of social concern and authoritative commands. Awareness of the moral law is not sufficiently motivational, not on its own. We can be, and are daily, morally motivated through other concerns.

Maibom acknowledges that in day to day practice, we may be motivated by social concern and obedience to authority because we don't continuously concern ourselves with considerations about what the moral law would prescribe us to do. I don't disagree with this claim. I understand the criticism of Kant's theory that our practical life doesn't always give us the time to rationally contemplate on the right action, nor does it always feel like we have to when we listen to authorities that we trust. Also, consistently denying actions their morality if they weren't motivated through this strict process, might leave us with little moral actions. Even if I endorse this idea of Maibom, however, I believe that the morality of the action and motivation still depends on its relation to the moral law and our receptivity to it. Even if social concern or obedience to authority motivates actions, moral feeling is still what the morality of that motivation depends on. Maibom claims that herself: being motivated by social concern is no longer moral motivation if we're not responsive to the moral law and the action and the norm conflict. Maibom can argue that moral feeling is not sufficiently motivational on its own. I have not genuinely considered such singular modern rationalist accounts, nor do I think they're plausible. So that's not what's disputed. Again, I don't disagree that we can be motivated to act on authoritative commands and that the resulting action can be moral. What I disagree with is that the claim that social concern and obedience to authority can morally motivate if the agent remained receptive to the moral law, argues that the morality of the motivation lies with affect and not with the attitude of moral feeling. Although Maibom argues that social concern is the source that creates

passions that motivate the autistic individual, the moral value of the action still depends on the agent's attitude towards what's right independent of that command.

Considering, for example, the moral norm not to harm others. In this case, an agent is motivated by social concern to act according to this norm, because he has a friend who's a pacifist and who he holds very dear. So, from taking the perspective of his friend in the hypothetical situation where he would kick an old lady, he knows that his friend would be disappointed in him and might want to call off the friendship. This social concern generates the emotion of fear of losing their friendship, which motivates him to consistently act in peaceful manners. To his mom he, however, admits that he has no clue what the deal is with this harm-prohibiting norm. Similar to the autistic individual, the agent is motivated by his social concern to structurally apply the norm. This social concern has motivated his action, but his action loses its morality or moral praiseworthiness because he's not responsive to the reasons for this norm. Because his lack of reverence for reason, as it were, reverses the moral nature of his motivation, I would explain Maibom to value the capacity for reverence for reason higher in service to morality, than the emotional motivational capacity. Even if moral feeling is grounded in social concern, in the sense that it's insufficiently motivational in lots of day to day cases, moral feeling is still singularly responsible for the morality of this motivation. Then, strictly speaking, moral feeling is more constitutive of *moral* motivation than emotion.

Conclusion

I've tried to show distinct modern interpretations of Humean sentimentalism and Kantian rationalism. Although this entails far from a complete overview of the modern sentimentalist and rationalist theses, I've chosen these theories because they do provide for very different interpretations and attempts to account for the empirical cases of psychopathy and autism. In the end, autism seems to be the moral alternative case on which most of these explanations differ. After all, most theories seem to agree that the psychopathic deficit is a combination of adequate cognitive empathy, a lack of affective empathy, and very minimal practical reason. Whether the psychopath has moral agency is generally not a point of discussion: he probably doesn't.

The general question that these philosophers try to answer in favour of the moral agency in people with autism, is whether autistic individuals often show consistent and norm conform behaviour because they are morally motivated (whether that's mainly through affect or mainly through reverence for reason) or because they like rules and do so for the sake of rules. If the former can be plausibly argued for, then autistic individuals could be moral agents. If the latter remains to be the only way out, then autistic individuals don't qualify for moral agency.

For Deigh, defining autistic individuals as moral agents is postponed until their capacity for empathy or an alternative capacity that guarantees their ability to value other people's interests as equal, is proven. That they show consistent behaviour that is often in accordance with moral norms, doesn't yet support the conclusion that they do so from an empathic view of other humans as equal. McGeer is more optimistic: a multifaceted deficit of both cognitive and emotional capacities can explain the deterring judgements and actions of autistic individuals, while not taking away from their moral agency. For McGeer, autistic individuals' affective motivation to act on the right ends signifies their moral agency, regardless of the fact that these affects were elicited by cosmic concern rather than empathic or social concern. Maibom also remains hopeful for autistic moral agency. For Maibom, the tendency of autistic individuals to follow rules, norms, and authoritative commands from their passion for structure and their social concern to avoid distress and anxiety, is not

detrimental to their moral agency as long as they've remained responsive to the moral law in consideration of their actions.

Although these three modern sentimentalist theories differ, they agree that the rule-conform and consistent behaviour of autistic individuals is not the result of their moral feeling, like Kennett claims. The constitutive capacity for moral motivation can't lie in reason and must lie in emotion (whether that's empathy or disinterested concern). Even though McGeer is one of these sentimentalists that refutes Kennett's idea that moral feeling could be more constitutive to moral motivation than affect, Maibom kicks her out of the group: behind McGeer's facade of sentimentalism lies a rationalist theory of moral agency. According to Maibom, McGeer's moral agency is grounded in the rational ability to subject personal-interests to larger and universal ends, something that's in line with what Kant and Kennett propose.

McGeer, however, is not the only sentimentalist theory in the current paper that acknowledges rational capacities. In fact, all of the sentimentalist theories in this paper have granted rational capacities important roles in moral agency. Deigh takes on a lot of Kant's theory, and focuses on our rational abilities to evaluate our action-guiding principles in light of their universality and relation to the moral law. Maibom emphasizes that actions motivated from social concern and obedience to authority, can be moral only if we have remained receptive to the moral law. Even Hume resorts to our rational capacities to control our empathically biased emotions and make sure that we use our empathy from a general point of view.

Maibom obviously sees a difference between McGeer's acknowledgement of rational capacities and her own. To me, this difference is much less clear. In my view, these theories have presupposed rational capacities to such an extent that the moral value of the (maybe affective) motivation might come to be dependent on these rational capacities: moral feeling specifically. In Hume's case, what motivates us to refrain from actions motivated by empathically biased emotions, is our rational control: our ability to subject our personal-interests to larger interests, similar to McGeer. In Hume's case, it's moral not to act on empathically biased emotions; it is moral to act on a controlled version of empathy. If that control is the result of our rational capacity, then it's likely that morality is too. In Maibom's case, the fact that our action motivated by social concern or obedience to authority loses its

morality if we failed to be receptive to the moral law that motivated us to do otherwise, shows a relation between our immoral motivation and our absent moral feeling. So, our moral feeling constitutes the morality of the action on a command. Perfectly illuminated by Deigh's case, it's confusing how these affects constitute the morality of our motivation, and especially how they do so more than moral feeling already does. Deigh's emphasis on the need for empathy as viewing others as equal and as having interests that might provide reasons for action, is encompassed by Kant's active duties of sympathy and respect.

Thus, because these sentimentalist theories of moral agency leave room for rational capacities to such an extent that these seem to account for the morality of the motivation, their refutation of Kennett's claim is uncalled for and even makes their theories paradoxical. Perhaps our moral feeling is more constitutive to moral agency than our affect, like Kant and Kennett proposed.

If that is the case, luckily for the autistic individual, they have a chance of qualifying for moral agency. After all, on Kennett's theory of moral agency, the autistic individual has this constitutive capacity for moral motivation: respect for duty. Their perspective-taking impairments will still complicate their moral autonomy, but that doesn't have to be detrimental to their moral agency. Also, the modern sentimentalists don't seem to argue that the rational capacities they presuppose are capacities that the autistic individual lacks. McGeer claims they're perfectly able to subordinate their personal interests to larger ends. Maibom believes they can remain receptive to the moral law, while being motivated to do so for other reasons. Deigh believes they need empathy to be moral agents, but if what Deigh requires of empathy can be found in the rational capacity for moral feeling, I don't think Deigh would deny them moral agency. After all, Deigh doesn't argue mainly against their rational capacities. Thus, acknowledging the constitutive nature of our rational capacities to the morality of our motivation and action, would definitely be in the autistic individuals' favour.

These criticisms that I provided, inspired by Maibom's criticism and Kant's duties of virtue, are obviously hypothetical. Further (moral) psychological research could provide for broader insights on the moral agency of the autistic individual. In my view, it would be particularly interesting to have more extensive reports of autistic individuals and their view

of respect for duty and their motivations to act. Because, although Kennett's characterisation of autistic moral agency is desirable, I'm also a little sceptical whether the consistent behaviour of autistic individuals necessarily points to their respect for duty; whether the causal relation between autistic behaviour and respect for duty is well supported. Also, this paper could be extended further by incorporating more sentimentalist theories and investigating whether they also acknowledge rational capacities and to what extent those are responsible for the morality of the judgement.

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