

An Unfamiliar and Positive Law: On Kant and Schiller

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Abstract: A familiar post-Kantian criticism contends that Kant enslaves sensibility under the yoke of practical reason. Friedrich Schiller advanced a version of this criticism to which Kant publicly responded. Recent commentators have emphasized the role that Kant's reply assigns to the pleasure that accompanies successful moral action. In contrast, I argue that Kant's reply relies primarily on the sublime feeling that arises when we merely contemplate the moral law. In fact, the pleasures emphasized by other recent commentators depend on this sublime feeling. These facts illuminate Kant's views regarding the relationship between morality, freedom, and the development of moral feelings.

A familiar post-Kantian criticism contends that Kant's moral theory does not provide true freedom but, rather, places the master inside us, as Kant's sharp distinction between reason and sensibility enslaves sensibility under the yoke of practical reason.¹ This criticism was first advanced by the poet Friedrich Schiller in his 1793 essay *On Grace and Dignity*, where he accuses Kant of banishing grace from the idea of duty and providing grounds for the adoption of a monkish attitude – a criticism to which Kant publicly responded in a footnote added to the second edition of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.²

¹ For example, in the *Spirit of Christianity*, Hegel suggests that Kant's moral agent "carries his lord in himself, yet at the same time is his own slave. For the particular – impulses, inclinations, pathological love, sensuous experience, or whatever else it is called – the universal is necessary and always something alien and objective" (TW 1:323/ETW 211). And in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel repeats the same objection when he writes, "[A]bstract reflection fixes this moment in its difference from and opposition to the universal, and so produces a view of morality as a perennial and hostile struggle against one's own satisfaction" (TW 7:233/PR §124R).

² There is, of course, much dispute over the question how seriously Schiller intends to *criticize* Kant. Guyer suggests that Schiller's 'criticisms' might be better construed as helpful suggestions or clarifications of Kant's own position. For example, Guyer writes: "In the end, surely, the point of Schiller's twofold ideal of grace and dignity is not primarily to criticize Kant's ethics but to use his artistic powers to defend Kant's view, perhaps from the more scornful tendency within himself and certainly from the many critics who had ridiculed Kant's separation between happiness and virtue from the moment the *Groundwork* was published" (Guyer 1993, 354).

As we shall see below, Guyer is absolutely right to emphasize that Schiller was largely sympathetic to Kant's project. In fact, Schiller claims that his major complaints largely concern Kant's *presentation* of the moral law, rather than

Past scholarship often assumed that Schiller primarily intended to object that Kant's philosophy requires people to renounce all happiness and joy in the fulfillment of the moral law. However, recent commentators have persuasively demonstrated that Kant regards joy as compatible with dutiful action. Indeed, as Paul Guyer and Anne Margaret Baxley have recently emphasized, Kant actually regards joy in the performance of moral duty as an *essential* component of a fully virtuous temperament.³ Unlike a monkish life, the truly virtuous life is, thus, hardly devoid of joy. At the same time, commentators have come to recognize that Schiller never actually believed that Kant's moral philosophy requires people to renounce joy. Instead, Schiller's major complaint is that Kant presents the moral law as a tyrannous yoke. According to Schiller, Kant refuses to allow people to act directly on even their most noble inclinations. Instead, Kant requires people always to act directly out of respect for the moral law and, thus, enslaves sensibility to reason.⁴ Many who have recently emphasized this aspect of Schiller's argument tend to suggest that Kant largely attempts to blunt the force of this challenge by emphasizing

Kant's overall moral doctrine. Given that Schiller aims to defend a broadly Kantian theory of morality, Guyer is certainly correct to suggest that Schiller's *primary* intention is not simply to criticize Kant. However, as Beiser (2005, 171) notes, we should not be misled into assuming that Kant and Schiller agree in full, even though Schiller is more sympathetic to Kant than past generations of scholarship often assumed. Indeed, as we shall see below, Schiller consciously departs from Kant in several serious respects, and in the *Vigilantius Lectures* Kant himself explicitly rejects much of Schiller's position. Moreover, although Schiller claims that his major complaints lie merely with Kant's presentation of the moral law, rather than with the general contents of Kant's moral theory, we should not conclude that Schiller's own position can be found simply by reading closely between the lines of Kant's texts. Instead, Schiller appears to be drawing the standard post-Kantian distinction between the spirit and the letter of Kant's philosophy. Indeed, in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* Schiller *explicitly* employs the language of the spirit and the letter of the Critical Philosophy, while presenting a line of argument similar to that found in *On Grace and Dignity*. He writes: "In the Transcendental method of philosophizing, where everything depends on clearing form of content, and obtaining Necessity in its pure state, free of all admixture with the contingent, one easily falls into thinking of material things as nothing but an obstacle, and of imagining that our sensuous nature, just because it happens to be a hindrance in this operation, must of necessity be in conflict with reason. Such a way of thinking is, it is true, whole alien to the spirit of the Kantian system, but it may very well be found in the letter of it" (NA 20:348/AE 87).

³ Guyer writes: "[Kant] argues that the concept of and demand for *virtue*, which is a purely moral demand, does demand complete harmony between principles and feelings, or what Schiller describes as grace, because he interprets any tension between them not as evidence that subdued inclinations may once more rise up against the rule of moral law but rather as evidence that the agent's commitment to the principle of morality has not been complete and wholehearted in the first place" (Guyer 2006, 196 f.). And Baxley writes, "Kant explicitly claims that the temperament of virtue is not sullen and morose, for the genuinely virtuous person desires to act as reason dictates and takes (rational) satisfaction and (practical) pleasure in virtuous activity" (Baxley 2010a, 1089).

⁴ For some recent arguments against the traditional interpretation, see Allison (1990, 180ff.); Baxley (2003, 494 f.; 2008, 2 f.; 2010a, 1 f.; 2010b, 85ff.); Beiser (2005, 169ff.); Deligiorgi (2006, 4 f.), Gauthier (1997, 513ff.), and Guyer (1993, 354).

the role that pleasure plays in his theory of moral action.⁵ In contrast to such interpretations, I will argue that Kant's response to Schiller relies *primarily* on the sublime feeling that we experience when we merely *contemplate* the moral law as the product of our own reason, rather than on the pleasure that we feel when we successfully *act* on the moral law.⁶ And I will argue that once we understand the debate in these terms, we can see that Kant provides a substantially more sophisticated and interesting response to Schiller than commentators typically assume.

As we will see below, Schiller suggests that Kant's moral law *feels* like a foreign and positive law. Schiller himself attempts to overcome this *feeling* of constraint by advocating that people be allowed to act immediately out of an *inclination for duty*. For Schiller, then, the pleasure that a virtuous agent takes in her compliance with the moral law serves as a *means* for not *feeling* tyrannized. Kant, I will argue, responds to Schiller in two stages. First, Kant appeals to the feeling of sublimity that accompanies our consideration of the moral law as a product of our self-legislation to show that even if the moral law is felt as a constraint, it need not be felt as a tyrannous one. Second, Kant then argues that over time, as

⁵ See especially Baxley (2010a; 2010b), Guyer (1993, 2006), and Beiser (2005). All of these authors emphasize the importance of Kant's discussion of a cheerful heart towards the end of the *Religion* footnote for understanding Kant's response to Schiller's objection. However, we should note that these authors do not ground their interpretations of Kant's response to Schiller *merely* on the role that Kant assigns to cheerfulness or joy in moral action. All three authors also suggest that Kant and Schiller remain divided over the question whether Schiller's ideal of the beautiful soul is possible for humans. For example, Baxley emphasizes the fact that even a completely virtuous human will is always *capable* of deviating from the moral law. According to Baxley, this fact leads Kant to question whether Schiller's beautiful soul is an appropriate moral ideal for humans, as the fact that the human will is always *capable* of deviating from the moral law implies that the moral law inevitably remains a constraint on human action. Thus, Kant insists that humans should aim for autocracy, rather than try to become beautiful souls. Beiser frames the debate between Kant and Schiller in terms of the highest good. According to Kant, the highest good contains two elements – namely, virtue and happiness. Kant refers to virtue as the supreme good and to happiness in accordance with virtue as the complete good. The highest good is, ultimately, full virtue accompanied by the happiness that such virtue merits. According to Beiser, Schiller insists that happiness should be regarded as part of virtue. Thus, Schiller challenges Kant's conception of the highest good in which virtue and happiness are distinct elements. However, Beiser suggests that Kant's view of the highest good remains more plausible, given that conflicts between virtue and happiness seem inevitable. Thus, the possibility of becoming a beautiful soul remains suspect. Guyer similarly questions the possibility of a person becoming a beautiful soul by emphasizing Kant's view that human beings can achieve full virtue (at the phenomenal level) only within an infinite progress. Therefore, Baxley, Beiser, and Guyer all question Schiller's theory of the beautiful soul. However, the beautiful soul is simply Schiller's own solution to the problem of feeling tyrannized by the moral law. To claim that Kant rejects Schiller's own solution to the problem does not, by itself, explain how Kant manages to solve the problem himself. And when addressing the question of how Kant himself attempts to solve the problem, all three authors tend to emphasize Kant's discussion of the cheerful heart and the joy of moral action found towards the end of the *Religion* footnote.

⁶ Grondin (2000, 386ff.) has drawn attention to the elevating feeling that accompanies not merely our fulfillment of the moral law but also our contemplation of the moral law. Grondin's analysis is based primarily on the well-known passage from the end of the *Critique of Practical Reason* regarding the starry heavens above us and the moral law within us. However, Grondin does not relate this point to the role that the sublimity of the moral law plays in Kant's response in the *Religion* footnote to Schiller's worry about the moral law's apparent tyranny.

people develop their moral feelings further, they will experience increasingly greater joy in moral action and, thus, the moral law will come to feel less and less like a constraint at all. However, the second stage of Kant's argument depends intimately on the first stage. For, contrary to the suggestions of recent commentators, Kant does not *primarily* attempt to overcome the feeling of tyranny by emphasizing the role of pleasure in successful moral action. Instead, Kant argues that our ability to take increasing pleasure in moral action *depends* on the fact that we already do not feel the moral law as tyrannous. And the reason why we do not feel the moral law as tyrannous is, specifically, because our awareness that the moral law is self-legislated results in a feeling of sublimity, independent of our attempts to fulfill the moral law. Kant's focus on the sublimity that accompanies our consideration of the moral law allows Kant, unlike Schiller, to explain how even people who fail to comply with the moral law need not feel tyrannized by the moral law and, thus, also allows Kant to provide a superior account of our ability to develop our moral feelings over time. In this way, Kant defends the integrity of his moral theory by criticizing Schiller for overlooking the various roles played in our overall moral experience by the feeling of sublimity that accompanies our contemplation of the moral law.

Unfortunately, recent commentators have failed to recognize the two-stage structure of Kant's response to Schiller. This observation applies even to commentators who indicate that sublimity might play some role in Kant's debate with Schiller.⁷ For example, Frederick Beiser draws attention to a possible role for the sublime in Kant's reply to Schiller when he suggests that Kant perhaps began to emphasize the role of "pleasure and *self-elevation*" in moral action in order to emphasize that the moral law is a law that we give to ourselves (Beiser 2005, 182; emphasis added). Beiser writes:

[T]he concepts of *moral pleasure* and of *moral feeling* stress the satisfaction of the agent in recognizing his own powers of moral autonomy: the agent finds satisfaction in acting morally because he has achieved *self-mastery* over his inclinations and because he has acted according to *self-imposed* principles. (Beiser 2005, 182)

Beiser is absolutely correct to note that the notions of self-elevation, self-mastery, and self-imposed principles play an important role in Kant's response to Schiller. The limitation of Beiser's interpretation, however, is that Beiser focuses only on the satisfaction that accompanies "*acting morally*", rather than on the sublime feeling that we experience when we simply contemplate the moral law (Beiser 2005, 182; emphasis added). But, as we will see below, the satisfaction that we experience when we act according to self-imposed principles, which Kant refers to as "*contentment*" [*Zufriedenheit*], differs from the

⁷ Guyer (1993, 2006) does not draw much attention to the role of the sublime in Kant's response to Schiller, preferring to focus on Kant's discussion of cheerfulness and joy in moral action at the end of the *Religion* footnote. Gauthier (1997, 524ff.) notes that Kant regards the moral law as sublime and awe inspiring. However, Gauthier fails to recognize the role that the sublimity of the moral law plays as a *response* to Schiller, rather than merely as a confession that we cannot achieve moral perfection. Gauthier's suggestion is that the feeling of sublimity plays a role in Kant's account of moral motivation; he does not focus on to what extent the feeling of sublimity provides a response to the feeling of being tyrannized by the moral law.

sublime feeling that Kant claims we experience when we simply contemplate *that* the moral law is a self-imposed principle, regardless of whether we have acted according to the moral law (AA 5:119/PP 235). In fact, we will see that Kant criticizes Schiller for confusing the satisfaction of contentment, which Schiller refers to as “admiration” [*Hochachtung*], with this separate sublime feeling (NA 20:303/GD 165). Thus, commentators who stress the role of pleasure and feeling in Kant’s conception of moral compliance but who fail to emphasize the two-stage structure of Kant’s response to Schiller, risk repeating Schiller’s own mistakes.⁸

1. *Grace and Dignity*

To begin, it is important to recognize that Schiller largely viewed himself as a Kantian. For example, in a letter to his friend Christian Gottfried Körner, Schiller writes, “It is certain that *no* mortal has spoken a

⁸ In her most recent work, Baxley briefly indicates that the moral law is not painful or despotic, at least in part, because “the feeling of respect the moral elicits in us is akin to a feeling of awe and sublimity in response to the unconditional dignity tied up with our own self-legislating rational nature” (Baxley 2010b, 113). Taken in isolation, Baxley’s short, suggestive remark is consonant with the interpretation developed below. However, both Baxley’s general interpretation of this feeling of sublimity and her characterization of its function in Kant’s overall argument are highly ambiguous. In general, Baxley’s discussions of Kant’s remarks regarding feeling in the *Religion* footnote emphasize Kant’s comments on joyfulness and cheer, rather than sublimity. In fact, the brief passage cited above constitutes the *entire* extent of Baxley’s discussion regarding the role of sublimity in Kant’s response to Schiller. Importantly, Baxley does not address the question of how exactly Kant’s discussions of sublimity and joyfulness in the *Religion* footnote are related to each other. Consequently, Baxley does not clearly acknowledge the *primacy* of Kant’s appeal to sublimity in his response to Schiller. In other words, Baxley does not note the way in which Kant’s discussion of joy *relies* on his prior argument about sublimity, a topic discussed in part 3 below. Moreover, in the cited passage Baxley refers to the sublimity of our “self-legislating rational nature” (Baxley 2010b, 113). By itself, this remark *might* suggest a feeling of sublimity related merely to our consideration of the fact *that* we ourselves legislate the moral law, rather than a feeling directly tied to our having successfully acted according to the moral law. But it also might not. And while discussing Kant’s description of respect in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Baxley actually seems to make the same mistake as Beiser and Schiller. Namely, Baxley seems to conflate, rather than sharply distinguish, the positive feeling that accompanies our consideration of the moral law and the positive feeling that we experience upon acting consistently with the moral law (Baxley 2010b, 153). As such, Baxley’s views regarding the precise role that sublimity plays in Kant’s response to Schiller at least remain unclear and, in my view, overlook the importance of the distinction between the sublimity we feel when contemplating that the moral law is self-legislated and the contentment we experience when we act consistently with this self-legislated principle. Like Beiser, Baxley correctly suggests that the themes of self-mastery, self-imposed principles, and sublimity play some role in Kant’s reply to Schiller. However, neither Baxley nor Beiser characterizes this role fully; as a consequence, both Baxley and Beiser overlook the actual structure of Kant’s argument. The interpretation that I develop below builds on the brief but suggestive remarks of both Baxley and Beiser by examining the precise relationship between the various kinds of feelings that Kant discusses in the *Religion* footnote; it differs from their interpretations by emphasizing the central importance of Kant’s distinction between the sublime feeling that accompanies our recognition of the moral law as a self-imposed principle and the contentment that accompanies our acting in accord with the moral law. For further reservations regarding Beiser and Baxley’s precise interpretations of the debate between Kant and Schiller, see notes 12, 17, 25, 26, and 27 below.

greater word than this Kantian word, which also encapsulates his whole philosophy: determine yourself from within yourself” (NA 26:191/K 153). For Schiller, then, the Critical Philosophy is primarily a philosophy of freedom. Indeed, Schiller fully agrees with Kant that people who fail to obey the moral law are not truly free but are, instead, slaves to animal impulse. As Schiller says, a person who allows his sensible nature to rule falls “prey to desire [and] lets natural impulse rule him unrestrainedly” (NA 20:281/GD 147). As a result, “his inner self-sufficiency disappears” (NA 20:281/GD 147). To obey the moral law is necessary in order to escape the slavery of mere instinct. Even a will that *chooses* to act on instinct, rather than in accord with the moral law, remains “*within nature*” (NA 20:291/GD 155). And such a will fails to raise itself to “divinity” (NA 20:290/GD 155).

But while Schiller agrees that people should not be slaves to their sensible natures, he also insists that inclination should not be completely *dominated* by reason. For according to Schiller, the “triumph” of the will should not be based on the “subjugation” of sensibility (NA 20:284/GD 150). Schiller’s argument for this claim is actually rooted in an aesthetic demand.⁹ As Schiller writes:

Human beings, as appearance, are also an object of the senses. Where the *moral* feeling finds satisfaction, the *aesthetic* feeling does not wish to be reduced, and the correspondence with an idea may not sacrifice any of the appearance. Thus, however rigorously reason demands an ethical expression, the eye demands beauty just as persistently. Since both these demands are made of the same object, although they come from different courts of judgment, satisfaction for both must be found in the same source. The frame of mind in which a human being is most able to fulfill his moral purpose must permit the type of expression that is also most advantageous for him as simple appearance. In other words: moral capacity must reveal itself through grace. (NA 20:276/GD 144–145)

Put otherwise, our aesthetic sense demands that moral actions appear graceful. Graceful movements must exhibit freedom and ease.¹⁰ But as Schiller notes, “Under [reason’s] strict discipline, the sensuous will thus appear to be suppressed and the inner opposition will be evidenced from outside in constraint” (NA 20:280/GD 147). Thus, if a person must dominate her inclinations through an act of will in order to follow the moral law, then that person’s actions and movements will not appear graceful. For the strain of overcoming one’s recalcitrant inclinations will display itself in one’s bodily movements.¹¹ Schiller also believes that immoral actions cannot appear graceful, no matter how easily they are performed. And, thus, Schiller concludes that grace appears only when neither reason nor inclination dominates the other. As Schiller writes:

⁹ Guyer (2006) emphasizes this point. Guyer writes, “For Schiller, that complete attunement of principle and feeling that expresses itself in grace is indeed an imperative, but an *aesthetic* demand rather than a strictly *moral* demand” (Guyer 2006, 194).

¹⁰ It is worth noting here that in the *Kallias Letters*, which were not published during Schiller’s lifetime, he goes so far as to define all beauty as freedom of appearance. He writes, “Beauty is thus nothing less than freedom in appearance” (NA 26:183/K 152).

¹¹ More specifically, the strain will be apparent in the unintentional aspects of the agent’s intentional movement.

When neither *reason dominating the sensuous*, nor *sensuous dominating reason* is compatible with beauty of expression, then (as there is no fourth alternative) the state of mind *in which reason and sensuousness – duty and inclination – coincide* will be the condition under which the beauty of play occurs. (NA 20:282/GD 148)

In other words, Schiller's aesthetic concerns require that duty and inclination exist in a *harmony*, where neither dominates the other.

Schiller, however, does not believe that Kant achieves a harmony between duty and inclination. According to Schiller, Kant believes that impure inclinations have a tendency to usurp power. And, thus, Kant maintains that people should *always* act out of respect for duty, for fear of ever acting on an impure inclination. Schiller, however, regards such a view as overly pessimistic. On Schiller's view, Kant is unduly suspicious of *all* people and their inclinations simply because *some* people are moral weaklings who "would like to introduce a certain *laxity* into the law of reason" (NA 20:285/GD 151). But as Schiller writes, "Must an unselfish emotion in the noblest of breasts come under suspicion just because impure inclinations often usurp the name of virtue?" (NA 20:285/GD 151). Given the fact that Kant requires even people with the noblest emotions to act merely out of respect for the moral law, Schiller accuses Kant of banishing grace from "the idea of *duty*" and encouraging people to seek moral perfection through a "monkish asceticism" (NA 20:284/GD 150). As a result, and this is the important point, Schiller believes that Kant's requirement that people always act out of respect for the moral law, leaves even people with the best of inclinations *feeling* unduly constrained, creating a servitude to reason. Consequently, the moral law, which should be "compatible only with our *feeling* of freedom", does not resemble a law of autonomy (NA 20:286/GD 151; emphasis added). Instead, it takes "on the *appearance* of an unfamiliar and positive law" (NA 20:286/GD 151; emphasis added).

Thus, Schiller attempts to *amend* Kant's moral theory by arguing that people should "combine enjoyment with duty" and "obey their reason with joy" (NA 20:283/GD 149). To this effect, Schiller introduces his own theory of the beautiful soul. As he writes, "It is in a beautiful soul that sensuousness and reason, duty and inclination are in harmony, and grace is their expression as appearance" (NA 20:288/GD 153). And he describes the beautiful soul in more detail as follows:

One refers to a beautiful soul when the ethical sense has at last so taken control of all a person's feelings that it can leave affect to guide the will without hesitation and is never in danger of standing in contradiction of its decisions [...]. It carries out mankind's most exacting duties with such ease that they might simply be the actions of its inner instinct, and the most heroic sacrifice that it exacts from natural impulse appears to the eye as a free operation of this impulse. (NA 20:287/GD 152)

It is important to recognize that Schiller agrees with Kant that *reason*, rather than inclination, should *legislate* what our duties are. As he says, inclination is "not in a position to *vouch for*" the moral law (NA 20:283/GD 149). Schiller's major suggestion, however, is that a beautiful soul successfully combines enjoyment with duty by acting not out of strict respect for the moral law but, instead, out of an

“inclination for duty” (NA 20:283/GD 149). But Schiller does not mean to suggest that a beautiful soul has inclinations that *coincidentally* coordinate with her duties. For Schiller explicitly states that the beautiful soul’s “ethical sense has [...] taken control of all [his] feelings” (NA 20:287/GD 152). Rather, Schiller’s idea appears to be that the ethical spirit has so seized the beautiful soul that she has successfully incorporated an inclination for duty into her sensuous nature. Thus, Schiller’s inclination for duty is not a natural instinct. In fact, Schiller explicitly contrasts the beautiful soul with a person who merely has “*virtue born of temperament*” (NA 20:294/GD 158). Instead, the beautiful soul has *developed* an inclination for duty out of her initial respect for the moral law.¹² And, as a result, the beautiful soul *feels inclined* to perform particular actions specifically *because* they are duties. In other words, she is attracted to duty as such.¹³

Schiller makes this last point especially vivid in his February 18th, 1793 letter to Körner. There, Schiller tells the story of a wanderer who discovers a wounded man on the road. Schiller writes:

As soon as the wanderer sees him, he lays down his load. ‘I see’, he says of his own accord, ‘that you are wounded and tired. The next village is far and you will bleed to death ere you arrive there. Climb onto my back and I will take you there.’ – ‘But what will become of your load which you leave here on the open road?’ – ‘That I don’t know, and it concerns me little’, says the carrier. ‘I do know, however, that you need help and that I am obliged to give it to you.’ (NA 26:197/K 158)

The last sentence here clarifies that the wanderer responds to the wounded man *because* it is his duty to do so. But, presumably, the wanderer also responds out of an inclination – namely, an inclination for duty. The beautiful soul, then, acts out of an inclination (albeit an inclination for duty) rather than out of strict respect for the moral law. We might say that she finds duty itself charming and, thus, performs her duties with joy and ease.

Unfortunately, there is some room for confusion here. For Schiller also commits himself to Kant’s view that only actions performed *out of respect* for the moral law have moral worth.¹⁴ In a December 3rd, 1793 letter to his patron Prince von Augustenburg, he writes:

¹² Allison (1990, 181), Beiser (2005, 176 f.), Baxley (2003, 497 f.; 2008, 6 f.; 2010a, 1087; 2010b, 94), and Gauthier (1997, 530) have recently emphasized the fact that Schiller regards the inclination for duty as a second nature developed and acquired over time. We should note, however, that while Allison, Baxley, and Gauthier all seem to interpret Schiller’s term ‘inclination’ [*Neigung*] as motivational, Beiser (2005, 177) more controversially argues that Schiller’s use of the word ‘inclination’ [*Neigung*] here refers to the manner of action rather than to the motive.

¹³ I acknowledge that this interpretation of Schiller’s inclination for duty is, like any interpretation of this point, controversial. I take it, however, to be a recognizable, traditional interpretation. Allison (1990, 183) and Baxley (2003, 505; 2010b, 109) seem to interpret Schiller’s inclination for duty as I do here – namely, as an inclination for duty as such, i.e., an inclination for duty *qua* duty. Most importantly, we shall see below that Kant appears to interpret Schiller in this manner.

¹⁴ This point has been heavily emphasized by Beiser (2005, 173ff.).

Immediately and provisionally, I confess that in the chief points of moral doctrine I think completely like a Kantian. I believe and am convinced that only those of our actions are called *moral* to which we are determined merely by respect for the moral law and not by inclinations, however refined these inclinations might be, and whatever imposing names they might carry. (NA 26:322)¹⁵

This passage is puzzling. For Schiller here tells us that a morally praiseworthy action *must* be determined “merely by respect for the moral law”. And yet, Schiller claims that the beautiful soul acts immediately out of inclination (albeit an inclination to duty). How, then, can Schiller claim that the beautiful soul’s actions have moral worth? The answer appears to be that Schiller does *not* believe that a beautiful soul’s *individual* actions have moral worth. Rather, only the beautiful soul’s *overall character* has moral worth.¹⁶ For although the beautiful soul does not perform her actions immediately out of strict respect for the moral law, she has developed her character – i.e. her inclination for duty – merely out of respect for the moral law.¹⁷ As Schiller writes:

[T]he actions of a beautiful soul are not themselves ethical, but the character as a whole is so. One cannot give the beautiful soul credit for any action, since satisfying an impulse is never considered creditable. The beautiful soul has no other merit besides being. (NA 20:287/GD 152)

Thus, Schiller and Kant agree that pure practical reason determines what our duties are. And Schiller and Kant also agree that, at least in some sense, a truly virtuous person performs her duties *because* they are duties. But Kant and Schiller seem to disagree over what this ‘because’ amounts to. Specifically, Schiller’s beautiful soul feels *inclined* to perform actions *because* they are duties, whereas Kant’s virtuous person performs her actions *out of a respect* for duty.¹⁸ Schiller’s basic argument, then, is that Kant has a limited view of the ways in which people can perform duties *because* they are duties. Given that the beautiful soul does perform her duties because they are duties, we should feel no qualms in allowing her to act merely from inclination (albeit from an inclination for duty). The beautiful soul’s own rational nature legislates the moral law to which her sensuous nature is, then, *inclined*. Indeed, as a

¹⁵ Here I have followed the translation of this passage in Beiser (2005, 173).

¹⁶ Baxley (2010a, 1087; 2010b, 93) also emphasizes that character is the object of moral evaluation for Schiller, although Baxley does not dwell on the fact Schiller regards individual moral actions as lacking moral worth.

¹⁷ Beiser has suggested that, at least in *On Grace and Dignity*, Schiller merely intends to *supplement* Kant’s own theory of moral *action* with a theory of moral *character*. See (Beiser 2005, 178 f.). The argument here, however, shows that Beiser’s interpretation is, at least to some extent, misguided. For, unlike Schiller, Kant does not appear to believe that individual moral actions lack moral worth.

¹⁸ Although I shall not discuss the issue in great detail here, commentators now routinely recognize that Kant does not intend for his requirement that people act out of strict respect for the moral law always to exclude inclination completely from moral action. Kant certainly allows people to act on inclinations that do not conflict with their duties. And he also requires that people cultivate certain feelings that generally promote moral action. For a succinct defense of all of these points, see Guyer (2000, 287ff.).

beautiful soul *wants* to perform her duty, she does not *feel* the moral law as a constraint. As she finds duty itself charming, she performs her duties with joy and ease. And given that a beautiful soul does not feel constrained but, rather, is free and at ease, her appearance strikes us as graceful.¹⁹

2. *The Tyrannous Yoke of the Moral Law*

Kant first heard of Schiller's essay from J. E. Biester, the editor of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. In a letter to Kant, Biester writes:

I wish you would look at Schiller's essay [*On Grace and Dignity*], and notice what he says, quite speciously, about your moral system, viz., that the hard voice of duty sounds too strongly therein (duty being a law prescribed by reason itself but nevertheless in a way a foreign law) and that there is too little attention to *inclination*. (AA 11:456 f./C 468)

According to Biester, Schiller accuses Kant of presenting the moral law as "in a way a foreign law" by allowing "the hard voice of duty" to sound "too strongly" and paying "too little attention to *inclination*". I shall argue that Kant follows Biester's lead. Kant's *paramount* concern in the *Religion* footnote is to refute the objection that he presents the moral law as a foreign law or, in Schiller's words, as an "unfamiliar and positive law" (NA 20:286/GD 151).

I suspect that my suggestion might encounter some resistance. After all, Kant appears to frame his footnote specifically as a reply to Schiller's charge of monkish asceticism. Kant writes, "Schiller [...] disapproves of this way of representing obligation, because it carries with it the frame of mind of a Carthusian" (AA 6:23/RRT 72). And this framing might suggest that Kant's major goal is *simply* to explain that a virtuous life need not be a somber life of complete self-deprivation. Indeed, in the footnote

¹⁹ We should briefly acknowledge, however, that Schiller does not believe that any human being could be a beautiful soul all of the time. For in cases of extreme "emotions, agreement with the law of reason is only possible by contravening the demands of nature" (NA 20:293/GD 158). Unfortunately, Schiller does not provide any concrete examples of what he has in mind in *On Grace and Dignity*. But, as Beiser (2005) has argued, Schiller would seem to be thinking of cases like that of a father whom duty compels to send his own son to a certain death in war. Such a father feels extreme anguish, even if he fully recognizes the worth of the moral law. And according to Schiller, although such a person suffers in the performing of his duty, he also shows "*peace in suffering*, in which dignity actually consists" (NA 20:296/GD 160). In other words, the actions of such a person are dignified, rather than graceful.

What, then, is the relationship between the grace and the dignity in Schiller's theory? Although the details here are controversial, Schiller's idea appears to be that a person who truly recognizes the value of the moral law develops an inclination for duty that allows her, in most circumstances, to perform her duty out of inclination and, thus, to appear graceful. But in certain extreme situations, such as those we find in tragedy, a person's emotions will be so strong that she will have to constrain them through respect for the moral law in order to perform her duty. In these cases, her actions will appear dignified rather than graceful. Schiller says, "The *beautiful* soul, then, must, in emotion, change into a *sublime* soul [...]. Control of impulses through moral strength is *spiritual freedom*, and its expression in appearance is called *dignity*" (NA 20:294/GD 158).

Kant clearly goes on to state that a truly virtuous person is *necessarily* cheerful and joyous in her compliance with duty. For joy is “the sign of genuineness in virtuous disposition”, whereas a person “weighed down by fear and dejected” actually harbors “a hidden *hatred* of the law” (AA 6:23/RRT 73).

But even though we might not immediately associate a monkish attitude with concerns about foreign moral laws, Kant does.²⁰ In the *Religion* footnote itself, Kant refers to the dejected and downtrodden person as possessing a “*slavish* frame of mind” (AA 6:23/RRT 73; emphasis added). And in his preliminary drafts for the footnote, Kant explicitly contrasts a “penitent headhanger” with a “free subject under the law” (AA 23:98). Moreover, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant classifies a monkish frame of mind as a form of superstition, where a person experiences only “fear and anxiety before the being of superior power [i.e., God], to whose will the terrified person sees himself as subjected without holding him in great esteem” (AA 5:264/CPJ 147).

Of course, one might assume that Kant, like Schiller, intends to overcome the feeling of the moral law’s tyranny by emphasizing the place for joy in a virtuous life. I would like to argue, however, that this is not the case. For Kant appeals first and foremost to sublimity, rather than to joy. Clear evidence for this suggestion comes from a rarely discussed remark in the *Vigilantius Lectures*. During his 1793–1794 course on moral philosophy, Kant discussed Schiller’s essay several times. But only *once* in the lectures does he refer to a monkish morality. After arguing that we should act “merely with an eye to the principle of duty itself”, Kant remarks:

Schiller [...] advocates *worth with comeliness*, and maintains that it would be a repulsive, crude, Carthusian morality, to wish to establish the basis of one’s actions merely upon strict respect for the law. (AA 27:623/LE 365)

But Kant does *not* proceed to explain the various roles that his own moral system allows for inclination and joy. Instead, he continues by arguing that Schiller is *wrong* to assume that the feeling of compulsion present in our respect for the moral law detracts from our subjective appreciation of the moral law’s worth or lends it the appearance of a foreign law. *Vigilantius* records:

But the moral law also engenders worth through the very compulsion that fetters us in obedience thereto. If this compulsion were pathological or physical, it would arouse fear and a simultaneous aversion, but it is *moral coercion*, i.e., our determination to obey duty arises from free will, *ex spontanea determinatione mentis*, and this commands respect, not servile subordination; we feel ourselves to be such that we can determine our duty, contrary to inclination, in accordance with duty’s laws. It is on this that the compulsion rests, though it involves only a voluntary feeling of respect. So there can be no thought of severity, but only of the worth of the law. (AA 27:623 f./LE 365 f.)

Vigilantius’ notes are sketchy. But Kant’s major point appears to be as follows. As intelligences, we *freely* submit to the moral law. And our phenomenal *consciousness* of this free submission is the feeling

²⁰ Beiser (2005, 182) also connects a monkish attitude to a slavish attitude.

of respect. As Kant writes in the 2nd *Critique*, “The consciousness of a *free* submission of the will to a law [...] is respect for the law” (AA 5:80/PP 204 f.). And, thus, both the compulsion and the feeling of respect on which this compulsion rests should give us “no thought of severity, but only of the worth of the law” (AA 27:624/LE 366).

Thus, Kant’s *primary* reply to the objection that he endorses a “repulsive, crude Carthusian morality” emphasizes our free submission to the moral law. We might, however, find this an odd point for Kant to press. For Schiller acknowledges that the moral law is “a prescription given by humans to themselves as rational beings and therefore binding only on them” (NA 20:286/GD 151). Schiller’s argument, however, is that even though we might cognitively grasp that the moral law *is* a law we give to ourselves, we still *feel* the moral law as a tyrannous yoke. Why, then, does Kant pursue this line of argument here?

The answer, I would like to suggest, is that Kant intends not merely to emphasize the metaphysical point that we, as intelligences, will the moral law but also to draw attention to the relationship between this fact and sensible feeling.²¹ Now, in the 2nd *Critique*, Kant clearly argues that the feeling of respect contains both painful and pleasant aspects. As an awareness of our submission to a law that constrains sensibility, respect is painful. Thus, Kant writes, “As *submission* to a law, that is, as a command (indicating constraint for the sensibly affected subject), it therefore contains in it no pleasure but instead, so far, displeasure in the action” (AA 5:81/PP 205). But the feeling of respect also has a positive component, which Kant terms “self-approbation” (AA 5:81/PP 205). For respect is an awareness of our *free* willing of the moral law. Kant writes:

On the other hand, however, since this constraint is exercised only by the lawgiving of his *own* reason, it also contains something *elevating*, and the subjective effect on feeling, inasmuch as pure practical reason is the sole cause of it, can thus be called *self-approbation* with reference to pure practical reason [...]. (AA 5:81/PP 205)

Schiller was, of course, familiar with this aspect of Kant’s position. But in *On Grace and Dignity*, he appears to suggest that we should distinguish between respect, which is *entirely* painful, and admiration, which is pleasant. We feel respect for the moral law itself but admiration for a person who actually *fulfills* the moral law. Schiller’s suggestion seems to be that the self-approbation from the 2nd *Critique* should be classified as admiration we feel for our *fulfillment* of the moral law on particular occasions. But according to Schiller, the feeling of respect for the moral law itself is a fully negative feeling. Indeed, Schiller explicitly claims that grace is important specifically because it provides the positive

²¹ Deligiorgi (2011, 505) suggests that Kant intends to appeal to the metaphysical fact that we can rationally determine our ends independent of sensibility and, thus, our ends are our own. But as argued above, this metaphysical fact is impotent against Schiller’s criticism. Schiller clearly recognizes this metaphysical fact as an aspect of Kant’s position but fails to see how the metaphysics is relevant to the feeling of tyranny. Deligiorgi does not answer this question; nor does she attend to the role of sublimity in Kant’s footnote. As observed in note 5 above, other recent commentators have better recognized the general importance of feeling in Kant’s response to Schiller.

counterpoint to the wholly negative feeling of respect. Otherwise, respect would simply be a form of fear. As Schiller states, “Grace protects respect from becoming fear” (NA 20:304/GD 167).

Now, in the above passages from the 2nd *Critique* Kant is explicitly discussing the role that respect plays in moral *action* and, more specifically, the role that respect plays in the *fulfillment* of the moral law. However, Kant’s point in the *Vigilantius Lectures* does *not* appear to be merely that people feel elevated merely when they actually *fulfill* the moral law.²² Instead, Kant seems to argue that the moral law does not feel tyrannous, regardless of whether we try to fulfill it or not, because the feeling of respect sensibly reflects our consciousness of the fact that we ourselves legislate the moral law. More specifically, Kant emphasizes that we, regarded as *Wille*, spontaneously legislate the moral law when he remarks that the “compulsion” of the moral law is “*moral coercion*, i.e. our determination to obey duty arises from free will, *ex spontanea determinatione mentis*, and this commands respect, not servile subordination” (AA 27:623 f./LE 365 f.). Here Kant’s primary point is not that an agent’s decision to fulfill the moral law results from free will but, rather, that the “compulsion” and “*moral coercion*” result from *Wille*, which freely legislates the moral law. Kant reinforces this point when he writes, “It is on this that the compulsion rests, though it involves only a voluntary feeling of respect” (AA 27:624/LE 366). In other words, as the compulsion of the moral law rests on our own *Wille*’s legislation of the moral law, the feeling of respect, which is our consciousness of this self-imposed compulsion, qualifies as a “voluntary feeling” (AA 27:624/LE 366). Indeed, Kant notes that we “*feel* ourselves to be such that we can determine our duty” (AA 27:624/LE 366; emphasis added). Moreover, Kant hints that this feeling is ultimately a positive feeling when he writes, “[T]here can be no thought of severity, but only of the worth of the law” (AA 27:623/LE 366). Finally, this positive feeling seems to be distinct from the satisfaction that we experience when we actually fulfill the moral law. In the 2nd *Critique* Kant refers to the satisfaction that accompanies our fulfillment of the moral law as “*contentment*” [*Zufriedenheit*] (AA 5:119/PP 235). But Kant makes no effort to identify our feeling “of the worth of the law” in the *Vigilantius Lectures* with the specific satisfaction of contentment. Rather, the contentment, which accompanies our fulfillment of the moral law, would seem to be distinct from the feeling that the *Vigilantius Lectures* suggest we experience when we contemplate the moral law as the product of our own self-legislation. Thus, in contrast to Schiller, Kant insists that the feeling of respect for the law is not entirely painful, even when we do not consider the admiration or contentment that might result from *fulfilling* the moral law.

Kant’s remarks in the *Vigilantius Lectures* are obviously brief and, taken by themselves, perhaps less than decisive. However, Kant pursues the same line of argument sketched above in the *Religion* footnote itself. The discussion of joy on which commentators tend to focus occurs at the very end of Kant’s long footnote. Kant, however, begins his response to Schiller by writing:

²² Nor does Kant’s point primarily seem to be that people *anticipate* feeling elevated when they consider how they *will* feel if they act morally.

I readily grant that I am unable to associate *gracefulness* with the *concept of duty*, by reason of its very dignity. For the concept of duty includes unconditional necessitation, to which *gracefulness* stands in direct contradiction. The majesty of the law (like the law on Sinai) instills awe (not dread, which repels; and also not fascination, which invites familiarity); and this awe rouses the respect of the subject toward his master, except that in this case, since the master lies in us, it rouses a *feeling of the sublimity* of our own vocation that enraptures us more than any beauty. (AA 6:23/RRT 72)

Kant's argument here is intimately tied to his point from the *Vigilantius Lectures*. Kant believes that Schiller has accused him of endorsing an attitude of dread, whereas Kant appears to construe Schiller's inclination for duty as a type of fascination. Kant, however, insists that the proper attitude towards the moral law is neither dread nor fascination but, rather, respect. Kant's description of respect here resembles that in the 3rd *Critique* where he writes, "The feeling of the inadequacy of our capacity for the attainment of an idea *that is a law for us is respect*" (AA 5:257/CPJ 140). We recognize that the moral law is a law for us. But we also recognize that even the best of us can never manage to live up to its demands. And our feeling of inadequacy, then, "rouses the respect of the subject toward his master" (AA 6:23/RRT 72). However, as we ourselves will the moral law, i.e. "since the master lies in us", we *then* experience "a *feeling of the sublimity* of our own vocation that enraptures us more than any beauty" (AA 6:23/RRT 72).

Here Kant emphasizes, even more explicitly than in the *Vigilantius Lectures*, that our feeling of respect for the moral law provides us with a feeling of sublimity. For Kant a feeling of the sublime, which is ultimately a type of pleasure, arises when an unpleasant experience leads us to consider our supersensible faculty of reason (AA 5:245ff./CPJ 129ff.). Such an experience, although painful at first, ultimately strikes us as purposive and thus pleasant, as it helps to make us aware of our supersensible faculty of reason.²³ In the *Religion* footnote, Kant suggests that our feeling of respect for the moral law is initially painful. But, ultimately, this feeling of inadequacy provides a *positive feeling* of sublimity, as we recognize the moral law as the product of our own spontaneous *Wille* or, as Kant says, recognize that "the master lies in us" (AA 6:23/RRT 72). Kant claims that this feeling of sublimity "enraptures us more than any beauty", including of course the beauty of Schillerian grace. Indeed, Kant routinely characterizes the feeling of sublimity as an outpouring of feeling that borders on enthusiasm. Given this rapturous outpouring, the ultimate feeling of sublimity makes the original feeling of pain seem small and insignificant. Therefore, we initially feel pain upon recognizing that our moral character is inadequate to the demands of the moral law. But this initial feeling of inadequacy turns out to be merely an occasion that prompts our consideration of the fact that our own supersensible faculty of reason legislates the moral law. Consequently, the initial feeling of pain is superseded and overwhelmed by the rapturous

²³ The *locus classicus* for Kant's general theory of sublimity is, of course, "The Analytic of the Sublime" in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. See AA 5:244ff./CPJ 128ff.

pleasure of sublimity.²⁴ Once again, it is not merely the fulfillment of the moral law that Kant characterizes as pleasurable but, rather, our contemplation of the fact that we ourselves legislate the moral law. Kant, then, does not respond to Schiller by merely repeating the metaphysical claim that we ourselves will the moral law. Instead, Kant explains that, contrary to Schiller's suggestion, we do not *feel* the moral law as a tyrannous yoke. Our experience of the moral law is not, in the end, painful and humiliating but pleasurable and sublime, regardless of whether we manage to fulfill the moral law.

Of course, one might worry that Kant has not actually answered Schiller's objection. For Kant has made no effort to suggest that we do not feel the moral law as a constraint. But we should keep Kant's more immediate goals in mind. Kant's major aim in the passages discussed so far is to explain that we *do* feel the moral law as an initially painful constraint but, due to the pleasurable feeling of sublimity, *do not* ultimately feel the moral law as a *tyrannous and humiliating constraint*.²⁵

3. *An Inclination for Duty*

But what, then, is the precise purpose of Kant's more famous remarks about the "joyous heart" [*das fröhliche Herz*] at the end of the *Religion* footnote (AA 6:24/RRT 73)? To begin, we should note that Kant explicitly rejects Schiller's inclination to duty. In the *Vigilantius Lectures*, Kant argues against Schiller's idea of an inclination for duty on the basis that duty is not inherently enjoyable. And, thus, a person cannot be *sensibly attracted to duty* as such. Kant's basic argument is that the moral law

²⁴ Note that Kant briefly anticipates this point as early as the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, where he writes, "For there is indeed no sublimity in him insofar as he is *subject* to the moral law, but there certainly is insofar as he is at the same time *lawgiving* with respect to it and only for that reason subordinated to it" (AA 4:440/PP 88). Moreover, in the *Groundwork*, Kant clearly distinguishes the sublimity that accompanies our legislation of the moral law from the "sublimity and dignity in the person who *fulfills* all his duties" (AA 4:440/PP 88; emphasis altered). Indeed, to anticipate the discussion in part 3 below, Kant argues in the *Groundwork* that our ability to represent a person who fulfills the moral law as sublime or dignified rather than as servile *relies* on the fact that this person's reason "is at the same time *lawgiving*" and, thus, that there is "sublimity in him" (AA 4:440/PP 88). In other words, the kind of dignity that accompanies fulfilling the moral law is parasitic on the sublimity that accompanies our mere legislation of the moral law. For now the major point to note is that Kant once again describes a sublimity that accompanies our mere legislation of the moral law, regardless of whether we try to fulfill the moral law or not.

²⁵ Baxley might seem to suggest that our experience of the moral law is not painful at all if we are reasonably virtuous, when she writes: "Kant makes clear that the thesis that human beings obey the law reluctantly is not intended as a phenomenological point about how the morally good agent actually feels at the time of acting, noting that the virtuous person who does her duty from duty experiences pleasure, cheer, and satisfaction in acting virtuously – in other words, this is the accurate phenomenology of her moral experience as well [...]" (Baxley 2010b, 113). However, this remark is misleading. As we have seen, Kant's argument appears to be that the moral law, although a constraint and thus painful, is not in the end merely painful. Rather, this pain is offset by the elevating side of sublimity. Baxley's failure to clearly recognize this point accounts, in part, for her tendency to deny that Kant's routine remarks concerning our reluctance to follow the moral law refer to the phenomenology of moral experience. I discuss this aspect of Baxley's interpretation in note 24 above.

constrains our natural impulses. Over the course of her life, a person who wants to comply with the moral law will, inevitably, have to sacrifice some of her own personal desires and interests. And the pain of such personal sacrifices “awakens resistance and struggle, which we perceive in fulfilling them” (AA 27:490/LE 259).²⁶ As the fulfillment of the moral law inevitably entails some degree of personal sacrifice, “it is contrary to the nature of duty to *enjoy* having duties upon one” (AA 27:490/LE 259). It is, thus, deeply mysterious how anyone could ever be *sensibly attracted* to duty as such.

At first we might wonder whether Kant has missed Schiller’s point. After all, Schiller argues that a person who has developed an inclination for duty *desires* to comply with the moral law. Thus, compliance with the moral law does not require any real personal sacrifice. But perhaps Kant has the following point in mind. Given that the moral law creates personal hardship, how could one ever come to be *attracted* to the moral law? The only answer appears to be that one might become attracted to the moral law because one recognizes that it possesses insurmountable worth. Indeed, this must be what Schiller intends when he vaguely says, “[T]he ethical sense has at last so taken control of all a person’s feelings that it can leave the affect to guide the will without hesitation” (NA 20:287/GD 152). But, as Kant notes, our appreciation for the moral law’s worth “is nothing more than man’s *respect* for the moral law, and that provides *no* ground for supposing a charm that attracts us to fulfilling it” (AA 27:490/LE 259; emphases added).²⁷ In other words, it is far from obvious how our *feeling of respect* could ever be transformed into an *inclination* for duty as such. And surely the burden falls on Schiller to explain this point.

²⁶ Baxley suggests that Kant’s discussion of our ineluctable reluctance to follow the moral law is merely a description of the metaphysical fact that we (unlike God) are always capable of being tempted to violate the moral law and does not refer to the phenomenology of moral experience. See Baxley (2010b, 110). However, Baxley is unable to account for the cited passage; additionally, Baxley’s metaphysical interpretation of reluctance seems to be at odds with Kant’s discussion of the painful side of respect in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. These interpretive difficulties are, perhaps, symptomatic of the fact that Baxley does not specify the precise role of sublimity in Kant’s argument (including the painful side of sublimity, which Baxley does not attend to in her discussion of Schiller) and does not analyze the relationship between sublimity and the feeling of joy.

²⁷ Kant appears to repeat this line of argument again in the *Vigilantius Lectures* at AA 27:623/LE 365. And it appears to represent Kant’s primary objection to Schiller’s inclination for duty. But we should note that Kant also briefly argues against Schiller’s inclination for duty on empirical grounds. *Vigilantius* records, “[E]ven psychological experience tells against Schiller’s view: *We would do many things, if only they did not have to be done from duty*” (AA 27:491/LE 260). And Kant illustrates his point with an (unfortunately sexist) example: “Women especially insist that no coercion should be evinced towards them, that it should seem as if they were doing a kindness, when duty tells them to act” (AA 27:491/LE 260). In other words, people are not attracted to duty as such. In fact, people seem reluctant to perform actions that they might otherwise willingly perform when told that they have to perform those actions because they are duties. For duty, then, appears to be “coercion” (AA 27:491/LE 260). And nobody is *attracted* to being coerced. We might note that these points all suggest that Kant rejects Schiller’s own positive theory largely due to common sense points about human nature rather than on a metaphysical distinction between active reason and passive inclinations (as Gauthier (1997) suggests), or due to a general pessimism about the moral capacities of humans (as Baxley (2003; 2008; 2010a; and 2010b) suggests).

Returning to the *Religion* footnote, the joy that Kant's virtuous person feels in her compliance with duty is, thus, *not* the joy that Schiller's beautiful soul would feel in the satisfaction of an *inclination* to duty. Rather, Kant most likely has two alternate sources of joyfulness in mind. First, Kant believes that compliance with the moral law is itself a source of pleasure. He refers to "moral feeling" as "the susceptibility to feel pleasure or displeasure merely from being aware that our actions are consistent with or contrary to the moral law" (AA 6:399/PP 528). Thus, the awareness that our actions are consistent with the moral law produces a pleasurable feeling. Second, commentators routinely recognize that Kant allows for people to determine their will out of respect for the moral law while still satisfying inclinations that do not conflict with the moral law. And Kant also makes it a duty to cultivate particular feelings that tend to promote actions in conformity with the moral law, such as the feeling of sympathy (AA 6:457/PP 575). Thus, compliance with the moral law will often satisfy both natural and cultivated desires, providing joy.

Now, Schiller, remember, argues that an inclination for duty is necessary to not regard the moral law as a foreign and positive law. Thus, for Schiller taking joy in the moral law is a *means* to not experiencing the moral law as a tyrannous yoke. For Kant, however, joy does not play this role. Instead, we have seen that Kant attempts to overcome the moral law's alleged tyranny by emphasizing the role of sublimity in moral experience. In fact, Kant appears to believe that the joy a person experiences in her compliance with the moral law is a sign that she *already* does not regard the constraint of the moral law as a *tyrannous* constraint. As Kant says in the *Vigilantius Lectures*:

[W]e may assuredly take it, that so long as anyone bows to the law only with grief and lamentation, and it costs him trouble to fulfil it, he is still nurturing a hatred for that law, as the slave does his master. (AA 27:656/LE 392)

In other words, if a person hates the moral law and, thus, views it as a tyrannous yoke, then she will not find it easy to comply with the moral law. For she will feel extreme regret at the sacrifice of her own personal interests for the sake of a law that she does not truly value. In contrast, someone who values the moral law may still experience the moral law as a constraint. But she need not experience it as a *tyrannous* constraint. Therefore, she will be able to take pleasure in the knowledge that her actions comply with the moral law. As discussed above, the sublime feeling of the moral law ensures that we need not feel the moral law to be a tyrannous constraint; we need not nurture "a hatred for that law" (AA 27:656/LE 392). In this way, the sublime feeling of the moral law is logically prior to the feeling of pleasure we experience when we recognize our actions as consistent with the moral law.²⁸ Of course, by developing sympathetic feelings, etc., a virtuous person will come to experience the joy of satisfying her inclinations through her compliance with the moral law. Certainly, these facts will make her compliance with duty even less difficult and less burdensome. In other words, they will bring her even closer to

²⁸ Compare note 24 above.

feeling *entirely* unconstrained.²⁹ However, they reflect the fact that she already, *prior* to any promise of joy, does not regard the moral law as a *tyrannous* constraint but, instead, as an object of unqualified worth.³⁰ And, as I have argued above, this prior recognition of the moral law's unqualified worth depends on the feeling of sublimity that we experience when we contemplate the moral law.

4. Conclusion

As we have seen, Schiller aims to overcome the moral law's tyrannous appearance by allowing people to develop and act out of an inclination for duty. As a result, Schiller's position seems to require that anyone who has not yet developed an inclination for duty cannot help but feel the moral law as a tyrannous yoke. Consequently, Schiller faces the problem of explaining how people who feel tyrannized by the moral law and, thus, nurture a hatred for the moral law, will be able to develop their moral feelings and take increasing pleasure in moral action. Kant, however, does not attempt to overcome the moral law's alleged tyranny merely by emphasizing the role of pleasure in the virtuous life. Instead, Kant appeals to the feeling of sublimity that accompanies our contemplation of the moral law as the product of our own self-legislation. Thus, even people who have not yet fully developed their moral feelings and who, therefore, routinely experience the moral law as a constraint still need not experience

²⁹ Of course, Kant often states that to develop a pure will completely would require an infinite amount of time. Indeed, this forms the basis of his well-known argument for the postulate of immortality in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Given Kant's view here, no person will *ever* entirely manage to not feel the moral law as a constraint. Of course, the level of Kant's commitment to this argument from the *Critique of Practical Reason* in his later writings is controversial. For a recent argument that Kant's attitude towards the postulate of immortality had changed in important ways by the time of the *Religion*, see Guyer (2006, 198).

³⁰ We should note that Kant's major responses to Schiller in the *Religion* footnote do not explicitly discuss Schiller's concern with graceful movement. However, we should not conclude that Kant was completely unconcerned with Schiller's aesthetic argument. First, in the *Vigilantius Lectures* Kant actually argues that people have a *moral* duty, rather than merely an aesthetic one, to make the appearance of their moral actions graceful. He writes: "Decorum must be founded on duty, and the latter may be subject to decorum, as an essential component of duty; as Schiller says, we must couple virtue with graciousness [...] [W]hereby we can lend to virtue a vesture of graciousness is the outer appearance of the disposition; we thereby endeavour not to act in contravention to the laws of seemliness [...]" (AA 27:707/LE 432).

Here Kant, unlike Schiller, does not appear to regard the grace of outer appearance as simply the expression of ease in the unintentional aspects of our intentional moral movements. Instead, he suggests a much less specific criterion that we act, perhaps with conscious effort, in a decorous seeming fashion. For we, thus, help satisfy our duty to "make the estimable nature of virtue beloved" (AA 27:706/LE 432). Of course, we have seen that in Kant's view, true virtue allows for a *type* of harmony between pleasure and duty, although not precisely the same harmony that Schiller himself envisaged. And, presumably, this harmony would manifest itself in graceful movements more along the lines that Schiller himself had in mind. Second, Kant suggests that while the idea of duty is not by itself beautiful, the idea of *virtue* – which Kant defines as "the firmly grounded disposition to fulfill one's duty strictly" – certainly is (AA 6:23). For virtue, if practiced, has beneficent consequences for both the individual and society. As Kant writes: "And if we consider the gracious consequences that virtue would spread throughout the world, should it gain entry everywhere then the morally oriented reason (through the imagination) call sensibility into play" (AA 6:23/RRT 72).

it as a *tyrannous* constraint. Indeed, as people develop their moral feelings over time, they will come to feel less and less constrained by the moral law. However, this ability to develop our moral feelings over time depends on the fact that we do not nurse a hatred for the moral law and, thus, depends on the sublimity that accompanies our contemplation of the moral law. As such, this feeling of sublimity is integral to Kant's accounts of moral psychology and moral development.

Obviously, Kant sees no reason to question his basic metaphysical dualism between practical reason and sensibility in his reply to Schiller. Rather, following Schiller's lead, Kant simply hopes to show that the moral law need not *feel* tyrannous *even though* practical reason is distinct from sensibility and rules over sensibility. To this end, Kant couches his argument primarily in terms of the positive feelings that accompany our awareness of the moral law. Indeed, the feeling of sublimity that accompanies our consideration of the moral law, rather than the joyful pleasures that accompany our fulfillment of the moral law, forms the core of Kant's response to Schiller. By focusing on the role played by this feeling in our overall moral experience, Kant avoids both Schiller's criticisms and the difficulties that plague Schiller's own account. If we focus primarily on the pleasures that Kant takes to accompany our fulfillment of the moral law and overlook Kant's own essential stress on the feeling of sublimity that accompanies our consideration of the moral law, then we do not merely mischaracterize the structure of Kant's argument but risk mimicking Schiller's own mistakes. It is imperative, then, that we listen to Kant when he wisely reminds us that a full account of moral experience must pay adequate attention to the respective roles that feeling plays in both our consideration and fulfillment of the moral law.³¹

Works by Hegel

- TW *Werke in zwanzig Bänden. Auf der Grundlage der Werke von 1832–1845 neu ediert (Theorie Werkausgabe).* Eds. E. Moldenhauer/K. Michel. Frankfurt a. M. 1971.
- ETW *Early Theological Writings.* Eds. T. M. Knox/R. Kroner. Philadelphia 1975.
- PR *Elements of the Philosophy of Right.* Eds. A. Wood/H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge 1991.

Works by Kant

- AA *Gesammelte Schriften.* Eds. Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften/Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin/Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Berlin 1900 ff..
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