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The Beautiful Soul and the Autocratic Agent: Schiller's and Kant's 'Children of the House'

ANNE MARGARET BAXLEY*

STUDENTS OF THE *GROUNDWORK OF THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS* are invariably surprised when Kant denies that the beneficent action of the sympathetic person, who finds inner satisfaction in helping his fellow human beings, displays moral worth. They are generally bewildered when he claims that it is only later, when this once sympathetically inclined philanthropist is overcome by grief and lacks the feelings of natural sympathy that previously moved him, that his beneficent action has moral worth. Does Kant really think that it is better to do one's duty in the absence of morally favorable feelings and inclinations?

Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), the great German poet, dramatist, and essayist, captured what first-time readers of *Groundwork* find so counterintuitive about Kant's analysis of the good will and the accompanying examples of action from duty in his delightful epigram:

Gladly I serve my friends, but alas I do it with pleasure.
Hence I am plagued with doubt that I am not a virtuous person.
To this the answer is given:
Surely, your only resource is to try to despise them entirely,
And then with aversion do what your duty enjoins.¹

¹ See Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Xenien* (1796). This translation is from H. J. Paton, *The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy* (London: Hutchinson, 1947), 48. "On Grace and Dignity" was first published in 1793 in the second edition of *Neu Thalia*. References to this essay are to *Schillers Werke*, Volume 4: *Schriften*, introduction by Hans Meyer and Golo Mann (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1966) and to the corresponding page in *Aesthetical and Philosophical Essays* from the *Complete Works of Friedrich Schiller* (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1902), 175–211. This is the only published English translation of "On Grace and Dignity" of which I am aware. In almost every case, I have used my own translation of the German, but have referenced the page in the existing available English translation for the convenience of those who do not read German.

References to Kant are to *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (KGS), *herausgegeben von der Deutschen (formerly Königlichen Preussischen) Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 29 volumes (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter [and predecessors], 1902–). Works cited in this paper are referred to by means of the abbreviations listed

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These joking lines, which take aim at Kant's account of the good will and moral worth on the grounds that Kant seems committed to the view that morally worthy action requires recalcitrant inclination in conflict with duty, continue to entertain readers today. But they ought not to be remembered as Schiller's philosophical contribution to our understanding of Kant's moral theory.² In his extended essay "On Grace and Dignity," Schiller sets out a more subtle and far-reaching challenge to Kant when he argues that virtue, or a well-developed moral character, involves a harmony between reason and sensibility, or duty and inclination.³ According to Schiller, sensibility must play a *constitutive* role in the truly ethical life, and this suggests that the indifferent moralist in the *Groundwork*, who does his duty from duty and without emotion and inclination, is deficient in virtue.

There is much we can learn from a careful consideration of the details of both Schiller's "corrective" to Kant's moral theory and Kant's reply to this critique, for (as this paper will argue) what is at stake in their debate are rival conceptions of the proper state of moral health for us as finite rational beings and competing political notions of the ideal form of self-governance that we ought to strive to attain.⁴ The paper is divided into three sections. Section 1 sets out Schiller's cri-

below. The English translations are referred to immediately following the reference to the volume and page of the German text. Translations of passages from Kant's *Vorarbeiten zur Religion* (KGS 23) and the Vigilantius lecture notes on ethics (KGS 27) are my own.

Gr *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (KGS 4). *Groundwork of The Metaphysics of Morals in Practical Philosophy*, Mary J. Gregor, ed. and trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

KprV *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (KGS 5). *Critique of Practical Reason in Practical Philosophy*, Mary J. Gregor, ed. and trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

KU *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* (KGS 5). *Critique of Judgment*, Werner Pluhar, trans. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987).

MS *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* (KGS 6). *The Metaphysics of Morals in Practical Philosophy*, Mary J. Gregor, ed. and trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Rel *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (KGS 6). *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Allen Wood and George di Giovanni, eds. and trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

² Kant does not think that action from duty must be done in the absence of inclination or that it requires contra-moral inclination, because he allows that action from duty (*aus Pflicht*) can be accompanied by inclination (*mit Neigung*). Interestingly, Schiller himself acknowledges that Kant is not guilty of the absurd view expressed in his epigram. In "On Grace and Dignity," Schiller explains that Kant simply thinks that it is only when inclination is in opposition to, rather than in accord with, morality that we can be "completely sure" that inclination is not interfering with the determination of the will by reason (169; 205). While H. J. Paton is often credited with making this point, it is original to Schiller.

³ For some recent discussions of the Kant-Schiller debate, see Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 180–4; Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 335–93; Dieter Henrich, "Das Prinzip der kantischen Ethik," *Philosophische Rundschau* 2 (1954–5), 29–34; G. Felicitas Munzel, *Kant's Conception of Moral Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 300–3; Hans Reiner, *Duty and Inclination* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), 41–51; and Andreas Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung: Hegels Moralitätskritik im Lichte seiner Fichte-Rezeption* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), 157.

⁴ As I will argue, despite the conciliatory tone between Kant and Schiller in their exchange, there is a real disagreement in substance between them. Among recent commentators, Henry Allison, Dieter Henrich, Felicitas Munzel, Hans Reiner, and Andreas Wildt agree that there is a substantial disagreement between the two concerning the proper relationship between sensibility and pure practical reason. I take this general point to be correct, although I disagree with some of the particular conclusions each of these commentators makes, either about how best to characterize Schiller's position or about Kant's considered view. Guyer, in *Kant and the Experience of Freedom*, expresses reservations

tique of Kant's rationalism, arguing that what underlies Schiller's view is the idea that a fully-developed moral character is one in which moralized inclination works hand in hand with reason to bring about morally good ends. Section 2 examines the relevant passages across the Kantian corpus and explains that Kant's considered response to Schiller is that moral health for merely finite rational beings consists in the *autocracy* of pure practical reason over inclination, as opposed to the harmony of the two. The concluding section 3 of the paper addresses two systematic concerns their debate raises.

I. SCHILLER'S CHALLENGE: VIRTUE REQUIRES THE HARMONY OF SENSIBILITY AND REASON

In "On Grace and Dignity," Schiller insists that he is in "perfect agreement" with the basics or fundamentals of Kant's ethics (169; 205). What he finds problematic is the manner in which Kant presents his rationalist moral theory. While Schiller offers little analysis of the Kantian doctrines with which he claims to be of one

about whether we should understand Schiller as offering a critique of Kant's rejection of sensibility from moral worth (351–6). Guyer offers two reasons for doubting that Schiller's conception of grace is intended as a radical critique of Kant's rationalist moral theory. First, he insists that Schiller's ideal of grace is not explicitly a combination of principle and inclination. Rather, Schiller arrives at this conception of grace by distinguishing between the architectonic, physical beauty of a human body, which is a natural phenomenon, and the beauty expressed in the voluntary movements of a human being, which can be seen as "*the sensible expression of a concept of reason*" effective in the agency of the person (351). This grace expressed in an individual's voluntary movements expresses her rational agency and is thus an object of approbation. Second, according to Guyer, the requirement of grace is a compound requirement arising from both our demand for moral worth and an independent demand for beauty. Guyer goes on to argue that Schiller in fact does not deny Kant's view that purely moral worth rests in reason alone; he simply argues "that we demand more of agents than moral worth alone, that we have an aesthetic interest in beauty in general, and in particular an aesthetic interest in harmony, which includes the harmony between the agent's principles and outward appearance which is manifested in grace" (352).

In reply to Guyer's first point, it is true that Schiller begins his essay with a discussion of grace as a moveable beauty manifest in voluntary movements, and only in those voluntary movements that express some sentiment of the moral order. This ideal of beauty is exhibited in persons in whom sensibility and reason are united, and is realized in voluntary movements when they give the impression of grace. Thus, Schiller *begins* his essay by conceiving of an ideal existence that is not strictly inspired by ethics. Nevertheless, Schiller clearly moves from this account of grace inspired by the Greek fable into a discussion of a particular ideal ethical existence that we ought to strive to attain, one he understands as contrasting with Kant's conception of dignity and as constituting moral perfection. As for Guyer's second point, it may be true that there is an independent aesthetic demand for beauty that grounds the requirement for grace; the relevant issue, though, is that there is in fact a moral ground for requiring grace. The latter alone warrants reading Schiller as offering a critique of Kant from the ethical point of view. Finally, there is one sense in which Guyer is correct in claiming that Schiller does not reject Kant's view that moral worth in the strict sense rests on reason alone and not inclination. As we will see, Schiller appears to equate the dignity of practical reason with moral worth. But again, the relevant issue is the very one Guyer goes on to note, which is that Schiller argues that we demand more of agents than moral worth alone. We demand grace, which signifies a fuller conception of character or virtue. These same considerations should move us to reject Vorländer's and Kühnemann's view that Schiller provides a supplement to Kant's ethics from the point of view of aesthetics without attacking anything fundamental about Kant's moral theory. See Karl Vorländer, "Ethischer Rigorismus und sittliche Schönheit," *Philosophische Monatshefte* 30 (1894), repr. in *Kant, Schiller, Goethe* (Leipzig, 1923) and Eugen Kühnemann, introduction to *Schillers Philosophische Schriften und Gedichte*, 3rd ed., Kühnemann, ed. (Leipzig, 1922). Thus, I am in agreement with Reiner, who also explicitly rejects the notion that Schiller is merely highlighting the aesthetical deficiencies of Kant's view (op. cit., 10 and 41).

mind, he specifically mentions Kant's rejection of hedonism and critique of eudaimonism, and he praises Kant for combating the current corruption in moral theory by presenting the moral law once and for all in its purity. On this score, Schiller argues that Kant was correct to ground the moral law in reason alone and to insist that morality requires obedience to law only, never instincts (*Triebe*). Finally, Schiller claims to embrace Kant's view that the precepts of morality are the ones we impose on ourselves as rational beings, which means that the essence of morality consists in autonomy and freedom. This agreement on matters of principle aside, Schiller explains that he finds Kant's presentation of these doctrines troublesome, because Kant leaves us with the harsh impression that inclination is "a very suspicious companion, and pleasure a dangerous auxiliary for moral determinations" (169; 205). Schiller expresses what he finds deficient in Kant's mode of presentation in the following passage to which Kant will later respond in the famous footnote in *Religion*:

In Kantian moral philosophy the idea of duty is delivered with a severity that frightens away all the Graces, and that could easily tempt a weak understanding to seek moral perfection along the path of a gloomy and monkish ascetic. (169; 205)

Schiller believes that Kant himself is in part responsible for this impression, given the way Kant, as the "Draco" of his time, has strictly opposed the two principles acting on the human will.⁵ Nevertheless, he thinks this picture can be corrected by "trying to uphold the claims of sensibility, which are completely repudiated in the realm of pure reason and in moral legislation, in the realm of appearance and in the actual discharge of moral duty" (169; 205). In terms of Schiller's governing metaphor, this emphasis on the proper role of the sensuous side of human nature within the moral realm will allow us to see how dignity (*Würde*) is complemented and perfected by grace (*Anmut*).

In a crucial passage that marks the transition within the essay from his poetic discussion of the Greek fable about grace to the critique of Kant's rationalism, Schiller explains that we can conceive of three different relations we can have with ourselves, three ways our rational and sensible natures can relate to one another. He claims that one of these relations in particular best suits us in the sensible world and that its expression constitutes the beautiful.⁶ On the first model, a human being governs herself according to her rational nature by silencing her sensible nature. Here reason has mastery over obstinate inclinations, which must be repressed. Schiller likens this relation between the two parts of the soul to a monarchy, "where strict surveillance of the ruler holds in hand all free movements" (168; 204). On the second model, a human being subjects her rational nature to her sensible nature, and obeys the necessity of nature. In this case, one is governed by instinct, and where instinct reigns, Schiller says, a human being has completely abandoned her independence. This relation between the two parts

⁵ Schiller's analysis is that Kant was pressed to present the contrast between pure practical reason and sensibility in an extreme and violent manner because of the perverse materialism that was pervasive in his time (171-2; 207-8).

⁶ Schiller says that grace is a "moveable beauty" met with only in one's voluntary movements, and only in those voluntary movements that express some sentiment of the moral order (142, 144; 176, 178).

of the soul is portrayed as an "ochlocracy," where citizens refuse to obey their legitimate sovereign (168; 204). Schiller considers both of these relations to be undesirable: the first amounts to legal oppression; the second amounts to anarchy; and each is incompatible with beauty. In contradistinction to these two models of self-government, Schiller sets out what he holds to be the ideal relation between reason and sensibility. On this preferred third model, reason and sensibility, duty and inclination, are in harmony, and "a human being is in agreement with himself" (167; 202).

Schiller's further analysis of why this agreement model is the one to which we should aspire is illuminating and intuitive. He explains that, since a human being is a rational *as well as* a sensible creature, the moral good cannot involve the sacrifice of the sensible part of oneself. Rather, we are obliged not to separate that which nature has joined, and should never found the triumph of one part of ourselves "over the oppression (*Unterdrückung*) of the other" (170; 206). On Schiller's view, then, moral perfection is realized in the *association* of inclination and moral conduct, not in the *renunciation* of inclination in the service of duty. In a passage summarizing this idea that the proper state of moral health for us involves cultivating inclinations to work toward our moral ends so that inclinations no longer provide resistance to the will, but are actively engaged in making effective our morally good choices, Schiller claims:

It is only when he gathers, so to speak, *his entire humanity* together, and his way of thinking (*Denkart*) in morals becomes the result of the united action of both principles, when morality *has become to him a second nature*, it is then only that it is secure; for, as long as the moral mind still employs force, then natural impulse must still have the power to resist it. The enemy that is merely overturned can rise up again, but the enemy *reconciled* is truly vanquished. (170; 206)

A person who has cultivated this genuine harmony between reason and sensibility and fully integrated her two natures is a beautiful soul (*schöne Seele*), and grace (*Anmut*) is the expression of this harmony. Schiller refers to those who have reached this ideal moral state as "children of the house" whom he contrasts with mere "servants" thereof. A child of the house is not at risk of finding discord between her inclinations and moral conduct. As a result, she need not consult reason for guidance every time before she acts, and can "abandon herself with a certain security to instinct" (173; 209). Because of this immunity to the possibility of disagreement between reason and inclination, Schiller argues that the imperatival form of the moral law, which may be necessary for a mere servant of the house, is not merely unnecessary, but inappropriate, for a child of the house.⁷

⁷ See 172; 208. Schiller says that the imperatival form of the moral law has the "appearance of a foreign law" through which reason tyrannizes over the sensuous side of the self. While impure inclinations can conflict with virtue, Schiller insists that we ought not to cast a suspicious eye toward disinterested affect "in the noble breast." His diagnosis of Kant's mistake here is that Kant was forced to present the moral law in all its saintliness to the eyes of a degraded century that had erred in relaxing the law of reason. To this end, Kant went too far in exaggerating its harshness and turned the fulfillment of duty into a kind of servitude. Schiller's basic point, then, is that while an impure will must be constrained by the moral law, a pure will naturally acts in accordance with the law, and so is not bound by the concept of duty. However, this criticism of the imperatival form of the moral law is both conceptually independent of the criticism of Kant's moral psychology and ill-conceived. In the first place, it is not entailed by the critique of Kant's moral psychology, because Kant's view about the imperatival

It is important to keep in mind that Schiller explicitly conceives of this state of moral perfection in terms of the notion of character, or *virtue*, which is distinct from particular virtues and particular moral actions.⁸ The idea that possessing a virtuous character involves a harmony between reason and sensibility, such that morality becomes “a second nature,” leads Schiller to insist that we have, in effect, a duty to establish this agreement between reason and sensibility. We are not only permitted to accord duty with pleasure, but “ought to obey reason with a sentiment of joy” (170; 206). Consequently, Schiller defines virtue as “nothing other than an inclination for duty,” and warns, “unless obedience to reason is a source of pleasure, it cannot become an object of inclination” (170, 169; 206, 204).

Three aspects of Schiller’s view should be highlighted. First, when Schiller claims that the proper relationship between reason and sensibility is a harmony between the two, he means that sensibility must actively participate in moral decisions. This agreement cannot be the result of reason subduing unruly affective and conative states, or avoiding a conflict by extirpating these states, because, for Schiller, virtue requires affective and conative states that are directed toward duty and effective in bringing about morally right action. Insofar as Schiller insists that inclination must play a constitutive role in moral action, his conception of virtue bears remarkable similarity to Aristotle’s conception of virtue as a condition in which the nonrational part of the soul that can obey reason does so and harmonizes positively with rational choice.⁹

Next, in the second part of his essay, entitled “Dignity,” Schiller informs us that this preferred agreement model is an ideal to be approximated, as opposed to a concrete goal fully realizable. In his words:

It is true that a human being has been set the task of promoting a sincere accord between his two natures, of being always a harmonious whole, and of acting with his whole harmonious humanity. But this beauty of character, the ripest fruit of humanity, is merely an idea with which he can strive to conform with constant vigilance, but which, for all his efforts, he can never fully realize. (175; 211–2)

form of the moral law is a claim about the nature and ground of moral obligation, as opposed to a psychological claim about how acting from duty *feels*. Moreover, granting positive moral significance to sensibility in the ethical life is perfectly compatible with the thesis that moral requirements take the form of categorical imperatives for the finite rational will. Secondly, Schiller’s rejection of the imperative form of the moral law seems misguided because of what Schiller himself says in the second part of his essay (“Dignity”), when he concedes that some inclinations do not harmonize with reason and therefore must be ruled. Since Schiller indicates that when recalcitrant inclinations provide resistance to the will, we must be constrained to act in accordance with the law, it would seem that the imperative form of moral requirements would be necessary on Schiller’s view as well.

⁸ Schiller puts the point nicely when he claims, “A human being is not intended merely to perform single moral actions, but to be a moral being” (169; 206).

⁹ In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains that virtue is the condition in which the nonrational part of the soul that can obey reason does so and *agrees* with rational choice (EN 1102b14–28). On his view, practical choice involves correct decision as well as appropriate desires, which means that neither desire nor reason is sufficient on its own; both are necessary features in moral choice. First, for Aristotle, virtue is not just a cognitive state consisting in the correct decision. The correct decision must be effective, and this requires modification of affective and conative states (EN 1103a15–1105b18). Second, as the distinction between mere continence and virtue reveals, virtue does not consist simply in overcoming or subduing unruly appetites and emotions that counter or oppose reason. Appetites and emotions must be trained to harmonize and agree with correct choice. Third, this harmonization does not just consist in pruning unruly affective or conative states by weakening or extirpating them, because virtue actually requires certain positive affective states (e.g., feelings and motivations).

Such harmony can never be fully achieved, despite all our strivings, because inevitably some of our inclinations will conflict with morality. When inclination provides resistance to the law, inclination cannot act freely, but must be restricted and heed the commands of reason. Schiller says that when one's rational nature needs to have the upper hand and restrain instinct, as it must when contra-moral inclination attempts to act "first," one's conduct possesses dignity, not grace. Moral beauty is not found here, for an action is beautiful only insofar as inclination has taken part in it. Under these non-ideal conditions (where inclination must be constrained), one's soul is sublime, and one's action possesses moral grandeur (*moralische Größe*).

Finally, Schiller explains that, although we demand of moral beings more than dignity, or the autonomy of the rational over the sensible side of the self, virtue does not exclude dignity altogether. The picture set forth in "Grace" seems to be that virtue requires the third relation of the two parts of the soul, which is directly juxtaposed to the first relation, according to which reason is the master over sensibility. Yet, Schiller qualifies this picture in "Dignity." As he puts it here: "Generally, what is demanded of virtue is not properly speaking dignity, but grace" (183; 220; emphasis mine). The concept of dignity, as we have already seen, entails that inclinations oppose reason, which they must ultimately obey. Hence, where there is no force (recalcitrant inclinations) to be resisted, Schiller tells us that dignity is "ridiculous," and where there ought not to be opposition, dignity is "contemptible" (183; 220). For precisely this reason, Schiller concedes that, at least at first glance, virtue does not appear compatible with dignity, "which is only the expression of a struggle between the two natures, and as such renders visible either the particular impotence of the individual, or the impotence common to the species" (183; 220). Nevertheless, Schiller proceeds to claim that dignity is implicitly contained in the idea of virtue, in that virtue presupposes that we rule over our instincts.¹⁰ In an effort to render these seemingly incompatible claims consistent, Schiller explains:

In general, the law prevailing here is that a human being ought to do with grace everything that he can accomplish within his nature (*Menschheit*) and with dignity everything for which he must go beyond his nature (*Menschheit*) to accomplish. (184; 221)

In short, we aim for virtue, and, in our best moments, where reason and sensibility are perfectly in accord, our actions express grace, and we appear beautiful. But since some states connected with our sensible nature will inevitably conflict with reason, virtue is an ideal that is simply not fully attainable for us, and so we cannot always be graceful. Because of our "impotence," at times the relation we have with ourselves must be the repression model, according to which reason has the upper hand over inclination. Here our actions express only the dignity of practical reason, uncomplemented by grace, and we appear sublime.¹¹

¹⁰ It is not exactly clear how this statement that virtue presupposes self-mastery in accordance with reason can be rendered wholly consistent with the notion that virtue requires harmony between the two parts of the self, to the extent that the child of the house is inclined to duty and can abandon herself to inclination without the guidance of reason.

¹¹ The aim of this paper on the relation between Schiller and Kant is narrow in the sense that its treatment of Schiller is confined to "On Grace and Dignity." Here I do not consider the ways in which

2. KANT'S RESPONSE: VIRTUE INVOLVES THE AUTOCRACY
OF PURE PRACTICAL REASON OVER INCLINATION

There are certain obstacles we face as we attempt to assess Kant's response to Schiller's challenge. Kant's own words on the subject are contained in the long footnote in *Religion* (Rel 6: 23–4n; 18–9), in the unpublished notes found in the *Vorarbeiten* to that work (23: 98–101), and in a brief discussion in the Vigilantius lecture notes (27: 489–91; 258–9).¹² The problem, however, is that these various passages do not provide us with a straightforward, definitive statement of Kant's position in this debate. Although the remarks in the *Religion* footnote are quite conciliatory in tone, certain substantive claims Kant makes reveal that he does not embrace Schiller's view about the proper relationship between reason and sensibility within the virtuous character. Moreover, in the part of the *Vorarbeiten* discussion that did not make it into the published text, as well as in the Vigilantius notes, Kant explicitly rejects Schiller's conception of virtue as "nothing other than an inclination to duty." The strategy here, then, will be to consider these passages and then to supplement Kant's own words on the subject with the doctrines that account for the true nature and extent of their disagreement.

In the *Religion* footnote, Kant begins by stressing agreement that the difference between Schiller and himself is one of presentation, not principle. All that is needed, he claims, is for them to make themselves clear to one another. Kant then explains that in emphasizing the dignity of the idea of duty, he has distinguished it completely from grace. But this, he says, is due to the fact that "the idea of duty involves absolute necessity, to which grace stands in direct contradiction" and that "when duty alone is the theme, they keep a respectful distance" (Rel 6: 24n; 19). The distinction Kant is drawing here between the nature and grounds of moral obligation and the aesthetic side of morality is perfectly in keeping with claims Schiller himself has made in "On Grace and Dignity."¹³ Schiller acknowl-

Schiller himself pursues this issue about the tension between the ideals of grace and dignity and the question of which is more relevant to virtue in *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794/5) or in the essay "On the Sublime" (1801), where he discusses the relation of the beautiful and the sublime. As a result, the conclusion about Schiller's challenge arrived at on the basis of "On Grace and Dignity" sets the agenda for exploring further a major issue that Schiller goes on to develop in interesting ways in some of his later writings.

¹² In addition, Kant's remarks in *The Doctrine of Virtue* under the heading "Ethical Ascetics" clearly seem to be written with Schiller's critique in mind. See MS 6: 484–6; 587–8. There is a very limited correspondence between Schiller and Kant, but unfortunately it does not contribute to our understanding of their dispute. Details of the Schiller-Kant correspondence can be found in Arnulf Zweig's biographical sketch of Schiller in Immanuel Kant, *Correspondence*, Arnulf Zweig, ed. and trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 607–9. Kant's only letter to Schiller can be found on 497–8 of this volume.

¹³ In general, "aesthetic" for Kant refers to sensibility. With respect to the practical philosophy, "aesthetic" refers to feeling as a mode of sense. This is made clear in Kant's explication of the term in both the second *Critique* and the *Metaphysics of Morals*. The Aesthetic in the second *Critique* investigates the relation of pure practical reason and its principle to sensibility, and considers how we, as sensible subjects, are affected by these principles (KpV 5: 90; 212). In the Introduction to the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant says that while an aesthetic of morals is not a part of the metaphysics of morals proper, it is "a subjective presentation of it in which the feelings that accompany the constraining power of the moral law (e.g., disgust, horror, etc., which make moral aversion sensible) make its efficacy felt, in order to get the better of merely sensible incitements" (MS 6: 406; 534).

edges that duty requires obedience to the dictates of pure practical reason and that moral requirements oblige us unconditionally.¹⁴ Furthermore, since Schiller states that dignity expresses the constraint of the will by pure practical reason in the absence of inclination, or even in the face of countervailing inclination, he would have no quarrel with Kant's claim that dignity contrasts starkly with grace.

After emphasizing that the "aesthetic aspect" of morality, which involves the feelings that accompany virtue, must be abstracted from altogether when we are concerned with the idea that moral obligation requires obedience to reason, Kant goes on to concede that Schiller's graces arise with respect to this aesthetic character of virtue. He says:

But *virtue*, i.e., the firmly grounded disposition to fulfill one's duty strictly, is also *beneficent* in its consequences, more so than anything that nature or art might afford in the world. Hence the glorious picture of humanity, as portrayed in the figure of virtue, does indeed allow the attendance of the *graces*. (Rel 6: 24n; 48n)

Further, he claims:

Now, if we ask, What is the *aesthetic* constitution, the *temperament*, so to speak of *virtue*: is it courageous and hence *joyous*, or weighted down by fear and dejected? an answer is hardly necessary. This latter slavish frame of mind can never be found without a hidden *hatred* of the law, whereas a heart joyous in the *compliance* with its duty (not just complacency in the *recognition* of it) is the sign of genuineness in virtuous disposition, even where *piety* is concerned, which does not consist in the self-torment of a remorseful sinner . . . but in the firm resolve to improve in the future. This resolve, encouraged by good progress, must needs effect a joyous frame of mind, without which one is never certain of having *gained* also a *love* for the good, i.e., of having incorporated the good into one's maxim. (Rel 6: 23n; 49n)

Despite Kant's expressed agreement that the issue between Schiller and himself is merely one of rhetoric or mode of presentation, not doctrine, this extended passage clearly suggests otherwise. To begin with, Kant explicitly distances himself from Schiller when he emphasizes his conception of virtue as a "firmly grounded disposition to fulfill one's duty strictly." Strictly fulfilling one's duty, on Kant's view, amounts to doing one's duty from the motive of duty, not from emotion or inclination. Whereas Schiller envisions our greatest perfection as a state in which we are inclined, without obligation, toward the moral law, or freely disposed to act in accordance with moral laws without constraint, Kant insists that our greatest perfection consists in a disposition in which duty is the sufficient motive for moral action (MS 6: 392; 523).

Similar considerations apply to Kant's characterization of having attained a love for the good as having incorporated it into one's maxim. This, undoubtedly, is not what Schiller has in mind with his picture of the beautiful soul in whom reason "has made inclination pass to the side of duty" so that one's sensuous nature aims at and is engaged in bringing about the very same ends morality requires. Schiller thinks that, within the virtuous character, sensibility need not consult the moral law prior to acting. Indeed, he insists that it would be regrettable if

¹⁴ Schiller acknowledges this point when he says: "The lawgiving of nature through instinct can conflict with the lawgiving of reason according to principles when instinct, to satisfy itself, demands an action which disgusts moral principle. In this case, it is a duty of the will to make the exigencies of nature give way to the claim of reason. While the laws of nature bind us only conditionally, the laws of reason bind us absolutely and unconditionally" (177; 213).

the will were obliged to take advice of pure practical reason in order to guide itself and that the person who abandons herself with a certain security to inclination, without having to fear being led astray, is “more estimable” (173; 209). This picture of virtue as a love of the good, i.e., an immediate inclination to want to do what morality would counsel (were it consulted), is wholly at odds with Kant’s account of virtue as “the strength of a human being’s maxims in fulfilling his duty” (MS 6: 394; 524).

Moreover, even Kant’s concession about the aesthetic character of virtue bespeaks a significantly qualified acceptance of Schiller’s view that dignity is supplemented by grace in the virtuous character. On the one hand, this characterization of the proper temperament of virtue seems promising. Kant grants that our emotional condition reflects our ultimate choice of maxims of practical reason. Whereas a begrudging attitude reflects an inner hatred of the law, a joyous or pleasant disposition reflects a firm commitment to duty. This, in turn, might suggest that the sorrowful moralist and the indifferent moralist Kant describes in his examples of action from duty at the outset of *Groundwork* would not qualify as virtuous on his full account of character, for these moralists seem, at best, complacent in the recognition of duty, but certainly not happy or cheerful in the performance thereof.¹⁵ Nevertheless, this claim that morally favorable feelings characterize the temperament of the virtuous person and that a pleasant, willing demeanor reflects her underlying commitment to duty does not satisfy Schiller’s demand that a sufficiently integrated personality is one in which reason and sensibility are “united in action.” Indeed Kant’s claim that a joyful frame of mind and a happy heart is a “sign” or “mark” (*Zeichen*) of a virtuous disposition might indicate that feeling and inclination are merely ornamental for virtue, and his concession that the virtuous person will *exhibit* the qualities that Schiller regards as essential to moral life may suggest that the development of moral sentiment is merely a *natural concomitant* of possessing strength of will to do one’s duty from duty, and *not a necessary ingredient* within the virtuous character.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Gr 4: 398; 54. Kant describes a person whose sense of natural sympathy has been extinguished because of his own grief. While this sorrowful moralist is no longer sympathetic to the plight of others, he “tears himself out of this deadly insensibility” when no inclination “excites” him, and continues to help others, in this case, “simply from duty” (Gr 4: 398; 54). According to Kant, it is at this point that his action first has “genuine moral worth” (*echten moralischen Wert*) (Gr 4: 398; 54). Kant then asks us to envision what might be called a naturally unsympathetic man, a man whom Kant says nature has not properly fashioned as a friend of humanity. This man is cold in temperament and indifferent to the sufferings of others, which Kant imagines may be the result of the fact that he is endowed with patience and endurance with respect to his own sufferings, and therefore expects the same from others. Kant then asks whether this indifferent moralist would find in himself “a source from which to give himself a far higher worth than what a mere good-natured temperament might have?” (Gr 4: 398; 54). Kant replies: “By all means! It is just then that the worth of character comes out, which is moral and incomparably the highest, namely that he is beneficent not from inclination but from duty” (Gr 4: 398–9; 54). These seem to be moralists in whom a sense of duty either is sufficient in the absence of natural emotions and inclinations or must overcome countervailing emotions and inclinations, and it might appear that there is something lacking or deficient in this kind of character.

¹⁶ The same point applies to Kant’s explanation that “the glorious picture of humanity,” or the ideal image of virtue, which he often claims is personified by the sage, does “allow the attendance of the graces.” This claim that it is appropriate that we associate the graces with our conception of the perfectly virtuous character amounts, at most, to the claim that these states *accompany* a perfectly

Next, we turn to Kant's brief discussion in the *Vorarbeiten* to *Religion*, which enables us to clarify further the extent of his disagreement with Schiller. Once again we find Kant expressing the belief that he and Schiller agree on the most important matters and that their dispute concerns the presentation of principle. "People who are in agreement," Kant says, "often cannot understand one another because of their words" (23: 99). In the notebook, Kant has copied the two sentences from "On Grace and Dignity" in which Schiller claims that we ought to combine pleasure and duty and ought not to sacrifice the sensible part of ourselves to the rational. In reply, Kant reiterates the *Religion* view about the proper comportment of the genuinely virtuous disposition by agreeing that one should cultivate and maintain virtue with a cheerful disposition and that obedience to duty with a sullen disposition and under the tyrannical yoke of a Carthusean mood signifies a hatred of the law. Yet what Kant proceeds to say in response to a further question Schiller poses, is wholly critical of Schiller's corrective. Schiller asks:

If the sensible nature within morals were always only the oppressed party, and never the cooperating party, how could it lend all the passion of its feelings to a triumph, which is celebrated over itself?

Kant indicates that there is a way in which these two aspects of our nature can be brought in line with one another, and his account of how this harmony is established contrasts sharply with the picture Schiller has in mind. Kant explains:

The sensible nature must not work as an ally, but rather must be restrained under the despotism of the categorical imperative, which fights against the obstacle of the anarchy of natural inclinations. The abolition of this anarchy [under the rule of the categorical imperative] alone ensures their thoroughgoing harmony. (23: 100)

As this rejoinder makes perfectly clear, Kant insists that the accord we can and ought to establish between sensibility and reason is the outcome of reason controlling and limiting the influence on the will of natural inclinations. In other words, Kant understands virtue as such in terms of a moral capacity for self-governance, which he characterizes in *The Doctrine of Virtue* as well as the various versions of his lectures on ethics as an *autocracy* of pure practical reason over inclinations (MS 383; 515). Of course, this ideal model of the soul, in which inclination stands under the discipline of reason, appears to be identical to the repressive model of the soul that Schiller portrays as a monarchy. Whereas Schiller thinks that true agreement requires reconciling one's sensible and rational natures so that inclination is duty's ally and equal partner, Kant insists that this reconcilia-

virtuous character, not that they are *required* for virtue. Additionally, we might note that, in the first portion of the extended passage under consideration from the *Religion* footnote, Kant appears to connect the graces with the beneficent results of virtue. Rather than agreeing that inclination is a constituent in virtuous conduct, Kant's suggestion is that, since virtue accomplishes more good in the world than does nature and art, we associate the graces with the picture that personifies the virtuous character. Kant offers no elaboration of this idea, but it seems to coincide with a claim he makes elsewhere regarding the universal favor with which virtue meets. Thus, although Kant repeatedly warns against recommending virtue in terms of the advantages it may offer, and insists instead that virtue is its own reward, he grants that, as an independent matter, virtue is beneficent in what it accomplishes and is therefore pleasing to us. Schiller would certainly agree with this, but this connection between the graces and virtue finding universal favor does not amount to a requirement that inclination must be present in a practical sense, that is, motivationally effective, if moral conduct is to possess grace.

tion or agreement is secured by reason attaining mastery over natural inclination, which is duty's potential foe.¹⁷

Yet for Kant, this is a mutually defining opposition, a struggle without which there would be no combatants. Thus immediately after insisting that sensibility must be restrained by reason, he conjectures that if all human beings were to obey the moral law gladly and willingly, there would be no such thing as duty. Instead, the law would appear to us as it does to the divine or holy will, that is, as a rule of reason on which we would act, but by which we would not be bound. The upshot of this is that:

If therefore there are duties, if the moral principle in us is a commandment for us (categorical imperative), then we must consider ourselves on that account as necessitated without pleasure and our inclination. (23: 100)

Kant then concludes his discussion by insisting that a duty to do something gladly and from inclination (*gern und aus Neigung*) is a contradiction.¹⁸

Kant's claim that we cannot have a duty to do something gladly and from inclination, which is what Schiller demands when he argues that we are obligated to obey reason with a sentiment of joy, can be interpreted in two ways. On the face of it, it amounts to the straightforward claim that one cannot be obligated to feel.

¹⁷ One possible objection to this characterization of Schiller's view is that the claim that he thinks reason and sensibility are *equal partners* might not seem precisely correct. Clearly Schiller thinks that inclination must play a constitutive role in virtue, but one might argue that that alone does not imply that duty and inclination are equal partners. In the virtuous person, inclination must harmonize with her conception of duty, but if Schiller does not claim that her conception of duty must harmonize with inclination, then the sort of harmony sought involves an asymmetrical dependence, which is not bi-directional. This asymmetrical dependence (henceforth referred to as AD) thesis says that inclination must conform to duty and that duty must not conform to inclination. Admittedly, it is true that, in Schiller's virtuous person, duty and inclination are not two independent paths to the same goal because inclinations have been moralized; thus, we should not view inclinations here as "unconstrained by reason" in the sense of not having been cultivated according to reason. Perhaps we can account for this feature of Schiller's view by keeping in mind that the kind of inclination that plays an equal role to duty in moral conduct is *moralized* inclination. It is also true that Schiller could maintain that inclination is always subordinate to duty if he were consistent in thinking that AD is the relationship that must hold between inclination and duty. The problem, however, is that some of the claims Schiller makes about abandoning oneself to inclination so that inclination, not reason, is guiding the will indicate that he does not hold fast to the AD thesis, which is what Kant would demand. That is, not only must inclination conform to duty (and not vice versa), but it must also be subordinate to duty so that duty is what ultimately determines action.

¹⁸ Kant offers no explanation for this, but he goes on to distinguish between doing something dutiful with pleasure (*pflichtmässig mit Lust*) and doing something from duty with pleasure (*mit Lust aus Pflicht*). Presumably the former is possible, while the latter is not. Doing something dutiful with pleasure amounts to doing what duty requires from inclination, in which case one's action conforms to duty, but has no moral worth. But the claim that doing something from duty with pleasure is contradictory is perplexing on the face of it. It would seem that doing something from duty with pleasure amounts to acting from the duty motive *accompanied* by pleasure, which is perfectly coherent and compatible with Kant's account of moral worth. Perhaps the independent clause that follows Kant's rejection of the possibility of acting from the duty motive with pleasure (*mit Lust aus Pflicht*) helps to clarify what Kant has in mind here. He proceeds to dismiss a scenario in which one acts according to a motive of sensible inclination that supplements the defect of obedience toward the law of duty, and insists that the morality of an action consists in duty being not merely the rule, but also directly the motive, for action. These claims pursuant to the rejection of acting from duty with pleasure suggest that Kant understands that to be tantamount to needing pleasure to supplement the motive of duty, which of its own is not sufficient to determine the will.

The idea that one cannot love on command is at the heart of Kant's analysis of the nature of the love that we ought to have for others (the love that is commanded in the Scriptures). In the *Groundwork*, the second *Critique*, and *The Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant insists that the love that we are obligated to have for others is not a mere feeling or inclination, but rather beneficence from duty.¹⁹ The former is "pathological" love, located in the propensity of feeling, whereas the latter is "practical" love, located in the will and in principles of action. The basic point, which seems intuitively correct, is that I cannot love on command where love is merely a feeling. But while I cannot be commanded to feel a particular way toward others, I can be required to adopt a maxim of beneficence, that is, I can be constrained to make it my policy to do what I can, within my means and consistent with my other ends, to promote the happiness of others without expecting anything in return.²⁰

It is important to note, though, that there is a deeper point behind Kant's claim that a duty to do something gladly and from inclination is a *contradiction*. Kant's analysis of practical love in *The Doctrine of Virtue* makes perspicuous this more fundamental point:

Love is a matter of feeling, not of willing, and I cannot love because I will to, still less because I ought to (I cannot be constrained to love); so a duty to love is an absurdity. But benevolence (*amor benevolentiae*), as conduct, can be subject to a law of duty . . . every duty is necessitation, a constraint, even if this is to be self-constraint in accordance with a law. What is done from constraint, however, is not done from love. (MS 6: 401; 530)

As the latter portion of this passage reveals, Kant holds that the constraint tied up with the concept of duty is incompatible with being wholly inclined toward duty, for the very concept of duty involves the necessitation of the will by pure practical reason. A consequence of this thesis that the moment of constraint is a necessary feature of obligation is that we obey the law reluctantly (*ungern*). This reluctance, which characterizes our disposition in relation to the law, is thus directly at odds with having something like a ready willingness or thoroughgoing liking toward duty, which explains why Kant rejects as *contradictory* the notion of having a duty to do something gladly and from inclination.²¹ What Kant rules out as impossible, then, is Schiller's conception of having an inclination to duty where this means taking pleasure in duty insofar as it is one's duty. While I can have inclination directed toward duty where inclination is *independent* of having my will determined by pure practical reason, and, while I can find satisfaction in having acted in accordance with duty, where satisfaction is always *consequent to*, and never *antecedent of*, the fulfillment of obligation, I cannot have an inclination to duty where this means that feeling in favor of duty *replaces* respect for the law.

In short, Kant's remarks in the *Vorarbeiten* discussion bring to the fore his thesis that the constraint implicit in the concept of duty necessarily defines our relation

¹⁹ See Gr 4: 399; 55, KpV 5: 83; 207, and MS 6: 401; 530.

²⁰ The duty of beneficence is a duty of virtue, so the type of constraint by which we are bound to this end is self-constraint.

²¹ This point is made explicit in Kant's analysis of why a duty to adopt the end of our own happiness would be self-contradictory. Kant explains: "What everyone already wants unavoidably, of his own accord, does not come under the concept of *duty*, which is *constraint* to an end adopted reluctantly. Hence it is self-contradictory to say that he is *under obligation* to promote his own happiness with all his powers" (MS 6: 386; 517).

to the law, which means that Schiller's suggestion that this moment of constraint can be cast off within the truly virtuous character (in actions expressing grace) is misguided. In a very important discussion from the second *Critique*, Kant spells out in detail his view that our relation to the moral law is always mediated by the concept of duty and respect for the law, and he criticizes attempts to locate the truly moral disposition in anything other than a firm commitment to duty from duty as species of "moral enthusiasm." We will therefore turn briefly to Kant's discussion of moral enthusiasm in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, for it sheds further light on what Kant finds wrong with Schiller's account of the truly virtuous disposition.²²

While there are different doctrines that Kant criticizes as morally fanatic or fantastic, in this portion of the second *Critique*, his target is any view that understands the moral incentive to be located in something "higher" than respect for the law.²³ In particular, he targets positions that understand the truly virtuous position in terms of a "ready willingness" (*bereitwillige Ergebenheit*) or "spontaneous inclination" (*freiwillige Zuneigung*) to follow the dictates of morality. On these accounts of the genuinely moral disposition, the virtuous person is not fettered by the thought of obligation or constraint: she is confirmed in goodness to the extent that she no longer experiences morality as a duty, but acts morally because it is beautiful and noble. Kant summarizes the problem with this picture as follows:

It is very beautiful to do good to human beings from love for them and from sympathetic benevolence, or to be just from love of order; but this is not yet the genuine moral maxim of our conduct, the maxim befitting our position among rational beings as *human beings*, when we presume with proud conceit, like volunteers, not to trouble ourselves about the thought of duty and, as independent of command, to want to do of our own pleasure what we think we need no command to do. We stand under a *discipline* of reason, and in all our maxims must not forget our subjection to it or withdraw anything from it or by an egotistical illusion detract anything from the authority of the law (although our own reason gives it), so as to put the determining ground of our will, even though it conforms with the law, anywhere else than in the law itself and in respect for this law. Duty and what is owed are the only names that we must give to our relation to the moral law. (KpV 5: 82; 206)

This extended passage indicates that Kant's rejection of any view that understands the ideal moral disposition as a state in which one performs one's obligations without command turns on the thesis that we are rational *human beings*, and, as such, our relation to the law is one of subjection to reason and duty. To assume that our relation to the law is not so mediated and that we might attain a state of good character in which we act in accordance with the law without constraint is to forget our status as non-holy beings, and, in effect, amounts to conflating virtue with holiness. Thus, from Kant's perspective, Schiller's view that through a moralization of inclination one's sensuous nature can pass over to the side of duty so that, in one's ideal moments, one is inclined to the good and, as a result, need not be constrained to act morally, falls under the category of moral enthusiasm.

²² Here I follow the lead of Gerold Prauss, *Kant über Freiheit als Autonomie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 247–8.

²³ At other places, Kant characterizes the following as morally fanatic or "fantastic" virtue: (1) the view that we can atone for moral failings by rituals and penance (MS 6: 485; 597–8); and (2) the view that morally trivial differences are morally significant (MS 6: 409; 536–7).

The crux of Kant's quarrel with Schiller, then, is not that an ethical cultivation of one's sensuous nature is impossible, or that inclinations, as products of nature, are not expressions of the will of the agent, which would mean that they must be excluded from an account of moral worth.²⁴ Rather, the crucial claim here is essentially a *metaphysical* one: because of our ontological status as finite, imperfect beings, there are certain limits on us, and these limits determine the ideal state of moral health we can realize.²⁵ Because we can never be altogether immune to the possibility of transgressing the moral law, our highest moral station is virtue, understood as autocracy or moral self-mastery over inclinations.²⁶

²⁴ Reiner appears to think that Kant is at odds with Schiller insofar as Kant thinks that the ethical cultivation of sensibility Schiller requires is not possible (op. cit., 49–51). Guyer suggests that the notion that inclinations are simply products of nature, not expressions of the will, is a hidden assumption at work in Kant's account of moral worth in the *Groundwork*, but one that Kant later rejects in *The Doctrine of Virtue* (Guyer, op. cit., 344).

²⁵ The basic lines of this view are laid out in Allison, op. cit., 180–4. I am in perfect agreement with Allison's reconstruction of Kant's direct response: "The essential point is that by raising the possibility for human beings of a form of morality that can dispense with the thought of obligation, Schiller is in effect forgetting our ontological status as finite, sensuously affected beings. Since our form of morality is grounded in this ontological status, its characteristic feature of constraint cannot be eliminated or overcome through the development of a good disposition or the right desires" (op. cit., 183). On my reading, however, this does not imply, as Allison at one point suggests, that inclination for Kant is merely a sign of, and not a constituent in, virtue (cf. op. cit., 182–3). In section 3 of this paper, I set out the grounds for my disagreement with Allison on this score.

²⁶ This conceptual claim about our finitude as moral subjects has a direct parallel in the theoretical philosophy, and the analogy underscores the nature of Kant's disagreement with Schiller. In the critical philosophy, Kant argues that human cognition is discursive, which means that both intuition and concepts are required for knowledge. Cognition has two essential features: data must be given and data must be conceptualized. Kant stipulates that there are certain specific conditions according to which an object can be given and according to which an object can be thought. In the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, he argues that objects must be given according to the forms of human sensibility; in the *Transcendental Analytic*, he argues that objects must be thought through the pure concepts of the understanding, or the categories. Together, these conditions determine what can count as an object for the human mind. As Allison has explained in his interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism, the implication of this thesis that there are certain epistemic conditions that determine what can count as an object for the human mind is that there are limits to our cognition. (See Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983], esp. parts 1 and 2.) In Kant's terms, we can only know objects as they appear to us, not as they are in themselves. But while discursive knowledge is the only possible kind of cognition for us, it is not the only conceivable kind of knowledge. At times, Kant contrasts the discursive or conceptual knowledge of which we are capable with the conception of an intuitive intellect. The latter is characterized as grasping its object immediately without being affected by the object and without the need for conceptualization. Thus, this intuitive intellect, which is the type of cognition that pertains to God, must be characterized as a creative one that produces its object in an act of intuition. Kant regards the conception of such an intellect as problematic, and uses it to underscore his central claim that human cognition is not the only logically possible kind of cognition, which, in turn, enables him to argue that there are particular conditions of human discursive knowledge that do not apply to things in themselves. The relevant point for us is that Kant understands this notion of an intuitive intellect as a model of cognition to which the transcendental realist appeals, and holds that, in modeling human cognition in this fashion, the transcendental realist exceeds the bounds of human reason and overlooks the limits that are imposed on us as finite intellects.

We should understand Kant to be making a parallel point in the practical philosophy in his critique of moral fanaticism and his rejection of Schiller's alternative conception of our moral perfection. The conception of moral agency that characterizes a holy will is simply the wrong normative model for us as finite imperfect beings; appealing to it, as Schiller does, as an ideal that we can actually realize, if only in our best moments, reflects a failure to grasp the limits imposed on us as practical agents. The sense of finitude that applies to us as cognizers for whom cognition is discursive sets limits

The suggestion that Kant sees Schiller as confusing virtue, the highest moral station that we can achieve, with holiness of will, an ideal in no way realizable for us at any moment, is made especially clear in Kant's brief discussion of Schiller's essay in the *Vigilantius* lecture notes, which is the final passage we will consider in our assessment of Kant's considered response to Schiller.

Within a discussion of the notion of an imperative, Kant reiterates his view that imperatives presuppose an "ought" and that the necessitation of moral imperatives implies that the action "would not have occurred from any impulse of the subject's own" (27: 489; 258). As a result, Kant insists that the very concept of an imperative is "conceivable only where contravention of moral laws is possible" (27: 489; 258). On Kant's view, then, the imperatival form of moral laws presupposes only the *capacity* for transgressing the law, not actual contra-moral inclination. Kant would therefore insist that Schiller's ideal agent, whose inclinations are properly moralized, would nonetheless experience moral laws as imperatives, because she still has the *capacity* for violating duty.²⁷

Kant then goes on to explain that if an agent were constituted so that she acted at all times without necessitation in accordance with the law, what is morally necessary would not be a duty. But this applies only to perfect beings, whose acts Kant characterizes here as "simply objectively necessary and never subjectively contingent" (27: 489; 259). Where no subjective necessitation of the will is needed, Kant insists that "there also no imperatives, no obligation, duty, virtue, ought or constraint is conceivable" (27: 489; 259). It is therefore only for finite imperfect beings like ourselves that virtue is "thinkable," for "only where necessitation is the ground [of conformity of will with the law] can we suppose, in consequence, a steadfast determination in obeying the moral laws" (27: 490; 259). It follows from this, Kant argues, that Schiller's critique is misguided. Since every obligation is associated with moral constraint, Kant claims that it is "contrary to the nature of duty to *enjoy* having duties incumbent upon one" (*gern Pflichten auf sich ruhen zu haben*), and so we cannot say, with Schiller, that the fulfillment of moral laws "also has a certain grace about it" (*daß solche auch mit einer Anmut verbunden sey*) (27: 490; 259). Yet while we must think of the law as commanding, not attracting, Kant remarks that these moral laws do not, as Schiller presumes, "demand respect in the manner of painful or despotic commands" (27: 490; 259). The virtuous person does feel pleasure, cheer, and satisfaction in response to virtuous action. But

on what we can know (what counts as an object for the human mind). Similarly, the sense of finitude that applies to us as rational beings whose wills are not in perfect accord with the moral law and who are never beyond temptation implies that we must be constrained to act as morality requires. Just as we cannot transcend these limits and cognize as God does, we cannot transcend the standpoint of duty and act morally without constraint, as if it were second nature. This analogy, I think, sheds light on Kant's claim that, "If *enthusiasm* in the most general sense is an overstepping of the bounds of human reason undertaken on principles, then moral *enthusiasm* is such an overstepping of the bounds that practical pure reason sets to humanity" (KprV 5: 85–6; 209).

²⁷ Schiller thinks that the law appears as an imperative only insofar as one actually has or is moved by contra-moral inclination. Thus, a finite rational being whose inclinations harmonize with her sense of duty does not experience the law as an imperative. On Schiller's view, then, having the capacity for contra-moral motivation is necessary, but not sufficient, for the law to appear as an imperative. The problem with this, from Kant's perspective, is that once inclination has, as Schiller puts it at one point, "taken the rudder" and is guiding the will, and a person is doing her duty gladly without obligation, how is it that reason can re-assert itself and take back this rudder when contra-moral inclination arises?

this, he argues, in no way lends confirmation to Schiller's idea that we can be inclined to duty, or that pleasure enjoins moral conduct, for the attraction we feel for the action itself after the fulfillment of duty is:

derivable, rather, from the same source as the cheer experienced on getting through work that has cost us trouble, and is evidence, rather, of the burdensomeness of duty. It is true that we can find pleasure in virtue and the contemplation of it, but only by the time, and for the reason, that we have already become equipped to fulfill duties, and it is thus easy for us to follow the prescriptions of reason; we thereby take satisfaction in our actions, and in the strengthening of our will to comply with the prescriptions of reason; we contemplate the future with a cheerful heart, and this also improves our physical condition. (27: 490; 259–60)

Here we see Kant acknowledging that we do indeed take pleasure in virtue and in contemplating virtue and that we experience satisfaction in virtuous action and in the strength of will necessary for complying with reason's commands. Yet, pleasure, cheer, and satisfaction, as Kant describes them, are all "practical," not "pathological" feelings, for they are consequent upon the determination of the will by pure practical reason. In other words, we experience these feelings as a result of having acquired autocracy, or moral strength of will over our sensible nature in accordance with pure practical reason.

Kant concludes his brief discussion on Schiller in the *Vigilantius* lectures with a claim that we should now recognize as central to his moral psychology:

It would be good if men were so perfect that they fulfilled their duties from a free impulse (*aus freiem Triebe*) without constraint (*Zwang*) and laws: but this is beyond the horizon of human nature. (27: 491; 260)

On Kant's view, what defines our status as finite rational beings is that we are sensibly affected beings with needs, who can always be tempted to take these needs as sufficient reasons to act, even when they conflict with the claims of morality. In contrast to a holy will, our will is not always in accordance with reason, and thus we have an inward reluctance to obey the law. While a holy will stands under the objective laws of pure practical reason, because of its characteristic perfect disposition, there is no subjective contingency between its will and the law and so it needs no constraint to act in conformity with the law. By contrast, because of our subjective constitution, we must always be constrained to act in conformity with the law. This entails, as Kant insists in his critique of moral enthusiasm, that for the will of every merely finite rational being, the law is "a law of *duty*, of moral necessitation and of the determination of his actions through *respect* for the law and *reverence* for his duty" (KprV 5: 82; 206).²⁸

²⁸ Kant makes this point explicit in the Introduction to the *Metaphysics of Morals*: "For us, whose choice is sensibly affected and so does not of itself conform to the pure will but often opposes it, moral laws are imperatives (commands or prohibitions) and indeed categorical (unconditional) imperatives" (MS 6: 221; 376). Similarly, in the *Groundwork*, he claims that all imperatives "are expressed by an *ought* and indicate by this the relation of an objective law of reason to a will that by its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by it (a necessitation)" (Gr 4: 413; 66). In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant says that because of the subjective character of our practical ability, the moral law takes the form of a command and obligations take the form of duties. This would not be the case, however, if we considered reason without sensibility (*viz.*, our human sensibility) (KU 5: 403–4; 286–7).

Kant's contention with Schiller, then, is that since we are never wholly immune to the possibility that there will be discord between inclination and duty, we can never dispense with the obligatory character of moral requirements. Furthermore, no matter how morally good we become, the highest stage of morality for us is virtue, where virtue is understood in terms of moral self-mastery, or the autocracy of reason over sensibility.²⁹ Given this conception of virtue, Schiller's picture that moral health consists in a thoroughgoing harmony between reason and sensibility, such that in her finest moments the beautiful soul can dispense altogether with the imperativ form of the law, is "enthusiastic" because it oversteps "the bounds that practical reason sets to humanity" (KprV 5: 85; 209). Kant might have pointed to Schiller's poetic description of the beautiful soul at the very end of his seminal essay as bespeaking this conflation of virtue with holiness, of finitude with divinity, and therefore overstepping the bounds of *our* practical reason:

It is absolute greatness itself which is reflected in grace and beauty, and satisfied in morality; it becomes the legislator itself, the *god* in us which plays with his own image in the world of sense . . . the beautiful soul knows no greater happiness than to meet the divinity (*das Heilige*) in himself or actually to see and to embrace in the world of sense his immortal friend. (188; 224–5)

In conclusion, the essential disagreement between Kant and Schiller concerns what each envisions to be the ideal state of moral health, or proper form of moral self-governance, that we can and ought to strive to attain in the ethical life. Whereas Schiller believes that it is grace that "testifies to a peaceful soul in harmony with itself and a feeling heart," Kant's reply is that it is the autocracy of pure practical reason that testifies to such peace and the cheerful heart of virtue (185; 223).

Interestingly, in the second part of his essay, Schiller appears to embrace the very ideas at work in Kant's view that virtue presupposes constraint and obligation in accordance with pure practical reason. Schiller explains that, in some instances, inclinations will not harmonize with reason; when this is true, inclinations must be ruled by reason and cannot be reason's equal partner. Given this concession that harmony is an ideal we can never fully attain, as well as Schiller's agreement that morality requires obedience to the dictates of pure practical reason (and therefore moral requirements command unconditionally), perhaps Schiller should be more skeptical about the possibility that we could ever dispense altogether with the notion of duty. Indeed, it is precisely this view that the perfect accord of our will with the moral law is something we must strive to attain (as opposed to something that is realizable through a moralization of inclination) that grounds Kant's rejection of the possibility that, as a result of the cultivation of our sensuous nature, we could get beyond the possibility of temptation, and thereby do away with the imperativ form of the moral law.³⁰

²⁹ In the Introduction to *The Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant insists that, "human morality in its highest stage can still be nothing more than duty, even if it be entirely pure (quite free from the influence of any incentive other than that of duty)" (MS 6: 383; 515).

³⁰ Indeed, Schiller himself ends up saying something along these lines in his essay "On the Sublime," where he develops in more detail an account of the compatibility of the ideals of the beautiful and the sublime. In addition, the conclusion he reaches at the end of Letter 23 in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, where he is directly struggling with the issue of how our rational and sensible natures can be brought into harmony, more closely resembles Kant's view. Thus, it is important to note

3. CRITICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS DEBATE

From what we have seen, Kant rejects as misguided the notion that through the ethical cultivation of our sensuous nature we can, in our best moments, dispense with duty and act morally without being obligated. As finite imperfect beings whose sensible nature does not conform as a rule to the dictates of morality, our relation to the moral law is one of constraint. Kant therefore dismisses Schiller's general account of virtue as a stage in which reason and sensibility are in perfect harmony, as well as the associated claims that pleasure motivates moral conduct and that virtue is "nothing beyond an inclination to duty." His alternative conception is that virtue consists in autocracy, a form of moral self-governance according to which inclination is always subordinate to duty.³¹

But here, I think, there are (at least) two main questions about which we need to think more critically. First, what does this reconstructed response—that Kantian virtue consists fundamentally in autocracy, not Schillerian harmony—really tell us about any *positive* value Kant might grant to feelings and inclinations within the ethical life? In other words, what statement about Kant's alternative view most accurately captures the role feelings and inclinations play within his full account of virtue? One conclusion we might reach, based on Kant's reply to Schiller's corrective, is that Kant grants that a well-developed sensible nature is merely a sign of a good moral character, and so he thinks that morally appropriate feelings and desires are *indicators* of a virtuous disposition. Of course, if this picture is correct, it raises doubts about the adequacy of Kant's theory of virtue, because Kant seems to reject the common view that certain feelings and desires rooted in the affective and conative side of human nature are significant, and not merely ornamental, for virtue. Fortunately, this conclusion is not necessarily entailed by Kant's reconstructed response to Schiller, and it should be resisted.

It is clear that Kant rejects the notion that feelings and inclinations replace the duty motive within the virtuous character. In addition, it seems that, for Kant, morally favorable feelings and inclinations can have, at most, a conditional worth, since they must be limited and governed by reason, or qualified by the goodness of the good will. All of this, however, is compatible with the notion that a well-developed sensible nature is a significant feature of Kant's more complete account of virtue and that feelings and inclinations cultivated in accordance with duty are constituent ingredients within virtue. In short, we should not be moved to say, as both Henrich and Allison do in their respective analyses of the Kant-Schiller dispute, that pro-moral feelings and inclinations for Kant are merely a sign of, but not a constituent in, a virtuous character, simply because Kant rejects Schiller's idea that inclination must play a constitutive motivational role within morally good conduct.

that Schiller does have more to say on this topic in some of his later writings and that the view he develops appears to put him more in line with Kant. (I thank an anonymous referee at the *Journal* for constructive suggestions about Schiller's view and for pointing me in the direction of these other texts, which clearly bear on the issue with which I am concerned.)

³¹ Guyer puts this point nicely when he explains: "Human beings achieve their unique moral value by elevating themselves above their inclinations, which is not to say by eradicating their inclinations but by ruling them through reason" (op. cit., 350).

Henrich correctly argues that Kant not only allows for the possibility of cultivating one's sensible nature according to reason, but also insists on its cultivation. But whereas a positive relationship between sensibility and reason is the essential feature of Schiller's position, which means that a well-developed sensibility is constitutive (in a motivational sense) of virtue, Henrich argues that for Kant our relationship to the moral law is one that is always mediated by respect, and this means that a well-developed sensibility is merely a mark of a virtuous character, not an ingredient in moral motivation.³² Allison claims, similarly, that the issue between Kant and Schiller concerns "a radically different conception of the state of moral health."³³ For Kant, this is one in which "reason controls and limits (but not really suppresses) the inclinations," whereas for Schiller, it is "one in which the two coexist in perfect harmony, with each directed toward the same end." Allison, like Henrich, concludes that a well-developed sensible nature for Kant is merely a sign, and not constitutive, of virtue.³⁴

Granted, Kant does use the term "mark" in the *Religion* footnote to describe the way in which Schiller's graces accompany the aesthetic character of virtue. Nonetheless, it should by now be clear that Kant's direct response to Schiller requires a good deal of interpretation and supplementation by other doctrines. It is far from obvious that this is the best statement of Kant's general position about the role of sensibility within virtue, and there are compelling reasons for doubting its adequacy.

In the first place, we might note that the Allison-Henrich line assumes that there are two alternatives available to Kant. That is, feelings and inclinations can be partially constitutive of virtue, in the sense that the virtuous person is motivated from moralized feelings and inclinations, *or* such feelings and inclinations can be a mere sign or mark of virtue. This is clearly a false dichotomy, for it overlooks the fact that there are other ways in which feelings and inclinations cultivated in accordance with reason can be a constituent ingredient within the moral psychology of virtue.³⁵ A well-developed sensible nature can be an important component in the virtuous character even if inclination is not supposed to replace duty as a motive for action, and even if inclination must always be subordinate to duty.

Moreover, the Allison-Henrich view is hard to square with the positive claims Kant makes in *The Doctrine of Virtue* about certain feelings to which he attributes significant moral value. Kant insists that moral feeling, conscience, love of one's neighbor, and respect for oneself are moral endowments, which he characterizes

³² See Henrich, "Das Prinzip der kantischen Ethik," *Philosophische Rundschau* 2 (1954-5), 29-34.

³³ Allison's discussion is in *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, 181-3.

³⁴ To be fair, although Allison makes this suggestion within the context of his analysis of Kant's response to Schiller, elsewhere, in both *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, ch. 9, and *Idealism and Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ch. 8, he claims that sympathy is morally facilitating in enabling us to fulfill the duty of beneficence, and this, of course, goes beyond saying that a well-developed sensible nature is merely a sign or mark of virtue.

³⁵ The claim that a well-developed sensible nature is a constituent within the virtuous character amounts to the claim that it is an important or significant element within virtue, which is not to say that a well-developed sensible nature is constitutive of virtue. But it is also important to realize that feelings and desires can be partially constitutive of virtue without being constitutive in a motivational sense.

as predispositions of the mind for being affected by the concepts of duty (MS 6: 399; 528). In Kant's terms, these are "antecedent predispositions on the side of feeling," that he thinks we all have, and it is in virtue of them that we can be put under obligation. These practical feelings are products of practical reason, and are necessary conditions of moral agency, and thus we would not be moral agents at all without them. The importance Kant ascribes to these feelings cuts against the notion that they merely accompany virtue, and the "mere mark" view is unable to account for the significant role these states play within virtue.

Finally, this view should strike us as puzzling when we consider that an important part of Kant's theory of virtue is to set out an account of the particular virtues that we ought to cultivate. Kant thinks that there are a host of virtues associated with our two obligatory ends, the perfection of ourselves and the happiness of others, and these various virtues involve at least some conative and affective aspects, even if the inclinations and feelings that accompany the virtues are subordinate to principles. In his discussion of the duties we have toward others, Kant divides the duty of practical love into duties of beneficence, gratitude, and sympathy (MS 6: 452–8; 571–6). The general duty of love here (philanthropy) is practical love, which Kant stipulates is rooted in the will; it is understood as active benevolence and involves maxims of action, not mere feeling. Nevertheless, Kant holds that part of what is involved in having a firm commitment to our particular duties of love is the cultivation of certain sensuously based feelings that are instrumental in fulfilling these duties. For example, in relation to our duty of beneficence, Kant suggests that we have an indirect duty to cultivate sympathetic feelings and "to make use of them as so many means to sympathy based on moral principles and the feeling appropriate to them" (MS 6: 457; 575). Further, he characterizes sympathy as "one of the impulses that nature has implanted in us to do what the representation of duty alone would not accomplish" (MS 6: 457; 576). The cultivation of our sympathetic feelings (which includes an obligation to visit scenes of human misery such as hospitals and debtors' prisons) increases our sensitivity to human suffering and is thereby morally facilitating insofar as sympathy renders us better able to fulfill the duty of beneficence. This indicates that Kant holds that some states rooted in our sensible nature (and cultivated in accordance with duty) are ingredients in good character, which, again, seems incompatible with the Allison-Henrich view that such states could at most be a mere adornment of virtue. In sum, while Kant's conception of moral health as autocracy cannot be identified with the particular brand of harmony Schiller envisions, he does think that affective and conative states that are cultivated and regulated by a proper conception of the moral law are important elements, and play a role, in the ethical life.

Apart from this issue about Kant interpretation, there is one further question the Kant-Schiller exchange should move us to address. Kant has grounds for rejecting some of the more specific claims Schiller makes in "On Grace and Dignity," such as the claims that moral laws do not take the form of imperatives for the virtuous person, that virtue itself is an inclination to duty, and that pleasure should motivate morally right action. Nevertheless, a larger question remains about what we want to endorse as the ideal relationship between reason and sensibility

within the truly ethical life. Schiller's charge is that we should aim for a sufficiently integrated personality in which the different features of our humanity are united as one and that we secure this agreement by reconciling our sensible nature with our rational nature. And we might think Schiller's particular recipe for securing this harmony is preferable to Kant's alternative picture, which appears to secure agreement by demanding compliance of the governed, and thereby seems to deny initiative to the governed.

Since the use of political metaphors and the analogy between political governance and moral self-governance are such prominent features of the debate between Kant and Schiller, we might conclude by raising one central challenge to Kant's conception of virtue that is motivated by Schiller's critique in "On Grace and Dignity." One issue about autocracy is that, even when this form of government takes a benign form, as it does in Plato's *Republic*, it can still be objectionable, because even though benign autocracy is concerned with the interests of the governed, it denies them initiative. Perhaps there is a similar worry about Kant's conception of moral self-governance as autocracy denying initiative to sensibility. As Schiller sees it, what was ideal about Greek conceptions of virtue is that the Greeks were concerned with securing *positive agreement* of the governed, whereas Kant seems concerned only with securing *rule over* the governed. Thus, while Kant agrees with Schiller's claim that "A human being is not intended merely to perform single moral actions, but to be a moral being," we might want to think more critically about whether striving to become autocratic is the most satisfactory account of what it is to become a moral being (169; 206).³⁶

³⁶ I would like to thank Henry Allison, David Brink, Wayne Martin, and Iain Thomson for the very helpful comments and suggestions they made on previous versions of this material. I am also grateful for the critical feedback I received on this material from members of the philosophy departments at Amherst College, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and Virginia Tech.