

ARTICLE

Kant on Moral Feeling and Respect

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Abstract

Although in his earlier ethical writings Kant explains the concept of moral feeling, inherited from the British sentimentalists, as a peculiar feeling of respect for the moral law that functions as an incentive for moral actions, the Doctrine of Virtue seems to add complexity to the issue. There, Kant discusses two similar aesthetic predispositions, moral feeling and respect, whose relationship to the feeling of respect is far from clear. This article offers a much needed elucidation of the relationship between these three concepts. In the first part, I show that Kant, in the writings before the Doctrine of Virtue, transforms the British sentimentalists' construal of moral feeling into that of the feeling of respect as the sole moral incentive. In the second part, I argue that, although in the Doctrine of Virtue Kant distinguishes, for a specific reason, between the aesthetic predisposition of moral feeling and that of respect, they are both ultimately identical to the feeling of respect. The conclusion is that nothing of substance changes between Kant's earlier thinking and his views in the Doctrine of Virtue; for Kant there is just one feeling that properly deserves the name of moral feeling, the feeling of respect.

Keywords: moral feeling; feeling of respect; self-esteem; aesthetic predispositions; moral contentment; moral incentive

1. Introduction

As widely acknowledged, Kant's conception of 'moral feeling' as our capacity to experience morality by means of our sensibility was inherited from the British sentimentalists, notably from Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. However, as frequently occurs in Kant, his adopted conception (not of his own making) underwent a series of modifications, such that his conception of moral feeling differs significantly from the original traceable to the British sentimentalists. Moral feeling, as Kant states in the *Groundwork*, cannot be 'the standard of our moral judging' as 'some have falsely proclaimed'; 'it must rather be viewed as the subjective effect that the law exercises on the will' (*GMS*, 4: 460).¹ Accordingly, Kant treats moral feeling in the *Groundwork* as a special feeling of respect (*Achtung*) 'which signifies merely the consciousness of the subordination of my will to a law' (4: 401n.). In the *Critique of Practical Reason* (where he fully develops in chapter 3 what was only briefly mentioned in the *Groundwork*), he also identifies moral feeling with the feeling of respect (e.g. *KpV*, 5: 76), as he does a little later in

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the *Critique of Judgement* (e.g. *KU*, 5: 267), and again in the *Religion* he states that the ‘susceptibility to simple respect for the moral law within us would thus be the moral feeling’ (*RGV*, 6: 27). However, four years later, in section XII of the introduction to the second part of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, the Doctrine of Virtue, dedicated to the so-called ‘preliminary aesthetic predispositions of the mind’s receptivity to concepts of duty as such’² – moral feeling, moral conscience, love of man (*Menschenliebe*) and respect (*Achtung*) – Kant appears to forgo the identity position in treating each of respect and moral feeling in separate subsections (as though distinct concepts demanding individual attention). What should we make of this apparent retreat from the identity view, and the apparently new way of dealing with the issue? Is moral feeling in the later Kant something different from the feeling of respect? What does it consist in? And is there indeed a genuine shift in Kant’s thinking; or rather, should we be moved to reinterpret the previous writings in light of the Doctrine of Virtue?

One might tend to simply dismiss the issue as a pseudo-problem because, as some assume, the feeling of respect from the previous writings corresponds to the aesthetic predisposition of moral feeling while the aesthetic predisposition of respect is in fact referred to a feeling of *self-respect* and is therefore a different, new concept.³ Indeed, in the enumeration of all the aesthetic predispositions at the beginning of section XII of the Introduction to the Doctrine of Virtue Kant calls it ‘respect for *oneself* (self-esteem)’ (*MS*, 6: 399; emphasis shifted) and then in the short description dedicated exclusively to this aesthetic predisposition also speaks of ‘respect for [one’s] own being’ (6: 403). However, if we interpret the aesthetic predisposition of respect as an entirely different concept, we face a different problem: how should we interpret it? What is it and what is its function within Kant’s philosophy? The description of the predisposition is very brief and incomplete, and the interpretation would be too speculative. In any case, if one carefully reads Kant’s description, it is clear that the aesthetic predisposition of respect shares with the feeling of respect from the previous writings at least some of its main characteristics and that it cannot be so simply reduced to self-esteem or respect for one’s own being.⁴ Despite growing interest in Kant’s views on the role of feelings in ethics, Kantian scholars remain largely silent about this interpretative problem. They often refer to some of the aesthetic predispositions, in order to emphasize the importance of feelings in Kant’s ethics,⁵ sometimes they also quote from Kant’s description of the aesthetic predispositions of moral feeling or respect to support their corresponding interpretations of the feeling of respect,⁶ but they usually do not address the underlying problem of the relationship between these three concepts.⁷ Now, it is clear (and the confusion in the secondary literature adduced in n. 3 corroborates this) that a resolution of this problem is much needed. We can only elaborate Kant’s full conception of the role of feelings in ethics if we first know whether (and if so, how) Kant in his later writings modified his doctrine of the feeling of respect and added other moral feeling(s). In this article, I propose a solution. To this end, in section 2 I briefly sketch the conception of moral feeling in the tradition predating Kant, and Kant’s own interpretation of it as the feeling of respect in the main ethical writings before the Doctrine of Virtue. In that section, I also address the question of the status of moral contentment (*moralische Zufriedenheit*), which follows from doing one’s duty, because Kant in the *Critique of Practical Reason* interestingly also refers to it as ‘moral feeling’. In section 3 I turn to moral feeling and respect as aesthetic predispositions, explaining their relation to Kant’s prior conception of moral feeling, that is, to the feeling of respect.

2. Kant's adoption of 'moral feeling'

The term 'moral feeling' (properly 'moral sense', but translated into German as *moralisches Gefühl*)⁸ was introduced by Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury.⁹ Shaftesbury was speaking about a special 'sense of right and wrong' that 'consist[s] in a real antipathy or aversion to injustice or wrong and in a real affection or love towards equity and right for its own sake and on the account of its own natural beauty and worth' (Shaftesbury [1711] 2000: 178). Nevertheless, Shaftesbury never provided a detailed conception and it was another philosopher who elaborated and disseminated this idea. The philosopher who most developed the theory of moral sense and undoubtedly was the greatest influence on Kant's thinking on the subject was Francis Hutcheson. On Hutcheson's account, we have a special sense that enables us to distinguish between good and evil. Still, interpreters diverge in its description. The common interpretation is that moral approbation and disapprobation, based on the moral sense that we experience in relation to morally good and bad actions, is a peculiar pleasure and displeasure. For example, when we perceive an unselfish, virtuous action (performed either by others or ourselves), it pleases us and we consider it virtuous on the basis of this pleasure. Although such an interpretation seems to be inaccurate,¹⁰ this was apparently how Kant himself interpreted it, and that is our focus too. Kant, for example, in the university lectures taught probably in the winter semester 1782/83 states that 'nobody has explained the system of moral feeling more than Hutcheson. He says one can perceive many characteristics of objects through feeling (*Gefühl*) that one does not know through the mere understanding' (V-PP/Powalski, 27: 108; my translation). Nevertheless, as Kant also clarifies in a reflection dating from around 1772, 'we can even approve or disapprove of something without any perceptible feeling on our part, and we can experience abhorrent actions as worthy ones. The abhorrence itself will be finally generated through practice' (Refl 6760, 19: 152; my translation); as a result, as Kant concludes in another contemporaneous reflection, 'moral feeling succeeds the moral concept, but does not produce it; all the less can it replace it, rather it presupposes it' (Refl 6757, 19: 150).

Moral feeling as moral incentive

Kantian criticism of moral sense theorists is amply discussed, and for reasons of space I will not expand on this well-known topic.¹¹ What is important for my purposes here is that Kant, even in his mature philosophy, acknowledges that there really is something like moral feeling, but thinks that the moral sense theorists were mistaken about its proper origin and role. As Kant states in the already cited passage from the *Groundwork*, moral feeling cannot be 'the standard of our moral judging' as 'some have falsely proclaimed'; 'it must rather be viewed as the subjective effect that the law exercises on the will' (*GMS*, 4: 460). However, this 'subjective effect' is a crucial element to note in Kant's philosophy, because it serves as an incentive for moral action. Kant put the matter very clearly already in his university lectures from the mid-1770s:

The moral feeling is a capacity for being affected by a moral judgement. When I judge by understanding that the action is morally good, I am still very far from doing this action of which I have so judged. But if this judgement moves me to

do the action, that is the moral feeling. (V-Mo/Mron, 27: 1428; see also V-Mo/Collins, 27: 274–5 for a similar passage)

We find the same claims in Kant's own reflections from the same period (or perhaps even earlier, from the late 1760s): 'The moral feeling is not an original feeling'; instead 'it rests on a necessary inner law' (Refl 6598, 19: 103) and 'is the capacity to be moved by the moral as an incentive' (Refl 769, 15: 336). And, in my opinion, Kant maintains this view on moral motivation by means of feeling in his 'critical' writings as well.¹² Although many Kantian scholars deny it, the feeling of respect he first introduces in the *Groundwork* (1785) as the equivalent of the moral feeling of British sentimentalists serves as an incentive to moral actions precisely because it is a *feeling*.¹³ As Kant says in the *Groundwork*, 'in order to will that for which reason alone prescribes the ought to a sensuously affected rational being, a capacity of reason to induce a feeling of pleasure or of delight in fulfilling duty is admittedly needed, and hence a causality of reason to determine sensibility in conformity with its principles' (GMS, 4: 460). That is also the reason why Kant treats the feeling of respect in the third chapter (the so-called incentive chapter) of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In the previous chapters he had already shown that pure reason is practical, in the third chapter it becomes necessary to show how it occurs. Kant thus explains what the moral law 'effects (or, to put it better, must effect) in the mind insofar as it is an incentive' (KpV, 5: 72). Accordingly, he describes a special feeling that 'does not serve for appraising actions and certainly not for grounding the objective moral law itself, but only as an incentive to make this law its maxim' (5: 76). Note that if the feeling of respect were a mere byproduct of the determination of the will, as some interpreters hold, Kant would not have discussed it so extensively in the *Critique*. He discusses it so extensively there precisely because he has to show how pure reason is practical, and for that it is necessary to invoke feeling.¹⁴ Therefore, we may conclude that, in his mature philosophy, Kant considers moral feeling, as he did in the mid-1770s, as being essential to moral motivation. Moral feeling is not the objective principle of judging, as Hutcheson and others thought, but it is the only moral incentive.

Moral feeling as moral contentment

Before we proceed to the Doctrine of Virtue, we ought to address an important terminological issue. In Remark II of Theorem IV of the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant also refers to the *moral contentment* (*moralische Zufriedenheit*)¹⁵ which follows from doing one's duty as 'moral feeling':

[A]s the human will is by virtue of its freedom immediately determinable by the moral law, I certainly do not deny that frequent practice in conformity with this determining ground can finally produce subjectively a feeling of contentment with oneself (*Zufriedenheit mit sich selbst*); on the contrary, to establish and to cultivate this feeling, which alone deserves to be called moral feeling strictly speaking (*eigentlich*), itself belongs to duty; but the concept of duty cannot be derived from it. (KpV, 5: 38)

This passage poses a problem for the interpretation of Kant's conception of moral feeling. Is it necessary to revise the interpretation of Kant's theses about moral feeling in light of this explanation? In my view, it would be difficult to justify a sudden change of terminology at this point (as far I know, this is the only place in his critical writings before the *Metaphysics of Morals* where Kant calls moral feeling anything other than the feeling of respect). Moreover, Kant also clarifies elsewhere in the *Critique* that moral contentment is not an actual feeling, but 'only a negative satisfaction (*Wohlgefallen*) with one's existence, in which one is conscious of needing nothing' (*KpV*, 5: 117). And finally, Kant says here that this is the *only* feeling that properly 'deserves to be called moral feeling', while it is quite clear that the feeling of respect is also a moral feeling. Therefore, we should look at the passage in its context and see whether there is any reason to connect the two feelings (i.e. moral contentment and the feeling of respect); perhaps Kant is ultimately referring here to the feeling of respect.

Kant argues in the second Remark against taking happiness as the determining ground (*Bestimmungsgrund*) of the will and in this connection also mentions the theory of moral feeling, or more precisely of moral sense:

More refined [than the pretense of those who make the principle of one's own happiness the determining ground of the will], though equally untrue, is the pretense of those who assume a certain special moral sense which, instead of reason, determines the moral law and in accordance with which consciousness of virtue is immediately connected with contentment (*Zufriedenheit*) and pleasure, and consciousness of vice with mental unease and pain, so that everything is still reduced to desire for one's own happiness. (*KpV*, 5: 38)

This passage is thought-provoking. Although Hutcheson was trying to argue with his theory of moral sense precisely *against* such a view,¹⁶ Kant interestingly interprets it as a variant of eudaimonism: because doing one's duty produces pleasure, one does one's duty because of the pleasure it promises.¹⁷ In such a scheme, the moral feeling that works as the determining ground of the will is the pleasure that results from the dutiful action (i.e. moral contentment). However, that is impossible; Kant explains that 'one cannot feel such contentment . . . prior to cognition of obligation and cannot make it the basis of the latter' (*KpV*, 5: 38). Similarly Kant argues against Epicurus (and 'many morally well-disposed men of this day who nevertheless do not reflect deeply enough on their principles': 5: 116) further on in the Critical Resolution of the Antinomy of Practical Reason. However, in that further passage he also connects moral contentment to the feeling of respect. According to Kant, Epicurus, but implicitly also the moral sense theorists (after all, Kant puts them both under the same heading in the table of the possible material principles of morality, see 5: 40), could consider the pleasure that results from dutiful action (i.e. moral contentment) as the determining ground of the will just because when they were acting morally they felt the feeling of respect and considered it erroneously an effect of that pleasure. They succumbed to 'the illusion that takes the subjective side of the intellectual determinability of the will [by a pure rational law] as something aesthetic and the effect of a special sensible feeling (for an intellectual feeling would be a contradiction)' (5: 117).¹⁸

To return to the terminological issue at stake, when Kant refers to moral contentment as ‘moral feeling’, he is ultimately thinking of the feeling of respect because it is precisely this (as ‘an impulse to activity’: *KpV*, 5: 116.34) that is, according to Kant, wrongly considered by Epicurus (and moral sense theorists) as being produced by moral contentment. Indeed, Kant in the passage also speaks of the duty to cultivate this moral feeling (5: 38.36–8); in the parallel passage on Epicurus he speaks of the duty to cultivate *the feeling of respect* (5: 117.7–10).¹⁹ Moreover, moral contentment could in fact be considered an aspect of the feeling of respect as described in the second *Critique*. When Kant speaks in the incentive chapter about self-approbation (*Selbstbilligung*) as attributable to a person who ‘cognized himself as determined solely by the law and without any interest, and now becomes conscious of an altogether different interest subjectively produced by the law, which is purely practical and *free*’ (5: 81), the description comes to strongly resemble moral contentment. As we already said, moral contentment is ‘a negative satisfaction (*Wohlgefallen*) in one’s existence, in which one is conscious of needing nothing’ (5: 117). Inclinations (even good ones), Kant explains, ‘are always burdensome to a rational being’, because they ‘change, grow with the indulgence one allows them, and always leave behind a still greater void than one had thought to fill’ (5: 118). Therefore, if one acts independently of inclinations (acts for the sake of the moral law), it ‘produce[s] a negative satisfaction (*Wohlgefallen*) with one’s state, that is, *contentment*, which in its source is contentment with one’s person’; ‘freedom itself becomes in this way (namely, indirectly) capable of an enjoyment’ (5: 118). Thus, it seems that moral contentment is an aspect of the complex feeling of respect as described in the incentive chapter. Although, strictly speaking, moral contentment and the feeling of respect are two different phenomena (the feeling of respect is the incentive to act morally, felt even by ‘the boldest evildoer’ (5: 80) who does not act according to the moral law, moral contentment arises only when one cognizes oneself as determined ‘solely by the law and without any interest’ (5: 81)), Kant treats them both in the incentive chapter without distinguishing them carefully – he simply describes the broad and complex phenomenon that the moral law produces in our mind.²⁰ So, when Kant speaks in the second Remark about the feeling ‘which alone deserves to be called moral feeling strictly speaking’ (5: 38.37–8), he is referring, in my opinion, to the feeling of respect.²¹ His use of the terminology is not very accurate, but the inaccuracy can hardly be said to occur for the first and only time. We may take it therefore that Kant at least until the Doctrine of Virtue uses the term ‘moral feeling’ to describe the feeling that cannot work as the objective principle of judging (as Hutcheson and others thought), but which is the only moral incentive. In sum, at least until the Doctrine of Virtue moral feeling seems to be identical to the feeling of respect.

3. Moral feeling as aesthetic predisposition

Due clarification of Kant’s reinterpretation of the concept of moral feeling out of the way, we come to the question of primary interest: how should we interpret the *aesthetic predisposition* of moral feeling? Is it the incentive for moral actions identical to the feeling of respect? And if so, how should we interpret the aesthetic predisposition of respect? Let us begin with the explanation of the term ‘aesthetic predisposition’. Kant states that the preliminary aesthetic concepts ‘are natural predispositions of the

mind (*Gemüthsanlagen*) (*praedispositio*) for being affected by concepts of duty, antecedent predispositions on the side of *feeling* (*ästhetisch*)' (*MS*, 6: 399). These aesthetic preliminary concepts are, therefore, innate capacities of the human being that enable 'receptivity to the concepts of duty' (6: 399.2–3) on the side of feeling.²² In general, they are capacities to experience feelings caused by our consciousness of the moral law. However, at least in the case of the predispositions of moral feeling and respect, Kant refers in their description not to the capacities themselves, but directly to the feelings (see also Falduto 2014: 237–8 for the distinction between the proper capacity or faculty to experience moral feeling and the realized feeling as a 'sensible state' (*ästhetischer Zustand*) (6: 399.24)).²³ What matter are the sensible states of feeling, although it is obvious that without the predisposition (i.e. the capacity) to experience them they would not be possible. Therefore, in the following (but not e.g. at the beginning of the next paragraph), I will sometimes for the sake of brevity write 'predisposition of moral feeling' (or respect), when I mean the sensible state of moral feeling (or respect) experienced by means of the predisposition.

Let us now turn to the predisposition of moral feeling. Like all the other predispositions, by virtue of being a natural predisposition, i.e. an innate capacity, it is 'such that anyone lacking [it] could have no duty to acquire [it]' (*MS*, 6: 399). However, in this case, duty to acquire it would also be absurd because it is a subjective *condition* of duties. There cannot be a duty to have moral feeling, 'since any consciousness of obligation depends upon moral feeling [as a sensible state] to make us aware of the constraint present in the thought of duty' (*MS*, 6: 399).²⁴ This is important because it shows clearly that moral feeling as aesthetic predisposition cannot be the contentment that follows from doing one's duty, also called (as we saw above) by Kant 'moral feeling', although rather by mistake.²⁵ The aesthetic predisposition of moral feeling cannot be a mere epiphenomenon of our consciousness of duty; it is intrinsic to that consciousness. In this regard, Kant's description of moral feeling as an aesthetic predisposition resembles quite closely the characterization of the feeling of respect in the second *Critique*. Kant states in the incentive chapter:

The consciousness of a *free* submission of the will to the law, yet as combined with an unavoidable constraint put on all inclinations though only by one's own reason, is respect for the law. . . . An action that is objectively practical in accordance with this law, with the exclusion of every determining ground of inclination, is called *duty*, which, because of that exclusion, contains in its concept practical *necessitation*, that is, determination to actions however *reluctantly* they may be done. The feeling that arises from consciousness of this necessitation is not pathological, as would be a feeling produced by an object of the senses, but practical only, that is, possible through a preceding (objective) determination of the will and causality of reason. (*KpV*, 5: 80)

As a law dictated by our own reason, the moral law has the peculiar characteristic that whenever we recognize it, in virtue of our nature as both rational and sensible beings, we recognize it as a law that we should obey unconditionally despite our inclinations, which quite often go against it (as Kant notes, 'in human beings all good is defective': *KpV*, 5: 77). That is what Kant calls 'necessitation' (*Nöthigung*), and to be conscious of such necessitation just is to *respect* the law. That is why Kant states

in the *Groundwork* in his note on the feeling of respect that ‘what I recognize immediately as a law for myself I recognize with respect, which signifies merely the consciousness of the subordination of my will to a law, without mediation of other influences on my sense’ (GMS, 4: 401n.). Therefore, when Kant later in the *Doctrine of Virtue* writes that ‘any consciousness of obligation depends upon moral feeling to make us aware of the constraint present in the thought of duty’ (MS, 6: 399), there is every reason to think that he is speaking about the feeling of respect. Moreover, it is not hard to find additional evidence to support this hypothesis. After laying out his initial definition of the aesthetic predisposition of moral feeling (to which I return below), Kant goes on to assert that:

Every determination of choice proceeds *from* the representation of a possible action to the deed through the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, taking an interest in the action or its effect. The state of *feeling* (*der ästhetische Zustand*) here (the way in which inner sense is affected) is either *sensibly dependent* (*pathologisch*) or *moral*. The former is that feeling which precedes the representation of the law; the latter, that which can only follow upon it. (MS, 6: 399)

Kant makes it clear that every determination of choice proceeds through the feeling of pleasure or displeasure *to the deed* (*zur Tat*), which means that he is not concerned with a mere consequence of good action. He is here saying that feeling is necessary for action to take place. As sensible beings, we need feelings that prompt the action. However, two types of feeling need to be distinguished: one that precedes the representation of the moral law and is caused by a prior object; and one that follows from the representation of the law and is caused by reason itself. The former is a pathological feeling; the latter is a moral feeling, i.e. the feeling of respect, associated with the corresponding aesthetic predisposition. Only action that takes place by means of moral feeling can be moral.

This interpretation is further confirmed at the very end of the section dedicated to moral feeling. There Kant argues against the British sentimentalists that we cannot understand moral feeling as ‘sense, for by the word “sense” is usually understood a theoretical capacity for perception directed toward an object, whereas moral feeling (like pleasure and displeasure in general) is something merely subjective, which yields no knowledge’ (MS, 6: 400), and then adds:

We no more have a special sense for what is (morally) good and evil than for truth, although people often speak in this fashion. We have, rather, a susceptibility on the part of free choice (*Willkür*) to be moved by pure practical reason (and its law), and this is what we call moral feeling. (MS, 6: 400)

For Kant, our capacity of choice (*Willkür*) requires feeling to be moved by pure practical reason. As it happens, this formulation recalls Kant’s earlier descriptions of moral feeling as moral incentive, discussed in the foregoing. But even if we restrict our focus to the *Doctrine of Virtue*, this interpretation perfectly fits another statement occurring in the same paragraph, which directly follows the claim that moral feeling is not a sense directed to an object but something merely subjective. Kant states:

No man is entirely without moral feeling, for were he completely lacking in susceptibility to it he would be morally dead; and if (to speak in medical terms) the moral vital force could no longer excite this feeling, then humanity would dissolve (by chemical laws, as it were) into mere animality and be mixed irretrievably with the mass of other natural beings. (MS, 6: 400)

Without the capacity to excite moral feeling, a person could not act according to the moral law, because this feeling is necessary in order to move the capacity of choice. In sum, the description of the aesthetic predisposition of moral feeling agrees with that of the feeling of respect encountered in the writings before the Doctrine of Virtue. And since it describes moral feeling as a feeling necessary for moral action to take place, we can say that it additionally confirms the affectivist interpretation of respect in Kant's mature moral philosophy which interprets it precisely in this way and not as a mere epiphenomenon (see n. 13).

The 'moral law vs. particular action' objection

Now, according to some interpreters, moral feeling in the Doctrine of Virtue cannot be the same as the feeling of respect because they are related to different referents. As Geiger puts it, 'moral feeling is not defined as related to consciousness of any moral law, but to the representation of the particular action enjoined by a specific moral duty: "Every determination of choice proceeds from the representation of a possible action to the deed through the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, taking an interest in the action or its effect" (MS, 6: 399)' (Geiger 2011: 293; see also Vigo 2020: 93–4). Accordingly, moral feeling, related to a particular action, cannot be the same thing as the feeling of respect, whose object is 'solely the law, the one that we impose upon ourselves and yet as in itself necessary', as Kant explains in the *Groundwork* (GMS, 4: 401n.). Yet I respond that this objection is not justified, because usually we do not distinguish the moral law independently of particular circumstances. Consider, for instance, Kant's first example in the *Groundwork* intended to illustrate the first formulation of the categorical imperative:

Someone who feels weary of life because of a series of ills that has grown to the point of hopelessness is still so far in possession of his reason that he can ask himself whether it is not perhaps contrary to a duty to oneself to take one's own life. Now he tries out: whether the maxim of his action could possibly become a universal law of nature. (GMS, 4: 421–2)

It is clear that consciousness of the moral law arises from a particular situation. As human beings, we act according to maxims, and that means that we see our actions as actions of a certain type. When we carry out an action, we subsume it under a corresponding maxim; in this case, along the lines of 'from self-love I make it my principle to shorten my life if, when protracted any longer, it threatens more ill than it promises agreeableness' (GMS, 4: 422). Accordingly, if we have 'enough conscience to ask' (GMS, 4: 422), we come to see whether this maxim is universalizable.²⁶ Only in this way are we confronted with the moral law, and the feeling of respect, as the only moral incentive for the corresponding *particular action*, arises in due course.²⁷ The

object of the feeling of respect is certainly the universal moral law, but the moral law related to a particular situation.²⁸ The passage from the Doctrine of Virtue used by Geiger to argue that moral feeling and the feeling of respect are related to different referents (i.e. *MS*, 6: 399.21–3) fits perfectly into this scenario. We represent a possible particular action, come to see whether its maxim is universalizable and – possibly – through the feeling of respect take an interest in the action. In fact, many interpreters cite it precisely to support their view that the moral incentive is the feeling of respect qua feeling (see e.g. McCarty 1994: 424; Morrisson 2008: 141; Ludwig 2014: 134–5 or Cohen 2015: 10ff.). Therefore, in my view, this objection is not justified because there is in fact no difference in this regard between the feeling of respect related to the moral law and moral feeling as pleasure connected to ‘the representation of a possible action’ (6: 399; emphasis added): the feeling of respect is also connected to ‘the representation of a possible action’ because it is the incentive for that action.

The ‘pleasure and displeasure’ objection

Another objection to the interpretation I propose arises from a different quarter. As Vigo (2020: 96–7) emphasizes, while the feeling of respect is a special feeling with, so to speak, ‘a bittersweet taste’ that cannot be adequately described in terms of either mere pleasure or mere displeasure (Kant speaks about a negative and a positive aspect, see *KpV*, 5: 77–8), moral feeling in the Doctrine of Virtue is, according to the initial definition, positive or negative depending on whether or not our action conforms to the moral law: ‘[Moral feeling] is the susceptibility to feel pleasure or displeasure merely from being aware that our actions are consistent with or contrary to the law of duty’ (*MS*, 6: 399; see also 6: 221).²⁹ I take this to be a legitimate objection. However, I believe we can explain Kant’s remark about pleasure and displeasure attending moral feeling as a residuum of the doctrines of the British sentimentalists. As we saw in section 2, for Hutcheson (at least according to Kant’s interpretation) it is owing to a special feeling of pleasure or displeasure that we recognize a good or evil action – moral feeling can thus manifest itself either as pleasure or as displeasure. Yet Kant insists that moral feeling is not ‘the standard of our moral judging’ as ‘some have falsely proclaimed’; ‘it must rather be viewed as the subjective effect that the law exercises on the will’ (*GMS*, 4: 460). So, while moral feeling exists, it ‘does not serve for appraising actions and certainly not for grounding the objective moral law itself, but only as an incentive to make this law its maxim’ (*KpV*, 5: 76). And as such an incentive, this feeling cannot be negative (i.e. it cannot be displeasure), even in cases when the possible action is contrary to duty and we should refrain from acting.³⁰ As Beck puts it, ‘there is no moral pain in obedience to the law; there is at most a pain arising from the thwarting of pathological feeling’ (Beck 1960: 225).³¹ However, the negative aspect of the complex feeling of respect, although present only insofar as we experience pathological feelings (as Kant explains, ‘sensible feeling, which underlies all our inclinations, is indeed the condition of that feeling we call respect’: *KpV*, 5: 75), is also important. In the incentive chapter Kant stresses the pain necessarily present in the determination of the will in order to emphasize the difference between the feeling of respect and other, pathological feelings. As he says, ‘we can see a priori that the moral law, as the determining ground of the will, must by thwarting all our inclinations produce a feeling that can be called pain’ (5: 73). The feeling of respect is therefore

'hardly an analogue of the feeling of pleasure, although in relation to the faculty of desire it does the same thing but from different sources'; as Kant adds, 'only by this way of representing things, however, can one attain what one seeks, namely, that actions be done not merely in conformity with duty (as a result of pleasant feelings) but from duty' (5: 117). Displeasure is a necessary element of the feeling of respect, and, although Kant does not say so, it probably becomes stronger (and our experience confirms it) in cases where we want to perform an action contrary to duty, since in such cases there are present actual inclinations opposed to the law that must be infringed. In this sense, when British sentimentalists speak about a feeling of pleasure or displeasure connected with a good or evil action, respectively, they are partly right, or at least it is understandable why they make such a claim.

Therefore, I propose that when in the Doctrine of Virtue Kant defines the aesthetic predisposition of moral feeling as 'the susceptibility to feel pleasure or displeasure merely from being aware that our actions are consistent with or contrary to the law of duty' (MS, 6: 399), we should treat this remark lightly. It is a vague, not very accurate formulation in the manner of British sentimentalists which is, however, at least partially correct.³² So, in my view, nothing changes about the fact that, on Kant's account, moral feeling is the capacity to experience a peculiar feeling that serves as 'an impulse to activity' (KpV, 5: 116), that is, as an incentive of pure practical reason. It is true that, interestingly, in the description of moral feeling in section XII of the Introduction Kant does not use the term 'incentive' (*Triebfeder*), but he explicitly connects both terms elsewhere in the Doctrine of Virtue.³³ To conclude, there is ample evidence that supports the interpretation of the aesthetic predisposition of moral feeling as the moral incentive identical to the feeling of respect.³⁴

Does Kant identify two aesthetic predispositions with *Achtung*?

Having identified moral feeling in the Doctrine of Virtue with the feeling of respect (*Achtung*), there remains an important question: why does Kant in the Doctrine of Virtue (in a single section) treat as separate moral feeling, which is identical to the feeling of respect, and another aesthetic predisposition denominated *Achtung* which likewise seems identical to the feeling of respect? Before we try to answer this question, we must see if this, the fourth, aesthetic predisposition called *Achtung* is really identical to the feeling of respect from the second *Critique*. I quote Kant's description of the predisposition of respect in full:

Respect (*reverentia*) is, again, something merely subjective, a feeling of a special kind, not a judgment about an object that it would be a duty to bring about or promote. For such a duty, regarded as a duty, could be presented to us only through the respect we have for it. A duty to have respect would thus amount to being put under obligation to [have] duties. – Accordingly it is not correct to say that a man has a duty of self-esteem; it must rather be said that the law within him unavoidably forces from him respect for his own being, and this feeling (which is of a special kind) is the basis of certain duties, that is, of certain actions that are consistent with his duty to himself. It cannot be said that a man has a duty of respect toward himself, for he must have respect for the law within himself in order even to think of any duty whatsoever. (MS, 6: 402–3)

The beginning of the passage proceeds similarly to the descriptions of the other aesthetic predispositions. As in the case of moral feeling (1), conscience (2) and love of man (3), Kant wants to stress that we have no duty to acquire the predisposition of respect (4). Moreover, in perfect correspondence to the case of moral feeling (1), a duty to acquire respect (4) would be absurd, because respect is a subjective condition of duties. In fact, Kant's reasoning is almost identical for both predispositions (1) and (4). The supposed duty 'to bring about or promote' respect (4), 'regarded as a duty, could be presented to us only through the respect we have for it' (MS, 6: 402), and 'there can be no duty to have moral feeling (1) or to acquire it', 'since any consciousness of obligation depends upon moral feeling to make us aware of the constraint present in the thought of duty' (6: 399). As this holds precisely for the concept of respect from the second *Critique*, it seems that the fourth aesthetic predisposition (more precisely, the corresponding feeling also called *reverentia*)³⁵ is identical to the feeling of respect too. We find yet another argument to support this conclusion at the end of the paragraph where Kant says that '[a man] must have respect for the law within himself in order even to think of any duty whatsoever' (6: 403). As it stands, the argument is merely a restatement of the claim that 'what I recognize immediately as a law for myself I recognize with respect, which signifies merely the consciousness of the subordination of my will to a law, without mediation of other influences on my sense' (GMS, 4: 401n.), and that 'any consciousness of obligation depends upon moral feeling to make us aware of the constraint present in the thought of duty' (MS, 6: 399). Therefore, we have to face the corresponding question: why does Kant explain in the same section of the Doctrine of Virtue two aesthetic predispositions identical to the feeling of respect from the second *Critique*? In my view, it is possible to provide an answer, albeit not an incontrovertible one. In the section on aesthetic predispositions, Kant treats elements that are traditionally considered the basis of virtuous actions and, according to Kant, are related to feelings (according to Kant, they are predispositions 'on the side of feeling (*ästhetisch*): MS, 6: 399). We saw in section 2 which role it is that Hutcheson and others ascribe to moral feeling. Kant revises their conception and explains what moral feeling really consists in. The same transpires in the case of moral conscience. Moral conscience had on the traditional account been taken to be a crucial element, itself a feeling or at least connected to feelings, that enables us to act morally (see e.g. Baumgarten 1760: §200). Following a similar strategy, Kant explains what it is and explicates its proper role, revising the previous accounts. It seems that in the case of love of man and respect (more precisely, self-esteem) the same dialectic unfolds once more. According to the prevailing account, love is the basis of virtuous actions towards others; Kant explains how the Gospel commandment of love – 'You ought to love your neighbor as yourself' – is possible despite the fact that love towards others cannot really be commanded because it is a feeling.³⁶ In the passage devoted to the last aesthetic predisposition Kant explains that self-esteem, the basis of virtuous actions towards oneself (see e.g. V-Mo/Collins, 27: 347), in fact cannot be commanded because it is a feeling. Moreover, such a duty would be absurd because this feeling of self-esteem or respect for oneself, as a feeling of respect for the *law within himself* (MS, 6: 403.5), is a condition of duties – not only of duties to oneself, but of all duties because one 'must have respect for the law within himself in order even to think of any duty whatsoever' (MS, 6: 403). Thus, I argue that when Kant treats the aesthetic predisposition of respect separately from moral feeling, he merely

intends to explain what self-esteem, considered as the basis of duties to oneself (just as love is considered as the basis of duties to others), consists in. It is, at bottom, the same as the feeling of respect for the law, yet insofar as this law is the law of my own reason, it can also be considered as self-respect. That is, incidentally, the most likely reason why the description of this last concept is unaccountably brief at first glance. Kant cannot add anything new to his analysis: everything has already been said. He merely draws consequences from his theory of respect, stressing in this regard that it is impossible to have a duty to feel self-respect.³⁷

4. Conclusion

I have endeavoured to show that for Kant there is *sensu stricto* just one moral feeling, namely, the feeling of respect, identical to the aesthetic predisposition of moral feeling and respect, despite a number of inaccurate, vague or unclear formulations appearing in his writings that seem to claim the contrary. Because of these inaccurate formulations, it could certainly be objected that my interpretation is not conclusive, but this could be said of any interpretation and with even greater emphasis because any alternative interpretation (or at least all the interpretations mentioned in n. 3) has to face many more textual objections (or lack of textual basis) than the one I propose here. This interpretation also has the great advantage of maintaining continuity with all previous ‘critical’ works. Therefore, I conclude that, contrary to what is often claimed lately (see the interpretations mentioned in n. 3), Kant was not advocating the involvement of several different moral feelings in moral action, such as the moral feeling of respect, moral feeling *sensu stricto*, the moral feeling of self-esteem or moral contentment. Besides recognizing moral discontentment (*TP*, 8: 283n.), which seems to be identical to the pang of moral conscience (see *V-MS/Vigil*, 27: 618), Kant certainly speaks about moral contentment but, strictly speaking, this moral contentment is not an actual feeling, but merely negative satisfaction; and although Kant once calls it ‘moral feeling’, he does so rather by mistake. For Kant, not just in the writings before the *Doctrine of Virtue*, but in the *Doctrine of Virtue* as well, there is just *one* feeling that properly deserves the name of *moral feeling*, the feeling of respect. Both the aesthetic predisposition of moral feeling and respect are in fact identical to it. That does not mean, however, that in Kant’s ethics feelings are not crucial, because this moral feeling is the only incentive for moral action and therefore indispensable.

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Notes

1 All references to Kant’s works cite the volume and page (and sometimes line) numbers of the Academy edition (Kant 1900ff.). With the exception of untranslated texts whose translations are, as indicated, my own, I quote from the Cambridge Edition of Kant’s works. I use the following abbreviations: *GMS* = *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, *KpV* = *Critique of Practical Reason*, *MS* = *Metaphysics of Morals*, *RGV* = *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, *Refl* = *Reflection*, *TP* = *On the Common Saying: That may be Correct in Theory, But it is of No Use in Practice*, *UD* = *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the*

Principles of Natural Theology and Morality, V-Mo/[Collins/Mron/Powalski/Vigil] = Collins/Mrongovius/Powalski/Vigilantius notes on Kant's moral philosophy lectures.

2 'Ästhetische Vorbegriffe für Empfänglichkeit des Gemüths für Pflichtbegriffe überhaupt'; Gregor translates this, in the Cambridge Edition, as 'Concepts of what is presupposed on the part of feeling by the mind's receptivity to concepts of duty as such'. Guyer opts for a more direct translation, 'aesthetic preconditions of the mind's receptivity to concepts of duty as such', with the intention 'to leave the meaning of the term to be garnered from Kant's subsequent discussion' (Guyer 2010: 130). I adopt his translation, but substitute his 'preconditions' for 'preliminary concepts', because it is a more literal translation of the original German term *Vorbegriffe* and thus accomplish even better Guyer's intention to leave the meaning of the term to be garnered from Kant's subsequent discussion (Makkreel (2012: 113) also renders *Vorbegriffe* as 'preliminary concepts'; Kathryn Sensen, in her translation of Baum's article (Baum 2013: 117), uses 'prior concepts'; Geiger (2011: 292) has 'preliminary notions').

3 For an interpretation that, on the one hand, identifies the feeling of respect with the aesthetic predisposition of moral feeling and, on the other, distinguishes a different aesthetic predisposition of self-respect (or self-esteem), see e.g. Guyer (2010) or Baum (2014). On the contrary, Wood (2002: 17) and Vigo (2020: 85–105) – and probably Cohen (2015: 13) – identify the feeling of respect with the aesthetic predisposition of respect, and distinguish it from the predisposition of moral feeling. Finally, there are also interpreters who distinguish all three elements. This is certainly the case for Geiger (2011) and Berg (2021: 756–7), and also seems to be the case for Schönecker (2013: 34), Merritt (2018: 152, n. 52) and Goy (2013: 193ff.). See also Kulenkampff (2004) and Borges (2019: 145ff.), who explicitly distinguish between the feeling of respect and the moral feeling as aesthetic predisposition, but do not address the predisposition of respect (however, they call it 'self-esteem', so it seems that they consider it different both from the predisposition of moral feeling and from the feeling of respect).

4 In this sense, it is telling that Guyer (see the previous note) admits that in the final clause of the section regarding the predisposition of respect 'Kant seems to revert to discussing the general feeling of respect rather than the specific feeling of self-respect that he introduced in the previous sentence' (Guyer 2010: 149). Goy, from a different perspective, speaks about a 'systematic imbalance' caused by the fact that Kant, in her view, restricted the aesthetic predisposition of respect to respect for oneself (Goy 2013: 194).

5 See e.g. Baron (1999: 213), Wood (1999: 38; 2002: 17), Cohen (2015: 10ff.) or Borges (2019: 144ff.).

6 See e.g. McCarty (1994: 424), Morrisson (2008: 141), Ludwig (2014: 134) or Berg (2021: 756).

7 There are notable exceptions: see Guyer (2010), whose interpretation has been challenged by Geiger (2011) and recently by Vigo (2020). As will be clear, my reading is different from all these accounts. See also Schönecker (2010: 139), who mentions this problem of interpretation but does not provide an answer (in a later article his answer, albeit brief, seems to be that there is a shift in Kant's thinking: '[In the Doctrine of Virtue Kant] names four incentives by means of which reason becomes practical (rather than simply one, as he does in the *Groundwork* and, in a somewhat more differentiated fashion, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*)' (Schönecker 2013: 34)).

8 It seems that this mispractice of translating in Germany 'moral sense' as *moralisches Gefühl* was established by G. E. Lessing in his translation (1756, Leipzig) of F. Hutcheson's *A System of Moral Philosophy* (1755, London). As a matter of fact, Lessing seems to be translating very loosely, see e.g. the German title of the work in question, *Sittenlehre der Vernunft* (emphasis added).

9 However, it seems that the term was used for the very first time by Thomas Burnet, see Leidhold (1986: p. xxii).

10 For a good overview of the problem, see Leidhold (1986: pp. xxxviii ff.), who also points out that in the first two editions of Hutcheson's first book, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, in *Two Treatises*, there are various passages (removed in subsequent editions) which seem to confirm such an interpretation.

11 For a more detailed description of Hutcheson's conception, as well as Kant's response to it, see e.g. Walschots (2017a) and an older but still essential study of D. Henrich, *Hutcheson und Kant* (1958), translated relatively recently into English (Henrich 2009). Henrich was the first to explain convincingly Kant's *prima facie* contradictory attitude towards Hutcheson. Although Kant never fully accepted the moral sense theory in the form developed by Hutcheson, he consistently acknowledged the important role Hutcheson played in the development of his own moral theory. That is why in his early works, despite his later sharp criticism of moral sense theory, he made observations favourable to the British philosopher, e.g. the following from the prize essay written in 1762: 'Hutcheson and others have, under the name

of moral feeling, provided us with a starting point from which to develop some excellent observations' (UD, 2: 300). For a detailed overview of the development of Kant's ethics, see also Schmucker (1961).

12 Walschots (2022: 245ff.) has convincingly argued that Kant's solution to the problem of moral motivation in the 1770s is different from his 'critical' one because in the 1770s Kant 'seems to think that ... acting morally, not just having correct judgement, is a matter of *separately* cultivating feeling in such a way that it is in *accord* with moral judgement', so that 'our sensibility needs to be cultivated via *habit* such that it accords with what we judge to be morally right and wrong'. Be that as it may, what is important for the purposes of this article is that both in Kant's conception of moral motivation in the 1770s and his 'critical' conception it is the feeling that serves as an incentive for moral action (see also n. 13).

13 My reading could therefore be included within the so-called 'affectivist' conception of respect (*Achtung*). The affectivists hold, against the 'intellectualists', that in Kant's mature philosophy the will can be moved only through feeling and, therefore, that the feeling of respect is itself responsible for the moral motivation to act and it is not a mere affective by-product of the determination of the will, as it is for the 'intellectualist' interpretation. As it is very clear that in the 1770s Kant gave an affectivist account of moral motivation, the intellectualists are forced to admit that in the 1780s he substantially changed his views on the matter (see e.g. Kuehn 2004: p. xxxv). For the intellectualist interpretation of the feeling of respect see e.g. Reath ([1989] 2006), Sensen (2012) or, more recently, Borges (2019: 40–1). For the affectivist interpretation, see e.g. McCarty (1994), Morrisson (2008) or, more recently, Walschots (2022).

14 The same applies to the *Religion*. If the feeling of respect were a mere effect of the determination of the will, Kant would not characterize it as the third predisposition to good in human nature. Kant says that 'the predisposition to personality is the susceptibility to respect for the moral law as of itself a sufficient incentive to the power of choice. This susceptibility to simple respect for the moral law within us would thus be the moral feeling' (RGV, 6: 27). He is clearly speaking here about feeling; without the capacity of reason to induce moral feeling man could not act morally. For a detailed argumentation (in Spanish) regarding the role of feeling in moral motivation, see my unpublished doctoral dissertation (Kolomý 2020: 60–103).

15 Translations and secondary literature oscillate between the terms 'contentment' and 'satisfaction'. I have chosen the term 'contentment' (and modified the translations of the term in the corresponding quotations), as it seems to be the prevailing one (even Walschots, although he titles his paper on moral contentment 'Kant on Moral Satisfaction' (Walschots 2017b), modifies some translations and uses the term 'contentment').

16 See especially the third and fourth edition of Hutcheson's *Inquiry* (published in 1729 and 1738, respectively), section II, paragraphs III and IV, where he argues that benevolence as 'the general Foundation of the Moral Sense' (Hutcheson [1725] 2004: 101) is always disinterested and, among other things, cannot be raised in ourselves 'with a View to obtain future Pleasures of Self-Approbation by our Moral Sense' (Hutcheson [1725] 2004: 221). Kant was probably aware of the incriminating passage, as he owned the German translation by Johann Heinrich Merck that follows the text of the fourth edition (see Warda's catalogue of the books in Kant's library (Warda 1922: 50); for the mentioned passage in the German translation, see Hutcheson (1762: 146ff.) reprinted in Klemme and Kuehn (2001)).

17 Kant explains the reasons for such an interpretation in the *Groundwork*, 4: 442n.

18 To understand the difficult passage about Epicurus' error, it is important to keep in mind the foundations of Kant's theory of action that he presents, albeit unsystematically, throughout the second *Critique*. That is, the lower faculty of desire works in such a way that 'the feeling of agreeableness that the subject *expects* from the reality of an object' (KpV, 5: 22.15–6; emphasis added) produces 'pleasure arising from the representation of the existence of a thing' (5: 22.9) that works as 'an impulse to activity' (5: 116.34) (Morrisson speaks about 'anticipatory pleasure' and 'the anticipation of pleasure' (Morrisson 2008: 66), Kulenkampff similarly distinguishes, with the additional help of the *Critique of Judgement*, between 'die realisierte unmittelbare Lust an etwas' and 'die motivierende Lust, etwas zu tun, die Lust zu etwas' (Kulenkampff 1994: 74–5). It is true that the textual evidence offered for the relationship between the two types of pleasure is not conclusive. However, Kant's descriptions of respect in the incentive chapter and in this passage confirm the reading in question). The higher faculty of desire on the other hand works differently: there is also pleasure involved that works as 'an impulse to activity', but this pleasure is not produced by a previous object but by pure reason, and the determination of the faculty of desire 'remains a pure practical, not aesthetic' one (5: 116.32). For a more detailed explanation of this (in Spanish), see Kolomý (2020: 28–32, 85ff.).

19 That Kant says in both places that the corresponding feeling must be cultivated of course does not prove anything: it could be a mere coincidence and Kant could simply be of the opinion that both the feeling of respect and moral contentment must be cultivated. However, while it is clear that the feeling of respect has to be cultivated and it is understandable why, it is not at all clear why it should be a duty to cultivate moral contentment.

20 Therefore, I agree with Walschots when he argues that moral contentment cannot be equivalent to the feeling of respect (the positive side of respect, properly speaking) because the feeling of respect 'takes place prior to the willing and therefore also the execution of action', while moral contentment 'arises only once willing is completed and we retrospectively reflect on the fact that we were motivated by the moral law alone' (Walschots 2017b: 299). However, I also agree, to a certain extent, with Beck, criticized by Walschots, when he connects the feeling of respect and moral contentment (Beck 1960: 229), because, in the incentive chapter dedicated to the feeling of respect, Kant does indeed discuss the feeling of the self-approbation (*Selbstbilligung*) that takes place once willing is successfully completed (note that in the *Critique* Kant describes a successful determination of the will by pure reason). See also Sensen, who, despite his different interpretation of respect, claims that the 'uplifting feeling' of self-approbation appears just 'from time to time' (Sensen 2012: 56). Interpreting the feeling of self-approbation as moral contentment, we can also easily explain Kant's allusion at the end of the incentive chapter to Epicurus and his 'cheerful enjoyment of life', connected to the moral incentive (*KpV*, 5: 88).

21 The fact that Kant says that it is the *only* feeling that deserves to be called moral feeling speaks against the alternative interpretation suggested by an anonymous referee, which considers moral feeling as a genus term (in contrast to pathological feeling) and the feeling of respect and moral contentment as two of its species. When Kant says in the incentive chapter that it is, *sensu stricto*, because of the positive aspect of the effect of consciousness of the moral law that the feeling of respect 'can now also be called a feeling of respect for the moral law, while on both grounds together [positive and negative aspects] it can be called a moral feeling' (*KpV*, 5: 75), he does not mean, in my view, that both the negative and the positive effects of the moral law on feeling can be called moral feeling (i.e. that the negative effect is moral feeling as well), as the anonymous referee suggests; he says so to indicate that the feeling he describes in the incentive chapter (i.e. the feeling of respect) is in fact the moral feeling identified by the British sentimentalists, which, as they argue, consists in both pleasure and displeasure. Note that Kant also says there that 'the negative effect upon feeling (disagreeableness) is *pathological*, as is every influence on feeling and every feeling in general' (*KpV*, 5: 75). For an interpretation of this passage, see also in section 3.

22 'By the predispositions (*Anlagen*) of a being we understand the constituent parts required for it as well as the forms of their combination that make for such a being' (*RGV*, 5: 28).

23 In the case of moral feeling, there are some exceptions where Kant refers to the 'susceptibility' (*Empfänglichkeit*) to it (*MS*, 6: 399.19, 400.10).

24 As we will see, a similar condition holds for respect too, because man 'must have respect for the law within himself in order even to think of any duty whatsoever' (*MS*, 6: 403). In the case of another predisposition, 'moral conscience', Kant asserts that without it man 'would neither impute anything to himself as conforming with duty nor reproach himself with anything as contrary to duty' (6: 400–1). However, we do not find any similar statement in the description of the last remaining predisposition (third in the order presented by Kant), 'love of man' (*Menschenliebe*). An interpretation of how Kant's statement from the initial description of the four aesthetic predispositions that 'it is by virtue of them that he [man] can be put under obligation' (6: 399) can be applied to this third predisposition is to be found in Kolomý (forthcoming).

25 It generally shows that moral feeling cannot be something *subsequent* to willing. This is what in my view A. Vigo overlooks in his otherwise notably lucid analysis of moral conscience, when he interprets moral feeling as a special 'emotional-affective resonance' connected to the reflexive operation of moral conscience; moral feeling would thus acquire the form of pleasure when we act in accordance with duty, and the form of displeasure when we act contrary to duty; see Vigo (2020: 85–105). It is true that in the description of the aesthetic predisposition of moral conscience Kant says that it 'affect[s] moral feeling by its act' (*MS*, 6: 400.30). However, in my opinion, there are two things to bear in mind. First, this latter passage could also be interpreted as a reference to the feeling of respect (because, as we recalled in the previous note, according to Kant moral conscience is a subjective *condition* of duties), and second, apart from the present passage that claims that 'any consciousness of obligation depends upon moral feeling',

Vigo's interpretation also faces the following problem. As Vigo himself emphasizes, moral conscience 'never praises, but, when it approves and does not condemn, it only approves coldly'. So, Vigo argues, conscience 'never incorporates in its own verdict any *express reference* to the feeling of pleasure produced by its own reflective operation, when it confirms the concordance of one's own actions with the demands of duty' (Vigo 2020: 104; my translation and emphasis). Nevertheless, in my opinion, Kant's writings suggest another scenario. When moral conscience condemns us, we experience a pang of remorse (*Gewissensbiß*) (V-MS/Vigil, 27: 618), a feeling of displeasure that seems to be identical to the moral discontentment or dissatisfaction (*moralische Unzufriedenheit*) from Kant's essay commonly known as 'Theory and Practice' (TP, 8: 283n.). However, when our conscience acquits us, there is no positive feeling of pleasure (whether expressly referred to by moral conscience or not), we only experience 'rejoicing at having escaped the danger of being found punishable' (MS, 6: 440). As Kant emphasizes, 'the blessedness found in the comforting encouragement of one's conscience is not *positive* (joy) but merely *negative* (relief from preceding anxiety)' (6: 440). And the same holds, as we saw, for moral contentment: it is not a positive feeling of pleasure, but only 'only a negative satisfaction with one's existence, in which one is conscious of needing nothing' (KpV, 5: 117).

26 Often we already know in advance whether the maxim is universalizable; see e.g. Kant's remark that we become immediately aware of the moral law 'as soon as we draw up maxims of the will for ourselves' (KpV, 5: 29.34–5) and the subsequent well-known gallows example in which one is immediately aware that one must not testify falsely against an innocent person (5: 30). See also Timmermann (2007: xiv ff.), who explains Kant's 'optimism' about moral cognition.

27 There are, of course, 'inverted' cases too: we adopt an obligatory maxim and see how this maxim can be instantiated in particular cases. Nevertheless, as we need an incentive for a particular action, the particular cases are essential in this scheme too.

28 This interpretation is additionally confirmed by Kant's explication of the respect directed at honest persons at KpV, 5: 76–7. Note that one is said to feel respect towards the moral law exemplified in *concrete circumstances*.

29 Vigo speaks about qualitative *monovalence* in the case of the feeling of respect and qualitative *bivalence* in the case of moral feeling (Vigo 2020: 96). See also Geiger (2011: 293) and Borges (2019: 147) for a similar objection (however, they neglect the positive aspect of the feeling of respect and erroneously describe it as a feeling of pain and humiliation).

30 Strictly speaking, in the *Critique* Kant calls 'respect for the law' just the positive aspect of the effect of consciousness of the moral law (for an overview of the textual evidence, see Berg 2021: 750ff.); the mixture of the two aspects, positive and negative (i.e. the feeling of pleasure and displeasure) is called 'moral feeling' (KpV, 5: 75).

31 Beck, however, seems to be inconsistent when he states at the same time that there is no real inconsistency between the second *Critique* and the Doctrine of Virtue because in the Doctrine of Virtue Kant leaves pathological feelings aside, does not discuss the whole phenomenon and 'therefore there is missing this peculiar mixture of pleasure and pain' (Beck 1960: 225). Guyer does not see an inconsistency there either because, according to him, 'we typically experience *both* displeasure at the thought of one action contrary to duty that is open to us and pleasure at the thought of the alternative action open to us that would correspond to duty' (Guyer 2010: 141).

32 Perhaps this formulation is deliberate, since it is the first sentence that connects the concept with an earlier philosophical tradition (this would also explain the presence of the word 'but' (*aber*) in the following sentence: 'Alle Bestimmung der Willkür aber geht . . .' (MS, 6: 399). The same holds for 6: 221 where Kant explains the concept of the moral law (as one of the preliminary concepts of the metaphysics of morals) and wants to emphasize, because of the British sentimentalists, that the concept in itself has nothing to do with moral feeling.

33 When Kant explains the end of one's own perfection (one of the two ends that are also duties) he speaks about the 'cultivation of one's will': 'Man has a duty to carry the cultivation of his will up to the purest virtuous disposition, in which the *law* becomes also the *incentive* (*Triebfeder* [emphasis added]) to his actions that conform with duty and he obeys the law from duty. This disposition is inner morally practical perfection. Since it is a feeling of the effect that the lawgiving will within man exercises on his capacity to act in accordance with his will, it is called *moral feeling*, a special sense (*sensus moralis*), as it were.' (MS, 6: 387).

34 Another of Geiger's arguments against identifying the feeling of respect and moral feeling is that '[Kant] does not use the term "respect" (*Achtung*) in this section, though he often employs it elsewhere in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, with what appears to be the same sense he gives the term in the earlier work' (Geiger 2011: 293). In my view, it makes sense that Kant does not use the term 'respect' in the description of moral feeling, since he wants to clarify what the often-misused concept of moral feeling actually consists in – a task that is accomplished better without referring to his own terminology (this also explains the remark that 'it is inappropriate to call this feeling a moral sense': *MS*, 6: 400). On the contrary, in the passages of the *Doctrine of Virtue* where Kant mentions the feeling of respect, he also uses the term 'moral feeling' (6: 464, 466) to indicate that his feeling of respect corresponds to the moral feeling of the British sentimentalists.

35 In fact, the Latin name *reverentia* is a further argument for identifying the feeling and predisposition of respect. See Walschots (2022) who argues that Kant's concept of respect (*Achtung*) has roots in Adam Smith's concept of *reverence* (or 'regard') for the general rules of conduct, which was translated as *Achtung* in the first German translation of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

36 For a detailed explanation of this predisposition of love of man see Kolomý (forthcoming).

37 In this sense, the interpretation I propose here is preferable to the interpretations that consider the aesthetic predisposition of respect as something different from the feeling of respect (they usually interpret it either as some kind of 'means afforded by nature to the fulfillment of one's duties to oneself' (Guyer 2010: 150; see also Schönecker 2013: 34 and Cohen 2015: 12–13) or as some kind of means to perceive our duties towards ourselves (Geiger 2011: 295–6), because they necessarily lack textual basis in Kant's own expressed views. For example, Guyer (2010: 149) admits that his interpretation is 'necessarily somewhat speculative'.

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