

substance. We are capable of making synthetic judgements because we have an immediate grip on phenomenal reality through our intuitions, and these intuitions transcend what we can grasp through conceptual articulation alone. As such, all true judgements are not analytic. Yet while he correctly points to much of this, Godlove is mistaken in suggesting that the content of a concept depends on its sphere, for this is to confuse intention with extension, and to confuse the ground of an analytic judgement with that of a synthetic one.

Despite this problem, Godlove gets at a central issue in analytic philosophy since Kant, one that governs the larger issues he explores in the book. This concerns the relation of empirical concepts to experience. How do we arrive at our empirical concepts? Are they constructed out of whole cloth, or do we form them in an attempt to articulate the nature of the objects of our experience? If so, how is such articulation possible? Is there even any fixity to our concepts, which is what must be presupposed if there is to be such a thing as an analytic judgement in the first place? Or are our concepts continually morphing as we use them to refer to different aspects of the same experience? A central issue in this regard concerns the relation of the content of a concept to that which falls under the concept. Godlove is incorrect to suggest that Kant believed that the content of a concept can be identified with its sphere: Kant was clear in distinguishing between intension and extension. However, Godlove is correct to point out that the problem of the fixity of the meaning of concepts, and the relation of a concept's meaning to that to which it refers is a rich one, one playing a key role in moving the study of religion away from a focus on the philosophy of religion and to its social and scientific study.

**Jacqueline Mariña**

*Purdue University*

*email: marinaj@purdue.edu*

Chris W. Surprenant, *Kant and the Cultivation of Virtue*

London: Routledge, 2014

Pp. 148

ISBN 9780415735209 (hbk) \$140.00

doi:10.1017/S1369415415000357

In *Kant and the Cultivation of Virtue*, Chris Surprenant explores the question of how Kantian agents become virtuous in practice. Surprenant argues that

the answer is dispersed among Kant's discussions of ethics, anthropology, education, political philosophy and religion. The volume aims to bring these discussions together into a unified account of the development of Kantian virtue.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the Kantian notions that are important to the discussion at hand. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss Kant's notion of civil society and offer several distinct accounts of the connection between membership in civil society and the development of an individual's virtue. Chapter 4 considers Kant's discussion of moral education, and chapter 5 investigates the role of religion in the development of virtue. In what follows, I focus on Surprenant's conception of virtue (§1) and his arguments regarding civil society (§2).

### 1. Virtue, Inclination, Moral Choice

Given the topic of the volume, the question of how to understand Kantian virtue takes on a central importance. On Surprenant's account, the acquisition of virtue is necessarily a social endeavour (p. 2). I am sympathetic with this claim: if developing virtue is a task particular to sensible, embodied agents then it seems plausible that the cooperation of others will be conducive, if not essential, to its development. But this may suggest a paradox, since autonomous willing and virtue are at bottom matters of individual willing. Much of Surprenant's discussion can be read as an investigation of how the social and individual intersect in the cultivation of virtue.

Virtue itself, Surprenant argues, requires knowledge of the moral law and the development of practical reason. Beyond this it requires a strength of will (e.g. *MS*, 6: 408).<sup>1</sup> Surprenant focuses especially on the duty of apathy, arguing that 'Kant understands moral apathy as not being affected by heteronomous impulses that cause one to act contrary to what the moral law demands' (p. 9). A necessary condition of virtue on Surprenant's account is thus the ability to 'resist [one's] inclination toward happiness in any and all circumstances' (p. 118).

The duty of apathy is a core component of Kantian virtue, but I wonder about Surprenant's tendency to describe apathy not simply as a necessary, but also a sufficient condition of virtue. In particular, I wonder about descriptions of virtue that present it as something that can be *accomplished* or *completed* by overcoming inclination. Surprenant says, for example, that 'the person who is able to overcome inclination or desire in all cases has *cultivated virtue completely*' (p. 49, my emphasis). Noting the difficulty of such a task, he observes, 'The problem with virtue is that it is unlikely anyone could *cultivate it completely* in practice, in the sense that we could find someone who always is able to resist his inclination towards happiness in any and all circumstances' (p. 118, my emphasis).

I suspect that this way of describing the ‘completion’ or ‘achievement’ of virtue relies upon a particular description of the relationship between virtue and happiness. I will say more about this below. Setting that observation aside for now, one reason to think that virtue is not something we can ever ‘complete’ is the ever-present possibility of backsliding. That possibility would seem to suggest that we practise virtue on particular occasions, and remain always hopeful that we will be up to the next moral challenge (cf. *MS*, 6: 440). But perhaps this is simply the way that phenomenal agents experience virtue. Noumenally, perhaps achieving ‘complete’ virtue is something like a ‘change of heart’ (e.g. *Rel*, 6: 47). And indeed, Surprenant himself draws this connection (e.g. p. 14). Still, because the discussion has to do with cultivating virtue in *practice*, it would seem that even an agent who has achieved this change of heart will have other tasks set for himself qua sensible agent – for example, becoming attuned to need, recognizing morally salient features of situations, and cultivating a capacity to deliberate about various grounds of obligation.

As suggested above, I also wonder if Surprenant’s account of virtue and moral apathy as ‘being able to resist [the] inclination toward happiness in any and all circumstances’ best captures Kant’s view of the relationship between virtue and happiness. This point is relatively straightforward when it comes to fulfilling perfect duty: I can enjoy a Beethoven symphony as long as I refrain from violating strict duty in so doing. Things may become a bit murkier when it comes to imperfect duty, especially if we take the view that these are particularly demanding. But even the most demanding account stops short of saying that virtue and happiness are necessarily at odds. I may, after all, take pleasure in fulfilling duties of beneficence or friendship. Kant’s ultimate point, I take it, is that we are members of two worlds, and that we choose to make the laws of one subordinate to the laws of one or the other. It is only when our wills operate according to the laws of autonomy that they are unconditionally good. Inclination can obviously *pose a threat* to morality because it offers a competing motivating ground. But this is not to suggest any necessary opposition between the two – it simply suggests the danger of getting the order of our maxims wrong.

Perhaps I am overstating Surprenant’s account of moral apathy. After all, *being able* to resist inclination at any point does not necessarily entail that one must always *in fact* resist the inclination towards happiness in order to be virtuous. But sometimes Surprenant seems to hold the latter view, for example as he expresses puzzlement over the idea of the highest good:

But whereas it is possible for an individual to be both morally praiseworthy and happy at the same because (1) his inclinations could be aligned with the moral law and (2) he acts in a manner consistent with those inclinations because he recognizes that it is

the right thing to do ... it is not possible to be both happy and virtuous at the same time. In short, since happiness is always getting what you want and virtue comes into play only when what you want conflicts with the moral law, virtue and happiness conflict necessarily. (p. 120)

It is all but impossible that a virtuous person will *always* ‘get what [he] wants’. As a result, we certainly become *aware* of virtuous struggle when ‘what [we] want conflicts with the moral law’, but it is surely not the case that virtue and happiness conflict necessarily for Kant. Indeed, Kant thinks that happiness is a good for human beings – albeit a good that is always conditioned by morality. A situation in which a person is virtuous and happy is not internally inconsistent but simply a *better situation* than one in which a person is virtuous and not happy. Indeed, Kant thinks it is a practical antinomy that virtue and happiness come apart in this world (*KpV*, 5: 113). Whatever we might make of the arguments that Kant offers in his attempt to resolve this antinomy, it is clear that he consistently conceives of virtue as the kind of thing that is not only consistent with the happiness of an individual, but that should, ideally, be coupled with the happiness of an individual. This should, at the very least, provide us with good evidence that Kant’s conception of virtue does not ‘conflict necessarily’ with happiness.

## 2. Virtue and Civil Society

Surprenant offers two types of argument regarding the connection between virtue and civil society. According to the first, being a member of civil society is a precondition of moral autonomy and virtue. According to the second, participation in civil society helps foster virtue.

In chapter 2 Surprenant presents the first of two arguments that civil society is a precondition of virtue. According to this argument, the fear and uncertainty associated with living outside of civil society will make it ‘impossible ... to act autonomously’:

[T]here appear to be circumstances under which it is impossible to act from maxims consistent with autonomy, circumstances that an individual can find himself in when he is living outside of civil society. Consider the situation for an individual living in Hobbes’s state of nature, a war of all against all where life is ‘solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short’ (L xiii: 9). If an individual constantly fears that he is going to suffer a sudden and violent death, then this fear will affect all of the decisions he makes. Under these circumstances it is impossible for this person to act autonomously, because all of his actions are

motivated by this particular fear and not by other maxims chosen by reason. (p. 26)

I wonder about this claim for two reasons. First, I do not think of Kant's conception of pre-civil society as being characterized by the kind of fear that would interfere necessarily with a person's ability to reason, or take over a person's entire motivational structure. Kant's assertion, I take it, is that rights outside of the civil condition are merely *provisional* (MS, 6: 256). But it is hard to see how this would necessarily engender the type of fear that would make us incapable of reasoning autonomously.

Second, even if pre-civil society is characterized by such fear or diffidence, I doubt this poses an existential threat to autonomy and virtue. If anything, Kant relies on examples of agents acting autonomously under such extreme background conditions in order to show that autonomy can always remain sovereign. Perhaps one might respond that these agents are acting autonomously in a *moment* of fear, but that the absence of fear *generally* is necessary for autonomy. But to make autonomy contingent upon anything empirical would seem to run counter to Kant's practical metaphysics. Further, if Kant's claim that we have a duty to leave the state of nature is addressed (even hypothetically) to pre-state peoples, then this would seem to be an appeal to autonomous reason in those pre-state peoples.

In chapter 3, Surprenant offers another argument in support of civil society's being a precondition of autonomy. This argument centres on liberty (understood in terms of having a range of options) rather than the absence of fear. As he puts it, 'The connection between autonomy and having an adequate range of options is important to ensure that we are able to control all relevant aspects of our lives, something required for autonomy and for an individual to be the author of his own life' (p. 52). Surprenant has a broad notion of autonomy in chapter 3 – encompassing both self-determination and moral autonomy. It seems plausible that having an adequate range of options is required for a robust sense of self-determination. However, I doubt that this can be a precondition of *moral* autonomy. Not having options might make it impossible to *know* whether a person has acted from duty, but autonomous action still seems possible in principle.

Surprenant also offers an argument that participation in civil society can help foster or encourage virtue: 'by passing laws that direct the citizens to perform the appropriate actions, the state promotes public decency and provides the populace with examples of what appear to be good people' (p. 66). I think this suggestion is a good one. Indeed, I suspect that civil society fosters autonomy in other ways too. For example, by requiring citizens to reason publicly from the general will, civil society may also foster the type of impartial reasoning essential to morality.

On the whole, I am sympathetic to many of Surprenant's arguments that various institutions and practices are conducive to virtue. I tend to be more sceptical about claims about the institutional or empirical preconditions of autonomy and virtue. Still, there is no question that fear and oppression can make virtue more difficult. Insofar as we are interested in fostering virtue, then, we ought clearly to abjure institutions that bring about these conditions.<sup>2</sup>

**Kate Moran**

*Brandeis University*

*email: kmoran@brandeis.edu*

### Notes

- 1 I use the following abbreviations: *KpV* = *Critique of Practical Reason*; *MS* = *Metaphysics of Morals*; *Rel* = *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. (The abbreviation used by Surprenant in the indented quotation in §2 refers to Hobbes's *Leviathan*, chapter 13, paragraph 9.)
- 2 Work on this review was generously supported by a Humboldt Foundation Fellowship.

R. Lanier Anderson, *The Poverty of Conceptual Truth: Kant's Analytic/Synthetic Distinction and the Limits of Metaphysics*

New York: Oxford University Press, 2015

Pp. 384

ISBN 9780198724575 (hbk) £50.00

doi:10.1017/S1369415415000369

Every philosopher who has not been living under a rock since 1787 knows that, according to Kant, 'The real problem of pure reason is now contained in the question: How are synthetic judgements *a priori* possible?' (B19). If R. Lanier Anderson is right, then every philosopher interested in Kant's place in the history of metaphysics should know that Kant secured that place partly by answering the question: how are non-analytic judgements possible? Once answered, Anderson's thesis is that 'Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments underwrites a powerful argument against the entire metaphysical program of his Leibnizian-Wolffian predecessors' (p. vii). As he explains, for these predecessors, metaphysics was a science of conceptual truths. And conceptual truths just are those expressed by Kant's analytic judgements. Kant's place in the history of metaphysics is revolutionary, on Anderson's retelling, because Kant shows that metaphysical truths are in fact synthetic, thereby demonstrating 'the poverty of conceptual truth'.