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Response to Ware and Moyar

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I want to thank my critics for responding to my book (Grenberg 2013). I am grateful for their interest in my work and for the time and effort they have put into doing so. I have learned a great deal by thinking about their comments, and reconsidering some ideas in my book. It is going to be impossible for me to respond adequately to all the good questions and criticisms that have been raised. Nonetheless, I will do my best to address the main concerns. I will first make some general comments that I hope will be helpful and clarifying for both critics. I will then turn to comments specific to each critic's comments.[1]

1. Common Misconceptions about Grenberg

It has been interesting to me, since my book came out, to discover a couple of ways in which my ideas have been characterized (including by the present critics) which I feel do not entirely accurately articulate my intent in the book. I take that fact as much as a criticism of myself as anything else. I think I sometimes spoke loosely in ways that I should not have (I will bring up an example of that later). And I suspect that the structure of my book failed to get across what I was hoping it would. More specifically, the first part of the book (three chapters) provides an interpretative framework to bring to the rest of the book. Part II is about the *Groundwork* and part III is about the *Critique of Practical Reason*. But each of these parts takes as its background or interpretative point of view the ideas expressed in part I, which themselves range from discussion of the *Metaphysics of Morals* to the *Religion* to the *Critique of Pure Reason*. And although I did try to highlight points in parts II and III where I was relying upon or assuming elements from the interpretative framework as part of my interpretation of the *Groundwork* or the second *Critique*, it is my suspicion that I should have done that more frequently, more extensively and more clearly.

In any event, I find that two main confusions about my work have tended to occur, both of which are found at various points in the comments of my present critics. I will begin with an explanation of these points.

The Fact is Forced But you Still Have to Pay Attention to it

My critics are quick to point out the central claim of chapter 8, i.e. that the fact of reason is a 'forced' fact. And it is certainly true that both Kant and I claim that the fact of reason is forced upon one. I wanted to be true to the admittedly strong language that Kant uses, and so emphasized it at various points.

I did, however, both in part I and part II, also emphasize that even a forced fact is something one has to pay attention to in order to reap its benefits. I find, however, that my critics do not dwell as much on how I place the receptive or forced nature of the fact within the context of the need for attentiveness, and I find that this absence leads to an overall mischaracterization of my ideas.

When I speak of the fact of reason being 'forced', I am emphasizing that it is something given to us to which we need to be receptive. But receptivity is not an automatic thing. We need to *focus* our attention upon what is given. If we do not, then even when it is being forced upon us, we will not recognize that thing for what it is. This is the case because of a deep fact about human nature. As Kant first points out at the end of *Groundwork* I, then articulates in more depth in the *Religion*, we humans want to find ways to rationalize our way out of what would otherwise appear pretty clearly to us as a duty. We should do this but we would rather do that; so we find ways to convince ourselves that we really are not obligated to the first. This simple tendency toward rationalization – what becomes radical evil in the *Religion* – helps to explain why the apparently simple (quasi-) act of attending carefully to what is given in our moral consciousness is so crucial, so basic to our moral lives and yet so difficult. Even when a recognition of duty is being 'forced' upon us, we humans will be tempted to fight it, to turn our awareness of what is expected of us into something it is not. Pangs of conscience at 3 in the morning will be interpreted as the effect of too much caffeine or alcohol the day before, not as the moral warning signs that they are. So even a forced fact is one that needs to be attended to in order to be 'received' properly. It can be forced by our noumenal selves, but it will have its effect only if our conscious, deliberating selves receive it properly, that is, attentively. Attentiveness is thus an antidote to the deep-seated human tendency towards self-deception; my extensive discussion of the Gallows Man emphasizes the many things he learns from his felt, forced experience *only* when he is attentive to it.

Attentiveness is thus a funny capacity. It is related to receptivity since it is only through being attentive that we can clearly be given what we are

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given. But it is itself a sort of quasi-activity: I need to *focus*! I need to *pay attention*! It is something I *do*; indeed, as I suggest in the book, it is the first of our moral *accomplishments*. It is not that I need never use my will actively in other ways when making decisions. It is just that underlying all that activity of the will is the first receptive/forced moment accessed through the quasi-active/quasi-passive moment of attentiveness to what is given. Kant's account of the fact of reason affirms this crucial first moment of being a moral person.

The Fact is Not a Feeling But is Accessed by a Feeling

The other common confusion is to believe that, on my account, the fact of reason just *is* a feeling. Although he is generally more careful than this in his comments, Owen Ware suggests that I 'identify' the fact with a feeling. He worries that, on my reading, 'the fact of reason and the feeling of respect are identical' (307). What he terms the Affect of Reason interpretation also suggests this understanding of my view, though he also sometimes articulates it more accurately, for example when he says that 'our experience of moral obligation is *accessible* only in the mode of feeling' (301; emphasis added/removed). When Dean Moyar suggests that, for Grenberg, 'the moral law's objectivity is secured by the passivity of feeling' (296), I have a similar worry: what we feel passively is indeed a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for accessing the fact of reason. Again, focused attentiveness is also required.

So am I saying that our passively experienced feelings 'justify' the moral law? Not quite. To be clear, here is what I say in part I when setting up the interpretive framework for the fact of reason:

> Even a non-contingent, common feeling [like the moral feeling of respect] must affirm the justificatory work of reason without replacing it. Felt experience cannot be what justifies the validity of the moral law. Another way of putting this point is to say that this feeling can play only an enabling instead of an evidential role in the justification of the moral law. That is, feeling could not prove practical cognitions, but could still be that upon which I rely to get epistemic access to the thing (for Kant, our rational natures) that will provide evidence or proof of practical cognitions. (58–9)

My point here is that the only way we can gain epistemic access to the categorical obligation the moral law places upon us is *through* a felt experience. This does not mean that the fact of reason is a feeling. Indeed, I spend an

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entire chapter (ch. 9) arguing that the fact is a fact *of* reason. And I spend another chapter (ch. 3) articulating the ways in which feeling can and cannot be involved in morality if Kant wants to avoid collapsing into moral sense theory. The crucial point in chapter 3 was that, whatever role feeling plays in knowing our moral obligations, it cannot be a simple replacement for reason (i.e. that feeling does what reason cannot). Feeling gains us limited access to our rational autonomously legislating selves, and it is our rational autonomously legislating selves that do the work of justifying the validity of moral demands.

So the fact of reason is not a feeling. But it is only through attentive reflection on felt experience that we are able to gain epistemic access to the fact. It is *through* feeling that we learn something deep about our *rational* natures, something that our everyday conscious theoretical rationality cannot access because it is a noumenal fact beyond the reach of that theoretical consciousness.

2. Response to Ware

I turn now to one of Ware's main criticisms: his claim that I cannot successfully defend what he calls proposition (2), namely, that 'what is forced upon us is accessible only in our receptive faculty, i.e. sensibility' (301). Ware argues that there is evidence in Kant's theoretical philosophy that Kant believes one can be attentive to a fact in a purely cognitive, non-receptive way. We can, he says, 'display the pure use of our cognitive faculty as a fact' without appeal to a receptive faculty; instead, it is possible that 'concepts … force' themselves upon you (304) so that, apparently, it is our faculty of understanding (Ware simply calls it a 'cognitive faculty'), not a faculty of receptivity that gains these concepts. Ware then suggests that the same point for making sense of attentiveness is revealed by a reference to Kant's theoretical philosophy at the opening of an important second *Critique* passage, which I removed for the purposes of my argument, namely, that facts can be impressed upon us without appeal to a faculty of receptivity. So in both theoretical and practical philosophy, it is not the case that 'what is forced upon us is accessible only in our receptive faculty, i.e. sensibility'. I wish to respond to this line of criticism.

I must admit that, because I am deeply committed to careful readings of texts, I am sensitive to the accusation that I might have 'adjusted' the relevant text for my purposes. It is true that I omitted the passage Ware mentions. But two points: (a) that passage is not as damning to my reading of things as Ware takes it to be and (b) elsewhere in the book,

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I address at length the theoretical parallel to attentiveness on the practical level, arguing in fact that both require appeal to a receptive faculty. My deleting of the relevant second *Critique* passage in chapter 8 was an effort to streamline discussion to focus on practical issues at that point, having already dealt with the theoretical parallel in chapter 2.

My discussion of the Second Analogy and the concept of causality in chapter 2 articulates an understanding of how, contra Ware, we need to be given something in sensibility so as to make a transcendental argument to the conditions for the possibility of that experience. This is just Kant's point when he notes, famously, that:

> There is no doubt whatever that all our cognition begins with experience; for how else should the cognitive faculty be awakened into exercise if not through objects that stimulate our senses and … bring the activity of our understanding into motion. (B1)

Applied to the Second Analogy, this just means that we start with an experience, something given to our senses, like the ship moving from upstream to downstream, or my viewing of a house. It is only from such given experience of necessary relations of representations that are forced on us (much like the categorical necessitation of the will is forced on the Gallows Man) that we are able to stand back and make *a priori* claims about the conditions for the possibility of this precise experience of necessity. In my book, I make a lot of hay about the idea that we actually *experience* necessity, both theoretically and practically; this kind of experience is the source of both our awareness of pure *a priori* concepts theoretically and pure *a priori* moral laws practically.

Now Ware asserts that the passage he quotes from the B Introduction shows that Kant accepts that we need not appeal to a receptive faculty in order for a concept to be forced upon us. But I disagree. Both in that passage and in the one I excised from the second *Critique*, Kant makes a general claim about how we become aware of concepts that hold with necessity. These claims are not so much an assertion about *how* that awareness of necessity comes about, only an indication *that* such awareness comes about. Here are the two passages in question:

> Thus convinced by the necessity with which this concept forces itself on you, you must concede that it has its seat in your faculty of cognition. (B6)

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> We can become aware of pure practical laws just as we are aware of pure theoretical principles, by attending to the necessity with which reason prescribes them to us and to the setting aside of all empirical conditions to which reason directs us. (5: 30)

Both of these passages state simply that, if one removes all interfering 'empirical conditions' (i.e. if only you 'attend'), one finds that the necessity of concepts or moral laws force themselves upon one. Neither of these passages states *how* that occurs. Furthermore, Ware refers only to a passage from the B Introduction, a point in the *Critique* when details of how this happens have not yet been articulated. So interpreters are left to figure that out for themselves.

Ware states the following:

> I understand Kant's point to be that moral laws, like pure theoretical principles, have a unique modal status (they express strict necessity), and in both cases we are actually conscious of their necessity. In the practical sphere, he is saying, we are actually conscious of the necessity of moral laws, and that is sufficient to show that pure reason is practical within us. (306)

I agree entirely with what Ware says here. The point on which we disagree concerns *how* that consciousness or awareness of the necessity of moral laws and theoretical principles comes about. Ware says we use only our 'cognitive faculty' here (understanding for theoretical principles and reason for practical principles?), but this does not make sense. The understanding is not a capacity for receiving things. This is a basic Kantian point:

> Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty of cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is *given* to us, through the latter it is *thought* in relation to that representation … (A50/B74)

So I would turn Ware's ideas back to him and ask the question: what story can Kant tell about how one receives something, or has something forced upon herself, *without* appeal to sensibility? My account preserves the traditional Kantian epistemological idea that knowledge requires sensibility and understanding. Your account suggests that, both theoretically and

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practically, awareness of necessity is forced upon us without appeal to sensibility but only to the faculty of concepts, i.e. understanding. But I cannot make sense of how that would work. And indeed, when one looks later in the first *Critique*, for example, to the ways that Kant describes in the Second Analogy as to how it is that we come to terms with the necessity of the concept of causality, he himself sticks with the idea that we start with what is received in sense experience, then think about the conditions for the possibility of that experience. I find nowhere in Kant's writings that he explicitly defends the idea that the faculty of understanding is a capacity for receiving things. So even with further discussion of the theoretical parallel to my account of being attentive to the necessity of the moral law, I continue to assert that both cases require a moment of receptivity (in the theoretical case, sense perception or experience; in the practical case, felt experience) in which something is given to us upon which we can attend and reason.

I certainly agree with Ware in that we are both friends of feeling in Kant! I appreciate his offering of an alternative way of thinking about the integration of moral feeling that is more significant than Allison's account but which preserves the stated structure of the Analytic of the second *Critique*. Ware suggests that, although we have some non-felt recognition or consciousness of the authority of the moral law (thus 'justifying' its authority for us – call this 'objective' determination of the will?), this first level of justification is strengthened and confirmed when subjectively we recognize its authority and thus are motivated to act on it through the moral feeling of respect. This subjective level of determination of the will is thus both motivational and justificatory in its role. In Ware's words:

> [W]e can distinguish the fact of reason (as our consciousness of the moral law's authority) and the feeling of respect (as the effect this consciousness has on sensibility), yet maintain that Kant's analysis of respect is central to his project of justification … Chapter III *completes* Kant's project of justification in the second *Critique*: it does so by showing how pure reason can be 'subjectively practical', i.e. an incentive for living one's life by its precepts. (309; emphasis added)

Ware thinks that by accepting this two-stage justificatory process, 'we can appreciate the justificatory weight of respect, in other words, without making it identical to the fact of reason'. I have already explained how I am not making the fact and respect identical; setting that aside, it does seem that Ware's account places more distance between justification and feeling, allowing first a non-felt moment of justification, followed up

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by a felt moment of justification which is simultaneously a moment of motivation to action.

I agree that such a reading would make the Analytic more coherent. It seems to me, though, that this reading gives feeling a role for justification only by collapsing the distinction between justification and motivation. That the moral law can, as Ware puts it, be 'subjectively practical', i.e. that it can in fact be operative in my life, seems more of a motivational claim than a justificatory one. I suppose it affirms the initial justification in that we discover that we are actually capable of acting on the thing to which we already know we are obligated. It is hard for me to decide on this account just how sure I am about being obligated to moral demands *before* I am motivated to act on them. Do I have to wait until I succeed in acting on moral demands to confirm that I was obligated to them at all? But if not, a further problem arises: I would already, before motivation to action and before my experience of moral feeling, know that I am obligated to the moral law. But that is what seems to be out of step with Kant's understanding of the common moral agent. It would be odd, for the common agent, to split recognition of the authority of the moral law into two separate moments, one austere, non-felt recognition followed only later by a felt motivational state. A central idea of my account is that experience of the moral feeling of respect simply is definitional of the human moral experience, from beginning to end. I encounter moral demands through this feeling; although I did not focus on this in the book, we are motivated by moral demands through taking up this feeling in the right way. This point about the felt-throughout coherence of common moral experience was exactly the point I was making against Allison's account in my book. So although Ware's account keeps the Analytic in better order, and it does provide a secondary justificatory role for feeling, in maintaining an artificial distinction between common non-felt and common felt states of consciousness, it is less true to a coherent picture of the common moral agent.

Nonetheless, Ware takes his reading to be more in line with the order of the Analytic, and I will grant him that point. But my way of reading the Analytic is that it is more at odds with itself than Ware suggests. There are two competing stories about the grounding of morality, one common and one more expertly philosophical. My reading highlights one of those strands, arguing that the Analytic has stronger epistemic justification if we accept the epistemic role of feeling in consciousness of the moral law (and that the expertly philosophical account has no adequate explanation of the source of that consciousness).

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3. Response to Moyar

I turn now to the concerns raised by Dean Moyar. I should begin by emphasizing that I am not a Fichte scholar, and that I do not consider myself qualified to assess the ways in which Moyar interprets Fichte, though I am happy to trust him about how he interprets Fichte. My larger worry – and an area in which I do feel I have a bit more expertise! – is the question of whether and to what extent we can bring certain Fichtean ideas *to Kant's* texts. I suspect this move towards Fichtean ideas is at the heart of the disagreements that exist between me and Moyar. In particular, they seem to me to violate the limits of reason as Kant would want to establish them.

First, Moyar worries that I abandon all appeal to causality in favour of moral obligation (I will comment on that shortly), and suggests that we should separate activity of the self and universality of law. In making that separation,

> Fichte's idea was to identify a free cause not first and foremost with the law, but rather to identify freedom in the first-person phenomenological viewpoint with pure activity, the basis of an intelligible or rational causality that is more primitive than the universality of law. (295)

It is just this move that strikes me as exceedingly un-Kantian. I am happy to admit that Fichte makes this move, but to try to bring to Kant a notion of rational causality that is more 'primitive' than that rational causality inevitably associated with morality via the Reciprocity Thesis is to try to resolve Kantian interpretive issues by turning him into Fichte.

Why is this move un-Kantian? First, as I have just suggested, Kant himself would not speak of a rational causality detached from moral demands in this way. Second – and this is perhaps more crucial – claiming that we have epistemic access to this primitive form of causality alongside space/time (saying, as Moyar does later, that 'we have a third form of intuition, the intuition of acting as such', 298) simply destroys the limits of reason as Kant would accept them. As I have argued in the book, by the time we get to the second *Critique*, Kant even abandons *any* phenomenological access to freedom as he typically understands it:

> Our cognition of the unconditionally practical … cannot start from freedom, for we can neither be immediately conscious of this, since the first concept of it is negative, nor can we conclude

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> to it from experience, since experience lets us cognize only the law of appearances and hence the mechanism of nature, the direct opposite of freedom. (5: 29)

We do not have an experience of freedom, felt or otherwise; we do not experience ourselves as positively, actively free. Period. I know that this is a huge difference between Fichteans and Kantians; I can even lament that my own first-personal phenomenological experience is lacking something that Fichteans apparently experience. But I accept Kant's insight here that we do not experience ourselves as positively and actively free. And, to get back to my original point, claiming we do is a major violation of the limits that Kant institutes for what we can and cannot know about the noumenal realm. To experience myself as free would be to experience my noumenal self, my rational spontaneity as such. And although Kant – and I – think that it is important to discuss such things and even make practical claims about them, to claim that I *experience* myself as free in this robust sense would be to violate the limits of reason as established in the first *Critique*. Kant does toy briefly with the idea, in the *Groundwork*, that we can get experiential access 'to what there may be of pure activity' in us (4: 451). But it was precisely because he sought this non-morally informed conception of our rational selves that the work of *Groundwork* III was a phenomenological failure. As I argue in chapter 5, once one looks at what experience of freedom we actually have, it turns out, at best, to be one of negative freedom (i.e. one of experiencing ourselves as not constrained by things external to us). But no amount of attentive reflection on that experience is going to yield freedom in the positive sense of affirmation of moral obligation. There is just not enough to that experience to yield those conclusions.

So although I agree with Moyar that Fichte's appeal to an intuition of activity as such has some similarities to my notion of phenomenological experience (it is not an experience of objects, it is accessed through feeling), I do not recognize Fichte's appeal to an intuition of activity as such as the *right* phenomenological starting point. Kant hoped in the *Groundwork* that feeling would get us access to this primordial part of ourselves; but that was exactly where his first phenomenological attempt failed. To get to things noumenally active, we need to take the long way around through our genuine felt experience of being constrained and obligated; and the freedom we will be able to claim as a result (not as a felt experience, but as something we infer attentively from our felt experience of obligation) is always and only that freedom necessarily connected with our capacity as moral agents, not a more pure or primordial non-moral freedom.

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Moyar states: 'The key point is that I claim (following Fichte's reading of Kant) that noumenal agency is just the consideration of action under the perspective of freedom, whereas Grenberg has a more metaphysical picture of noumenal agency in mind' (295). So Moyar claims a more basic understanding of noumenal agency that can be equated with what he calls a 'natural finite' perspective on conscience. But I just do not see how he can have it both ways: is this noumenal agency, or is this natural finite human consciousness? Maybe I am missing something about how Moyar understands things, but it seems to me that his Fichtean commitments do not allow him to reduce consciousness from the perspective of freedom to a natural finite thing. I think he is more noumenal than he wants to admit. I am confused too about why Moyar thinks that the Fichtean two-standpoint view is closer to the common point of view than my own. It seems neither common nor Kantian to me.

One might accuse me of violating similar limits when I claim a felt experience of categorical obligation as the starting point. But it was with just these concerns about what can and cannot come within phenomenological experience that I argued that we must begin with the feeling of categorical obligation. Again remember: the fact of reason itself is not a feeling; indeed, like freedom, the fact is something that cannot be located within the experience (felt or otherwise) of finite rational beings. Rather, I experience a feeling of a particular sort which attentive reflection reveals must have a distinctive causal history. That is, it must come from the moral law acting upon my will and sensibility; without such a rational cause, we could not otherwise explain the experience of absolute necessitation of the will. And so, unlike the bare felt experience of negative freedom, the new felt experience of necessitation that emerges in the conflict between morality and inclinations *does* yield results upon attentive reflection. That is why it is more phenomenologically satisfying.

In my move from a felt experience of freedom to a felt experience of categorical obligation, Moyar worries further that I am rejecting all appeal to rational causality as such. That is not true. Moyar says, correctly, that 'it is precisely a reliance on *theoretical* arguments about causality that Grenberg is determined to reject in the name of the common point of view. She criticizes Kant's argument in *Groundwork* III in part by arguing that it relies on a thesis of "global causal determinism"' (294; emphasis added). He is right that part of my assessment of the failure of *Groundwork* III involves pointing out that Kant feels the need to appeal to theoretical claims from the first *Critique* that have not been accessed from his nascent practical point of view, which is decidedly a

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phenomenological point of view. I thus argue that appeal to a theoretical claim in the middle of a phenomenological, practical argument is out of order. But Moyar then goes on to say:

> [I]t is very hard for a Kantian to give up the equation of moral willing = rational cause = law. I think that Grenberg does rely on this equation when she argues, for the formal determination of the will, that 'a rational cause that holds with necessity has to be a merely formal cause' (Grenberg 2013: 239), so there does seem to be a certain tension in her view on this point. One could try to do without causation altogether, but that would itself be contrary to our common moral intuitions about willing and responsibility. (294–5)

Here is where Moyar misunderstands my position (or at least tends in that direction). The fact that I reject Kant's appeal to a theoretical point about causality when he is in the middle of a practical argument does not mean that I reject 'the equation of willing = rational cause = law'. Indeed, as Moyar rightly points out, I cling firmly to that equation when I go on to assess what we can learn about the fact of reason when we attend to our felt experience of obligation. The section from which Moyar quotes is one in which I argue that the feeling of obligation the Gallows Man experiences, when attended to, reveals itself as evidence of the fact of reason. In other words, the felt experience points us back towards its cause (which is not itself 'given' in the feeling). What it points us back to, amongst other things, is that, whatever causes my feeling of necessitation, it has to be formal not material; this is because a material cause would not be adequate to the experience I in fact have of absolute necessitation of my will. The law I encounter in my felt experience must have a rational cause, and that rational cause is the moral law itself, residing in my noumenal self. So yes, I whole-heartedly accept the equation of willing, rational cause and law. What I reject is the claim that I could encounter such things in felt experience, or any other experience. Again, the point is that I have a felt *experience* of obligation, an experience which, upon attentive reflection, leads me to acquire certain *beliefs* about rational causality and its effect on my will. I do not experience rational causality, or myself as in the midst of using it.

Moyar worries that I am not entitled to this move from felt experience to the objective moral law. Here is what he says, first quoting me, then commenting on what I say:

> 'Moyar is, however, wrong to insist that a first-personal reading of the Fact requires of us the separation between the activity of

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> the rational self and lawfulness. Moyar misses the connection between first-personal moral experiences and lawfulness because he does not explore more carefully how attention to receptive and felt experience (instead of active, nonfelt experience) points us, mysteriously, to just this objective moral law as the ground of our felt experience of constraint.' (Grenberg 2013: 155–6). Not surprisingly, I have some questions about this mystery. In particular, I am just not sure how Grenberg makes the case that this feeling of constraint is indicative of the objective moral law. Could there not be another source of this feeling? (296)

I will comment on the worry of mystery shortly. But first, Moyar worries that I have not shown that the moral law itself is the cause of my felt experience. And in a sense he is right. As the passage quoted from me points out, we need to admit something mysterious about the cause of my felt experience of obligation. The moral law is not 'given' in my felt experience the way 'absolute necessitation of my will' *is* given in felt experience. This is just the experience of the Gallows Man who realizes that he feels compelled to avoid malicious lies even if this brings harm to him. If the moral law is not given in experience (because it is beyond the limits of reason to hope that it could be), we need instead to take what we can from what we do experience as saying something about what must have caused that experience. In chapter 9, I defend the claim that 'the Gallows Man's experience of moral obligation is an experience of the fact *of* reason; that is, an experience of the objective, synthetic a priori cognition of that necessary, universal, autonomously legislated law determining the will by its mere form' (207). This language reveals to me how I failed to express myself clearly. What I should have said is that attentive reflection on the felt experience of moral obligation reveals that this felt experience must be *caused* by something that is 'necessary [and] universal', that is, an 'autonomously legislated law determining the will by its mere form'. The point is this: attentive reflection on my felt experience reveals that, *whatever* the cause of it is, it is something that must have these qualities (necessity, universality, formality, autonomy). I will not go through all my arguments for each of these points here. But I do think I have shown, whatever the cause of my felt experience is, it has these qualities. So I can agree with Moyar when he wonders whether there might be something other than the moral law that is the cause of my felt experience, *to this extent*: there might be something other than the moral law that is necessary, universal, formal and autonomous. But I do not know what that thing would be. We do better to admit, while I cannot simply know (in the theoretical sense) the moral law, that the moral law is the most reasonable thing to understand as fulfilling these conditions. I can

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thus say that I have a practical cognition of the moral law that is compatible with me also finding something mysterious about this cause upon which I have stumbled through attentive reflection on my felt experience.

But we need to think further about this mystery. Moyar seems perplexed by my willingness to embrace mystery and wonder as part of a rigorous philosophical account of Kant's ethics: 'I have some questions about this mystery'. But let us think about mystery in Kant's writings. Once we accept Kant's account of the *limits* of reason in the ways I have suggested, and reject the more Fichtean hope of knowledge of our active, noumenal selves from the inside, it should not surprise us that we need, as rational beings, to acquire a different relationship to the realm of the noumenal than that of simple knowledge. I argue in the book that what we end up with is a practical, not a theoretical, cognition of both the moral law and freedom, but that practical cognition is the kind of epistemic animal that sits happily with the idea that there remains something mysterious about what is thereby cognized. To say that we practically cognize something is simply to say that we understand enough of it for practical purposes: here, for knowing what our obligations are and what we should do. But knowing that much about something leaves plenty of room for us to admit that we do not know that thing – here, the moral law – completely. We can thus still wonder at, or find mysterious, that very thing of which we have a practical cognition.

Kant himself, in both the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique,* reflects on the mystery that we must admit about those noumenal things we cannot know fully. He emphasizes that what we wonder at is not moral obligation itself; that is at times all too painfully clear to us. I know very clearly what I have to do! What we wonder at instead (and indeed, what we have a duty to wonder at) is the moral law's 'inscrutable source' or cause (*Metaphysics of Morals*, 6: 400). Here is another example, now from the *Groundwork*, one of my favourite examples of Kant's embrace of incomprehensibility. Although this point is made after the (failed) deduction of the moral law from freedom in *Groundwork* III, I would argue that it still applies to the recognition of the qualities of the law that must cause our felt experience of obligation in the second *Critique*, and is entirely of a piece with the passage just quoted from the *Metaphysics of Morals*:

> It is … no censure of our deduction of the supreme principle of morality, but a reproach that must be brought against human reason in general, that it cannot make comprehensible as regards

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> its absolute necessity an unconditional practical law (such as the categorical imperative must be); for, that it is unwilling to do this through a condition – namely by means of some interest laid down as a basis – cannot be held against it, since then it would not be the moral law, that is, the supreme law of freedom. And thus we do not indeed comprehend the practical unconditional necessity of the moral imperative, but we nevertheless comprehend its *incomprehensibility*; and this is all that can fairly be required of a philosophy that strives in its principles to the very boundary of human reason. (4: 463, Kant's emphasis)

What I take Kant to be saying here is that if we are going to set our moral sights high (if we are going to hope to say something about a supreme, unconditional law of morality and not just about prudential maxims), we must simultaneously be willing to accept that there will be something about the object of study that is in principle incomprehensible to us. I whole-heartedly accept this point! To lay my cards on the table (as Moyar did when he admitted he was a Hegelian), this is an account of practical cognition that makes it compatible not only with mystery but also, eventually, with a rational faith in God. That, however, is a story for another occasion.

So Kant accepts a sense of mystery that sits happily with practical cognition. But I think that contemporary interpreters are hesitant to integrate these sections, hoping instead to set them aside. Philosophers do not like it when we cannot know something! But I think a commitment to the limits of reason is so deeply a Kantian thing that it is better to take Kant at his word here and to realize that a strong metaphysical reading of our noumenal selves requires that we not only admit but welcome a relationship of mystery or wonder to moral philosophy. With an acceptance of the limits of reason comes the welcoming of wonder into philosophy.

One final reaction to a series of Moyar's comments, even as I admit that space does not permit me to respond to everything interesting and good that he has brought to the table. Moyar wonders at the end of his comments about my understanding of the relationship of the common to the philosophical, and asks whether we are licensed to 'correct common morality with tools of philosophy' (299). This one is easy: No! To expand: the whole premise of my book has been that our common experience of morality is the life-blood for practical philosophy. Unless we had these common experiences, philosophers would not be at all entitled to reflect upon things moral. And they are now entitled to reflect

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on things moral only to the extent that attentive reflection on our felt experience allows. The work of philosophy is not to correct common moral experience, but only to unpack, clarify and reveal it. I think this too is a very Kantian point of view. In my book I note numerous passages from Kant's moral works (especially the second *Critique* and the *Metaphysics of Morals*) in which he is almost derisive about so-called 'expert' approaches to morality. Here is one of them, from the second *Critique*:

> The direct opposite of the principle of morality is the principle of *one's own* happiness … This conflict [between morality and happiness], however, is not merely logical; … it is instead practical and would ruin morality altogether were not the voice of reason in reference to the will so distinct, so irrepressible, and so audible even to the most common human beings; thus it can maintain itself only in the perplexing speculations of the schools, which are brazen enough to shut their ears to that heavenly voice in order to support a theory they need not break their heads over. (5: 35)

It seems that Kant is not worried about correcting the common point of view by appeal to expert philosophical reflection. To the contrary, he is worried about how expert philosophers get so attached to their pet theories (and the publications, recognition, jobs, etc. they might get from them) that they lose sight of what I call that 'life-blood' of practical philosophy, our common moral experiences.

Moyar wonders what this 'ordinary moral judgement' would look like, with particular concern for the relative relationship of the experience of feelings and consciousness of the moral law. He also says that I have misunderstood his own order of first and second-order moral judgements. I regret that misunderstanding on my part. His clarification of first-order object-oriented versus second-order subject-oriented 'supervisory' judgements is helpful to me in correcting my misunderstanding, though I could use further clarification myself of his order of things. For example, is not the supervisory function at least moving us *towards* choice? Why would I engage in such oversight except for the practical purpose of deciding what to do on the best evidence possible? In any event, I want to respond to some of Moyar's queries on the order of moral judgements. I suspect that I will not be able to satisfy his concerns fully, but here is a beginning. Here is what Moyar asks:

> The question Fichte's example raises for me is just how Grenberg wants to develop the Kantian appeal to feeling. Is the feeling of

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> respect illustrated by the Gallows Man just supposed to provide a grounding for morality *in general*? Or does feeling also have an epistemic and justificatory role in the process of practical judgement? I take it that Grenberg finds more attractive the model of morality in which the finite subject passively feels the force of the moral law against inclination. This could result in the directive 'If it feels bad, it must be right', though I would be surprised if Grenberg would endorse any such idea. I am really not sure what direction exactly Grenberg wants to go here, and I would like to learn more about her views on ordinary moral judgement. (298–9)

I hope from what I said in response to Ware's questions that it is clear that feeling does not justify our obligation to the moral law. It plays an epistemically enabling role in showing us that our own rational natures justify the authority of the moral law for my will. Feeling plays an enabling, not a straightforwardly evidential or justificatory role in knowing the demands of the moral law.

So the order of things is like this: I have a particular felt experience, perhaps not unlike the Gallows Man's experience (though hopefully less intense!) of wanting to do something but worrying that it is the wrong thing to do. I experience this through feeling. Like the Gallows Man, I find that this 'it would be wrong' sticks to my feelings and will not go away. In terms relevant to the moral feeling of respect, I am feeling the 'negative' aspect of the feeling, that constraint of my inclination that says 'Hey! Do it!' This feeling of the constraint of my inclinations will not go away, even when I try to ignore it. It wakes me up at 3 in the morning as a pang of conscience; it haunts me. In Kant's language in the second *Critique*, it occurs even against my will: 'my spirit bows whether I want it or whether I do not' (5: 77). That is, it does if I am honest with myself. And this is a big 'if', for this is the moment when I say to myself that I must 'set … aside all empirical conditions' (5: 30), i.e. my strong desire to do the thing in question. So, if I am honest with myself, I look at this conflict and learn something from it: this tugging on my feelings that will not go away is a sign of the fact that I am obligated to ways of acting that are not conditional upon my inclinations. I learn that, and decide that these grounds for acting (the unconditional ones) hold with more authority than those grounded in my inclinations. I have, in other words, become conscious of the authority of the moral law. These feelings then are something that precede my consciousness of the moral law, and upon which I rely to understand what the moral law is and its authority

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over me. Thus: '[A]ny consciousness of obligation depends upon moral feeling to make us aware of the constraint present in the thought of duty' (*Metaphysics of Morals*, 6: 399). Call this consciousness of the moral law consciousness of the objective determination of my will. I have not yet decided what I will do; i.e. my will has not yet been subjectively determined. If I allow the authority of unconditional demands to have its proper sway in my choice, I will do the right thing. If, instead, I allow 'empirical conditions' to win the day, I will do the wrong thing.

Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to say once again that I am deeply appreciative to Ware and Moyar for commenting on my book; I am aware of the amount of work it takes to be a responsible critic of a book, and I am deeply appreciative. I am also exceedingly grateful to be working on ideas in Kant's ethics at a time when there is so much fruitful work and discussion going on in this area, not the least of which is provided by my present critics. Thank you for being part of what makes Kant studies right now such a vibrant and satisfying area of study!

Notes

1 In citations from Kant in what follows I refer by the standard 'A/B' pagination to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, with translations drawn from Kant 2009, and for quotations from Kant's ethical writings I cite by the standard method from the Akademie edn, with translations drawn from Kant 1997 and 1998.

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