Appetimus sub ratione boni: Kant's Practical Principles between Crusius and Leibniz

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For Leibniz, freedom cannot consist in an ability to act without any sufficiently determining cause. That would violate the principle of reason, replacing God's omniscience and omnipotence with "the chance of the Epicureans"[1]. But, of course, Leibniz is equally concerned to avoid the necessitarianism represented by Spinoza and the "the sect of new Stoics"[2], and to this end he argues for the metaphysical contingency of created nature. But it is important to see that, for Leibniz, since all of nature is contingent, contingency is far from constituting a sufficient condition for freedom: what distinguishes human beings from the rest of nature is not the contingency of their actions, but rather the fact they are *intelligent* (*Theodicy*, §34). Leibniz thus defines 'freedom' variously as *rational* spontaneity (*spontaneitas rationalis*) (*Ak*. VI.4: 1380), as spontaneity with *intelligence* (*spontaneitas intellegentis*) (*Gerhardt* 7:108) or as the property of being "spontaneous with choice" (*spontaneum cum electione*) (*Ak*. VI 3: 133). By this, Leibniz means that we act according to a conception of what is *good*: "The free substance is self-determining and that according to the motive [*le motif*] of good perceived by the understanding, which inclines it without compelling it"[3]. In finite beings, this conception of the good may be very mistaken: "free will tends toward good, and if it meets with evil it is by accident, for this evil is concealed beneath the good" (*Theodicy*, §154). But in every case a will without any (sufficiently determining) motive is a fiction (*Gerhardt* 7:371f.).

In the *Nova dilucidatio* of 1755, Kant defends an account of human freedom that is Leibnizian in the relevant respect: the freedom of the will is not a freedom from causal determination, but rather the will's ability to choose whatever seems best. On this account, the actions of a human being are necessitated by a sufficiently determining cause, but are still free since they are not determined by the "external enticements and impulses" (*sollicitationes et impulsus externi*) that necessitate "animal or physico-mechanical actions" (*actiones brutae s.*

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[1] Leibniz, G. W.: *Die Philosophische Schriften*. Ed. C. I. Gerhardt. Berlin. 1875-90, 7: 374. Cited henceforth as *Gerhardt.*

[2] Leibniz, G. W.: *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*. Ed. the Prussian (now German) Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1923–),VI 4: 1384-1388. Cited henceforth as *Ak.*

[3] Leibniz, G. W.: *Theodicy*. Trans. E. M. Huggard. London. 1951, §288.

physico-mechanicae). The actions of a human being, as the actions of an *intelligent* being, are determined rather by inner grounds (*per rationes internas*) namely by motives of the understanding (*per motiva intellectus*) (AA 01:400-1).

We can see more clearly that this is a version of the Leibnizian equation of freedom with rational spontaneity when we note that according to the Wolffian psychology underlying Kant's view, these motives (*motiva* or *Bewegungsgründe*) are the representations of the good and the bad that serve as the ground or reason (*Grund*) why we will something.[4] For Wolff, a person cannot choose what he represents as worse over what he represents as better; motives thus "confer certainty"; and yet this is compatible with freedom since, the person could choose the worse if he wished, that is, if he were to represent it as better (*German Metaphysics* §§521, 517). Wolff concludes from this that the free will is *self-determining* (*German Metaphysics* §§518-519, 515).[5]

Kant, of course, subsequently rejects the Leibnizian account of freedom as a mere "freedom of a turnspit" ("Freiheit eines Bratenwenders") (KpV, AA 05: 97): the claim that actions are free simply because they arise from motives of the understanding—because they are actions "whose natural determining ground lies *internally* in the acting being" ("davon der bestimmende Naturgrund innerlich im wirkenden Wesen liegt")—is therefore merely a "wretched subterfuge" ("ein elender Behelf") (95.29-96.08). In making these claims, Kant sides with the libertarianism advocated by Crusius against the compatibilism of Leibniz and Wolff.[6] However, in notes and lectures throughout his career, Kant continues to define the free will in the Leibnizian terms familiar from the *Nova dilucidatio*: the free will is the will determined by motives (*motiva*/*Bewegunsgründe*) rather than stimuli or sensible impulses (*stimuli*/*Antriebe*). For example, in the early 1780s Kant defines the *arbitrium liberum* as the

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[4] Wolff, Chr.: *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt, den Liebhabern der Wahrheit mitgetheilt.* Halle. 1751 [[1]1720], §496. Cited henceforth as *German Metaphysics*.

[5] Cf. *Vernünfftige Gedancken von der Menschen Thun und Lassen zu Beföderung ihrer Glückseeligkeit*. Frankfurt and Leipzig. 1733 [[1]1720], §1. Cited henceforth as *German Ethics.* Selections are translated in Schneewind, J. B. (ed.): *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant*. Cambridge. 1990, 331-350.

[6] Crusius, Chr. A.: *Anweisung vernünftig zu leben.* Leipzig. 1744, §40. Selections are translated in Schneewind, J. B. (ed.): *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant*, 568-585. Cited henceforth as *Anweisung*.

will "that is determined by motives" ("das durch motiva determiniert wird") (V-MP/Mron, AA 29: 896) and writes:

> Die Freyheit wird negativ definirt durch *independentiam a necessitatione per stimulos*; positiv aber durch das Vermögen, nach motiven zu handeln, also nach der diiudication des Guten und Bösen [...].
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> Freedom is defined negatively as *independentia a necessiatione per stimulos*; but positively as the power to act according to motives, thus according to the judgment of good and evil [...]. [Refl 1043, 15:467.08-10].[7]

Such claims appear to be very close to the Leibnizian view of the *Nova dilucidatio*. In fact, the language is so close to Baumgarten's text that we might think that such statements are merely Kant's explications of Baumgarten's version of the thesis that freedom is rational spontaneity.[8] But Kant's own published definitions of the "negative" concept of freedom also always refer to the independence from determination by *sensible* (non-rational) impulses or desires rather than in terms of a lack of determination (e.g., *KrV* A534/B562; *MdS* 6:213f., 226; *KpV* 5:33).

Despite this obvious continuity with the Leibnizian account of freedom as rational spontaneity, Kant's view in the 1770s marks a key shift in understanding *how* the human being acts according to motives. One way we can understand Kant's emerging view of motives is as an attempt to accommodate Crusian objections to the Leibnizian account of freedom without following Crusius in divorcing the will from reason or understanding and thus any conception of the good: that would make freedom seem to be a "blind" power.

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[7] Similar claims are made in Refl 1008 [from the mid-1760s or possibly 1770s], 1010 [1769-1777?], 1012 [1772-1775?], and in V-MP-L $_1$/Pölitz, AA 28:255, and V-MP-K$_3$/Arnoldt [1790s], AA 29:1015.38-1016.02.

[8] See Baumgarten, A. G.: *Metaphysica*. Halle. ^{4}1757, §§719, 690.

Crusius acknowledges that the will always has motives for its actions.[9] But he adds that the will is free to choose *among* its motives, and is thus free even to choose what is represented by the understanding as the worse (*Anweisung* §56). Kant agrees with Crusius against the Leibnizians (and thus against his own view of the *Nova dilucidatio*) that the motives of the human will do not determine how the will actually acts. But Kant never accepts the Crusian idea that freedom of the will is the indifferent ability to choose *among* motives. For Kant, the will is practical reason itself (*e.g.*, GMS, AA 04: 412.28-30)—something unthinkable on a Crusian view. But to hold on to the Leibnizian view that freedom is acting from motives while trying to leave room for the possibility that we can fail to act on these motive, Kant needs to introduce an innovation that moves him beyond both Crusius and the Leibnizians. The innovation is the claim that motives are representations are of the good telling us how we *ought* to act—not representations determining how we *actually* do act (Wolff) or representations articulating the reasons for action among which we can choose without any further reason (Crusius). That is, on Kant's emerging view motives express an *objective* rather than a *subjective* conception of the good: motives are *imperatives* for human beings. Thus, in a later addition to the *Reflexion* quoted above, Kant glosses the intellectual impelling causes that distinguish freedom from nature with the note: "practical laws—ought" ("practische Gesetze — sollen") (Refl 1043 15: 467.13f.). And in *Reflexionen* from the same group, he defines practical rules as motives (*motiva*), which, as objects for the understanding "can thus only determine freedom" ("können also nur die Freyheit bestimmen") (Refl 1037, AA 15:466) and notes that intellectual appetitions stand under imperatives such that moral motives are pure motives (*motiva pura*) (Refl 1044, AA 15:467).

Both Wolff and Crusius present accounts of what we ought to do—but in each case these accounts are distinct from their account of our motives. On Wolff's account, moral obligation is based on the will's relation to the "law of nature" expressing the fact that the will ought to increase its own perfection (and simultaneously the perfection of others). On this view, we have a *motive* to act morally only insofar as we have a rational insight into the constitution of nature and of ourselves sufficient to see what actions really do increase our perfection; thus the moral law obligates universally only in the sense that everyone *would* have a motive to act morally *if* they were perfectly rational, that is, if they knew what was truly best for them

[9] See *Anweisung* §58; *Entwurf der notwendigen Vernunft-Wahrheiten*. Leipzig. 1745, §§308, 451 (cited henceforth as *Entwurf*); and *Dissertatio philosophica de appetitibus insitis voluntatis humane* [[1]1742], as published in Part II of *Opuscula Philosophico-Theologica.* Leipzig. 1750, §1 (cited henceforth cited as *Diss. de appetitibus*).

(*German Ethics* §§8-23). Alternatively, if we are not "reasonable human beings" we must be given a motive to act morally by political authority in the form of rewards and punishments that make our more immediate welfare conditional upon compliance with the "law of nature" (*German Ethics* §8, 39).

Rejecting this intellectualization of morality, Crusius, claims that the ordinary human understanding already possesses the motive to conform to the divine moral law in the form of the innate "drive of conscience" (*Gewissenstrieb*). But Crusius has difficulty explaining why we *ought* to act according to *this* motive among others we also possess: he claims that we ought to choose in accordance with the objectively best motive (*Anweisung* §52), but he does not link the account of what is objectively the best with an account of *our own* reasons for action (motives). What counts as objectively the best, or what we have most reason to do, Crusius calls the 'norms of actions' (*norma actionum*). He distinguishes these grounds or reasons from causes by claiming that these norms signify "not that something exists, but rather that it ought to exist [*existere debere*]"[10] . On this basis, Crusius goes on to define the *principium rationis sufficientis moralis*: that nothing *is to be done* without a sufficient reason (*Diss. de usu* §32). This principle is not contained in the Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason since a sufficient reason in Leibniz's sense is always a reason why something is (*ratio* cur *res sit*) (§33) or a principle of physical existence (*principium existentiae physicae*) rather than an principle of moral existence (*principium existeniae moralis*), a reason why it is the case that something *should* happen or is allowed to happen (*quo sit vt aliquid fieri debeat, vel liceat*) (§34). This distinction clearly anticipates Kant's distinction between laws of nature dictating what happens and imperatives dictating what *ought* to happen (e.g., *KrV* A547/B575-A550/B578 and *GMS* 4:387.21-388.02). Moreover, Crusius's division of *principia existentiae moralis* into either *principia prudentiae* or *principia iustitiae* (*Diss. de usu* §38) anticipates Kant's distinction between *motiva pragmatica* and *motiva moralia*—that is, between categorical and hypothetical imperatives (§30). However, the essential point to note here is that Crusius's *principia*, unlike Kant's imperatives, are not *principia* of our own reason. That is, *they are not motives*, and hence (like Wolff's law of nature) they form no part of a moral psychology of freedom. They are objective, but also impersonal: they are not *our* reasons. In terms that Kant introduces in the *Groundwork*, both Crusius and Wolff take the relation of the will to the moral law to be one of heteronomy. If *objective* reasons for action

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[10] *Dissertatio philosophica de usu et limitibus principii rationis determinantis, vulgo sufficientis* [[1]1743] as published in Part III of *Opuscula Philosophico-Theologica*, §30. Cited henceforth as *Diss. de usu*.

are simultaneously motives or *principles of our own will* and if, in particular, the moral law is a law of our own will, the relation of the will to the moral law is instead one of autonomy.

Despite this important difference from Crusius, Kant nevertheless follows Crusius rather than Leibniz to the extent that he holds that there is a gap between motives and the subjective moving force that actually brings about an action. And this requires an important terminological deviation from Baumgarten. Baumgarten considers both motives and stimuli to be incentives (*Triebfeder*, *elateres animi*) that actually cause actions: motives are intellectual incentives and stimuli are sensible incentives (*Metaphysica* §§663, 669, 670, 677). But beginning around the 1770s, Kant denies that motives are just a species of incentive; he instead distinguishes the *objective* necessitation of motives from the *subjective* moving power of incentives. In his transitional ethics lectures from the 1770s, Kant characterizes motives (*Bewegungsgründe*) as *motiva objective moventia*, whereas the incentives (*Triebfeder*/*elateres*) that actually move the will are characterized as *motiva subjective moventia*. To be necessitated subjectively would be pathological necessitation by stimuli, and in that case the will would not be free. Motives, by contrast, necessitate the will objectively or "practically". On this view, the moral motive of the understanding does not subjectively determine the will since the understanding provides merely a principle of appraisal (*diiudication*) of obligation "according to which I judge the goodness and depravity of actions" ("nach welchem ich die Bonitaet und privitaet der Handlungen beurtheile"), not a principle of performance (*execution*), i.e., a principle of incentive (*Triebfeder*), which instead comes from a moral feeling (*moralisches Gefühl*) (V-Mo/Collins, AA 27:274f.). It is in the context of this gap between the objective moving power of motives and the subjective power of incentives to actually bring about an action that we should understand Kant's more well-known distinction in the *Groundwork* between incentives (*Triebfeder*) and motives (*Bewegungsgründe*). On this view, motives are objective rather than subjective because they hold for every rational being ("für jedes vernünftiges Wesen gelten") (427.26-30; *cf*. KpV, AA 5:19.10-12). That is, the incentive/motive contrast is between representations with subjective and (merely) objective moving force, not between empirical and *a priori* representations. This is consistent with the development of these terms from Baumgarten and also makes the best sense of the fact that both *before* and *after* the *Groundwork* Kant speaks of the non-empirical incentive of a morally good action (e.g., V-MP-L_1/Pölitz, AA 28:258 and KpV, AA 05:72.01-11).

Keeping in mind that according to the Wolffian terminology that Kant follows in lectures and notes a *motivum* is a representation of the good (e.g., AA 29:896 and $15{:}449_{26}$), it is easy to see how an objective representation of the good is the same as what Kant will go on to call an "imperative" , which "says which action possible for me would be good" ("welche durch

mich mögliche Handlung gut wäre") (GMS, AA 04: 414). Indeed, Kant makes explicit this connection between motives and imperatives in his transitional ethics lectures of the 1770s.

> Alle Imperativi sind nur Formeln der practischen Neceßitation und drücken eine Nothwendigkeit unsrer Handlungen aus unter der Bedingung der Bonitaet. Die Formel die die practische Nothwendigkeit ausdrückt, ist die Causa impulsiva einer freien Handlung, und weil sie objective neceßitirt, so nennt man sie ein Motivum. Die Formel, die die pathologische neceßitation ausdrücket ist causa impulsiva per stimulos, weil sie subjective neceßitirt.
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> All imperatives are mere formulae of practical necessitation and express a necessity of our actions under the condition of goodness. The formula that expresses practical necessity is the *causa impulsiva* of a free action, and since it necessitates objectively it is called a *motivum*. The formula that expresses pathological necessitation is a *causa impulsiva per stimulos*, since it necessitates subjectively. […] [V-Mo/Collins, 27:255.21-256.05]

The same contrast between pathological necessitation by stimuli and practical necessitation by motives or imperatives is asserted in the Canon of the first *Critique*, where we are told that the free will is "independent of sensible stimuli" ("unabhängig von sinnlichen Antrieben"), and that the human being instead has reason, which gives laws "that are imperatives, i.e., objective *laws of freedom*, and which say what *ought to happen* even if it may never happen and thereby distinguish themselves from *laws of nature*, which only concerns what *happens*, for which reason they are called practical laws" ("welche Imperativen, d. i. objective *Gesetze der Freiheit*, sind, und welche sagen, was *geschehen soll*, ob es gleich vielleicht nie geschieht, und sich darin von *Naturgesetzen*, die nur von dem handeln, was *geschieht*, unterscheiden, weshalb sie auch praktische Gesetze genannt werden") (A802/B830). And the same contrast finds expression in the *Groundwork* in terms of the distinction between a natural causality according to laws and the actions of rational beings according to the *representation* of laws (AA, 04: 412), that is, according to imperatives determining how the will *ought* to act (04: 413).

Kant's moral psychology departs from its Leibnizian origins in denying that these representations of what is good (*i.e.*, motives or imperatives) infallibly determine, necessitate, or "incline" the will: they leave execution of the action to the power of choice. In this way, Kant's account of imperatives is a symptom of a broader rejection of the Leibnizian view of ethics as developed by Wolff and Baumgarten. On the intellectualist view, evil is occasioned

by a failure or imperfection of *intellect*, a failure to adequately conceive the good, rather than a failure of a specifically *practical* capacity of reason or will, the practical capacity itself being infallible or perfect. But Kant follows Crusius (and Rousseau) in rejecting this sort of intellectualism and claims instead that that everyone has the knowledge necessary to act morally (*e.g.*, GMS, AA 04: 411.08-11; KpV, AA 05:91.18-24). And this implies that evil arises not from a failure of the intellect, but rather from the "depravity of the heart" ("Pravitaet des Herzens") (as Kant suggests in the transitional ethics lectures) or a "perversity of the heart" ("Verkehrtheit des Herzens") (*Religion* 6:37), that is, from a *practical* failure of our will.

In the *Nova dilucidatio*, Kant had claimed that if freedom were a power to act without or even contrary to the representation of the best, then freedom would be mere chance, which is no better than fate (AA 01: 402). And although Kant goes on in his mature work to reject the Leibnizian account of freedom, he certainly aims to avoid making freedom appear to be *unintelligent* or *blind* and hence the same as chance. In a series of notes dated between 1769 and 1770s, Kant repeatedly makes the point that freedom cannot be conceived as a blind chance (*casus*, *blindes Ungefähr* or *Zufall*).[11] Freedom must instead be a "third thing" between nature and chance (Refl 5369 [1776-78], 18:163).

It is in this context that we can explain the fact—otherwise surprising given his stance against Leibnizian intellectualism—that Kant says he endorses the "old formula of the schools: "*nihil appetimus, nisi sub ratione boni*; *nihil aversamur, nisi sub ratione mali*" (KpV, AA 05:59.12-14), *i.e.*, we desire nothing except under the aspect of the good, and we avoid nothing except under the aspect of the bad. By endorsing the "old formula of the schools", Kant shows his debt to the moral psychology of Leibniz and the Wolffians rather than any direct debt to Aquinas or Scotus: At one point, Leibniz alerts us to the "most ancient and universal dogma": "*Voluntatis objectum esse bonum apparens, et nihil a nobis appeti nisi sub ratione boni apparentis*" (*Ak*. IV 6:1380), that the object of the will is the apparent good, and that we desire nothing except under the aspect of the apparent good. Kant is almost certainly unaware of Leibniz's invocation of this "ancient dogma". But it is curiously similar to a Wolff's "*lex appetitus*" or law of the faculty of desire: "But it nevertheless remains true what the ancients pointed out long ago: that we will nothing except what we take to be good, and will against nothing except what we take to be bad. For motives are either distinct

[11] Refl 4091 [1769-1775], 17:412; Refl 3906 [1766-69], 17:335f.; Refl 4161 [1769-70], 17:439; and Refl 4929 [1776-78], 18:31; also see V-MP-L_1/Pölitz, AA 28:200.

representations of good and bad, or else they are pleasure, displeasure, and affects—*i.e.*, indistinct representations of good and bad" (*German Metaphysics* §506).[12]

Kant's mature account of practical freedom aims to be in conformity with the "old formula of the schools" and thus with Wolff's *lex appetitus*. We have already seen how Kant's account of freedom as necessitation by motives or imperatives can be understood in this context: the free will is necessitated by motives representing the good. However, the free will is thereby only "practically" or "objectively" necessitated, and hence actions do not follow from motives with certainty as they do on the Leibnizian picture. It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider in more detail Kant's account of freedom as a causality according to imperatives. But one potential problem with this account is directly relevant to the issues under consideration: if the representation of the good necessitating a free action expresses merely what we *ought* to do, then it seems that the *choice* whether to follow this imperative would itself be *unintelligent*: either merely *arbitrary* or merely *natural*. Kant has at least two ways to address this problem and thus make his account consistent with the "old formula of the schools". First, we all possess the "moral motive" or objective conception of the good against which we assess our maxims; and this means that although morally bad action is a *practical* failure, it is also a *failure of reason* to derive actions from the laws that we represent to ourselves as universally valid (GMS, AA 04: 412.28-413.08). This can be contrasted with Crusius's view, according to which our evil is a failure of will to act according to the *Gewissenstrieb*, not a failure of reason. Second, Kant views all free action as arising from *maxims* (e.g., RGV, AA 06:21.9-12, 57n; MS, AA 06:320n; and V-MP/Dohna, AA 28:678.21-27); and maxims can be understood as expressing what the agent practically speaking, *takes to be good or bad* (KpV 5:58.36-59.07).[13] Whereas imperatives are conceptions of the good telling the agent how he *ought* to act, maxims embody the practical values of the agent that are reflected in the way the agent *actually* acts. Immoral maxims ultimately value happiness as if it were "the only thing that counts" to the exclusion of duty (KpV, AA 05:61); they value what satisfies one's own inclinations as a good and hence fall under the principle of self-love.

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[12] Also see §522; *German Ethics* §6; *Vernünfftige Gedancken von von Gott, der Welt, und der Seele des Menschen. Anderer Theil, bestehend in ausführlichen Anmerckungen*. Frankfurt a. M. 1740 ([1]1724), §162; and *Psychologia empirica methodo scientifica pertractata*. Frankfurt and Leipzig. 1728, §§904, 907. Cf. Crusius, Chr. A.: *Diss. de appetitibus* §1.

[13] Similar views have been defended by Herman, Barbara: *The Practice of Moral Judgment*. Cambridge. 1993, 217; Engstrom, Stephen: *The Form of Practical Knowledge*. Cambridge. 2009, 46; and McCarty, Richard: *Kant's Theory of Action*. Oxford. 2009, 1-9.

A moral maxim, by contrast, embodies respect for the law; it values good willing as a good that is itself a condition of all other goods. The failure of reason to execute the moral imperative is expressed in a false conception of the good.

This way of understanding Kant's account of subjective practical principles is already suggested by the term "maxim" itself, which Kant borrows from Wolff and Baumgarten.[14] Wolff defines a maxim as a general rule containing a judgment that something is good or bad. Particular actions, on this picture, are pursued or avoided according to how they are subsumed under such general maxims. Baumgarten, following Wolff, thus identifies maxims with the "major propositions of practical syllogisms" (V-Eth/Baumgarten §§246, 449; *Metaphysica* §699), and Kant says, similarly, that maxims are "*principia practicae subjectiva* because they would be the *propositio major* in practical syllogisms" (V-MP/Dohna, AA 28:679). On this view, a maxim is just an intellectual incentive (for Baumgarten: just a motive) that is general and has an enduring or habitual nature. Thus, while we can say that honor is worthy of pursuit if it promotes the end of perfection in a particular case, the *maxim* that honor is good (in all conditions) is false; honor itself is therefore indifferent (*German Ethics* §400).[15] A true good, by contrast is precisely what *is* good in all circumstances. Maxims function in Kant's moral philosophy in roughly the same way. Thus, the maxim to *always* avenge an insult or to take *every* secure means to attain money cannot be aiming at a true good since it does not aim at what is good in *all* circumstances: good willing itself.

Wolff's account of the role of maxims in action serves an intellectualist view of action: moral improvement of the will consists in increasing the distinctness of the cognitions of good and bad embodied in our maxims. The will itself, for its part, always follows the understanding and its maxims (*German Ethics* §400). Wolff says quite explicitly here: "Acquiring different maxims for judging good and bad, as well as attaining different concepts of things, belongs, without a single exception, to the understanding" . In addition, the will can be improved by correcting the concepts used to distinguish cases as falling under the maxim (*ibid.*). But Kant rejects Wolff's intellectualism. Kant even says that maxims are the product of the will or the power of choice (*Willkür*); they are the product of reason in its *practical* capacity, not the understanding. And Kant's account of maxims differs from Wolff's in a second, related way. For Wolff, a Leibnizian account of contingency is satisfactory to ensure

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[14] See Bubner, Rüdiger: *Handlung, Sprache und Vernunft. Grundbegriffe praktischer Philosophie*. Frankfurt a. M. 1976, 199-200. I argue in more detail for this Wolffian lineage in "Acting on Habit and Acting on One's Own Maxim". In: *Kant-Studien* (forthcoming), §III.

[15] See Ch. Schoerer: *Naturbegriff und Moralbegründung.* Stuttgart. 1988, 125ff.

that these maxims, as long as they can be considered internal, do not determine us to act in a way that would destroy freedom. This satisfied the Kant of the *Nova dilucidatio* as well. But the mature Kant, in addition to denying Wolff's intellectualism, also insists that *if we are to be responsible for our actions, then these maxims must themselves be the product of an absolute freedom*. Only thereby, Kant thinks, can we maintain that we are free insofar as we pursue what we take, in a maxim, to be good. Accounting for this possibility—that maxims can be the product of an absolute freedom—becomes a task central to Kant's mature practical philosophy and thus to his philosophy in general.

Despite these important deviations from the Leibnizian view, the critical Kant still holds to a version of the view that he asserted in the *Nova dilucidatio* of 1755: that we are free in choosing what we take to be good, and thus free even when we pursue evil. Kant's account of the relationship between the moral law and the will's freedom from the causal necessity of nature is intended to solve two related problems that Kant claims his predecessors failed to solve: (1) the problem of how we are free causes of our actions in the natural world and (2) the problem of how we are motivated to act morally. In articulating positions on these issues, Kant breaks completely with his Leibnizian past. But this innovation occurs within the context of a conception of moral psychology that remains deeply indebted to Leibniz, Wolff, and Baumgarten. Indeed, in terms of the account of the operation of our practical mental capacities and our "practical freedom", Kant's account of the freedom that ensures our moral responsibility turns out to be a revision of Leibniz's account of the freedom of the will that is "inclined" but not "necessitated" by the reasons of the understanding, the freedom to choose what we take to be good.