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The Philosopher's Stone

In this chapter I will focus on the development of the early Schleiermacher's ethical theory. At this early stage, we find Schleiermacher working on issues closely related to a problem that would continually preoccupy him throughout his life, namely, the question of the ground of the unity of the personality. As I demonstrate in this study, Schleiermacher's answer to the question evolved over the years. By the time he had produced the first edition of the *Christian Faith* appearing in 1821–2, it had already achieved its definitive contours. But Schleiermacher arrived at the position that he did through a sustained reflection on foundational metaethical issues. He did so by engaging the philosophies of figures such as Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Jacobi, Schelling, and Fichte. Two of the greatest influences on Schleiermacher's thought, I will argue, are Kant and Leibniz.¹ In this chapter I discuss how Schleiermacher's early ethics were shaped by his attempt to deal with the problems raised by Kant's understanding of transcendental freedom. In particular, we here find Schleiermacher concerned with the problems that positing transcendental freedom poses to the unity of the personality.

In his ethics Kant distinguishes between the moral principle of discrimination (*principium diiudicationis*) and the moral principle of execution (*principium executionis*). The former has to do with ethical judgment—how we decide that an action is right or wrong, and the latter with what *moves* us to do the right thing. It is a fundamental

¹ In his February 2, 1790 letter to Brinkman, Schleiermacher writes that his “belief in this [Kant's] philosophy increases day by day, and this all the more, the more I compare it with that of Leibniz” (*KGA* V.1, no. 134, 191). While Kant is certainly a leading influence, so is Leibniz. As I will show later in the book, Schleiermacher's mature position is one that imposes a Kantian turn on Leibnizian ideas.

feature of Kant's critical ethics that he considered the two to be intrinsically intertwined: the moral principle of discrimination, i.e. the categorical imperative, can only be valid if we are transcendently free. As a *rational*, and thereby a universal and *a priori* practical principle, its bindingness cannot depend on any empirically given desires. This, however, implies that a purely rational principle can be an incentive for the will. Kant himself was deeply perplexed about how this could be possible, calling the difficulties occasioned by such an idea "the philosopher's stone."

The early Schleiermacher, on the other hand, while sympathetic to Kant's project, became increasingly dissatisfied with some of the deep philosophical problems posed by the notion of transcendental freedom. How do we connect a transcendently free act with the nature of the subject? Insofar as the act is transcendently free, it cannot be understood in terms of causes, and this means that it cannot be connected with the previous state of the individual before he or she engaged in the act. Insofar as this is the case, the act is given *ex nihilo* and cannot be connected with an agent's character. Given the intractability of this problem, Schleiermacher wanted to preserve Kant's understanding of the moral principle of discrimination as a rational principle while denying that the moral principle of execution is not connected with feeling and with the character of the agent. Hence the ground of an action must be found in the totality of an agent's representations, that is, how a person understands a situation is a crucial factor in the determination of how that person will act. Since a person's character is intricately involved with how a person assesses a situation, this move allows Schleiermacher to connect the ground of an action with character.

In this chapter, I work through these ideas by taking a thorough look at some of Schleiermacher's early essays and reviews. My main focus will be Schleiermacher's early essay *On Freedom*, written between 1790–2. I will, however, also be taking a look at Schleiermacher's notes on Kant's second *Critique* (1789), the third of his *Dialogues on Freedom* (1789) and his critical review of Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1799). While other treatments have detailed Schleiermacher's arguments and disagreements with Kant as set out in these works, they have

not paid sufficient attention to the *development* of Schleiermacher's views regarding these questions. Whereas many of Schleiermacher's contemporary commentators understand *On Freedom* as standing in fundamental continuity with his earlier treatments of Kant's moral philosophy² I will argue that Schleiermacher's *On Freedom* is not only the most mature, but also the most Kantian of Schleiermacher's early ethical writings. Reflection on many of the issues regarding freedom and morality led him to reject empiricism as a foundation for morals, thereby bringing him closer to Kant. It is no doubt true that significant differences between Kant's theory and his own still remained. However, it is important to locate precisely at what point it is that Schleiermacher disagreed with Kant in *On Freedom*. His disagreement with Kant at this point is a different and more subtle one than that expressed in his earlier writings; for one, by this time the philosophy of moral sense no longer had the same influence that it once had on Schleiermacher's thought.³ Rather, here we find Schleiermacher

² In his book *Deterministische Ethik und kritische Theologie*, Günter Meckenstock notes that Schleiermacher's intention is to make Kant's practical philosophy more consistent (50). However, after detailing the deep differences between Kant's practical philosophy and the variety of moral sense philosophy espoused by Schleiermacher in the *Freiheitsgespräch*, he goes on to note that Schleiermacher's task in *On Freedom* is to fill out the outlines of the theory sketched in the "Notes on Kant" and in the *Freiheitsgespräch* (51). In her article "The Early Philosophical Roots of Schleiermacher's Notion of Gefühl, 1788–1794" Julia A. Lamm reads *On Freedom* as continuing the "trajectory begun in *On the Highest Good*" (82), interpreting it as developing an understanding of *Gefühl* in which it is presented as "the faculty that not only harmonizes the moral sentiments but also enables us to transcend certain sentiments in order to attain higher ones" (89); I have not found evidence for this reading in the text. Albert Blackwell's book *Schleiermacher's Early Philosophy of Life: Determinism, Freedom and Phantasy*, presents Schleiermacher as denying the possibility of the *direct* influence of reason on the will in *On Freedom* (44), thereby understanding the essay as standing in direct continuity with his earlier works. Another fine essay in which *On Freedom* is discussed at some length is John P. Crossley's "The Ethical Impulse in Schleiermacher's Early Ethics," although the specific issue with which I am concerned is not addressed in it.

³ As pointed out by John Wallhauser in his article "Schleiermacher's Critique of Ethical Reason: Toward a Systematic Ethic," by the time Schleiermacher writes his *Outlines of a Critique of Previous Ethical Theories* (published 1803), he clearly rejects the more recent English and French moral philosophy as belonging to traditions of feeling (29). The problem with this tradition, as with other eudaimonistic theories, is "its failure to draw a clear line between the ethical and the natural (reason and nature); it tends to collapse the ethical into a description of natural impulses rather than positing a distinct sphere and power of its own (reason/spirit)" (30).

performing a subtle about face concerning the issue of whether reason can influence the will, one that will lead him notably closer to Kant's views.

The chapter will be divided into three parts. In the first part, I will discuss why Kant asserts that reason can, in fact, pose as an incentive to the will as well as the nature of the deep philosophical problems that this idea has posed. In the second part I will discuss Schleiermacher's attempt to circumvent some of these difficulties. Here I discuss both of his earlier, more naive treatments of the problem dating from 1789, as well as his rather sophisticated attempt to provide us with what seems, at first blush, to be a more palatable, compatibilist account of freedom, one which nonetheless seems to cohere with the main outlines of a Kantian ethic found in his more mature treatise *On Freedom*. The third section will provide a philosophical assessment of Kant's and Schleiermacher's respective positions, analyzing both their strengths and weaknesses.

THE STUMBLING BLOCK [*STEIN DES ANSTOßES*] OF ALL EMPIRICISTS

It is a well-known fact that in his fully critical ethics Kant came to the conclusion that a moral law binding all rational agents implies transcendental freedom. This is a "thick" concept of freedom that must be understood in a strictly incompatibilist or indeterminist sense. It implies "a power of absolutely beginning a state, and therefore also of absolutely beginning a series of consequences of that state."⁴ An "absolute beginning" is one that is not preceded by another temporal state that *determines* it and is as such independent from all determining causes. Kant himself was aware of many of the difficulties that such a conception posed and called it "the stumbling block [*Stein des Anstoßes*] of all empiricists but the key to the most sublime practical

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the standard A and B paginations of the first and second editions and will henceforth be included in the body of the chapter preceded by *KRV*. In this case the reference would appear as *KRV A445/B473*.

principles for critical moralists”⁵ In his notes on Kant’s second *Critique* as well as in his essay *On Freedom*, Schleiermacher details many of these difficulties and tries to offer an alternative account of how a rationalistic ethic can co-exist with a compatibilist account of freedom. Before we can understand both the difficulties and the ingenuity of Schleiermacher’s attempts at a solution, however, it is important to understand the depth of the problem as Kant himself did.

While the semi-critical Kant believed that the principle of discrimination through which the moral law is determined is purely intellectual and *a priori*, at this stage he did not think that such an intellectual principle could pose as a moral incentive [*Triebfeder*] to the will. In his *Lectures on Ethics*, dating from 1775 to 1780, Kant noted that

Moral feeling is the capacity to be affected by a moral judgment. My understanding may judge that an action is morally good, but it need not follow that I shall do that action which I judge morally good: from understanding to performance is still a far cry . . . The understanding, obviously, can judge, but to give to this judgment of the understanding a compelling force, to make it an incentive that can move the will to perform the action—this is the philosopher’s stone.⁶

A little later Kant notes, “Man is not so delicately made that he can be moved by objective grounds.”⁷

In his critical ethics, however, Kant came to the conclusion that the possibility of being moved by objective grounds (the moral law) carries with it the implication of transcendental freedom. The critical Kant came to this conclusion because the very idea of a moral principle that is *necessarily* binding implies that its bindingness cannot depend on any empirically given desires. The validity of a hypothetical imperative lies in a preceding desire for an object, that is, *only* given a particular desire to achieve a certain goal is the will

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*. All future references to Kant’s second *Critique* will be cited in the body of the text itself. They will be indicated by *KprV*, followed by the Berlin Academy Edition volume number and pagination; reference to Beck’s English translation will follow a semicolon. In this case the references would appear as *KprV* 5:7; 8.

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 45. ⁷ *Ibid.* 68.

necessitated to perform certain actions in order to accomplish it. The rule given through such an imperative is only hypothetically necessary, and this implies that any kind of rule for the will based on a preceding desire cannot necessitate the will categorically. This means, however, that the *bindingness* of a categorical imperative cannot depend on any empirically given desires. According to Kant, this in turn implies transcendental freedom, for the moral law can only be binding upon us if it can move us to action, but insofar as it is *categorical* it can bind us only insofar as a previously existing desire *is not* the ground of the incentive. The incentive must, rather, be grounded in reason, and insofar as reason is itself a product of our spontaneity, such an incentive is intricately involved with the power of absolutely beginning a series of actions, and hence with transcendental freedom.

The two most profound difficulties raised by Kant's scheme have to do with a) how a purely intellectual principle can motivate the will and with b) the problem of transcendental freedom. Kant recognized both the intractable nature of the two problems, as well as their intrinsic connection when he noted, "how a law in itself can be the direct motive of the will (which is the essence of morality) is an insoluble problem for the human reason. It is identical with the problem of how a free will is possible" (*KprV* 5: 72; 75). Schleiermacher's notes on Kant's second *Critique* are principally directed to coming to terms with precisely these two difficulties. We should keep in mind that these notes are Schleiermacher's earliest attempt to come to grips with these issues, and are subsequently beset with incongruities overcome in his later reflections.

In his notes on Kant's second *Critique* Schleiermacher expresses dissatisfaction with Kant's account of respect for the moral law, the locus of Kant's discussion of how a purely intellectual principle can motivate the will. In his second *Critique* Kant had explained that the moral law checks self love and *strikes* down self conceit (*KprV* 5: 73; 76); furthermore, respect "weakens the hindering influence of the inclinations through humiliating self-conceit; consequently, we must see it as a subjective ground of activity, as an incentive for obedience to the law" (*KprV* 5: 38; 40). Schleiermacher complains that Kant's account still fails to provide an explanation for the *genesis* of the feeling connected to the influence of the moral law: "Only a negative

feeling originates directly from the relation of practical reason to self-conceit, and if one says everything that one possibly can about an inhibition of the causality of a pathologically driven feeling . . . it is still, however, not an incentive.”⁸ Furthermore, Schleiermacher adds that

it seems to me that he [Kant] did not achieve this either [clarifying the genesis of a feeling *a priori*], for even if I understand that practical reason must occasion an effect on feeling, all that I can understand by this “a priori” . . . is first only an indirect effect in that certain ideas, which would otherwise encourage the feeling, are destroyed; second, only negative in that what was otherwise present in feeling through those ideas is annulled; third, no particular distinct feeling . . . How the positive can be understood *a priori* is still left as empty as before, as is the claim that this feeling distinguishes itself from all other.⁹

Schleiermacher is correct to note that Kant’s account provides for only an indirect influence of the moral law on feeling: in checking self love and striking down self conceit it blocks the effect of these pathologically motivated feelings and thereby strengthens the moral incentive. These are, however, already *effects* of the moral law on previously existing feelings, and while an explanation of these effects on these pre-existing feelings may help to illuminate certain psychological processes, it still affords us insight neither into the nature of the incentive directly connected with the moral law nor into how such an incentive is possible. In other words, while Kant may have provided us with an account of the *effect* that the moral law has on an individual when s/he recognizes its absolute worth, he still has not explained how a person can recognize such absolute worth in the moral law to begin with. The explanation of how practical reason occasions an effect on feeling is left just as obscure as before, and no

⁸ “Notizen zu Kant: *KpV*” in *Schleiermacher Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Jugendschriften 1787–1796*, 132; henceforward *KGA I.1*. All English excerpts from Schleiermacher’s notes on Kant’s second *Critique*, as well as Schleiermacher’s “Note on the Knowledge of Freedom” and his “Review of Kant’s *Anthropology from a Practical Point of View*” are my own translations. The translated texts can be found in their entirety in my “A Critical-Interpretive Analysis of Some Early Writings by Schleiermacher on Kant’s Views of Human Nature and Freedom (1789–1799) with Translated Texts.”

⁹ *KGA I.1*, 133.

real explanation is given as to how we can understand the genesis of a feeling *a priori*.

It is important to grasp the deep structure of the difficulty concerning how a purely intellectual principle can become a motivating ground of the will. In order for the moral law to motivate us it must affect the faculty of desire in some way, and this involves feeling.¹⁰ The problem becomes particularly acute since feeling has to do with our sensuous nature, and thereby with our receptivity, that is, our capacity for being affected from without. The understanding, on the other hand, is spontaneous. Spontaneity and receptivity are, according to Kant, two distinct faculties of human nature. How can feeling be affected by the moral law (a purely intellectual principle)? In order for it to be so affected there must be some capacity in our very faculty of *receptivity* that already allows that faculty to *recognize* the *unconditioned* worth of the moral law, but this already involves a judgment of the understanding. This would imply that the faculty of *receptivity* is itself somehow capable of true judgment, which is impossible. The problem thereby seems to be intractable. It can be understood from yet another angle. The judgment of the unconditioned worth of the moral law presupposed by such an incentive has

¹⁰ In his book *Schleiermacher's Early Philosophy of Life: Determinism, Freedom and Phantasy*, Albert Blackwell represents Kant's understanding of the moral incentive as follows: "Incentives involve feelings, and yet, if moral obligation is not to be undermined, the means of influence of the moral law cannot involve feeling 'of any kind whatsoever'" (29). Later on he notes "unlike Kant and Reinhold, Schleiermacher never speaks of the influence of reason on the will as being 'direct.' The influence of reason upon our intentions is by means of incentives, and the incentives of reason, like all other incentives, involve feelings" (44). This is a somewhat misleading presentation, both of Kant and of Schleiermacher's understanding of him, since Kant never asserts that reason cannot influence feeling; in fact, the whole section entitled "On the Drives of Pure Practical Reason" in the second *Critique* concerns precisely how reason does influence feeling. For instance, Kant notes "Whatever checks all inclinations in self-love necessarily has, by that fact, an influence on feeling. Thus we conceive how it is possible to understand a priori that the moral law can exercise an effect on feeling since it blocks the inclinations . . ." *KprV* 5: 75; 78. When Kant speaks of the influence of reason on the will as being direct, he does not mean that it does not have an influence on our affective nature; in fact, it must, if reason is to be an incentive. What Kant does mean is that no pre-existing feeling can be the ground or the basis of the validity of the moral law; if it were, the law would be reduced to a hypothetical imperative. As can be seen from my discussion of Schleiermacher's *On Freedom*, below, by the time that Schleiermacher writes this treatise he is fully in agreement with Kant's reasoning regarding this issue.

two components. Insofar as we stress the *absolute and unconditioned* worth of the moral law, we must rely on reason for the judgment of its unconditioned character. However, insofar as we stress the *worth* of the moral law, we are concerned with a question of value, and hence with the subject and his or her attitudes or feelings, since the assignment of worth cannot be defined in purely logical or rational terms. Hence the question becomes: how can the rational principle itself be the *ground* of the absolute *worth* that the moral subject must assign to it? ¹¹

In the "Notes" we find Schleiermacher attempting to come to grips with this problem. While he agrees with Kant that the moral law cannot be empirically grounded, he questions whether making feeling indispensable to the determination of the faculty of desire necessarily results in an empirically grounded practical principle. He believes that he can show that the implication is not an inevitable one, arguing that the ethical principle of discrimination (*principium diiudicationis*) can be separated from the ground of moral motivation (*principium executionis*). The key here, according to Schleiermacher, is not to equate the determination of the faculty of desire with the giving of rules for the will, two elements closely connected in Kant's practical philosophy. Schleiermacher does not consider Kant justified in having linked the two: he complains that Kant has shown neither that they are analytically nor synthetically combined.

It is here that Schleiermacher's analysis of the inadequacy of Kant's theory of non-moral motivation comes in. This theory specifies that the faculty of desire is empirically determined when pleasure is what marks an object as worthy of desire. Yet if *pleasure* is that which marks an object as worthy of desire, the pleasure gotten from the realization of the object, and not the object itself, is the final goal

¹¹ Much the same is noted by Dieter Henrich in his article, "Das Problem der Grundlegung der Ethik bei Kant und in Spekulativen Idealismus." There he notes that "Die Vernunft für sich allein hat keine Kraft 'eine Handlung zu exekutieren'. Selbst die Billigung (*complacentia*), die wir dem Guten zollen, ist kein in der Logik zu definierender Akt. Sie ist wie jene emotionaler Natur. So scheint eine *Antinomie* zu bestehen, die zu lösen den Stein des Weisen ausgraben heißt: Entweder die Ethik wahrt den rationalen Charakter der sittlichen Forderung; dann sind die Triebfeder des sittlichen Willens nicht verständlich zu machen. Oder sie geht von der Sittlichkeit als einer Kraft zu handeln aus; dann ist der Vernunftcharakter des Guten nicht zu wahren." 369.

of non-morally motivated action. But Schleiermacher remarks that there is something wrong in thinking that pleasure, rather than the realization of a desired *object*, is the goal of non-moral motivation. The correct understanding of the relation between satisfaction and desire is that the realization of an object brings satisfaction *because* it is desired.

Schleiermacher thereby argues that Kant could only have shown that the determination of the faculty of desire was synthetically combined with the giving of rules for the will on the presupposition that “the feeling, which is necessary in order to set the faculty of desire in motion is also the only possible end to which the desire itself could be directed.”¹² He reasons that if the feeling of pleasure is not the end to which an empirically given desire is directed, then feeling can motivate without at the same time determining the rules of action for the will. At this point it is important to recall the Kantian analysis of the lower faculty of desire and its relation to heteronomous action. An object is desired because its realization will bring pleasure, and reason figures out the means for the realization of the object. However, because it is desire that marks out the object to be realized in the first place, desire is the ground of the rule for the will; reason is only instrumental in providing the rule through which the object of desire can be achieved. Schleiermacher concludes that if pleasure is not the final goal of non-moral action, the lower faculty of desire cannot be the ground of any rules for the will. Kant’s linkage between the principle of execution and that of discrimination has been thereby effectively severed.

What Schleiermacher has accomplished here, however, remains rather questionable. Given this account, Schleiermacher is still faced with the task of providing an account of how an *object* of desire relates to the emotional character of the agent, that is, of how it is that the object of desire comes to be desired. More importantly, his argument here seems to be at cross-purposes with his initial goal, which was to ground the moral incentive in feeling or moral sense. Such a theory holds that the worth that the moral law has for us is based on the satisfaction that is associated with acting on it, on the one hand, and the pangs of conscience linked with failing to live

¹² “Notizen zu Kant: *KpV*” *KGA* I.1, 131.

up to it, on the other. But if, as Schleiermacher seems to want to be arguing here, an object is not desired in virtue of the pleasure it will bring, presumably then acting morally cannot be attractive to us because of the satisfaction that is associated with acting on the moral law, either.

SCHLEIERMACHER'S COMPATIBILIST PROPOSAL

In the third of his *Dialogues on Freedom* (1789) Schleiermacher attempts to forge a middle position between Kant's understanding of respect for the moral law and a theory of moral sensibility. The dialogue involves three friends, the Kantian Kritias, Sophron, whose position represents Schleiermacher's, and Kleon. Towards the latter part of the dialogue Sophron reminds Kleon that their intention in discussing these matters was to determine the extent to which reason influences our actions, and concludes that "we have found nothing but that such an influence can nowhere take place, and that moreover all our actions flow from the feeling of pleasure and the attempt to get it."¹³ He proceeds to outline a theory of moral sensibility wherein experience is a key component in allowing us to determine which actions will bring us pleasure and which will bring us pain. It is experience that "acquaints us with the different powers of our soul; it is that which informs us of the nature of our pleasure and that it is only harmony and perfection that can delight us" (*KGA* I.1, 155). The imagination works with this data, thereby giving us a foretaste of virtue.

Sophron later qualifies his original statement that the influence of reason on our actions can nowhere take place: insofar as we find pleasure in virtue, reason *can* influence the will. Hence he notes that "the capacity to act according to rational grounds means nothing other than the capacity to be determined by a feeling of pleasure that works through the moral ideas of reason" (*KGA* I.1, 160). He continues by noting that this "pleasure is completely sensory; it has a

¹³ "Freiheitsgespräch," *KGA* I.1, 153; future references to the text will be included in the body of the chapter. All excerpts are my own translations.

sensory magnitude and a sensory effectiveness, although it is caused by an object in which nothing sensory is to be found, namely the eternal and unchangeable laws of reason” (KGA I.1, 160). Despite the fact that Schleiermacher here concedes that reason can have an influence on the will, the crux of the matter is that it can have such an influence in virtue of a pre-existing disposition to find pleasure in the moral law. At this point Schleiermacher has not grasped the intrinsic interconnections between the principle of discrimination and that of execution discovered by the critical Kant: if the latter is empirically grounded, that is, is dependent on a given condition or susceptibility of the subject, then so is the former. **It is impossible to be moved by a practical principle in virtue of pre-existing susceptibilities to find pleasure in such a principle, and to at one and the same time identify the underlying maxim on which one is acting with eternal and unchanging laws of reason. This is because if one is moved to act in accordance with a practical principle because it brings one pleasure, the maxim underlying one’s action to act on the practical principle is that of maximizing one’s own happiness or pleasure, a merely subjective principle which could never qualify as a universal law.**

Another significant feature of Schleiermacher’s account in the third of the dialogues is his attempt to provide a detailed analysis of the psychological conditions of the possibility of moral motivation. Thus he makes the observation that while reason does play a role in moral motivation, it is not the only factor involved. He notes that

we therefore cannot maintain that this feeling is determined by pure reason alone (which indeed is always unaltered and the same) but must affirm rather that it is determined by the receptivity of the faculty of sensation [*des Empfindungsvermögens*] to being affected by the representation of the moral law. This receptivity is dependent upon other conditions each time.¹⁴

(KGA I.1, 163)

Insofar as feeling is involved, it depends on the receptivity of the faculty of sensation. This receptivity is not, however, a given constant, and is not always affected in the same way by the moral law.

¹⁴ Quoted from Albert Blackwell’s introduction to Schleiermacher’s *On Freedom*, xv.

How it is affected by the moral law depends upon at least two factors: (1) the strength with which the moral law is represented and (2) other factors, such as previously existing emotions, wants, wishes and desires, which may interfere with or enhance the impact that the moral law has on the faculty of sensation. For example, if an individual is overly preoccupied with professional advancement, and is considering acting on an immoral maxim, this preoccupation may be so strong that it overpowers the effect that the moral law has on feeling. The effect of his/her prior preoccupation on feeling may be so strong that it overtakes that faculty altogether, leaving little possibility for it to be affected by the moral law. The moral law may thereby fail to be an incentive for the will.

The story Schleiermacher offers here has some similarities to the one he will offer in his longer treatise *On Freedom*. Both are intended to show how an account of moral motivation can be fully integrated with an account of a person's character. There are, however, some significant differences between the story offered in the third dialogue and the one offered in *On Freedom*; the former seems almost primitive compared to the more robust theory offered in the latter treatise. The *Freiheitsgespräch* portrays an individual's desires as having an effect on his/her total emotive constitution; this prior determination of feeling limits the effect that a given representation can have on feeling and thereby serves to determine the person's future desires. For example, my desire for more money may be connected with a particular dissatisfaction concerning my present state as well as with a feeling of heady excitement given the prospect of a viable get-rich-quick scheme. These pre-existing feelings may in turn determine how much I will dwell upon other representations, for instance the idea of enjoying my present situation and time with my husband. I may be so overwhelmed with dissatisfaction that I am not a millionaire, and so dizzy with the emotion that the idea of a future possibility of wealth evokes in me that I cannot dwell upon the idea of enjoying what is presently within my grasp. Given my prior emotional state, the representation of what is presently enjoyable cannot make a deep enough impression on me, for it simply cannot hold my interest, nor can it change my present feelings. Note that this amounts to a strict determination of action by desire, or a strict determination of future desires by past desires.

In contrast, Schleiermacher's account of moral motivation in *On Freedom* is much more sophisticated. In fact, a reader of the first part of the treatise would be struck by its almost thoroughly Kantian character. How far Schleiermacher's views have swung in a Kantian direction in the first section of *On Freedom*, particularly as compared with the position espoused in the notes on Kant's second *Critique* as well as in the *Freiheitsgespräch*, can be gauged by his avowal that the principle of discrimination cannot be effectively separated from the principle of execution. He notes that "reason becomes practical only through the idea of obligation to its laws,"¹⁵ that is, "reason's dictums must be able to become objects of an impulse" (KGA I.1: 233; 18). He reasons further that

this must be true not simply to the extent that what reason commands happens to be in accord with some inclination, that is insofar as reason's dictums relate mediately to a sensible object, but rather precisely insofar as the dictums relate immediately to the law. That is, even if in some particular case the law's will should become actual through an accidental relation, the law has no influence on the faculty of desire, and so this relation cannot establish the idea that it is possible in every case to realize the command of reason. This involves a feeling, and thereby an impulse, which relates immediately and exclusively to practical reason and at the same time represents practical reason in the faculty of desire. (KGA I.1: 233; 18)

In other words, the moral law must itself be a motive for the will.¹⁶ His argument for the claim accords with Kant's: if the moral law were not able to pose as an incentive to the will, the coincidence of one's maxims with the moral law would be merely accidental. Furthermore, under such a scenario, whatever one's practical principle, it cannot

¹⁵ *On Freedom*, trans. by Albert L. Blackwell. The German can be found in KGA I.1, 219–356. Future references to the text will be included in the body of the chapter. I first provide the KGA pagination; reference to Blackwell's English translation will follow a semicolon. In this case the reference would appear as KGA I.1 232; 17.

¹⁶ Note that Schleiermacher's claim regarding the need for the immediacy of the relation of practical principles or "dictums" to the moral law is in principle equivalent to Kant's claim that "what is essential in the moral worth of actions is that the moral law should determine the will directly" *KprV* 5: 71; 75. This is in fact the opposite of the position he espoused in *On the Highest Good*, where he noted that "the law of reason can never determine our will immediately" ("Über das höchste Gut," in KGA I.1, 123). Blackwell is mistaken when he claims that one of Schleiermacher's main points in *On Freedom* is to criticize Kant's idea that an *a priori* practical principle can directly influence the will. Blackwell, 29ff.

be a categorical imperative. What would really be driving an action would be some presupposed end, and this means that moral requirements would be treated as hypothetical imperatives instead of as intrinsically obligatory.¹⁷ In such a situation a categorical imperative *as such* would have no influence on the will, and while one's maxims might accord with legality they would not be *moral*. In order for the categorical imperative to be the principle that is in fact guiding one's will it must in fact be chosen as such. In order for it to be chosen, however, it must be able to be deemed a principle *worth* acting on, and as such it must be able to pose as an incentive to the will.

What makes this work more sophisticated than the third of his *Dialogues on Freedom*, however, is Schleiermacher's distinction between *choice* and *instinct*, and what he does with it. In the first part of the treatise Schleiermacher tells us that "insofar as impulse to some particular activity can be determined by a single object alone, the faculty of desire is called *instinct*, but insofar as it arrives at some particular activity solely by comparing several objects it is called *choice*" (*KGA* I.1: 224; 8). Key here is the idea that in instinct a being's desire is "hard-wired" to a particular object or group of objects. There is no complex mechanism internal to the subject that allows for variation in desire. Thus Schleiermacher lists the following two characteristics of instinct: (1) "an action persists only until the determining object itself ceases, and (2) . . . where instinct is present, desire follows immediately upon the appearance of the object, and the tendency toward action follows immediately upon desire" (*KGA* I.1: 224; 9). In such a case the organism is so constituted that the very appearance of the object elicits desire. Later on he notes that if external objects "were to include not only the basis for our being affected . . . but also the basis for the preponderance necessary to every act of choice, then with every external object there would have to be given not only a general influence on the faculty of desire but also a determinate quality and quantity of this influence, not alterable by any inner characteristic of the subject" (*KGA* I.1: 235; 20). In contrast, choice involves a complexity of processes *internal* to the subject. The individual

¹⁷ Henry Allison provides an insightful analysis of Kant's arguments regarding the issue in *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, 99–106.

that has choice is not hard-wired to desire any given thing; further, such a being can find value in several different things and compare their relative strengths. As such, the attraction that any given object effects upon the faculty of desire does not immediately occasion *desire per se*, but rather, “the object appears and the faculty of desire *craves*...the complete determination of impulse still remains suspended by consciousness of the necessity to take into account several determining grounds, and only when this has occurred does it *desire*” (KGA I.1: 226; 10). Hence the determinative feature of choice is the ability of the individual to postpone action and to weigh alternative options. This ability is possible because while an object may no doubt affect the will, it is yet not, of itself, sufficient to determine the will to action.¹⁸

The idea of choice, involving as it does several possible objects of desire, naturally elicits the question of what is going to ground the final determination of the faculty of desire one way or another. Schleiermacher carefully distinguishes the idea of *choice* from the idea that given *several objects of choice* the will is determined to act through the outcome of the *balance* of attractive and repulsive forces elicited by these objects. He notes that

if several simultaneously affecting objects partially annul their influence reciprocally, we could regard what remains as itself an object (since with respect to its influence it would be determined in only one way). This object’s impression would be unalterable, and the faculty of desire would be absolutely determined to it. (KGA I.1: 235–6; 20)

It is important to note that the “balance of forces” view that Schleiermacher rejects is more sophisticated than the naive notion that an agent simply acts on its strongest desire, since if action on one’s strongest desire precludes a whole host of other options, the cumulative attraction of these other options may serve to outweigh the strength of one’s strongest desire. Schleiermacher rejects this more sophisticated view because it presents the subject as simply being affected from without. In it *external* influences, whether

¹⁸ So Schleiermacher: “Whenever our faculty of desire is affected from without, we are conscious that this is not yet sufficient to determine it, and every determination of impulse appears to us within the realm between craving and desiring” (KGA I.1: 227; 11).

they be the influence of a single object, or the influence of a balance of attractive and repulsive forces elicited by several objects, are represented as the ultimate determining ground of an individual's choice.

Given his observations on choice and instinct, Schleiermacher concludes that while the moral law can motivate, it cannot of itself be *sufficient* to determine the will. He arrives at this conclusion by first noting that a "natural undeterminedness of the will is necessary if that relation of the law to the faculty of desire entailed by the idea of obligation is to be possible" (*KGA* I.1: 233; 17), in other words the idea of obligation is inapplicable to a will that *necessarily* acts in accordance to the moral law.¹⁹ Moreover, if acting in accordance with the moral law is truly to involve choice, the law cannot be sufficient to determine the will to action. The impulse or incentive provided by the moral law "must have exactly the same relation to the faculty of desire as every other"²⁰ (*KGA* I.1: 233; 18), and this means that just as other objects can be viewed as desirable without their desirability being a sufficient condition of their initiating action, so it is the same with the moral law. We must, in fact, hold this to be the case in order to make sense of how it is possible that persons can stand under an intrinsic moral obligation and yet fail to meet its demands.

Schleiermacher concludes that "no single object of our faculty of desire, whether internal or external . . . has a determinative influence,

¹⁹ On this point he stands in fundamental agreement with Kant; see *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, where Kant notes that "if reason for itself alone does not sufficiently determine the will, if the will is still subject to subjective conditions (to certain incentives) which do not always agree with the objective conditions, in a word, if the will is not *in itself* fully in accord with reason (as it actually is with human beings), then the actions which are objectively recognized as necessary are subjectively contingent, and the determination of such a will, in accord with objective laws, is *necessitation* . . . The representation of an objective principle, insofar as it is necessitating for a will, is called a 'command' (of reason), and the formula of the command is called an *imperative*" (*KGS* 4: 413; Wood, 29–30).

²⁰ My interpretation of what is going on is fundamentally at odds with that of Julia Lamm, who in her book *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza*, argues that this idea "marks Schleiermacher's most rebellious stance against Kant" 45. To the contrary, as my discussion below of Kant's incorporation thesis will demonstrate, Schleiermacher is at this point in his argument still in fundamental agreement with Kant. It is only much later in his argument that the two positions will diverge.

invariable in all cases, either upon the faculty of desire in general or upon its particulars, so that the preponderance of impression requisite for any complete action of the faculty of desire cannot be grounded in such objects” (KGA I.1: 236; 21). If this is true, we are still confronted with Schleiermacher’s question “Wherein must the origination of the preponderance of one portion of the determining ground of choice over other portions be grounded in each case?” (KGA I.1: 234; 19). In other words, Schleiermacher asks, if the attraction or repulsion that an object or its realization holds for us is not of itself sufficient to determine the will, then what, ultimately, is the ground of the will’s acting on one desire rather than another? Schleiermacher answers that this ground must be found in our subjectivity; more precisely, the effect that an object of desire can have upon the will is determined by the way in which that object is *represented*. Hence Schleiermacher notes that “Even if in some particular case the preponderance of one impulse over others is based in such accidental determinations of the faculty of desire as have been produced through its preceding activities, these in turn have their first ground in the state of the faculty of representation . . .” (KGA I.1: 237; 22). Note that this position is the exact opposite of the one espoused by Schleiermacher in his earlier third *Dialogue on Freedom*; there the impact made by a representation was limited and determined by preceding activities of the faculty of desire. Here the reverse is true; just how attractive a course of action is depends on how it is represented:

the preponderance in which every comparison of choice must end in order to pass over into a complete action of the faculty of desire must in every case be grounded in the totality of present representations and in the state and interrelations of all the soul’s faculties that have been produced in the progression of representations in our soul. (KGA I.1: 237–8; 22)

Which ideas will be associated with an external object, and which desires, in turn, will be connected with these ideas depends on our faculty of representation. For instance, our desire for an object may vary with what we know of it. Put before a hungry individual a sumptuous feast and she will of course desire it, but let her find out that it is poisoned and her desire will surely wane. Further, the desirability of an object is tied with how prominently it stands before

consciousness. In some cases an individual may enable himself to forego a temptation by putting the offending object out of mind and concerning himself with other things. On the other hand, it is no doubt true that desire is often heightened by dwelling upon a coveted thing.

These and other related examples lead Schleiermacher to conclude that no object is itself the ground of its desirability or attractiveness to the will; rather it is desirable only insofar as it is represented as such, and this means that desire is always intrinsically connected with the representing activity of the subject. Because it is, there is “no degree of impulse, however great [that] can be conceived to which an impulse of higher degree cannot be juxtaposed” (KGA I.1: 239; 25). This is what Schleiermacher calls “the boundlessness of impulse” (KGA I.1: 239; 25). By this he means that since the attraction an option holds for us is always a function of how it is represented, no matter how great the inducement to do one thing, it is still possible to be moved to do the opposite. This is because the degree of attraction of the opposite course of action also rests upon how it is represented. Hence it is always in principle possible to follow the dictates of morality, no matter how great the temptation to do otherwise: even if some “sensible feeling is unduly elevated by my representations” yet “a series of representations is possible through which the feeling representing practical reason might be affected more strongly” (KGA I.1: 240; 25).

The similarities of Schleiermacher's argument to that of Kant's are deep and surprising. An important feature of Kant's practical philosophy is his claim that “freedom of the power of choice has the characteristic, entirely peculiar to it, that it cannot be determined to action through any incentive *except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim*,”²¹ that is, human freedom involves an activity of the subject through which an inclination or desire is deemed *worth* acting upon, or taken as a fitting ground of action. Henry Allison has dubbed this Kant's Incorporation Thesis and has rightly pointed to its pivotal place at the core of Kant's practical philosophy. A central implication of this claim is that an incentive

²¹ Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, (KGS 6: 24; Giovanni and Wood, 73).

or desire of itself is not a reason for action, and this means further that the adoption of a practical principle or a maxim is never a causal consequence of a person's being in a state of desire.²² Schleiermacher's understanding of choice, involving as it does the assertion that while objects of desire may affect the will, they are not sufficient grounds for the determination of action, carries with it some of the same implications.

There are, however, some significant differences between Schleiermacher's position and Kant's. While Schleiermacher grounds the ultimate worth that a subject assigns to a particular course of action in the activity of the subject, and not in the causal consequences of one's being in a state of desire, he still wants to be able to link the subject's activity with its prior states. Noteworthy is the fact that Schleiermacher grounds the ultimate worth that a subject will assign to an object of desire in the faculty of representation, the present state of which can be connected with a subject's preceding states in a lawlike manner. The weight of the whole of Kant's incorporation thesis, on the other hand, rests on the *spontaneity* of the subject. Because a spontaneous action cannot be subjected to the principles of causal determination, the action cannot be grounded in the agent's prior states.²³

It is at this point, then, that Kant and Schleiermacher part company. In positioning the sufficient ground of an action in a subject's representations, Schleiermacher has, through one and the same argument, come as close as he possibly could to Kant's practical philosophy while at the same time having laid the groundwork for his own psychological determinism. He thereby seems to have provided a "compatibilist" version of a Kantian practical philosophy and overcome the stumbling block of all empiricists.

²² On this aspect of Kant's practical philosophy, see Allison's *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, especially 39–40, although the whole book is an extended argument concerning the importance of the incorporation thesis for Kant's theory of freedom.

²³ It is, however, significant that according to Kant in the *Religion*, the ground of an agent's actions can be traced to the fundamental disposition. We can thus connect the agent's action with his/her character, but *which* fundamental disposition the agent has chosen is still a matter of transcendental freedom.

KANT OR SCHLEIERMACHER?

Schleiermacher's compatibilist account of freedom and moral motivation has much to recommend it. For one, it allows us to understand our psychological processes in such a way that we can learn to steer the course of our desires. He notes that "if we must seek the basis for particular activities of the faculty of desire elsewhere than in the state and other activities of the soul, then the inquiries concerning our soul so natural to each of us are cut off at the root—inquiries concerning laws of the soul's various faculties . . . premises that would have been requisite to come to some certain result, and the result that certain premises would have produced" (*KGA* I.1: 240; 24–5). Later on he notes that "without this idea we could in no way justify our efforts to affect wills . . ." (*KGA* I.1: 242; 28). The validity of the idea that our present state is connected in a law-like manner with what precedes it, and that further, it is the ground of our future states, is connected with a certain practical interest: it allows for the care of the soul, that is, the nurturing of dispositions that in the future will bear moral fruit. On the other hand, the doctrine of the freedom of the will, through which one comes to think of oneself as instantly capable of realizing a moral goal without this involving a long and arduous training of one's character and dispositions is, according to Schleiermacher, self-deceptive. The feeling of freedom hides from us the fact that "everything that yet lies between the present moment and the anticipated one, as a means or preceding links in the chain, really belongs to the attainment of that state" (*KGA* I.1: 294; 79). The idea that there is no ground determining our ability to reach a moral goal other than our very intention of realizing it (transcendental freedom) only lulls us into unconcern through the false certainty that such an intention is all that is required to achieve the proposed end. Such a certainty "always does its utmost to make us miss our goal" (*KGA* I.1: 294; 79). On the other hand the doctrine of necessity, through which we can connect previous states of the soul with future ones, allows us to understand how we may affect ourselves and others in such a way as to bring us closer to moral perfection; it allows for us to undertake a "therapy of desire." Key to such self-affection is the strengthening of the ethical impulse: whether it will be strong enough

to overcome the opposing inclinations all depends upon the preceding period in which it was forged. Schleiermacher asks: "... will the ethical impulse... be strong enough to prevail over opposing inclinations?" and answers that necessity presents this as "depending upon the content of the intervening period—upon the strengthening or weakening of ethical feeling contained therein, upon the increasing or diminishing power therein of ethical impulse through action, both generally and in the particular respect under consideration" (*KGA* I.1: 295; 80). Necessity teaches that because prior moral states affect future ones, "You would have become so less (morally good) than perhaps you will, had you not so vitally desired it in advance" (*KGA* I.1: 295; 80).

Note all of this stands in agreement with a compatibilist understanding of freedom, according to which a person could have done otherwise, and is hence free, provided that he or she had had different sorts of desires. This understanding allows Schleiermacher to distinguish his own brand of determinism from fatalism. The idea behind the fatalism of Greek tragedy is that a given result will necessarily occur regardless of causal antecedents; Schleiermacher's determinism, on the other hand, propounds that given certain causal antecedents, a given result will necessarily follow. While the former principle is of no use to an investigation of the mechanism of desire and its consequences, the latter is indispensable to any kind of psychological insight, and hence to a therapy of desire.

Connected with Schleiermacher's practical criticisms of the idea of transcendental freedom is the fact that the conditions under which an act may be attributed to an agent give rise to a certain "antinomy of agency." This antinomy is closely related to Kant's third antinomy, developed in the first *Critique*.²⁴ Recall that the third antinomy concerns the possibility of appealing to another mode of causality beside that developed in the second analogy (causality in accordance with the laws of nature). The kind of causality in question is transcendental freedom, understood as "the power [Vermögen] of beginning a state spontaneously [von Selbst]" (*KRV* A533/B561). Since Schleiermacher's arguments take the side of the antithesis of this

²⁴ The connection of the antinomy of agency with the cosmological conflict is noted by Allison in *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, 28.

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antinomy, let me begin with a short exposition of it as it is presented by Kant in the first *Critique* and later discuss its relevance to an understanding of the antinomy of agency.

The antithesis of the third antinomy is relatively straightforward. According to it, if we assume transcendental freedom (defined as “a power of absolutely beginning a state, and therefore absolutely beginning a series of the consequences of that state” [KRV A445/B473]), then the unity of experience would be rendered impossible. This is because every action “presupposes a state of the not-yet acting cause” (KRV A445/B473), that is, we must assume the existence of an agent before it initiates an action, and furthermore, this agent must exist in some given state. However, insofar as an action is transcendently free, it would be an absolute beginning and as such in no wise grounded in the prior state of the agent. This means that the two states, that of an agent before the initiation of an action and that of the agent initiating the action could not be connected in a lawlike manner.

As Allison notes, while the recognizably Leibnizian argument of the antithesis concludes that if transcendental freedom were to be assumed the unity of experience would be annulled, it also supports the familiar compatibilist account of freedom also connected with Leibniz. Leibniz had argued that an action must have a sufficient reason grounded in the prior states of an agent; to deny this is to deny the conditions under which the act could intelligibly be attributed to that agent. The same point had already been made by Hume and other compatibilists, and Schleiermacher argues along the same lines in *On Freedom*. A condition of act attribution is that we should be able to relate an action to an agent and his or her character, that is, we must be able to understand how it flows from that character. If transcendental freedom is assumed, however, no such connection between the action and the character of the agent is possible. Schleiermacher asks, “How can I be accountable for an action when we cannot determine the extent to which it belongs to my soul?” (KGA I.1: 316; 100–1). Our ability to attribute the motive for an action to an agent depends on that action’s being explicable in terms of an agent’s character. Failing such a condition, the actions “have no ground at all, not even immediately, and are based on chance” (KGA I.1: 316; 101), which means they have nothing to do with the condition of the agent, that is, his

or her psychological states and disposition. Schleiermacher concludes that this idea of “complete chance . . . certainly annuls morality more than anything else” (*KGA* I.1: 317; 101).

The thesis of the third antinomy is also significant in that it relates in important ways to the conditions of the possibility of act attribution. The thesis of the antinomy stipulates that it is necessary to appeal to transcendental freedom, since without it mere causality in accordance with the laws of nature would be subject to two contradictory demands. These are, first, the principle that every event must have a cause and second, the principle of sufficient reason. The latter requirement is understood in the manner developed by Leibniz in his polemic with Clarke: every occurrence must have a sufficient reason both in the sense that it have antecedent causal conditions and in the sense that it have a complete explanation. As Allison puts it, it is understood as both a “logical principle requiring adequate grounds for any conclusion and as a real or causal principle requiring sufficient preconditions for every occurrence.”²⁵ According to Kant, the law of nature itself demands that “nothing takes place without a cause sufficiently determined a priori” (*KRV* A446/B474). If, however, this very same law of nature requires us to understand every event as itself having a cause, then the requirement that a cause be sufficiently determined a priori cannot be met. Since each event will have its ground in a cause preceding it that is also an event and that is, as such, subject to the same requirement that it also be grounded in a preceding event, completeness in the series of grounds determining an event can never be given.

Now the problem encountered in the thesis of the third antinomy becomes relevant to the question of act attribution in that if the causality of nature is universally applied to actions, we would be unable to find a sufficiently determined ground of an action that is attributable to an agent per se. Instead, the grounds for each action can eventually be traced to events pre-existing the agent and so having nothing to do with him or her. Schleiermacher is at the very least aware of these difficulties when he puts the

²⁵ *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, 17.

following argument in the mouth of the opponents of his doctrine of necessity:

This resonance of the soul is in turn a product of preceding and occasioning impressions, and so, resist as we may, all is at last dissolved in external impressions. So, of all that belongs to the action, what can we then assign to the agent? Do we see the agent in some way? We can think of the agent only as suffering! Or where is the power that is active? It dissolves into infinitely many infinitesimally small external forces that leave us with nothing to think of as firmly active in the subject. (KGA I.1: 257; 42–3)

The difficulty is a profound one: if we assume that all events are subject to causal law, it becomes hard to distinguish actions from events. Committing suicide by jumping off a ten-story window would be little different from being pushed by someone from behind in the significant sense that in both cases a pre-existing chain of events led to the disaster with inexorable necessity; in both cases the individual simply suffers what occurs to her. As Schleiermacher acutely notes, in such a scheme the individual functions as a mere placeholder for a given causal chain: s/he flashes “all the colors, but merely according to the laws of refraction. Of all that you see in the person’s actions, nothing belongs to the person” (KGA I.1: 257; 43). Since the person does not initiate any action but is merely the locus in which a certain causal chain occurs, we cannot attribute the actions to her.

To summarize: the antinomy of agency suggests that act attribution is subject to two conflicting requirements. The first is that an act be explicable in terms of an agent’s character; the second is that an agent should be the initiator of an act if it is to be attributed to him or her. While Schleiermacher obviously tries to meet the first requirement, it is unlikely that he succeeds in meeting the second. A simplistic understanding of the differences between Kant and Schleiermacher might suggest that while Schleiermacher decided to go with the first requirement and to accept his losses regarding the second, Kant did just the opposite. Kant’s position is, however, much more complicated than this. He wants to hold that *both* the thesis and antithesis of the third antinomy are compatible, since transcendental idealism creates a logical space for the idea of transcendental freedom. It is important to realize that Kant’s transcendental idealism is a

way of—as Allen Wood puts it—demonstrating the “compatibility of compatibilism and incompatibilism.”²⁶ Kant finds his way around this seemingly intractable antinomy through his affirmation that both points of view, i.e. the transcendental standpoint (corresponding to freedom) and the empirical standpoint (corresponding to determinism) are legitimate. Both freedom and determinism, however, can be attributed to the same subject only when in each case the attribution is made from a different standpoint.²⁷ Insofar as the subject is considered as appearance, determinism applies; insofar as the subject is considered in itself, freedom applies.

In his review of Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Schleiermacher raised serious questions about the viability of such an option, especially as regards the possibility of a pragmatic anthropology. How is one to affect oneself, to engage in any kind of therapy of desire or care of the soul if transcendental freedom is presupposed? If we speak of that which affects the mind, in the way that Kant does in his *Anthropology*, do we not then begin to treat the self as an appearance?²⁸ What then of freedom? From a practical perspective, Kant’s two points of view are very difficult to keep separate. We often assume freedom when we think of ourselves as resolving to make a radical change in our lives, but it is often the case that in order for such a change to become a reality we must nurse our subsequent desires in certain directions, we must be equipped with certain psychological insights about ourselves that will facilitate change in these desires, and we must suffer

²⁶ Allen W. Wood, “Kant’s Compatibilism,” see especially 99–101.

²⁷ In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant notes: “The union of causality as freedom with causality as the mechanism of nature, the first being given through the moral law and the latter through natural law, and both as related to the same subject, man, is impossible unless man is conceived by pure consciousness as a being in itself in relation to the former, but by empirical reason as appearance in relation to the latter. Otherwise the self-contradiction of reason is unavoidable” (*KprV* 5: 6; 6).

²⁸ In his review of Kant’s *Anthropology*, Schleiermacher notes: “This gives rise to the question: where do the ‘observations about what hinders or promotes a mental faculty’ come from, and how are these observations to be used for the mind’s expansion, if there are not physical ways to consider and treat this expansion in terms of the idea that all free choice is at the same time nature?” [*KGA* I.2, 365–9]. Here he has in mind Kant’s assertion in the *Anthropology* that so long as observations respecting that which hinders or stimulates a faculty such as memory are used practically, they belong in a pragmatic anthropology, one that presupposes freedom.

through all the stages that are involved in such a change. All of this involves some form of determinism. The question then remains whether Kant was justified in requiring transcendental freedom from a moral point of view. Cannot the concept be dispatched with altogether in the way that Schleiermacher does? Does Schleiermacher succeed in showing that the reality of the moral law as a motivating principle is consistent with a strictly compatibilist account of freedom?

Despite the ingenuity of Schleiermacher's discussion, I believe the answer to the question whether the concept of transcendental freedom can be dispatched with is no on two counts. First, Schleiermacher ultimately fails to show how, assuming determinism, an action can be understood as having been initiated by an agent, rather than the agent being a mere locus wherein a predetermined event takes place. There are hints in parts of *On Freedom* regarding how this implication might be avoided, but they are undeveloped. Were they developed, however, I believe they would ultimately imply transcendental freedom at some level.²⁹

Second, and more importantly, Schleiermacher's account of moral motivation ultimately fails to satisfy important conditions that are necessary if the moral law is to be conceived as a rational practical principle obligating all rational agents. The problem in Schleiermacher's analysis is the following. If we can provide a deterministic account concerning why an individual chooses to do *x*, while we may have provided an exhaustive *causal* account regarding why *x* was chosen, we still would not have shown that the agent had sufficient *reasons* for doing *x*, that is, we would not have shown why the agent *ought* to have done *x*. An agent who does *x* because s/he was causally necessitated to do so cannot rationally justify her actions on these grounds. We need carefully to distinguish rational necessity

²⁹ For instance, in the middle of *On Freedom*, Schleiermacher notes: "We do not want to feel a freeing from all necessity, because this exhibits itself in no case whatsoever, and our pretense would also be a vain attempt, but only a freeing from the compulsion of the object, and this will occur whenever we determine our faculty of desire through an idea that relates to pure self-consciousness" (72). As Crossley notes in his article "The Ethical Impulse in Schleiermacher's Early Ethics," "This view of accountability must mean, however, that a person has the power to alter his or her character, even if particular actions are determined by the state of a person's character at any particular time" (14).

grounded in objective laws of reason from causal necessity stemming from antecedent conditions, a distinction that Schleiermacher fails to make. While the *incentive* of the moral law is not sufficient to determine the will to action from a causal standpoint, the objective validity of the moral law itself provides sufficient reasons for action in accordance with it, and in this sense the moral law is rationally necessary. While Schleiermacher ultimately recognizes that if reason is to be the source of moral laws it must be possible that pure practical principles can have an influence on feeling, he yet wants to give an account of how the extent of this influence is determined by antecedent conditions in the subject, thereby once more reducing his account to deterministic principles. However, Schleiermacher's move, as ingenious as it is, only pushes the problem he recognized in *On Freedom* one step further back. There, it will be recalled, he noted that there must be an "impulse" that relates exclusively to practical reason, otherwise actions could only accidentally be in accordance with the moral law. However, in order for an agent to have *sufficient* reasons for action it is not enough to say that the moral law provides an incentive for action in the same way that other empirically conditioned desires have an influence on the will. The agent must also in principle be able to provide an account of why all these impulses are not on a par with one another, for instance, we must be able to give an account of why the impulse to be moral is *superior* to, or has more value than, the desire to kill when one feels like it. Unless the agent acts in accordance with the moral law *because* she recognizes that her impulse to be moral has more *worth* than her other non-moral desires, such action would be in accordance with the moral law only *accidentally*. The recognition of such a worth, required in order for her action not to be merely accidentally in accordance with the moral law would, however, imply transcendental freedom. Were the recognition of the worth of such a principle to be grounded in pre-existing susceptibilities of the agent, the principle could not be one that is universally and categorically binding, since the ability to act in accordance with it would thereby depend on the existing conditions of the agent.