

den jeweiligen Künstlern und Literaturhinweise, und gegebenenfalls erläuternde Bemerkungen. Der Katalog bietet so noch einmal den Ertrag der Textparaphrasen des Hauptteils *in nuce*. In diesem Sinne empfiehlt sich das Buch auch als ein praktisches Nachschlagewerk zu Schellings Kunstphilosophie und ist jedem Leser der *Philosophie der Kunst* zu empfehlen.

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David C. Schindler: *The Perfection of Freedom. Schiller, Schelling, and Hegel between the Ancients and the Moderns*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books 2012 (Veritas 8). xxvi, 414 pages. ISBN 978-1-62032-182-9

With this book Schindler sets out to accomplish a herculean task. He aims to present a richer alternative to the popular conception of freedom as the “power to choose” by giving an account of freedom in three of the most difficult thinkers in the history of philosophy – Schiller, Schelling, and Hegel. As one would expect, given the enormity of the task, the results are mixed. On the one hand, Schindler succeeds in showing the richness of a fuller conception of freedom, and does so with some remarkable insights. On the other hand, the sheer amount of material presented in Schindler’s book – especially in the treatment of Schelling – makes it difficult for him to focus and develop fully the thought contained in any individual text. Accordingly, the book often assumes the character of a historical overview, which serves a purpose in itself, but which is not always satisfying from a philosophical point of view – and Schindler notes that his project is primarily philosophical, not historical.

In the introduction Schindler gives a critique of the popular notion of freedom, which he calls the “possibilistic conception.” According to this conception, freedom is the power to choose. Freedom is thus defined in terms of power or possibility, not actuality. This is problematic, Schindler argues, because it instrumentalizes freedom: as the power to choose, freedom is a mere means of achieving other ends, not an end in itself. And yet there is a general recognition that freedom is a great human good, that it *is* an end in itself. Accordingly, freedom is treated as an end worth pursuing for its own sake, but commonly defined as a mere means.

I am skeptical concerning Schindler’s claim that freedom as a power would be a mere means. Our cognitive powers – for example, the understanding – are not simply means, but are desired for their own sake. In any case, Schindler intends the book to present an alternative to the “possibilistic conception” of freedom – an alternative that would do justice to freedom as a great human good. According to this alternative conception, freedom is a kind of actuality or perfection, not a mere power. Schindler does not intend to give a compre-

hensive treatment of this conception but to focus on a single aspect, which he calls “the *relationship between freedom and form*.” (xvii) I find this way of expressing the central theme of the book somewhat unfortunate, because the word “form” has so many meanings. As a preliminary definition, Schindler defines form as “a complex, structured whole” in the sense of *Gestalt* (xviii). In the body of the book, Schindler seems to use the word as a synonym for order, actuality, or objective realization, but he never defines his use of the word definitively.

In the introduction Schindler gives two different formulations of the true relationship between freedom and form; these competing formulations create an unacknowledged tension that runs through the book. On the one hand, freedom is to be *integrated* with form. Indeed, the word “integration” is one of the key words of the text, accompanied often by the notion of “reciprocal dependence.” On the other hand, Schindler states that “properly understood [...] form and freedom coincide” (xxv). Here freedom is not just integrated with an ordered whole: freedom simply is the ordered whole. But when this ordered whole is the state, as is the case in Hegel’s philosophy of right, any sense of individual freedom is marginalized. At the end of the book Schindler is very critical of Hegel on this score, but he never acknowledges that the very manner in which he frames the problem places him on a trajectory toward Hegel. Any attempt to integrate freedom with the whole runs the risk of collapsing the one into the other.

Schindler devotes two chapters to each of the three philosophers, and he ends with a short concluding chapter. Each philosopher’s conception of freedom can be summarized in terms of form: freedom is (1) “aesthetic form” for Schiller, (2) “organic form” for Schelling (in his *Naturphilosophie*), and (3) “social form” for Hegel. Schindler devotes chapter 1 to a very sympathetic characterization of Schiller’s style of philosophizing. Although Schiller’s philosophy may appear to be hopelessly inconsistent, Schindler argues that the apparent inconsistencies are intentional: Schiller sharpens opposition in order to bring the opposed elements together in a dramatic unity. While this may be Schiller’s intention, in my view he fails to show concretely *how* the opposed elements come together, and thus we are still left with the inconsistencies. In chapter 2 Schindler presents Schiller’s insights into beauty and its relationship to freedom in the *Kalliasbriefe* and the Letters *Ueber die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*. Though I still have concerns about the coherence and precision of Schiller’s thought, I found Schindler’s account of moral beauty in Schiller particularly compelling: moral beauty exists when “‘duty becomes [...] nature’” and one performs duty as if it were instinctive (59f.).

In chapters 5 and 6 Schindler examines Hegel’s conception of freedom as “social form,” focusing on the *Philosophie des Rechts*. Schindler’s overall approach to interpreting Hegel is nuanced. He emphasizes the importance of reading Hegel metaphysically: freedom in the form of *Sittlichkeit* has a sub-

stantial reality that is metaphysical in nature. Nonetheless, Schindler acknowledges that popular anti-metaphysical readings of Hegel have some truth, but they are necessarily incomplete and threaten to undermine the basis for what truth they have. Unlike the possibilistic conception of freedom dominant in classical liberalism, freedom for Hegel is an actuality that transcends individuals and essentially involves an *other*. Freedom reaches its most complete form in the state, which is an organic whole of individuals, whose ends coincide with the ends of the whole. At the end of chapter 6 Schindler considers the possibility of the totalitarian state, which he regards as a significant problem for Hegel, insofar as Hegel rules out the freedom of the individual over against the state (cf. 357). One solution would be to emphasize the liberal elements in Hegel's thought, but Schindler argues this would involve denying principles fundamental to his philosophy. Schindler's own solution involves going beyond objective spirit (which culminates in the state) to absolute spirit – particularly in the form of religion, which could bring together objective and subjective spirit in a way that does not reduce one to the other. Schindler's solution is provocative but requires more development before it can be properly evaluated.

Schindler devotes chapters 3 and 4 to Schelling. The discussion of the motivation for Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* in chapter 3 is excellent: Schindler shows how an impoverished, mechanistic view of nature entails an impoverished view of the subject; in contrast, reconceiving nature as dynamic and productive enriches the subject and its freedom. The organism is paradigmatic because it shows the integration of form and matter, subjectivity and objectivity. Schindler, however, does not think that Schelling always goes far enough in this integration, at times allowing a kind of hostility between subject and object (cf. 165). Schelling would argue, however, that some opposition between subject and object is necessary if they are not to collapse into one but form a living unity. "Ohne Gegensatz kein Leben" (SW VII, 435).

Of all the chapters in Schindler's book, chapter 4 suffers most from a lack of focus. Schindler tackles the *Identitätsphilosophie*, the *Freiheitsschrift*, and the philosophy of revelation, but he is severely critical of much of this material. One wonders, if Schindler's aims are primarily systematic and not historical, why he did not focus more narrowly on the material he wished to appropriate. In particular, Schindler regards Schelling's conception of love as an important insight (cf. 237), but he does not develop the concept at any length. More than anything else, Schindler is critical of Schelling's definition of freedom in the *Freiheitsschrift* as "the capacity for good and evil." (SW VII, 352) According to Schindler, not only is this definition "possibilistic," but it makes freedom indifferent to the good.

This brings me to some concluding points of criticism. Schindler entitles his book, "The Perfection of Freedom." But what is the relationship between freedom and *imperfection*? One way of reading the book's title would be the

following: there are different kinds of freedom, including the freedom to do evil, but the book describes the highest kind of freedom – its perfection. There are places where Schindler seems to consider degrees of freedom (cf. 337), but in the end he acknowledges only one kind of freedom, freedom as perfection. But this raises the question: is there *not* a freedom to do evil? Schindler's answer seems to be that there isn't (cf. 235). Indeed, it is difficult to conceive how he could answer otherwise, without embracing in at least a qualified form a possibilistic conception of freedom. And yet such an answer has profound consequences that Schindler does not develop.

One such consequence involves the question of moral responsibility. We only consider people responsible if their actions are *free*. But if evil acts are not free, if they are not *in some sense* expressions of freedom, the agents are not responsible. Indeed, moral responsibility is one of the "conventional" themes associated with philosophical discussions of freedom. Schindler admits in the introduction that the book says "almost nothing" about moral responsibility and other conventional themes, concentrating on a rich array of questions that have to do with the actualization of freedom (xxv). However, one of the recurring (Hegelian) themes of the book is that a conception of freedom as actuality includes everything of value in the possibilistic conception but brings it to perfection in a more complete whole. But without engaging themes like moral responsibility, Schindler's book raises the suspicion that his conception cannot adequately treat such themes. Unfortunately, this makes it all too easy for those who rightly emphasize the importance of moral responsibility to dismiss Schindler's legitimate contributions.

Despite my points of criticism, these contributions are significant. By posing and developing the question of the relationship between freedom and actuality, Schindler introduces a problem that any complete account of freedom must address. At the same time, Schindler provides us with a useful framework for relating Schelling and Hegel on freedom: how does each conceive the relationship of freedom to its concrete realization?

Finally, the book gives an overview of the potential richness that a fuller conception of freedom provides. Freedom, properly conceived, relates not only to individual actions but to human flourishing in the fullest sense. Such a freedom is indeed something worth striving for.

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