

## C.C.E. Schmid and the Doctrine of Intelligible Fatalism

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Abstract: C.C.E. Schmid’s doctrine of intelligible fatalism was immensely influential in the immediate reception of Kant’s philosophy. Existing treatments of this doctrine, largely neglected by modern scholarship, echo uncharitable interpretations espoused by Schmid’s contemporaries. I demonstrate that Schmid’s intelligible fatalism is more coherent and philosophically robust than hitherto recognized. I argue for a novel interpretation of Schmid’s account of rational agency, showing that intelligible fatalism is compatible with his conceptions of freedom, obligation, and imputation. Specifically, I argue that the role of consciousness in this account carves out conceptual space for a distinction between the theoretical and the practical that is sufficient to render intelligible fatalism consistent with these conceptions.

## I. Introduction

Carl Christian Erhard Schmid, called one of the “most significant Kantians” of his time,<sup>1</sup> was an influential interpreter of the Critical philosophy in the 1780s and 1790s. In his renowned *Attempt at a Moral Philosophy* (1790; *Versuch einer Moralphilosophie*), Schmid introduced his doctrine of intelligible fatalism, “the assertion of the natural necessity of all actions of a rational being according to laws of the causality of things in themselves.”<sup>2</sup> For Schmid, the doctrine entailed

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Rosenkranz, *Geschichte der Kant’schen Philosophie*, 307.

<sup>2</sup> C.C.E. Schmid, *Attempt at a Moral Philosophy*, §257, 211, abbreviated as <sup>1</sup>AMP §257, 211. References to the second and third editions are abbreviated accordingly. The fourth edition omits the division of sections present in the other editions and is cited according to page number only.

that only morally good actions were free, a claim which inflamed debates concerning the extension of the concept of free will and the possibility of moral imputation.

Despite its notoriety in eighteenth-century Germany, Schmid's intelligible fatalism has received surprisingly little attention in scholarship on the reception of Kant's philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Works engaging with Schmid do so tangentially, apropos his disputes with Reinhold and Fichte.<sup>4</sup> Thus, investigation of Schmid's intelligible fatalism in its own right is still outstanding.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the few existing treatments of the doctrine disagree fundamentally about its characterization and role in Schmid's philosophy. Whereas Georg Wallwitz argues that, through intelligible fatalism, Schmid constructs a metaphysics of morals,<sup>6</sup> Michelle Kosch asserts that Schmid considered the doctrine to be "incompatible with ethics."<sup>7</sup> While Brigitte Sassen describes Schmid as a "committed defender and expositor of the Kantian philosophy,"<sup>8</sup> and Carl Daub calls Schmid's *Attempt at a Moral Philosophy* "a philosophical ethics entirely in accordance with Critical principles,"<sup>9</sup> Antonino Falduto claims that the Jena *Frühkantianer*, including Schmid, "were not Kantians at all" but rather neo-Leibnizians.<sup>10</sup> The impact of Schmid's intelligible fatalism on his conception of free will has also been disputed. Martin Bondeli holds that Schmid restricted the extension of the concept of freedom to morally good actions.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, Paul Guyer claims that Schmid held that "the noumenal self is free to choose to act on the moral law *or* 'other (non-rational) powers.'"<sup>12</sup> To complicate matters, Guyer argues that Schmid does not endorse intelligible fatalism at all, but instead merely presents it as a portrayal of J.A.H. Ulrich's view.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, despite Schmid's espousal of imputation in *Attempt at a Moral Philosophy*, several of

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<sup>3</sup> In his landmark monograph, Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 193, 215, 355n59, mentions Schmid just thrice in passing, without referencing intelligible fatalism. Likewise, in his examination of debates engendered by Kant's conception of free will, Owen Ware, "Freedom Immediately After Kant," relegates Schmid to a footnote. In their examination of the "first reception and critique of Kant's moral philosophy" and the "relations between the most important philosophers", Antonino Falduto and Jens Timmermann (eds.), *The Early Critique of Kant's Moral Philosophy*, omit Schmid altogether.

<sup>4</sup> For brief treatments of intelligible fatalism pertaining to Reinhold's account of free will, see Martin Bondeli, "Zu Reinholds Auffassung von Willensfreiheit"; and Faustino Fabbianelli, "Die Theorie der Willensfreiheit." For discussion of the dispute between Fichte and Schmid, see Elizabeth Millán, "Fichte," 313–317.

<sup>5</sup> An exception is Georg von Wallwitz, *Die Interpretation und Ausformung*, 47–56.

<sup>6</sup> Wallwitz, *Die Interpretation und Ausformung*, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Kosch, *Freedom and Reason*, 51.

<sup>8</sup> Sassen, *Kant's Early Critics*, 39.

<sup>9</sup> Carl Daub, *Darstellung und Beurtheilung*, 147.

<sup>10</sup> Antonino Falduto, "Freiheit zwischen Autonomie und Notwendigkeit," 3395, 3398.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Bondeli, "Einleitung," 376n26.

<sup>12</sup> Guyer, "The Struggle for Freedom," 122. Guyer is quoting from <sup>1</sup>AMP §261, 224.

<sup>13</sup> Guyer, "The Struggle for Freedom," 122.

his contemporaries charged that he rejected the compatibility of imputation and intelligible fatalism. Thus, Fichte writes: “By Mr. Schmid’s own admission, imputation, blame, and merit cease to exist in this theory.”<sup>14</sup> Likewise, J.C. Schwab asserts that, in Schmid’s doctrine, “*there is no real blame and imputation, and no real punishment*. It is not I who makes this inference, but Mr. Schmid himself.”<sup>15</sup>

It is perhaps no exaggeration to claim that never has such a significant figure in the reception of the Critical philosophy been so misunderstood by both his contemporaries and recent scholars. The aim of this paper is to show that Schmid’s doctrine of intelligible fatalism is more coherent and philosophically robust than previously recognized. I argue for a novel interpretation of Schmid’s account of rational agency to show intelligible fatalism to be consistent with his conceptions of freedom, obligation, and imputation. By vindicating intelligible fatalism, I demonstrate the doctrine’s historical significance and its philosophical significance as an anticipation of contemporary compatibilist conceptions of free will.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 outlines Schmid’s conception of intelligible fatalism. In sections 3–5, I develop and defend an interpretation of Schmid’s account of rational agency as restricted to action in accordance with consciously representable reasons. I argue that the role of consciousness in this account carves out conceptual space for a distinction between the theoretical and the practical that is sufficient to render intelligible fatalism consistent with Schmid’s conceptions of freedom (section 3), obligation (section 4), and imputation (section 5). In section 6, I discuss the philosophical significance of Schmid’s position in relation to contemporary compatibilism. I conclude in section 7 by discussing the merits of studying Schmid’s practical philosophy. On my reading, intelligible fatalism decisively influenced the immediate reception of Kant’s account of free will, anticipates interpretations of Kant on the scope of the concept of freedom, and prefigures contemporary compatibilism.

## 2. The Doctrine of Intelligible Fatalism

In the first edition of *AMP*, Schmid defines intelligible fatalism as “the assertion of the natural necessity of all actions of a rational being according to laws of the causality of things in

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<sup>14</sup> Fichte, “Creuzer Review,” 204.

<sup>15</sup> J.C. Schwab, “On Intelligible Fatalism,” 32–33.

themselves.”<sup>16</sup> He apparently holds that since appearances are grounded in things in themselves, the causal relationships between appearances must also be so grounded. Several passages about intelligible fatalism from <sup>2</sup>AMP suggest just that: according to intelligible fatalism, “one represents the natural necessity of actions as grounded in the intelligible,”<sup>17</sup> and “our sensibly perceivable actions, considered as appearances, are ultimately grounded in something conceivable though not cognizable, namely [something] supersensible.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, whereas Kant takes deterministic causal laws to hold for empirical states of affairs, Schmid extends the doctrine of determinism to the intelligible. Below I sketch Schmid’s arguments for this extension.

J.A.H. Ulrich’s *Eleutheriology, or On Freedom and Necessity* (1788) is crucial to Schmid’s intelligible fatalism. Following Ulrich, Schmid characterizes the causality of the will in terms of the mutually exclusive frameworks of determinism and indeterminism. He defines determinism negatively as a doctrine that denies chance, and indeterminism positively as one that affirms it, or, what is the same, posits lawless effects.<sup>19</sup> Schmid claims that preceding causes determine all human action, a claim which refers to actions considered as temporally-conditioned appearances.<sup>20</sup> However, as I clarify below, he extends determinism to things in themselves, as the causality of things in themselves cannot be lawless.

Schmid argues for the extension of determinism, or fatalism,<sup>21</sup> to things in themselves in connection with the existence of immoral action. He addresses Ulrich’s view that immoral actions are apparently inexplicable. If (as Kant seems to propose) the intelligible, rational self is the human being’s proper self (*G* 4:457), and freedom indicates intelligible causality (*CPR* A 537/B 565) or “a causality of pure reason” (*CPrR* 5:48), and if the moral law is the causal law of freedom (*CPrR* 5:47), why do we not always act morally? In other words, why does reason not always uniformly determine the will?<sup>22</sup> Schmid assumes Ulrich’s exclusive disjunction between necessity and chance, opting for the former:

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<sup>16</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §257, 211.

<sup>17</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §261f, 368.

<sup>18</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §260a, 357.

<sup>19</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §224, 187.

<sup>20</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §228, 190–1. Cf. Ulrich, *Eleutheriology*, 20.

<sup>21</sup> In <sup>1</sup>AMP Schmid claims determinism and fatalism are “essentially indistinct” (§232, 194), and in <sup>3</sup>AMP and <sup>4</sup>AMP he redubs intelligible fatalism “intelligible determinism.”

<sup>22</sup> As discussed by Guyer, *The Virtues of Freedom*, 164ff., though omitting reference to Schmid.

*If we do not want to allow any (irrational) chance, then there remains nothing left but necessity, for there is absolutely no middle path between the two.* Thus, something must be thought as present with the existence of reason that determines its efficacy on appearances [...] And if we want to escape groundlessness, i.e. theoretical irrationality, in explaining immorality, then we must think this problematic thought assertorically.<sup>23</sup>

In Schmid's view, because chance is irrational, we must assume that when reason is inefficacious, "*it could not be efficacious*" due to something that is not itself appearance.<sup>24</sup> Since "an appearance cannot determine a thing in itself," we must presuppose *something* intelligible that hinders the efficacy of pure reason. This follows from the asymmetrical grounding relationship between things in themselves and appearances. Since things in themselves ground appearances, and not conversely, any obstacle to the efficacy of things in themselves must be intelligible. Thus, Schmid posits intelligible obstacles in order to ground reason's inefficacy in immoral actions. The concept of intelligible obstacle (*Hindernis*) cannot be determined any further than as that which limits reason's efficacy, and Schmid explicitly calls this posit "problematic," i.e. something that we cannot cognize but must accept to avoid the irrationality of chance. He refers to "unknown reasons and obstacles which limit rational efficacy,"<sup>25</sup> claiming that "[a]ll immorality of a finite being is grounded, *concerning its possibility*, on these (transcendent) limiting conditions to the self-activity of reason that lie beyond experience [...]."<sup>26</sup> Consequently, Schmid maintains that all of a rational being's actions must be conceived of in terms of the causality of things in themselves, determined either by pure practical reason or by intelligible obstacles to reason's efficacy. He calls this "intelligible fatalism."

A brief excursus on the historical context will help illustrate the significance of Schmid's doctrine. Schmid's postulation of intelligible obstacles grounding immoral action was highly controversial. In an anonymously published review of <sup>1</sup>AMP in the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung*, Karl Heinrich Heydenreich questions how the agent could be blamed for such action, claiming intelligible fatalism "precludes a *genuine theory of duty*."<sup>27</sup> He countered these perceived

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<sup>23</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §255, 209.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> <sup>3</sup>AMP §375f, 648. See also <sup>1</sup>AMP, §257, 207; <sup>2</sup>AMP §252, 342f.; <sup>2</sup>AMP §263v, 388.

<sup>26</sup> <sup>3</sup>AMP §375g, 648.

<sup>27</sup> *ALZ*, no. 108, 59. On Heydenreich's authorship of the review, see Martin Bondeli, "Mitstreiter und Kritiker"; Alessandro Lazzarari, *Das Eine*, 204f.

deficiencies in the second volume of his *Reflections on the Philosophy of Natural Religion* (1791; *Betrachtungen über die Philosophie der natürlichen Religion*), arguing for a conception of freedom as “the capacity to contain and make efficacious the complete ground of actions which are in conformity with or contrary to the moral law of reason.”<sup>28</sup> Likewise, in the second volume of his *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy* (1792; *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*), Karl Leonhard Reinhold argues that Schmid’s intelligible obstacles abolish moral imputation,<sup>29</sup> and posits freedom as “the capacity to determine oneself, through the power of choice, for or against the practical law.”<sup>30</sup> In the wake of these developments, intelligible fatalism became famous — nay *infamous* — among German philosophers. In 1793, J.G. Fichte described it as “all too familiar to every reader of the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung*.”<sup>31</sup> That same year, A.L.C. Heydenreich characterized Schmid’s conception of freedom, rooted in intelligible fatalism, as “more commonplace in the Kantian school”<sup>32</sup> than that of K.L. Reinhold, who once enjoyed the preeminent status of herald of the Critical philosophy.

Despite the apparent metaphysical implications of a doctrine of intelligible determinism, Schmid’s view is at bottom epistemic: “*intelligible fatalism* [...] is a necessary thought of reason.”<sup>33</sup> Since the concepts of *ground* and *consequence* are pure concepts of the understanding, they “appertain to everything thinkable.”<sup>34</sup> Distinguishing between things in themselves and noumena, or the thought of things in themselves, Schmid argues that the “conceivable [supersensible] determining grounds of actions, inasmuch as we think them (i.e. not as things in themselves but as noumena) are subject to the rational laws of thought.”<sup>35</sup> So, “the assertion of a universal necessity in accordance with rational laws, of a universal lawfulness of things in themselves (inasmuch as they are thought, as noumena) [...] is a necessary thought of reason.”<sup>36</sup> For Schmid, the postulation of intelligible fatalism reflects the constitution of our faculty of

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<sup>28</sup> Heydenreich, *Reflections*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Reinhold, *Letters II*, 296–297.

<sup>30</sup> Reinhold, *Letters II*, 272. In recent scholarship, Reinhold’s proposed conception of freedom is viewed as a corrective of Kant’s account of freedom as autonomy, thought to be restricted to morally good actions (see, e.g. Courtney Fugate, “On a Supposed Solution”).

<sup>31</sup> J.G. Fichte, “Creuzer Review,” 204.

<sup>32</sup> A.L.C. Heydenreich, *On Freedom and Determinism*, 59n.

<sup>33</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §263z, 397.

<sup>34</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §260a, 358.

<sup>35</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §260a, 357–358.

<sup>36</sup> <sup>3</sup>AMP §262z, 525.

cognition. Thus, he explicitly calls this posit “problematic,” i.e. something that we cannot cognize but must assume to avoid “theoretical irrationality.”<sup>37</sup>

### 3. Intelligible Fatalism and Freedom

In <sup>1</sup>AMP Schmid presents an account of free will that he takes to be consistent with the spirit of Kant’s. Schmid’s contemporaries criticized the account’s supposed departure from Kant<sup>38</sup> and its compatibility with intelligible fatalism.<sup>39</sup> In this section, I sketch Schmid’s broadly Kantian account of freedom and argue that it is compatible with intelligible fatalism.<sup>40</sup> To this end, I interpret Schmid’s account of rational agency and show how his conception of free will is to be understood accordingly.

As is the case for Kant, Schmid’s account of free will comprises several concepts of freedom. In <sup>1</sup>AMP Schmid introduces four concepts of freedom: transcendent, absolute or metaphysical, moral, and practical freedom. Transcendent freedom is described quickly, since Schmid denies that it pertains to our will. It is defined as “independence of intelligible action from intelligible grounds, an unlimited capacity of reason to have a determining influence on all perceivable actions of a finite rational being and thereby make them moral [...].”<sup>41</sup> Immoral actions disprove that we have this kind of freedom, or that our will is completely independent of intelligible grounds *qua* obstacles.<sup>42</sup> Only God can be free in this sense.

The concept of absolute, or metaphysical, freedom indicates the “capacity to act from pure self-determination (thus, *without being determined*),” a capacity “to begin an action.”<sup>43</sup> It is markedly influenced by Kant’s concept of transcendental freedom, “the capacity to begin a state from itself” (A 533/B 561). Following Kant, Schmid denies that, in experience, human beings are absolutely free, for no temporal action could begin independently of preceding circumstances.<sup>44</sup> Yet, for the I *qua* supersensible substrate of the “sensibly perceivable

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<sup>37</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §255, 209. As we will see in §5, that intelligible fatalism indicates an epistemic perspective we must adopt from the theoretical standpoint is relevant to Schmid’s account of imputation.

<sup>38</sup> See ALZ, no. 108, 58.

<sup>39</sup> See *Annalen der Philosophie* (2), 121.

<sup>40</sup> The complex and controversial nature of Kant’s account of free will precludes an extensive assessment of consistency with Schmid’s. Here I indicate parallels between Schmid and Kant.

<sup>41</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §256, 210.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §233, 194–195.

<sup>44</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §233, 195.

character,” we can conceive of a capacity whose causality does not itself begin but effects actions in a determined temporal series.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Schmid argues that, because we are conscious of the moral law, we *must* consider our will absolutely free.<sup>46</sup> Thus, he endorses Kant’s claim that the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom (cf. *CPrR* 5:4n).

This absolutely free capacity is connected to the human being *qua* thing in itself, and manifests in appearance by determining the human being’s faculty of desire. The concept of moral freedom indicates this “determinability of desire through pure reason,”<sup>47</sup> which amounts to the “appearance of metaphysical [i.e. absolute] freedom.”<sup>48</sup> In connection with this, Schmid likens reason’s self-activity to a “law of nature”;<sup>49</sup> the moral law is “an essential law of my supersensible I.”<sup>50</sup> He considers the moral law a law of nature in that, with respect to pure practical reason, it is a necessary law of intelligible causality.

Practical freedom is defined as “independence from the generally compulsive influence of animal feelings.”<sup>51</sup> We are practically free when we act on the basis of rational representations, even if these remain determined by natural necessity. For Schmid, our taking the moral law as an incentive demonstrates our capacity to act on the basis of representations provided by pure practical reason.<sup>52</sup> Concomitantly, “moral freedom presupposes practical freedom.”<sup>53</sup> This claim illuminates how absolute freedom manifests itself in the world of appearances. If moral freedom presupposes practical freedom, the appearance of absolute freedom presupposes a capacity to act based on rational representations.

Our freedom, *qua* intelligible being, implies no capacity to do otherwise. Consequently, only moral actions, the manifestation of pure practical reason’s activity, are free. When reason is not efficacious in determining the will, “it could not be efficacious.”<sup>54</sup> Supposing otherwise would admit irrational chance. Explicitly, in <sup>2</sup>*AMP*, the capacity to act immorally “contradicts the concept of a moral capacity, and such a freedom would be a capacity to act in contradictorily

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<sup>45</sup> <sup>1</sup>*AMP* §238–241, 197–200. Cf. A 532/B 560–A 558/B 586.

<sup>46</sup> <sup>1</sup>*AMP* §243, 201–202. See also <sup>1</sup>*AMP* §227, 190.

<sup>47</sup> <sup>1</sup>*AMP* §227, 190.

<sup>48</sup> <sup>1</sup>*AMP* §261, 224.

<sup>49</sup> <sup>1</sup>*AMP* §111, 110.

<sup>50</sup> <sup>1</sup>*AMP* §245, 203.

<sup>51</sup> <sup>1</sup>*AMP* §226, 188.

<sup>52</sup> <sup>2</sup>*AMP* §251c, 340.

<sup>53</sup> <sup>2</sup>*AMP* §251b, 338.

<sup>54</sup> <sup>1</sup>*AMP* §255, 209.



opposed ways, which amounts to a contradiction.”<sup>55</sup> Since freedom consists in reason’s self-activity in determining the will, and its failure is the necessary result of intelligible obstacles, immoral actions are not free: “Immoral actions and dispositions therefore in no way depend on freedom [...] but rather on the lack of it.”<sup>56</sup>

Having outlined Schmid’s conception of freedom in relation to his intelligible fatalism, I turn to its connection to his account of rational agency. Significantly, Schmid claims that intelligible fatalism “cannot provide any determining ground” of a rational being’s actions nor “any principle of inactivity.”<sup>57</sup> *Prima facie*, this claim denies the determining influence of intelligible causes, and therewith intelligible fatalism. But that suggestion is implausible, given Schmid’s commitment to the doctrine: he is explicit in all editions of *AMP* that intelligible fatalism is a necessary but problematic posit to account for immoral action. If intelligible fatalism entails that a rational being’s actions are grounded in intelligible causality, how are we to understand the claim that intelligible fatalism cannot provide a determining ground of action? I contend that this claim must be understood in accordance with Schmid’s account of rational agency, namely his restriction of its scope to the sphere of consciously representable reasons.

Schmid’s commitment to this feature of agency is evidenced in his account of the free power of choice. The concept of the power of choice indicates the “capacity to act on the basis of representations.”<sup>58</sup> These representations can be immediate impressions of the representations of objects, relevant to the animal power of choice, or “rational deliberations and motives,” relevant to the free sensible power of choice.<sup>59</sup> Finite rational beings possess a free sensible power of choice, which Schmid correlates with practical freedom.<sup>60</sup> The representations at issue are not mere sense impressions, but rational representations, deliberations, and motives, core facets of practical reasoning. Recall that Schmid conceives of practical freedom as the capacity to act on rational representations. A closer look at the passage expressing the view that intelligible

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<sup>55</sup> <sup>2</sup>*AMP* §248, 335.

<sup>56</sup> <sup>2</sup>*AMP* §252, 342. Schmid restricts the concept of freedom to morally good action in his *Lexicon*, where “to act freely” and “in a way that is morally good” are synonyms. (*Lexicon*, 62). By <sup>3</sup>*AMP*, presumably in light of Kant’s *Religion*, Schmid seems to waver on this issue (<sup>3</sup>*AMP* §241, 441–442n; *ibid.*, §249, 449–452; *ibid.*, §252, 458–459). However, as the reviewer of <sup>3</sup>*AMP* observes, Schmid retains passages from previous editions which deny that moral evil is free (*ALZ*, no. 315, 58; cf. <sup>3</sup>*AMP* §260b, 479–480; <sup>4</sup>*AMP*, 502).

<sup>57</sup> <sup>1</sup>*AMP* §257, 211.

<sup>58</sup> <sup>2</sup>*AMP* §251a, 337.

<sup>59</sup> <sup>2</sup>*AMP* §251b, 338. Following Kant, Schmid provides the Latinate *arbitrium brutum* and *arbitrium sensitivum liberum* (cf. A 802/B 831).

<sup>60</sup> <sup>2</sup>*AMP* §251b, 338.

fatalism provides no determining ground of action reveals that these representations must be able to function as objects of reflection in an agent's practical reasoning:

Intelligible fatalism, i.e. the assertion of the natural necessity of all actions of a rational being in accordance with laws of the causality of things in themselves, cannot provide any determining ground of these actions or any principle of inactivity, since only what we are acquainted with can have a determining influence on our actions, whereas the limits that define rational activity are absolutely indeterminable for us.<sup>61</sup>

The final phrases in this passage are key. Given that denying the determining influence of unknown things in themselves directly contradicts intelligible fatalism, I propose that Schmid is concerned with rational agency and the scope of practical reasoning. Hence Schmid's appeal to "what we are acquainted with," i.e. what we can consciously represent. Consequently, Schmid must mean "determining ground" not in a theoretical sense, but practically, like "motive" – as evidenced by Schmid's definition of "motive" as "the objective ground of the will insofar as it is represented by reason and determines the will."<sup>62</sup> The scope of rational agency is limited exclusively to consciously representable reasons – they alone serve as determining grounds of actions in the agent's practical reasoning.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, the limits of reason's efficacy are indeterminable, and cannot be determining grounds *from the practical perspective*. More explicitly, in <sup>2</sup>AMP: "The obstacles of self-activity, which indeed could limit moral freedom in appearance, are entirely unknown and therefore cannot be taken into account in advance for any particular case [...]."<sup>64</sup> Schmid's claim that the theoretical doctrine of intelligible fatalism cannot undermine practical moral considerations is supported further: "For morality it is enough to know or to believe that everything with which we are acquainted and all temporal circumstances cannot force us to act irrationally."<sup>65</sup>

This interpretation avoids the contradiction that intelligible fatalism both cannot provide a determining ground of action and entails that all of a rational being's actions are determined in

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<sup>61</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §257, 211.

<sup>62</sup> Schmid, <sup>2</sup>Lexicon,

<sup>63</sup> In Kant's unpublished notes he remarks: "what I cannot perceive at all is practically nothing [...] for it does not come into consideration of motives" (*Refl* 4223, 17:463).

<sup>64</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §263v, 388.

<sup>65</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP, §257, 211.

accordance with the causality of things in themselves. In the next two sections, I argue that Schmid's accounts of moral obligation and imputation are depend on this feature of his conception of rational agency.

#### 4. Intelligible Fatalism and Moral Obligation

A serious charge against Schmid's intelligible fatalism is that it undermines moral obligation, and with it, morality. The reviewer of <sup>3</sup>AMP in *Annalen der Philosophie* suggests that, given Schmid's intelligible fatalist conception of freedom, "all imputation, all blame, merit, in short, everything properly pertaining to morals is entirely forsaken."<sup>66</sup> Recent scholarship echoes the charge that Schmid's identification of the moral law with the causal law of freedom reduces it to a mere law of nature, devoid of normativity. I argue that Schmid's conception of rational agency affords a normative understanding of the moral law by distinguishing sharply between practical and theoretical standpoints. The unconditional validity of the moral law cannot be vitiated by theoretical posits essentially incapable of figuring in the agent's practical reasoning.

Preliminary to the discussion, consider Kosch's view that, for Schmid, intelligible fatalism entails that ethics is impossible: "Schmid claims that this conclusion [of intelligible fatalism] is incompatible with ethics, and that if it is true, 'then a rational being must either take ethics to be a chimera or, for the sake of ethics – and thus *on rational grounds* (for we are supposed to be ethical by virtue of being rational) – *wholly renounce reason*, its principles and its use. An irrational reason!'"<sup>67</sup> In the first quoted sentence, Kosch omits the antecedent. Contrary to Kosch's gloss, the antecedent is a counterfactual supposition about the incompatibility of morality (*Sittlichkeit*) and intelligible fatalism, not a categorical assertion of the latter: "if morality were not as compatible with this thought as was shown above (§254ff.), then a rational being [...]."<sup>68</sup> In fact, Schmid *does* take morality to be compatible with intelligible fatalism. In the section to which he refers (§254), he claims that "The universal validity of the moral law for all actions of rational beings at all times is preserved in its

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<sup>66</sup> *Annalen der Philosophie* (2), 128.

<sup>67</sup> Kosch, *Freedom and Reason*, 51–52. Cf. <sup>1</sup>AMP §259, 219.

<sup>68</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §259, 219. Kosch renders *Sittlichkeit* as "ethics". I translate it uniformly as "morality."

possibility by the fact that we have come to know reason as a capacity to act that is independent of all appearances in time. This is sufficient in a practical respect [...].”<sup>69</sup>

Other scholars acknowledge that Schmid maintains his doctrine’s compatibility with morality, but reject that compatibility. They argue that Schmid reduces the moral law to a law of nature, depriving it of normativity. Thus, a reviewer of <sup>3</sup>*AMP* asserts that, in Schmid’s view, both moral and immoral actions arise from ineluctable laws. Since both are equally necessary, there is no relevant difference between them, both being “products of nature.”<sup>70</sup> More recently, George di Giovanni offers a disjunction of philosophical options open to Schmid. First, Schmid may develop the supposed implications of Kant’s account of a formal law as the supreme principle of morality and enter a “new world of meaning,” entailing the irreducibility of the normative to “purely physical predicates.” Or, second, he can “revert to Ulrich’s traditional conflation of physical and moral – that is, he can consider the law, however much now formally defined in Kantian style, as still the conscious by-product of a given particular nature [...].”<sup>71</sup> According to di Giovanni, Schmid opted for the second alternative – “or, more precisely, since it is doubtful that he ever understood the possibility of the first, that he fell in line with it as if instinctively.”<sup>72</sup>

To be sure, Schmid likens the moral law to a law of nature insofar as it is the essential law of the noumenal self. But this does not entail that the moral law lacks normative import; thus, di Giovanni proffers a false dichotomy. A commitment to the irrationality of chance does not preclude a commitment to the irreducibility of the normative to the merely physical. In fact, Schmid deliberately restricts the scope of rational agency to consciously representable reasons in order to retain a commitment to both. Concerning his claim that, from the practical standpoint, only reasons representable to consciousness, “what we are acquainted with,” can determine action, he asserts:

For morality, it is enough to know or to believe that everything with which we are acquainted and all temporal circumstances cannot force us to act irrationally, and hence cannot cut us off from the obligation to always *make* the moral law the rule and guideline

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<sup>69</sup> <sup>1</sup>*AMP* §254, 208.

<sup>70</sup> *Annalen der Philosophie* (2), 127.

<sup>71</sup> Di Giovanni, *Freedom and Religion*, 120.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

of our actions, although, from a theoretical point of view, it cannot always really be the determining rule of our actions.<sup>73</sup>

Even if, theoretically, all events must be construed as ultimately grounded in a thoroughgoing intelligible determinism, that determinism is inaccessible to rational agents like ourselves. Nor can it undermine our practical conception of our agency, since that conception concerns only representations that can play a role in our practical reasoning. Moral obligation, or “the necessity of an action according to a *moral law*,”<sup>74</sup> is underwritten by our “consciousness of the necessity (obligation) to obey the moral law universally [...]”<sup>75</sup> This *a priori* consciousness enjoins us to reason practically according to the moral law.

## 5. Intelligible Fatalism and Imputation

Intelligible fatalism’s relationship with imputation is perhaps its most controversial aspect. The prevailing objection alleges that, by denying our ability to do otherwise, Schmid makes imputation impossible.<sup>76</sup> Below, I argue that Schmid’s concept of imputation depends on his conception of rational agency: judgments of imputation are restricted to a conceptual space of consciously representable reasons. So, imputation presupposes no metaphysical capacity to do otherwise under identical circumstances. Instead, it is a feature of the moral psychology of rational agents. I consider Fichte’s and Schwab’s allegations that Schmid admitted the impossibility of imputation to illuminate Schmid’s restriction of the concept of imputation to finite rational beings. Next, I discuss an apparent inconsistency between Schmid’s conception of imputation and intelligible fatalism, and argue that it is resolvable by his account of rational agency.

Recall Fichte’s allegation: “By Mr. Schmid’s own admission, imputation, blame, and merit cease to exist in this theory.”<sup>77</sup> Unlike Fichte, Schwab provides the precise reference for

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<sup>73</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §257, 211.

<sup>74</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §297, 245.

<sup>75</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §258, 214.

<sup>76</sup> See ALZ, no. 108, 61; *Annalen der Philosophie* (2), 129; and, more recently, Lazzari, *Das Eine*, 200–201.

<sup>77</sup> Fichte, “Creuzer Review,” 204, reviewing Leonhard Creuzer’s *Skeptische Betrachtungen über die Freyheit des Willens* (*Skeptical Reflections on Freedom of the Will*), which included a preface by Schmid. For a discussion of Fichte’s review, see Wayne Martin, “Fichte’s Creuzer Review”.

this alleged admission. He identifies a passage which illuminates Schmid's thinking about imputation and rational agency. Schwab claims:

according to the former [i.e. intelligible fatalism], *there is no real blame and imputation, and no real punishment*. It is not I who makes this inference, but Mr. *Schmid* himself, who on p. 296 writes: "in the judgment of the infinite being," who knows the intelligible obstacles to the finite agent's self-activity that lie beyond his control, "there is no *blame at all* [...]."<sup>78</sup>

The operative phrase in Schmid's cited passage is "in the judgment of the infinite being."<sup>79</sup> Schwab fallaciously infers that because Schmid denies any imputation in the judgment of the infinite being, he thereby denies imputation *per se*. In fact, Schmid's view of imputation rests on the agent's ignorance of the intelligible obstacles to reason's efficacy. In the section, "Imputation", Schmid argues: "Reason is not *acquainted* with the obstacles to this self-activity, due to which it was weaker, and therefore cannot take them into account."<sup>80</sup> His concept of imputation is necessarily connected with his account of rational agency, because it depends on the possibility of consciously representing reasons for action. Because the intelligible obstacles to reason's efficacy are transcendent, they cannot figure in the agent's practical reasoning, and cannot be attributed to him. On the other hand, the infinite being *is* acquainted with the intelligible obstacles to the agent's self-activity. The judgment of the infinite being contains no imputation because it does not meet this ignorance requirement. Only finite rational beings, unacquainted with the ultimate intelligible causes of their actions, are subject to imputation.<sup>81</sup>

At first blush, Schmid's conception of imputation seems inconsistent with intelligible fatalism. He claims: "With regard to these concepts and judgments of imputation we suppose that, *regardless of all circumstances*, [the faculty of] reason of the rational being that erred could have had a higher degree of self-active efficacy. For, nothing existing in time, nothing

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<sup>78</sup> J.C. Schwab, "On Intelligible Fatalism," 32–33.

<sup>79</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §375, 296.

<sup>80</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §252, 207.

<sup>81</sup> As critics correctly observe, God's insight into the actual determining grounds of actions apparently undermines the notions of divine reward and punishment. See the reviewer of <sup>2</sup>AMP in *ALZ*, no. 134, 307–308, and Schwab, *On Intelligible Fatalism*, 33.

cognizable could have restricted the efficacy of reason.”<sup>82</sup> As justification, Schmid indicates that nothing subject to temporal conditions could have prevented reason’s efficacy. However, intelligible fatalism entails *intelligible* obstacles to reason’s efficacy; that *temporal* conditions could not have prevented reason from being efficacious is irrelevant. But Schmid claims that when pure reason is not efficacious, it could not have been efficacious. So, it seems contradictory for judgments of imputation to imply that reason *could* have been efficacious. It seems to follow that, for immoral actions, reason both could and could not have been effective.

It is no wonder that Schmid’s account of imputation dissatisfied so many of his commentators. However, the apparent contradiction between Schmid’s claims is resolvable through the theoretical/practical distinction from his account of rational agency. From the perspective of the agent’s practical reasoning, the moral law is a normative constraint *opposed to* sensible incentives. This explains Schmid’s surprising reference to the fact that nothing existing under temporal conditions could have restricted the efficacy of reason.<sup>83</sup> Only the moral law and temporal desires contribute to practical reasoning. According to Schmid, we know that we always ought to act in accordance with the moral law. Because nothing with which we are acquainted – i.e. nothing that can play a role in our deliberation – can restrict reason’s efficacy, reason imputes to itself its “omitted or exercised self-activity”.<sup>84</sup> Thus, consciousness of the moral law entails that we “subject all of the voluntary actions we perform and the dispositions arising from them to its judgment and appraisal.”<sup>85</sup> Although, from the theoretical standpoint, intelligible obstacles might impede reason’s efficacy to determine the human being’s action in appearance, “Reason is not *acquainted* with the obstacles to this self-activity, due to which it was weaker, and therefore cannot take them into account.”<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, Schmid explains that our imputing our actions to ourselves is integral to the psychology of rational agency: “consciousness of personality depends on reason, and everything that this person did is incorporated in this consciousness in accordance with an incomprehensible natural law, even if it did not occur through reason but as a result of other *forces* and other laws.”<sup>87</sup> Notably, an unknown but necessary law causes reason to incorporate the agent’s actions

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<sup>82</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §253, 207.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §231, 317.

<sup>86</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §252, 207.

<sup>87</sup> <sup>1</sup>AMP §252, 206–207.

into this consciousness of personality. That consciousness, as a fact of moral psychology, is foundational to judgments of imputation. In <sup>2</sup>*AMP* and subsequent editions, Schmid calls reason's attribution of all voluntary actions to itself the "fact of imputation" (*Faktum der Zurechnung*).<sup>88</sup> For Schmid, this fundamental fact is necessary for rational agency. Thus, discussing the fact of imputation, he observes that the absolute validity of the moral law cannot be nullified "without entirely destroying our innermost essence, our person."<sup>89</sup> Schmid is not terribly clear about how the fact of imputation as a condition for rational agency – or, for "our person" – is related to the absolute validity of the moral law. The idea seems to be that, unless reason ascribes all voluntary actions to itself, certain actions would not be subject to the moral law as the essential law of reason. But this would contradict the universality and absolute necessity of the moral law, which demand that all of our voluntary actions be judged according to it. Further, the moral law presupposes freedom, so if reason did not impute all voluntary actions to itself, and thereby undermine the moral law's absolute validity, the agent could not consider himself as independent of the determining influence of sensible causes. In short, the human being could not consider himself a rational agent at all.

Connected with his account of imputation, Schmid defends the strict divide between the theoretical and practical standpoints for two further reasons. The first is epistemic strength. Whereas we are conscious *a priori* of the unconditional validity and absolute necessity of the moral law, intelligible fatalism is a problematic supposition. Schmid does not consider it to be apodictically true, but a proposition we must problematically think to avoid the irrationality of chance. Thus, in his discussion of judgments of imputation, Schmid notes: "But whether these temporal circumstances might not point to *something else intelligible which is to be considered apart from all temporal relations* and which *make the appearance of morality impossible at a given point in time* – this is not yet thereby settled [theoretically]."<sup>90</sup> Because intelligible fatalism is a mere problematic presupposition, it cannot undermine the necessity of our practical concepts.

Second, for Schmid, the distinction between the theoretical and the practical entails the independence of each domain's respective modal concepts. He asserts: "an essential difference

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<sup>88</sup> <sup>2</sup>*AMP* §231, 317.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> <sup>2</sup>*AMP* §263t, 386. In the third and fourth editions, Schmid adds "theoretically" (cf. <sup>3</sup>*AMP* §262t, 512; <sup>4</sup>*AMP*, 533).



between the concepts of that which is physically or theoretically necessary and possible, and that which is practically or morally necessary and possible.”<sup>91</sup> In making judgements of necessity, reason conforms to different laws pertaining to the theoretical or practical standpoint, respectively:

Practical or moral necessity remains in effect of its own accord and is not nullified in the judgment of practical reason *even supposing that what is morally necessary, i.e., solely possible, is cognized or thought as theoretically or physically impossible in accordance with laws of sensible or intelligible nature*. Consequently, a determination of the will and action is commanded or prohibited, approved or disapproved, declared meritorious or unmeritorious (blameworthy) without consideration of theoretical possibility, necessity, or impossibility, and *these judgments are not altered by any theoretical consideration*.<sup>92</sup>

Note the independence of the practical from the theoretical standpoint evinced in this passage: judgments belonging to the practical perspective cannot be vitiated by theoretical considerations. This is in keeping with Schmid’s epistemic view of intelligible fatalism, discussed above. From the theoretical standpoint, we must assume intelligible fatalism. However, from the practical standpoint, our consciousness of the moral law and the practical judgments based thereon are independent of theoretical speculation: “Hence even *intelligible fatalism* [...] cannot abolish the practical universality and necessity of the moral law. The representation and conviction [of intelligible fatalism] therefore cannot *rationally* determine the human being not to obey this law.”<sup>93</sup> Theoretical considerations do not impinge on the domain of rational agency, or the space of practical deliberation on putative reasons for action.<sup>94</sup>

Schmid’s strict divide between the theoretical and the practical may come at the cost of the unity of theoretical and practical reason. Nevertheless, it allows Schmid to accuse those who

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<sup>91</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §263u, 386–387. This reasoning appears incongruent with the Kantian principle that *ought* implies *can*. Schmid seems cognizant of this: “the *possibility* that lies immediately in the consciousness of *moral necessity* (the ought), is not physical but rather likewise *moral possibility* – not a *can*, but a *may*. The *can* lies only in the *must*” (<sup>2</sup>AMP §263u, 387–388).

<sup>92</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §263u, 387 (my emphasis).

<sup>93</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §263v, 388.

<sup>94</sup> Strictly speaking, theoretical considerations can *enter into* practical deliberation, e.g. in considering the implications of the natural effects of my action. However, in this role, such theoretical considerations function as *reasons* for action. On this point, see Patrick Frierson, “Two Standpoints and the Problem of Moral Anthropology,” 86f.

maintain that causal grounds undermine the possibility of imputation of a category mistake: they conflate theoretical with practical necessity. Only practical necessity is relevant to imputation.<sup>95</sup>

## 6. Intelligible Fatalism and Contemporary Compatibilism

The hallmark of Schmid's account of rational agency, that its scope is limited to consciously representable reasons, prefigures several contemporary accounts of free will.<sup>96</sup> John McDowell's distinction, for example, between responsiveness to reasons and responsiveness to reasons *as such* rests on the view that conscious representability is necessary for rational agency.<sup>97</sup> While animals can be said to respond to reasons, for instance, by fleeing from danger, rational agency requires the subject's ability to reflect on any putative reason for action. Hilary Bok's account of free will is strikingly similar to Schmid's.<sup>98</sup> Bok argues that freedom pertains to the practical standpoint, restricting morally relevant freedom to those possibilities which the agent, from his limited epistemic perspective, considers *practically possible for him*.<sup>99</sup> On her view, freedom does not involve deliberating on the theoretical question about which action we *will* perform, given determinism, past histories, and so on. Instead, it involves adjudicating "which action we have reason to perform."<sup>100</sup> We are free when we act on basis of reasons that are open to our practical deliberation, and need no libertarian capacity to do otherwise to be free. This is because, even if there is just one possible, deterministic future outcome at any given time, the agent does not know that outcome and must consider possible courses of action based on the best available reasons. The freedom to act on putative reasons is consistent with determinism, even if the concept of determinism and its cognates are empty for practical purposes.<sup>101</sup> Moral concepts

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<sup>95</sup> Reinhold, *Letters II*, 200, argues that Schmid's view entails that an action's moral significance and imputability are contingent on the presence of an [intelligible] obstacle to reason's efficacy. For a similar critique, see Creuzer, *Skeptical Reflections*, 184. A Schmidian rebuttal would charge Reinhold and Creuzer with unwarranted metaphysical assumptions about the concept of imputability, illicitly importing theoretical concerns into the practical sphere, limited to the domain of consciously representable reasons.

<sup>96</sup> I do not necessarily wish to imply that these contemporary thinkers would be flattered by the comparison with Schmid.

<sup>97</sup> McDowell, *Having the World in View*, 128ff.

<sup>98</sup> Bok, *Freedom and Responsibility*, 7n, maintains her view is Kantian and "could be described as working out some implications of the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal selves."

<sup>99</sup> Bok, *Freedom and Responsibility*, 108. For further discussion, see Michael McKenna and Derk Pereboom, *Free Will*, 202.

<sup>100</sup> Bok, *Freedom and Responsibility*, 115.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 108, 116, 121.

are deployed only in this domain of practical reasoning. As for Schmid, those concepts' validity cannot be undermined by theoretical concerns that play no role in an agent's rational deliberation.

Donald Davidson's compatibilism also distinguishes the practical from the theoretical. Davidson argues for a non-reductive isomorphism between the mental – perceiving, judging, acting, and other freedom-relevant activities – and the physical, including events subject to causal laws.<sup>102</sup> Despite the mental-physical isomorphism, the mental does not admit of purely physical predicates, cannot be described purely in physical terms, or explained with physical laws. For our purposes, the important aspect of Davidson's broadly Kantian account is the inviolability of the mental.<sup>103</sup> For Davidson, the intentional nature of the mental accounts for its nomological disparity with the physical. Although Davidson's view is motivated by more recent developments in the philosophy of language, his position that intentions are irreducible to purely physical nomological descriptions recalls Schmid's separation of the practical from the theoretical.

John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza's reasons-responsiveness view also broadly resembles Schmid's. Like Schmid, Fischer and Ravizza reject freedom as the capacity to do otherwise.<sup>104</sup> In their account of freedom, "guidance control," a free action must issue from one's own, properly reasons-responsive mechanism.<sup>105</sup> Roughly speaking, in an appropriately reasons-responsive mechanism, the agent is moderately *receptive* to, or apt to recognize, moral reasons, and at least weakly *reactive* to reasons. That is, he can be affected by reasons such that their presence in a given circumstance, in at least some relevantly close possible worlds, results in a different action sequence. Notably, Fischer and Ravizza consider this account consistent with causal determinism. Certain transcendental idealist assumptions aside, like the grounding of empirical states of affairs by intelligible things in themselves, their account broadly parallels Schmid's. Moreover, Fischer and Ravizza maintain that, in an appropriate reasons-responsive

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<sup>102</sup> See Donald Davidson, "Mental Events."

<sup>103</sup> Ralph Meerbote, "Kant on the Nondeterminate Character of Human Actions," interprets Kant along Davidsonian lines. Depending on one's interpretation of Kant, Davidson and Meerbote might be better construed as Schmidians.

<sup>104</sup> Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*, 31ff. Whereas Schmid rejects freedom as the capacity to do otherwise outright, Fischer and Ravizza make the weaker claim that freedom so understood is not required for moral responsibility.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 34–47. For a discussion of what proper responsiveness to reasons involves, see *ibid.*, 69–85.

mechanism, the agent *recognizes* actions as his own and takes responsibility for them. This ownership condition is integral to Schmid's account of imputation.

In my view, Schmid's distinctive philosophical contribution is twofold: first, he sharpens Kant's distinction between the theoretical and the practical in a way that prefigures contemporary two-standpoint views; second, his claim that reason's imputation of all voluntary actions to itself is a condition of rational agency constitutes an alternative to Strawsonian moral responsibility. Let us consider each in turn.

One of Schmid's distinguishing contributions consists in positing the decided independence of the practical from the theoretical. As discussed, Schmid holds that moral judgments cannot be undermined by theoretical considerations, positing distinct meanings of the modal concepts operative for the theoretical and practical perspectives. This prefigures some contemporary two-standpoint views. Recall that, for Davidson, the practical is conceptually and nomologically independent of the physical. Likewise, Bok suggests that, since the aims of theoretical and practical reasoning differ, the two domains require distinct concepts of possibility.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, Wilfrid Sellars distinguishes "the modality of scientific explanation" from what he calls "practical modalities," arguing that "[n]o 'metaphysics' of scientific determinism can contradict the conceptual truth in the framework of persons and what I call the practical modalities – that one could always have done something other than what one did."<sup>107</sup>

Schmid's relationship to two-standpoint positions like Bok's and Davidson's calls for further discussion. One challenge for two-standpoint views is to account for the supposed inconsistency between the respective claims of the practical and theoretical standpoints. In Schmid's account, there is no inconsistency between absolute (metaphysical) freedom and intelligible fatalism: the intelligible causality of our noumenal self is consistent with the necessity of actions in accordance with the causality of things in themselves, considered as noumena. Nor is there any inconsistency between moral freedom and intelligible fatalism, since this concept indicates the determinability of our will by the causality of pure reason.<sup>108</sup> The

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<sup>106</sup> Bok, *Freedom and Responsibility*, 103–109.

<sup>107</sup> Wilfrid Sellars, "Thought and Action," 126 note 15. For an explication of this view, see Sellars, "Fatalism and Determinism."

<sup>108</sup> Schmid's concept of moral freedom evokes source incompatibilism, since this freedom does not involve the capacity to do otherwise but the capacity to be motivated by pure practical reason. As Derk Pereboom notes, apropos Kant, this freedom consists in "being the undetermined source of one's actions" ("Kant on Transcendental Freedom," 542).

potential tension in Schmid's account is between his account of rational agency, restricted to the domain of consciously representable reasons, and intelligible fatalism. From the practical perspective, an array of possible actions is open to the agent in his deliberation; yet, from the theoretical perspective, there is only one possible outcome, determined by the causality of things in themselves. Thus, the agent seems to contradict himself in his reasoning by regarding as viable courses of action from which he is in fact barred.

In my view, a few responses are available to Schmid. The first is based on the abovementioned independence of the practical from the theoretical. 'Practical modalities' – to use Sellars' phrase – are restricted to a domain of discourse that holds for the standpoint of practical reasoning. The modal semantics of the practical and theoretical differ, as do the truth or assertability conditions of the judgments found therein.<sup>109</sup> Thus, questions of efficient causality and deterministic outcomes are improper to the domain of practical reasoning.<sup>110</sup>

The second response turns on Schmid's epistemic view of intelligible fatalism. Recall that Schmid regards intelligible fatalism as a merely problematic supposition, necessary to avoid theoretical irrationality. By contrast, morality involves "consciousness of apodictic necessity and universality,"<sup>111</sup> since "[m]oral laws are universally valid, necessary, and without exception."<sup>112</sup> In this regard, the practical can be said to enjoy a certain priority over the theoretical, at least concerning intelligible fatalism: the problematic posit of intelligible fatalism cannot abrogate our consciousness of the moral law as the supreme normative principle of our practical reasoning. Hence Schmid's claim, referenced above, that "*intelligible fatalism* [...] cannot abolish the practical universality and necessity of the moral law."<sup>113</sup>

Besides Schmid's philosophical contribution as a two-standpoint theorist, his account is significant for claiming that reason's imputation of all voluntary actions to itself is a condition of rational agency. In this regard, Schmid's account of imputation offers an alternative to Strawsonian moral responsibility. For Strawson, to be morally responsible is to be an appropriate subject of reactive attitudes like praise or blame. These attitudes, Strawson maintains, are so

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<sup>109</sup> For a similar point on the assertability conditions of *ought* judgments, see Pereboom, "Kant on Transcendental Freedom," 561.

<sup>110</sup> For a critical treatment of two-standpoint views, see Dana Nelkin, "Two Standpoints." For a reply to several challenges raised by Nelkin, see Frierson, "Two Standpoints and the Problem of Moral Anthropology."

<sup>111</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §112, 203.

<sup>112</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §7b, 28.

<sup>113</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §263v, 388.

embedded in our social practices that they are necessary to our “human commitment to participation in ordinary interpersonal relationships.”<sup>114</sup> The Strawsonian approach has become dominant in contemporary discussions of compatibilism.<sup>115</sup> Recently, it has been criticized as unable to justify token reactive attitudes, even if it can explain our dispositions to these attitudes.<sup>116</sup> This is because Strawson’s justification for claims of blame or praise is grounded in reactive attitudes embedded in social practices, which must themselves be justified. In contrast to this socially driven approach, Schmid’s view entails that imputation is necessary for us to regard ourselves as agents at all. Recall that the so-called *fact of imputation*, necessary for rational agency, consists in reason’s ascription of all voluntary actions to itself. Significantly, Schmid appeals to this *Faktum* in explicating moral imputation, “the act whereby reason determines the inner worth or unworth of its author, the decision on the guilt, innocence, and merit of an action or of an acting rational being.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, judging the moral worth of the actions of *others* is dependent on the conceptual capacities involved in judging *oneself* to be the author of one’s own actions. On his view, being the appropriate subject of praise and blame depends on the agent’s regarding himself as the author of his actions and, in turn, regarding others as the authors of theirs. As we have seen, this account depends on Kantian assumptions about the moral law which may be controversial today, including that the moral law is the supreme principle of morality of which we are *a priori* conscious. While a systematic defense of Schmid’s view far exceeds the scope of the present investigation, I hope to have indicated how Schmid’s account might contribute to the contemporary discourse on free will.

## 7. Conclusion

In this paper, I have vindicated Schmid’s maligned intelligible fatalism against its most egregious criticisms. Short of exonerating Schmid, I have shown these criticisms to be founded on misunderstandings. I argued that Schmid’s conceptions of freedom, moral obligation, and imputation are properly understood only through his restriction of the scope of rational agency to

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<sup>114</sup> P.F. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” 54.

<sup>115</sup> Although differing in details, Strawsonian approaches to moral responsibility are defended by Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control*; David Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins*; and R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, among others.

<sup>116</sup> Paul Russel, “Free Will and Moral Sentiments,” 99f.

<sup>117</sup> <sup>2</sup>AMP §369, 502.

the sphere of reasons representable to consciousness. I conclude by highlighting the merits of examining Schmid's position.

Considering intelligible fatalism may improve our understanding of post-Kantian debates on free will in the immediate reception of the Critical philosophy. As explained, Schmid's doctrine was widely discussed and heavily criticized in his day. It served as the foil for Reinhold's conception of free will as the capacity to choose in accordance with or against the moral law. These two conceptions structured the free will debate in 1790s Germany, and implicated many related issues, including the extension of the concept of freedom, the possibility of moral imputation for immoral action, the relationship between moral and natural necessity, between freedom and nature, and between theoretical and practical reason. Attending to intelligible fatalism is therefore indispensable to understanding the immediate reception of Kant's account of free will.

Moreover, Schmid anticipates contemporary Kantian interpretations of free will. Although recent scholars have not posited intelligible obstacles to explain immoral action, Schmid is the first Kant interpreter to restrict the extension of the concept of freedom to morally good actions.<sup>118</sup> Investigating intelligible fatalism raises the question whether Kant was unwittingly committed to Schmid's view. I have left this complex question for future research. If my interpretation of Schmid is correct, it might serve as a basis for such studies.

Finally, Schmid carves out space for a conception of the practical independent of the theoretical concerns connected to intelligible fatalism. This account heralds contemporary two-standpoint views that assert the nonreducibility of the normative to theoretical descriptions. Within this framework, Schmid offers an account of imputation qua agential self-ascription as a condition of rational agency that rivals contemporary Strawsonian views of moral responsibility.

My primary purpose in this paper has been to clarify misunderstandings about Schmid's intelligible fatalism. These misunderstandings fail to account for Schmid's restriction of rational agency to the conceptual space of consciously representable reasons, or for his emphasis on the distinction between the concerns of practical and theoretical reason. As an interpretation of the

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<sup>118</sup> More recently, see Daniel Breazeale, "Freedom and Duty," 119–120; Courtney Fugate, "On a Supposed Solution," 352–353; Michelle Kosch, *Freedom and Reason*, 47–55; and Dieter Schönecker, "A Free Will." For alternative readings, see Henry Allison, *Kant's Groundwork*, 284–293; Karl Ameriks, *Kantian Subjects*, 29–34; and Julian Wuerth, *Kant on Mind, Action, and Ethics*, 236–254. I leave undecided here the proper extension of Kant's concept of freedom.

Critical philosophy, Schmid's view offers insights into the implications of Kant's position, anticipates contemporary interpretations of Kant, and prefigures compatibilist conceptions of free will. I hope to have shown that Schmid's doctrine of intelligible fatalism and the concomitant accounts of free will, moral obligation, and imputation are historically and philosophically significant views that refreshingly engage with the positions of his day.

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