

Individuality and Subjectivity in Kant and Schleiermacher

Jacqueline Mariña

Certainly the most striking feature of Schleiermacher's ethics is its grounding in the foundational value of the individual. Schleiermacher's massive 1803 treatise *Outline of a Critique of all Previous Ethical Systems*¹ sought to demonstrate, among other things, how previous ethical systems had failed to ground the value of the individual. And in his *Brouillon* from 1805/06 he describes his task as one of arriving "critically at the recognition that the principle of individuation lies in morality itself, and that it must be the greatest principle, because if one neglects it everything pre-eminent is omitted from the presentation of moral action."² In both the *Kritik* and in *Brouillon* Schleiermacher presents several criticisms of Kant's ethics, all having to do with Kant's alleged failure to be able to account for the value of the individual. In this paper I focus on three main criticisms. The first is Schleiermacher's charge that Kant is a "political eudaimonist" (KGA I.4, 130): his formalism precludes him from specifying ends for the will. Without such ends, the moral perfection of the individual, and the genuine appreciation of the other in his or her individuality cannot become my end. The second is that Kant cannot provide an adequate metaphysical grounding of the value of the individuals comprising a community. And third, Schleiermacher argues that Kant cannot give an account of why members of a community should value the individual *qua* individual in relation to the community. In this paper I discuss these criticisms and their validity in detail. I show that understood properly, Kant has the resources to answer Schleiermacher's first criticism; and I show how Schleiermacher's own system sought to avoid the second and third problems.

Kant's Categorical Imperative and the Value of the Individual

According to Schleiermacher, Kant's ethical formalism was unable to a) provide a genuine unity to the will and b) provide a derivation of the duty of perfection as an end. As merely formal, the CI only expressed a required *relation* among the principles of action of all moral agents, namely, the requirement that they harmonize with one another. As such, the CI is itself empty. It works as a second order principle, that is, it must assume first order practical principles, an agent's maxims, which are then tested through the Formula of Universal Law. But the CI has no content of its own.³ This by

itself does not mean that the CI cannot be action guiding, since it can throw out maxims that stand in contradiction with their universal generalizations. But these maxims tested by the CI, the “matter” for which the CI provides a formal requirement, are formed in virtue of agents’ desires and inclinations, which are themselves non-moral. The CI merely determines which of these maxims are permissible. It does not determine ends for the will. Instead, ends can be found in the maxims tested by the CI, and all these ends are ultimately determined by empirically conditioned desires and the drive towards happiness. This, charges Schleiermacher, has two results. First, the CI cannot provide any kind of genuine unity to these maxims. They are disparate, since they are determined by the empirically conditioned desires. The individual may thereby wind up acting on numerous permissible maxims, all determined by distinct and possibly contradictory inclinations, with the end result being that there is no unity to the will, for there is no single moral end prescribed by the CI. Second, Kant cannot make sense of the duty to make the moral perfection of the will an end; at best he speaks of the duty to self-perfection as a means to the possibility of setting other ends, but this is a far cry from the duty of *moral* self-perfection. Schleiermacher reads Kant as a “political eudaimonist,” that is, he understands Kant’s ethics principally in terms of formal conditions harmonizing the pursuit of happiness of distinct individuals with one another. If this is all that can be gleaned from Kant’s ethics, Kant cannot show why I should value the other. Even the Formula of Humanity as an End in itself only seems to treat the other as a negative end, one that I should not use as a mere means or violate as I go on my merry way in my pursuit of happiness. Schleiermacher does not think that this does enough to show why the other individual should be valued, and he even goes as far as to charge that Kant’s injunction to make the happiness of others my end remains ungrounded in his ethical theory (KGA I.4, 126ff.).

To what degree are these charges justified? In assessing them, it is useful to look at a common, and as it turns out, related charge against Kant, that is, that his first formulation of the CI, the Formula of Universal Law (FUL), fails to root out maxims of murder and mayhem through the Contradiction in Conception (CC) test.⁴ This is significant, since Kant held that it was through the CC that strict or narrow duty was to be determined. Moreover, Kant held that all three major formulations of the CI, the Formula of Universal Law (FUL), the Formula of Humanity as an End in itself (FE) and

the Formula of the Kingdom of Ends were equivalent, being merely different expressions of a single fundamental principle. These same commentators argue that while FUL is a failure, in particular in its determination of strict duties, FEI does a much better job.⁵ But this would mean that Kant's three formulas are not equivalent, and that there are fundamental lacuna in his explication of the deep structure of the CI and how it can be expressed in three distinct yet equivalent formulations.

Let us look at FUL in relation to the maxims of false promising and convenience killing. In the case of false promising, I cannot achieve my end through the making of a false promise while at the same time willing the maxim's universal generalization. This is because the success of my action on the maxim of false promising depends upon the practice of accepting promises, which would not exist if everyone made false promises. In this way, the maxim contradicts itself. Rooting out this practical contradiction through FUL works because success of my action depends on shared practices such as promise keeping, and these practices would not exist if everyone violated the practice. Here I can only succeed if I made an exception of myself. What about the maxim of convenience killing? Success of action on the maxim "I will kill others when it is convenient in the pursuit of my ends" does not depend upon the integrity of shared practices in order for it to succeed. It therefore does not yield the same kind of practical contradiction that we find in the making of a false promise. As pointed out by Barbara Herman, willing a world in which convenience killing is permissible yields a Hobbesian world in which life is nasty, brutish, and short, and puts me in a very insecure position. But this insecurity in willing is not a logical or practical contradiction, for there is no conceptual contradiction in trying to achieve my ends in a world in which everyone has a policy of convenience killing. If Herman is right, this would strengthen Schleiermacher's case that Kant's "political eudaimonism" cannot even provide an account of the absolute value of the individual.

There is, however, another way of understanding how the maxim of convenience killing fails the contradiction in conception test. I will argue that Kant's analysis of the prohibition of suicide contains a key insight central to understanding the contradiction in conception in maxims of murder and mayhem. It reveals a *logical* requirement that the will not contradict itself in its own willing. Kant describes the maxim of suicide and the reasons for its prohibition in the following famous passage:

His maxim, however, is: from self-love I make it my principle to shorten my life when its longer duration threatens more troubles than it promises agreeableness. The only further question is whether this principle of self-love could become a universal law of nature. It is then seen at once that a nature whose law it would be to destroy life itself by means of the same feeling whose destination is to impel toward the furtherance of life would contradict itself and would therefore not subsist as nature; thus that maxim could not possibly be a law of nature and, accordingly, altogether opposes the supreme principle of all duty. (4:436)⁶

The example is central, since requirements regarding how we are to behave towards others are grounded in the conditions of the possibility of willing itself, and these conditions must first and foremost be grasped and respected by the self in its relation to itself. The will that cannot respect the conditions of its own willing cannot respect the conditions of willing in others, either. An examination of the deep structure of the maxim of suicide and the contradiction it embodies therefore stands at the heart of Kant's analysis of morality, and it is no accident that he begins his examination here. The principle of the will through which it exercises its causality can be broken down into two principle elements. First we have the desired end, and in relation to the end, the means employed to realize it. A necessary condition of rational willing is that there must be an internal consistency between the means employed to achieve an end and the capacity to set that end in the first place. Such a consistency would be violated first and foremost when the means chosen to achieve an end (for example, suicide as the way to end unhappiness) annihilates the very fundamental conditions (the impetus or drive of the will itself) through which the end was willed in the first place. In suicide, where I terminate the efficacy of my will, I annihilate the very instrument that makes possible all willing to begin with, even the willing of the act of self-annihilation itself. In the passage quoted above Kant notes that the maxim of suicide could not subsist as a *law of nature*. It cannot subsist as such a law because it contains a contradiction in the very *logical* structure of willing, for here the means adopted to achieve an end annihilates the very ground of all willing itself, namely, the *conatus* or drive through which life is furthered and all willing is possible to begin with. It is important to note that this is a logical contradiction in the principle of the will in regard to the relation between its ground and consequent; it is, as such, being considered atemporally. It is no use to

object that in suicide there is no contradiction because there is a temporal order to the act of suicide, such that the will first exists to will its annihilation, and only later is annihilated. It is the *logical structure* of the principle of the will in relation to itself that is at issue, and, as I shall argue, stands as a necessary condition grounding all duties. This logical structure concerns the relation between ends and the means through which they are achieved (this relation is expressed in the principle of the will characterizing its causality), and the relation of this principle to the faculty of willing as a whole.

How does this analysis of the maxim of suicide shed light on the prohibition of maxims of murder and mayhem? At stake in the latter kinds of maxims are my actions towards others. But the reason maxims of murder contradict their universal generalization depends upon the prior analysis of why maxims of suicide are contradictory. Maxims of murder and mayhem are internally contradictory in the same way that maxims of suicide are contradictory, although a further step is needed to arrive at this internal contradiction. This step is the universalization of the maxim, which implies how others will treat me. When I will the universal permissibility of a maxim of murder, I will to allow that another destroy the very conditions of the possibility of willing in me. But this willingness to allow the destruction of the very conditions of willing implies that a maxim stands in contradiction with its very grounds, and such a maxim annihilates itself.

It is important to keep in mind that the requirement concerning the consistency of maxims with the conditions of willing are *presupposed* in our duties to others. This is why Kant discusses the suicide example first. Now it is true Kant only later explicitly discusses the move from the self's relationship to itself, to its relationship to others, when he is discussing FEI (Formula of Ends in Themselves). There he importantly notes that "the human being necessarily represents his own existence in this way [as an end in himself]; so far it is thus a *subjective* principle of human actions. But every other rational being also represents his existence in this way consequent on just the same rational ground that also holds for me" (4:429). Yet a similar move, namely one from the requirement of the consistency of the principle of the will in relation to itself, to the requirement that that the will's principles be consistent with the principle of willing of other rational beings, is also operative here in relation to FUL. Key to the move is the nature of rationality; earlier Kant had noted that the "representations of reason" concern

“grounds that are valid for every rational being as such” (4:413). If the requirement of the consistency of the maxims of willing with the grounds of all possible willing in myself are operative in relation my own rational will, it is also operative in regard to the rational will of others. The rational will of the other mirrors my own. It is like mine in all relevant respects; in a deep sense, the other is another me. Profoundly embedded in the character of reason is its universal validity. We cannot even make sense of rational requirements on the will unless, as rational, we take them as valid for all rational agents. At the heart of the deep structure of rationality is a reference to another possible thinker, for whom entailments and the requirement of non-contradiction also has validity. Hence in relating to my own will as practical reason, I am at the same time relating to the will of other practical rational agents; reference to the other *is already* built in. The other, too, has pure practical reason, and just as my maxims must not contradict my will as the ground of their possibility, they must not contradict the will of the other as ground of the possibility of the exercise of causality.

If I am correct in my analysis of the deep structure of the requirement of FUL, then it is easy to see why Kant thought that FUL was equivalent to FEI (Formula of Ends in Themselves). According to FEI, the rational will must not become a mere means, but must be treated also as an end in itself. FUL illuminates, among other things, the possible contradiction of the principle of the will with its ground, and as such highlights the supreme importance of the integrity of the will for the possibility of generating practical principles. In declaring that the will should not be used as a *mere* means, FEI highlights that the will has fundamental value, being itself the condition of all value or of the setting of any arbitrary end (and the setting of a practical principle in relation to that end), and should not be treated as having less worth than such arbitrarily chosen ends. Importantly, regarding the equivalence of FUL and FEI Kant notes:

For to say that in the use of means to any end I am to limit my maxims to the condition of its universal validity as a law for every subject is tantamount to saying that the subject of ends, that is, the rational being itself, must be made the basis of all maxims of actions, never merely as a means but as the supreme limiting condition in the use of all means, that is, always at the same time as an end. (4:438)

Both FUL and FEI assume the legislative character of the will. This legislative character in relation to other wills is what is highlighted in the Formula of the Kingdom of Ends (FKE). Each practical agent must be viewed as capable of legislating universal law; as Kant notes, “it is just this fitness of his maxims for giving universal law that marks him out as an end in itself” (4:438). The Formula of the Kingdom of Ends brings together the requirement that the will not contradict itself in its legislative capacity (FUL) with the idea of rational beings as the subject of all ends (FEI). The two together yield the idea of “a systematic union of rational beings through common objective laws, that is, a kingdom, which can be called a kingdom of ends (admittedly only an ideal) because what these laws have as their purpose is just the relation of these beings to one another as ends and means” (4:434). This analysis of FUL demonstrates the grounds on which Kant argued that the three formulations were equivalent.

In demonstrating the absolute value of the will as practical reason the three formulations of the CI show that Kant is no political eudaimonist. While the will is not an end to be effected or realized, it must be taken as having an absolute value, for it has the capacity to be a good will, itself the only thing that is good without qualification. Because the will has such an absolute value, it can serve as the focal point for the unification of all ends: it is the human being, whether in my own person or in that of another, who is that *for which* all ends are to be effected and who must never become a mere means in my pursuit of ends. When thought together as comprising a community, these human beings comprise a kingdom of ends, an ideal possible through laws specifying “the relation of these beings to one another as ends and means” (4:433). Furthermore, autonomous universal legislation can indeed become my end; this is, in fact, what I do when I *choose* to make the categorical imperative the condition of my action on a maxim. This choice, moreover, is not an easy one, since the individual must always struggle with the unruly inclinations. Kant defines virtue as “the moral disposition in conflict” (*CPrR* 5:84). It is clear then, that Kant has a story to tell about a) the absolute value of the individual will, b) the unification of all ends through the categorical imperative, and c) morality as enjoining striving after moral perfection.

The Metaphysical Value of the Uniqueness of the Individual

In spite of the failure of Schleiermacher's charge that Kant is a "political eudaimonist," his *Brouillon* contains some more potent criticisms of Kant. Here he questions Kant's grounding of the value of the individual. He notes:

"...freedom is provided only in order to make possible the co-existence of individual natures. But then one spins around in a circle, for if one asks why they should co-exist, the answer is because freedom is present within them."
(*Brouillon*, 36)

How does Kant justify his claim that only the good will is good without qualification? The good will has such value because only its value can be universally recognized through practical reason. The value of all other ends is only conditionally valued, that is, their value depends upon the inclinations and desires, and the empirical constitution of the individual with those inclinations. But those inclinations themselves have merely subjective validity: the fact that a particular individual desires something does not by itself constitute a sufficient reason for why other agents should value it, or bring it about that that individual realize the object of that desire. What does have universal value, according to Kant, is the agent in his or her moral capacity of legislating universal law. Kant is clear that

... the will of a rational being must always be regarded as at the same time lawgiving, since otherwise it could not be thought of as an *end in itself*... Morality is the condition under which alone a rational being can be an end in itself, since only through this is it possible to be a lawgiving member in the kingdom of ends. (4:434-5)

It is through freedom that the individual is capable of both giving herself the law and abiding by it, and it is therefore freedom that makes possible the harmonious co-existence of one individual will with another. Schleiermacher charges all of this masks a more fundamental question. Why is the individual of such value that she is worth preserving by the community? Put another way, for Kant, it is the community of rational legislators that assigns value to the individual because she is capable of such legislation. But the community of rational legislators is itself a community of *individuals*. What grounds the value of such individuals? Presumably, for Kant, because

they are fit to be members of the Kingdom of Ends through their legislation. But why should this community of legislators have value? It seems to rest on the authority of reason, which justifies itself. Schleiermacher is not convinced. He wants to know why the *individual* has value, for the community only exists because of the individuals in it, and he does not think it makes sense for us to say that it is the capacity for community alone (through universal lawmaking) that grants the individual value. Something irreducible is missing. There is something strange and fishy in the claim that the possibility of the harmonious workings of the group are what give value to the individuals that comprise it. This is what Schleiermacher thinks is circular.

The problem ultimately has to do with the metaphysical grounding of the individual. The individual is conditioned, dependent, not her own ground. As such she is unable to be the ground of her own value.⁷ And if the individual cannot ground her own value, neither can a community of individuals. Schleiermacher was not the only one to recognize the problem; later, twentieth century figures would illustrate the problem in particularly useful ways. Heidegger, no doubt influenced by Schleiermacher, treats the problem in relation to the phenomenon of primordial guilt, that is, a primordial indebtedness. The problem, according to Heidegger, is that the human being “is never existent *before* its basis, but only *from* it and *as this basis*. Thus “Being-a-basis means *never* to have power over one’s ownmost Being from the ground up.”⁸ The individual self is always contingent and conditioned; it is not the author of its own existence, but simply finds itself already there. Sartre would treat this conditioned character of the human being in a different way, noting that while its awareness is not identical with a feeling of guilt, through it we appear to ourselves “as having the character of an unjustifiable fact.”⁹ Sartre recognized this not only as a problem of metaphysical contingency but as a problem of value; the individual “has the feeling of its complete gratuity; it apprehends itself as being there *for nothing*, as being *de trop*” (132). I note these later thinkers here only to highlight the character of the problem, of which Schleiermacher most certainly was well aware.

Schleiermacher recognized this; the individual is radically aware of his or her conditioned existence. Yet for Schleiermacher awareness of one’s conditioned character did not lead to feelings of guilt or superfluity, but rather to the feeling of absolute dependence on God. Through this dependence, the value of the individual comes to her

through a direct and unmediated relation to the Absolute. Such a way of conceiving of the individual allowed Schleiermacher to account for the value of the individual in ways that were not possible for Kant.

For Kant, the will had unconditioned value precisely insofar as it was “capable of unconditional valuation.” As I note above, this means that what grounds the absolute value of the will in Kant’s system is that it is “the will of a rational agent as such.” But Schleiermacher’s complaint in his early *Short Presentation of the Spinozistic System* is to the point here: “reason individuates us least of all” (KGA, I.1, 574). Since reason is the same in all rational agents, Kant’s system seems lead to the absurd conclusion that persons are interchangeable, since what grounds their absolute value is the same in all. What then, of what is irreducibly particular in the individual—what grounds the value of a person’s individuality *qua* individuality? How can this value be affirmed? In Kant’s system, Schleiermacher charged, the only thing that individuates persons are the empirically conditioned desires, which as conditioned, cannot be the ground of unconditioned value. In his *Critique of all Previous Ethical Systems*, Schleiermacher notes that for Kant “pleasure [the lower faculty of desire] is that which especially represents the personality” (KGA I.4, 94). Fichte followed Kant in this: for him individuality did not move beyond the “relationship to one’s own body, and to the plurality of human exemplars in general” (KGA I.4, 93). He did not ground the particularity of persons in the “inner individuality of persons” but rather on “the point where each first encountered his freedom.” Both Kant and Fichte could only account for the specificity of individuals in spatial and temporal terms, namely, through their position in the spatial and temporal continuum (KGA I.4, 92-3). For these reasons they regarded individuality as “something alien and accidental” to morality, “something absolutely physical” (*Brouillon*, 73).

But if the value of the individual is derived from the value of the Absolute on which the individual is completely dependent, the problems confronting Kant disappear. One can indeed affirm the value of what is *unique* to the individual, for in her very uniqueness the individual depends upon God. It is not only her reason, which she has in common with all other rational agents, that grounds her value. Her characteristic talents, her way of expressing herself, her presence, her view of the world, all of these are dependent on the Absolute and have their value grounded there. And it is because

Schleiermacher can account for the value of the individual *first* that he can then account for the value of the community:

Insofar as it is possible to speak of a higher and lower in ethics, individuality is the higher and community the lower. The impulse to community also presupposes consciousness of individuality in such a way that the impulse of individualization does not presuppose the consciousness of community. (*Brouillon*, 72).

Ethics must begin with an account of the individual and her value before we can begin to speak of community.

One of the fundamental problems in Kant's philosophy, according to Schleiermacher, was the split between reason and nature in the individual. For Kant, the inclinations had their origins in sensibility, in the body, and were thereby attributable to causes lying outside the will itself. According to Kant's model, reason *controls* the unruly inclinations; for him virtue amounts to "the moral disposition in conflict." For Schleiermacher, on the other hand, as the individual develops, her inclinations are "ensouled" through reason. Instead of reason standing in conflict with, and having to control the inclinations, what we have is a *transformation* of the desires of the individual springing from his or her embodiment. Schleiermacher, then, would have a very different understanding of virtue from that of Kant—his way of characterizing it was much closer to that of Plato and Aristotle. For Schleiermacher, the whole of the individual, including the inclinations and desires definitive of her particularity, could be ensouled through reason. For this reason as well he could speak of the *uniqueness* of the individual as having "sanctity." It was not simply in virtue of her capacity for universal legislation that she had value.

Individuality, Non-transposability and the Theory of Consciousness

What does the individual *qua* unique bring to the community? Schleiermacher supplements Kant's analysis of persons as absolutely valuable in virtue of their rationality with his own understanding of persons as absolutely valuable in virtue of their individuality. In order to grasp Schleiermacher's point, we need to first understand his characterization of the individual as unique. First, it is important to keep in mind that for Schleiermacher there is no such thing as merely abstract, universal

reason. Reason exists through the acts of reason of individual cognizers: “there is no objective knowing without subjective knowing” (*Brouillon*, 27). But what is the nature of this subjective knowing? Two important passages are worth quoting at length:

...as surely as it [formative activity] is to be the act of an individual, it must also express that individual’s own particular nature in its non-transposable uniqueness. Moreover, as surely as it is to be an act of reason it must also be beyond personal existence. (*Brouillon*, 62)

As uniqueness, the organizing activity of reason has the character of nontransposability, because in each person a fundamental relationship is expressed that is not applicable to any others. This uniqueness dwells in activity as the impulse of exclusive separating out, of absolute appropriation; its result is *proprium*. Even here there is no sharp divide between the person and the person’s expansion out of the nature that surrounds it. Both, as products of a person’s unique reason, are conditioned through each other. For that reason, both possess the same sanctity. (*Brouillon*, 68)

Subjective knowing is *non-transposable*. But how does Schleiermacher ground the individuality and non-transposability of the subject? And how is this related to the individuality and non-transposability of the act of knowing?

These are not easy questions to answer. To do so, we must refer to Schleiermacher’s reception of Kant’s groundbreaking theory of consciousness.¹⁰ As Dieter Henrich has argued, between 1789 and 1798 “all the fundamental decisions crucial to ensuing developments had been made,”¹¹ that is, all points of departure stemming from Kant’s insights and their trajectories had been mapped out. Famously, in §16 of the B edition of the first *Critique*, Kant declared, “The I think must be able to accompany all my representations, for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all . . .” (B 132).¹² If experience is to be possible, consciousness must have two moments: the first is original consciousness, the *act* of thinking, and the second is the capacity of the thinker to make herself her own object. It must be possible for the I to know itself as the thinker of its thoughts, that is, to know itself as the *subject* that is aware of objects that stand over against it. The *I think* that Kant speaks of at the beginning of §16 is not the *act* of thinking of original

consciousness, but rather, the I think that has become its own object. Awareness of an object impliesthetic awareness of the self as subject, and vice-versa. And only through reflection is self-awareness possible. But this also means that in order for consciousness to become its own object, it must also become aware of the not I, as Fichte had seen.

Now one of the central questions that arose in the reception of Kant was the problem of the relationship of original consciousness to reflection. While the story is a complicated one, the fundamental issue ultimately concerned the possibility of an Absolute philosophy. Kant's followers agreed that the I and the not I, both subject and object, are contained in a moment of original unity in original consciousness. Original consciousness is the non-thetic pole of consciousness, the point of conscious activity itself. Prior to the self's recognition of itself *as* a self in opposition to the world (where the self is its own object), both self and world remain undistinguished and therefore undivided. As such, the totality of existence is indicated in original consciousness. Both Romantics and Idealists agreed upon this.¹³ The crucial difference concerned whether this totality could be penetrated by consciousness. Idealists argued that the self achieved itself through its recognition of itself in the moments of self-consciousness. As Fichte had argued, "the I posits itself as an I." Hence the conditions of determination and therefore of possibility applied to the achievement of consciousness, and these conditions could be understood through Reason. This was a foundationalist philosophy of first principles put forward by Fichte and those who followed in his train. On the other hand, the Romantics, including Schleiermacher, disputed the possibility of such absolute knowledge. They stressed that the factual nature of original consciousness *could not* be understood through Reason. This was because the nature of possibility could only be understood through the conditions of *self-awareness*, but this self-awareness presupposed the givenness of original consciousness. To think that original consciousness could be understood in terms of possibility, itself only intelligible in terms of reflection and self-awareness, involved a vicious circularity. Since there is no I before reflection, the conditions of thinking that depend on such an I for their intelligibility (especially the logic of possibility) cannot be applied to original consciousness itself.¹⁴ Hence, original consciousness and the totality that is given with it remain dark to consciousness, an enigma. Reason cannot grasp the inner workings and fate of the totality of existence, for consciousness cannot penetrate the conditions of

its own actuality. We have access to this totality *only* immediately and directly, in its givenness, and it can be accessed only through feeling.

Whereas Fichte stressed the *activity* of consciousness in reflection, Schleiermacher stressed the self's givenness to itself in immediate awareness. This can be seen right away in the respective ways that each characterized the self's immediate awareness of itself. Fichte speaks of the self's immediate awareness of itself as "intellectual intuition;" the self *intuits* itself in a direct and immediate awareness of its original consciousness, but its intuition is "intellectual" since this immediate awareness is one of the self's *activity* of achieving itself through reflection and self-positing.¹⁵ For Schleiermacher, on the other hand, the self is immediately aware of itself in its "feeling of absolute dependence."¹⁶ This is because original consciousness, notwithstanding its activity, does *not* achieve itself, but is a sheer conditioned fact. Following Kant, Schleiermacher agrees that all factual knowledge is given through our receptivity, and hence through sensation or feeling.¹⁷ For finite rational beings such as ourselves, intuition, through which the individual is given, is always sensible; we can only be *receptive* to the presence of an individual, whether this be our own self-presence to ourselves, or the presence of another. In *On Religion* Schleiermacher notes "intuition is and always remains something individual, the immediate perception, nothing more,"¹⁸ and in the *Brouillon* he comments that "...in feeling the way in which unfamiliar life grasps our own is given immediately" (*Brouillon*, 75). The individual in its sheer thisness is cognized through feeling:

Cognition, however, also emerges in the character of uniqueness—that is, non-transposability. We call this, in its proper sense, feeling. To the extent that feeling is found in every concrete operation in life, non-transposability is also present within it. This non-transposability applies, however, not only among several people, but among several moments of the same life (*Brouillon*, 51).

While the *activity* of consciousness can only produce concepts, which are mediated and thereby merely general representations, it is through intuition and feeling, that is, through our receptivity, that the individual is cognized. Recall that for Kant, only the divine intelligence is capable of intellectual intuition, through which the individual is intuited through *activity*, and so is at once produced by it.

Given that through activity we cognize only through concepts, and concepts are general representations, the individual cannot be grasped through our activity. The presence of the individual can only be felt. To be sure, what is given to feeling must be understood, and understanding involves activity and concept formation. But existence is given through feeling. Each existence has a particular point from which its activity proceeds, and all its activity is to some degree stamped by its point of origin: “nature that is personal is simply the point from which activity proceeds and apprehends all that can enter into association with it. For this function the entire world consists only of singulars” (*Brouillon*, 56-7). All activity proceeds from and presupposes the given. The activity of consciousness presupposes the facticity of original consciousness, through which its conditioned character is revealed. With respect to our knowledge of the world and others, the synthesis of the imagination, necessary to identify individuals so that they can be subsumed under concepts, depends on received perceptions, and perceptions always depend on the perspective available from a particular spatio-temporal location. And since activity is grounded in existence, activity proceeds from an individual whose existence must already be characterized in some way: “If on the other hand, one abstracts from the relation of reason in itself, then it is only what proceeds from the individual that remains—the character present in the individual consciousness and feeling” (*Brouillon*, 68). How the world is understood and interpreted will, to some degree be deeply personal and non-transposable. Each moment of synthesis or organization is itself an individual one. In this regard he mentions the formative or organizing *activity* of reason, akin to Kant’s synthesis of the understanding. It includes any kind of synthesis through which what is given to the individual through perception is organized or formed. Because the activity of consciousness presupposes its existence and therefore its determinate character, each activity through which the individual gains knowledge of the world will “express that individual’s own particular nature in its non-transposable uniqueness” (*Brouillon*, 62). Each act is the act of an *individual who acts*; moreover, each act is a *single* one. *My* act of synthesis, (and *my awareness* of it) cannot be yours, and vice very. As Schleiermacher notes, “Individuation is indeed the most complete formation, and yet it remains unknowable owing to its non-transposability, for it is precisely that which no other organ can be, and it can never be the organ of another without being destroyed” (*Brouillon*, 74). Awareness of this activity is given immediately

(not mediately) to the self-feeling of the individual; only the individual who so acts has first-person access to it. My first person experience cannot be yours.

Moreover, the formative *product* of such activity (the object of cognizing, what is known or organized) is itself stamped with a unique character, although it can, to be sure, be shared to a significant degree through language, but *not completely*. The way that an individual understands is unique; Schleiermacher speaks of “the impulse of exclusive separating out, of absolute appropriation; its result is *proprium*” (*Brouillon*, 68). Schleiermacher for the most part adopted Kant’s two-faculty psychology: understanding is the faculty of concepts (spontaneity), and through sensibility we are aware of singular individuals. Without the matter of sensation concepts are merely formal, and without concepts we have mere chaos. Importantly, however, Schleiermacher does not think that the products of the two faculties can in any way be separated out: this is his doctrine of the “preponderant synthesis.”¹⁹ All intuition is to some degree always already organized, and we cannot really think our concepts without them already containing some “matter.” What we have instead is objects of thought, some of which are more abstract or conceptual, and others that are less organized, containing more of what is given in sensation. Why is this important? Because it is through sensation that the individual is given to me: through it I am directly in *immediate* relation to an individual object. It is through this *relation* that I can have cognition of the object, and what is known is always the product of my unique capacity to be influenced by the object in some way (dependent upon the constitution of my sense organs) and the object’s powers to affect me. However, its powers are received differently by distinct subjects. This is not only because the reception of its influence always depends on the powers of what it influences to receive it. It especially depends on the fact that, because this influence is always a *relation*, its character will depend on the *unique* position of the subject. Each individual is uniquely situated, and therefore stands in a unique set of relations to other individuals. For this reason, how an individual appropriates and understands what is given to her in sensation will be unique. Moreover, given that her thinking is always thinking from a particular point of view, what the world and others mean to her is unique and contains an element of non-transposability. Schleiermacher notes “Each person has his place in the totality of being, and his thought represents being, but not independently of his place (*Dial. O*, 377),²⁰ and “for every point in which

it originates, a representation of the world must be a different one" (*Brouillon*, 112). To be sure, to the degree that concepts define the contours of what is cognized, communication of these original "formations" is possible. But there is always something left over, that which is expressly due to point of view, which cannot be expressed in a concept. That which one can "never entirely or purely dissolve," becomes "only the object of acknowledgement" (*Brouillon*, 43). Moreover, I can never fully *know* the other. At best I can stand in a relation of feeling to her, for it is through feeling that she is present to me: "This impulse to intuit inaccessible, nontransposable individuality is what one calls *love* in the narrower (but not yet narrowest) sense" (*Ethics* 74).

The preceding discussion illuminates Schleiermacher's resources for explicating the individual's value to the community. Whereas for Kant the individual is a member of the Kingdom of Ends (and thereby acquires a dignity) in virtue of her capacity for universal legislation, for Schleiermacher the individual must be valuable in some other way as well. It is true, of course, that such an individual must be capable of community; to this extent, Schleiermacher agrees with Kant. However, as noted above, the capacity for universal legislation is exactly the same in all members of the Kingdom of Ends, and Kant does not have the resources for providing an account of why the individual, in her irreducible particularity, must be of value to the community. Schleiermacher is in a much better position. He stresses that without unique individuals, community is impossible. For a community is not made up of a collection of mere instances, that is, singulars that are mere copies of one another. Rather, community is possible through the sharing of unique ways of knowing expressive of the Being of each individual, her presence, and her directedness towards others. Each individual reflects the world and all other individual from her own unique perspective.²¹ Each gives the other herself in that the self knows itself, to a significant degree, through the image refracted in the other's point of view. Schleiermacher not only provides us with a rich account of the non-transposable character of the individual, but also of the foundational value of the individual qua unique for the possibility of community.

ENDNOTES

¹ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Grundlinien einer Kritik der bisherigen Sittenlehre*, in *Friedrich Schleiermacher Kritische Gesamtausgabe* I.4, Eilert Herms, Günter Meckenstock, and Michael Pietsch, eds. Walter de Gruyter: Berlin, 2002. All future references to the *Grundlinien* will be in the body of the paper and will appear as KGA 1.4, followed by the page number.

² Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brouillon zur Ethik/Notes on Ethics (1805/1806); Notes on the Theory of Virtue (1804/1805)*, trans by John Wallhausser and Terrence Tice, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003. All future references to this text will be internal to the text and will be indicated by *Brouillon*, followed by the page number, in this case *Brouillon 74*.

³ On the nature of the categorical imperative and how it functions, see my article “Kant's Deduction of the Categorical Imperative: How to Get it Right” *Kant -Studien* 89, Heft 2 (1998): 167-178.

⁴ See Barbara Herman, *The Practice of Moral Judgment*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993, in particular her chapter “Murder and Mayhem,” (113-131); cf. Christine M. Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, especially her chapter “Kant's Formula of Universal Law,” (77-105), and Paul Dietrichson, “Kant's Criteria of Universalizability,” in *Kant: Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals: Text and Critical Essays*, edited by Robert Paul Wolff, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969.

⁵ See for example, Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 110.

⁶ All citations from Kant's *Groundwork*, as well as those from the *Critique of Practical Reason* are from: Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. All references will be to the Academy edition pagination and will be internal to the text.

⁷ This was, in fact, one of the central issues of contention between the Romantics and the Idealists in the reception of Kant's theory of consciousness. For Fichte, the I posits itself as an I, and in its self-positing, achieves itself. Schleiermacher and the Romantics, certainly influenced by Jacobi, would stress the sheer facticity and conditioned character of original consciousness. In fact, Schleiermacher held that it is only through an

acknowledgement of the self's facticity and its relation to the Absolute that one could account for the self in its individuality and sheer particularity. For a discussion of these points see my "Religion and Romanticism," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Religion and Romanticism*, Elizabeth Millán, ed., London: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1962, 330.

⁹ Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Washington Square Press, 1956, 128.

¹⁰ I provide a detailed discussion of Schleiermacher's reception of Kant's theory of what Schleiermacher calls the "double constitution of consciousness" in "Where Have All the Monads Gone? Substance and Transcendental Freedom in Schleiermacher," *Journal of Religion*, Volume 95, No 4, October 2015, pp. 477-505, especially in pp. 494ff.

¹¹ Dieter Henrich, *The Course of Remembrance and Other Essays on Hölderlin*, edited by Eckart Förster, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 93; cf., p. 73.

¹² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, translators, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. All references to Kant's first Critique are to this translation.

¹³ On this point, see my article "Religion and Romanticism."

¹⁴ The problem was discussed by Hölderlin in his important fragment "Judgment and Being," Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, Stuttgart: 1943-1985, Bd. 4, p. 216f. I discuss this at length in my article "Religion and Romanticism."

¹⁵ On this point see Allen W. Wood, *Fichte's Ethical Thought*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 55ff.

¹⁶ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, in *Friedrich Schleiermacher Kritische Gesamtausgabe* I.13.1, Rolf Schäfer, ed., New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003. 32.

¹⁷ Importantly, since for Kant the Dasein or existence of things can be given only through sensation, the self's original cognition of itself, its *that it is*, is given through perception, and hence through feeling. Kant notes that "perception, which yields the material for a concept, is the sole characteristic of actuality" (A225/B272-3), and "I cognize existence through experience (Reflexion 5710, AA 18: 332). Yet more to the

point, regarding the self's awareness of itself, Kant explicitly notes "the "I think is, as has already been said an empirical proposition" (B422, note).

¹⁸ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, translated and edited by Richard Crouter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 1996, 26.

¹⁹ On this point see Manfred Frank, "Metaphysical Foundations: a look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, edited by Jacqueline Mariña, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 19ff.

²⁰ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Dialektik*, edited by Rudolf Odebrecht, Unveränd. Reprograf. Nachdruck der Ausgabe Leipzig 1942. Edn. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft Abt. Verlag, 1976.

²¹ I develop this point in my book *Transformation of the Self in the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher*, especially in my chapters "The World is the Mirror of the Self," (109-145) and "Individual and Community" (164-185), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.