



On the Freedom of the Will

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

Musean Translation

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Translated by Michael Berardi

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THE WORK

Written 1839 · Philosophical essay

SOURCE

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Edition dated 28 October 2026

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Chapter I, 1



Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will, awarded the prize by the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences at Trondheim on January 26, 1839.

Motto: *Freedom is a mystery.*

The question set by the Royal Society reads:

Can human freedom of will be demonstrated from self-consciousness?

In German: “Can the freedom of the human will be proved from self-consciousness?”

I. Definitions.

A question so important, grave and difficult, touching in essence on one of the central problems of medieval and modern philosophy, calls for great precision. An analysis of its principal concepts is therefore very much in order.

¹ **What does freedom mean?**

Strictly considered, this is a **negative** concept. We think through it only the absence of everything that obstructs or restrains; whatever restrains, by contrast, must be something positive, since it exerts a force. According to the possible nature of this restraint, the concept has three very different subdivisions: physical, intellectual and moral freedom.

a) **Physical freedom** is the absence of **material** obstacles of every kind. Thus we speak of an open sky, an unobstructed view, open air, an open field, a vacant space, free heat—which is not chemically bound—free electricity, and a river’s

free course where mountains or sluices no longer check it, and so on. Even free lodging, free board, a free press and a postage-free letter signify the absence of the burdensome conditions that generally attach to such things as obstacles to their enjoyment. Most often, however, our thinking makes freedom an attribute of animals, whose distinctive feature is that their movements proceed from **their will** and are voluntary. Accordingly, these movements are called **free** when no material obstacle makes them impossible. Since these obstacles can be of very different kinds, while what they obstruct is always the will, we find it simpler to take the concept from its positive side: everything that moves solely through its will, or acts solely from its will, is thereby thought of as free. This reversal of the concept changes nothing essential. In this physical sense of freedom, then, animals and human beings are called **free** when neither bonds, nor imprisonment, nor paralysis—in short, no **physical, material** obstacle—impede their actions, which instead proceed in accordance with their **will**.

This **physical meaning** of freedom, especially as an attribute of animals, is its original, immediate and therefore most common meaning. Precisely for that reason, it admits of neither doubt nor controversy: experience can always attest its reality. As soon as an animal acts from its will alone, it is **free** in this sense, regardless of whatever may influence that will itself. For the concept of freedom, in this original, immediate and thus popular meaning, concerns only **ability**: the absence of **physical** obstacles to action. Hence we say: the bird in the air is free, the wild animal in the forest is free; the human being is free by nature; only the free are happy. We also call a people free, meaning that it is governed by laws alone and has itself made those laws, so that it everywhere obeys only its own will. Political freedom must therefore be counted as physical freedom.

But once we leave this **physical** freedom and consider its two other kinds, we are dealing no longer with the popular meaning of the concept but with a **philosophical** one, which, as everyone knows, opens the way to many difficulties. It divides into two entirely different kinds: intellectual and moral freedom.

b) **Intellectual freedom**—what Aristotle calls *the voluntary and involuntary in respect of thought*—is considered here merely to complete the division of the concept. I therefore take the liberty of postponing its discussion to the very end

of this essay. The concepts required for it will by then have been explained in the preceding argument, allowing it to be dealt with briefly. In the classification, however, it had to take its place beside physical freedom as its closest relative.

c) I turn at once, then, to the third kind, **moral freedom**, which is properly the *freedom of choice* referred to in the Royal Society's question.

Chapter I, 2



This concept connects with physical freedom on a side that also makes its necessarily much later origin understandable. Physical freedom, as we have said, concerns only material obstacles and is present as soon as they are absent. Yet people observed cases in which a person, though restrained by no material obstacle, was prevented by mere motives—threats, promises, dangers and the like—from acting as would otherwise certainly have accorded with his will. The question then arose: had such a person still been free? Could a strong counter-motive really obstruct an action corresponding to his actual will and make it impossible, just as a physical obstacle could? Common sense could have little difficulty answering that a motive could never act as a physical obstacle does. A physical obstacle may readily exceed human bodily strength altogether and unconditionally; a motive, by contrast, can never be irresistible in itself or possess unconditional power. It may always be outweighed by a **stronger counter-motive**, provided such a motive exists and the particular person in question is susceptible to it. We often see even what is generally the strongest of all motives, the preservation of life, outweighed by others: in suicide, for example, or in sacrificing one's life for other people, for opinions, or for interests of many kinds. Conversely, every degree of the most ingenious torture on the rack has sometimes been overcome by the mere thought that otherwise one's life would be lost. But although this showed that motives carry no purely objective and absolute compulsion, they might still possess a subjective and relative compulsion—

one applying to the person concerned—which came to the same thing in the result. The question therefore remained: is the will itself free? The concept of freedom, previously thought of only in relation to **ability**, had now been brought into relation with **willing**, and the problem arose whether willing itself was **free**. Yet closer examination shows that the original, purely empirical and thus popular concept of freedom cannot enter into this connection with **willing**. For according to that concept, “**free**” means “in accordance with one’s own will.” To ask whether the will itself is free is therefore to ask whether the will accords with itself: something self-evident, but also something that tells us nothing. The empirical concept of freedom says: “I am free if I can **do** what I **will**”; the words “what I will” already settle the question of freedom there. Now, however, we are asking about the freedom of **willing** itself. On the same terms, the question would read: “Can you also **will** what you will?” This amounts to supposing that willing depends on another willing lying behind it. Suppose that question were answered in the affirmative: a second would immediately arise, “Can you also will what you will to will?” The question would thus be pushed back into infinity. We should always be thinking of one willing as dependent on an earlier or more deeply situated willing, vainly striving by this route to reach one that we would have to think of and accept as dependent on nothing at all. But if we wished to assume such a willing, we could just as well take the first as any arbitrarily chosen last one. The question would thereby be reduced to the perfectly simple “Can you will?” Whether merely answering this question affirmatively establishes freedom of willing is precisely what we wanted to know, and remains unsettled. The original empirical concept of freedom, derived from doing, thus refuses to enter into a direct connection with the concept of the will. To apply freedom to the will nevertheless, it had to be modified by being understood more abstractly. This was done by thinking of **freedom**, in general, simply as the absence of all **necessity**. In doing so, the concept retains the **negative** character I assigned to it at the outset. We must therefore first discuss **necessity**, the **positive** concept that gives this **negative** one its meaning.

We ask, then: what does **necessary** mean? The usual explanation, “Necessary is that whose opposite is impossible, or that which cannot be otherwise,” merely explains a word. It paraphrases the concept without increasing our understanding. As a definition of the thing itself, however, I propose this: **necessary is whatever follows from a given sufficient reason**. Like every correct definition, this proposition can also be reversed. According to whether the sufficient reason is logical, mathematical, or physical—in which last case it is called a cause—the **necessity** will be logical, as with a conclusion once its premises are given; mathematical, as with the equality of a triangle’s sides when its angles are equal; or physical and real, as with the occurrence of an effect once its cause is present. In every case, however, necessity attaches to the consequence with the same rigor once the reason is given. Only insofar as we understand something as a consequence of a given reason do we recognize it as necessary; conversely, as soon as we recognize something as a consequence of a sufficient reason, we see that it is necessary, for all reasons compel their consequences. This definition is so adequate and exhaustive that necessity and consequence of a given sufficient reason are interchangeable concepts: either can everywhere be put in place of the other*). The absence of necessity would accordingly be identical with the absence of a determining sufficient reason. **Contingency**, however, is thought of as the opposite of **necessity**, and this does not conflict with what has been said. For everything contingent is so only **relatively**. In the real world—the only place where contingency is encountered—every event is **necessary** in relation to its cause, but **contingent** in relation to everything else with which it happens to coincide in space and time. Since absence of necessity is the mark of what is free, what is free would have to depend on no cause whatsoever. It would therefore have to be defined as the **absolutely contingent**: a highly problematic concept whose conceivability I do not guarantee, yet one that strangely coincides with the concept of **freedom**. In any case, **what is free** remains that which is necessary in no respect, meaning that it depends on no reason. Applied to the human will, this concept would mean that an individual will is not determined in its manifestations—its acts of will—by causes or by sufficient reasons of any kind. Otherwise, since a consequence of a given reason, whatever its kind, is

always **necessary**, its acts would not be free but necessary. This is the basis of **Kant's** definition of freedom as the capacity to begin a series of changes **of itself**. Reduced to its true meaning, "of itself" means "without a preceding cause," which is identical with "without necessity." Thus, although this definition gives freedom the appearance of a positive concept, closer examination brings its negative nature to light again. A free will, then, would be a will determined by no reasons—and since anything determining something else must be a reason, and in the case of real things a real ground, that is, a cause—a will determined by nothing whatsoever. Its individual manifestations, its acts of will, would therefore arise absolutely and originally from itself, without being brought about necessarily by prior conditions, and hence without being determined by anything in accordance with a rule. Clear thinking fails us at this concept, because the principle of sufficient reason, in all its meanings, is the essential form of our entire faculty of knowledge, yet here it is to be abandoned. There is nevertheless a *technical term* for this concept too: *freedom of indifferent choice*. It is, moreover, the only clearly defined, firm and definite concept of what is called freedom of the will. We cannot depart from it without falling into wavering, foggy explanations that conceal a hesitant refusal to go the whole way—as when people speak of reasons that do not necessarily bring about their consequences. Every consequence of a reason is necessary, and every necessity is a consequence of a reason. The immediate consequence of assuming such *freedom of indifferent choice*, one that characterizes the concept itself and must therefore be established as its defining mark, is this: for a human individual endowed with it, under given external circumstances that are entirely particular and determined in every respect, two diametrically opposed actions are equally possible.

*) The concept of necessity is discussed in my treatise on the principle of sufficient reason, § 49, S. 184 f. of this edition.

Chapter I, 3



² What does self-consciousness mean?

The answer is consciousness of **one's own self**, as opposed to consciousness of **other things**, the latter being the faculty of knowledge. Before those other things appear in it, this faculty does indeed contain certain forms governing the manner of their appearance. These are therefore conditions of the possibility of their objective existence—that is, their existence as objects for us. Time, space and causality are familiar examples. Although these forms of knowledge lie within us, they do so only to enable us to become conscious of **other things** as such, and wholly in relation to those things. Thus, although these forms are within us, we must not regard them as belonging to **self-consciousness**, but rather as making **consciousness of other things**—that is, objective knowledge—possible.

Nor will I let the double meaning of the word used in the question—*consciousness or conscience*—tempt me to include within self-consciousness the human moral impulses known as conscience, or sometimes as practical reason, with the categorical imperatives **Kant** attributes to it. For one thing, these impulses arise only through experience and reflection, and hence through consciousness of other things. For another, no sharp and indisputable boundary has yet been drawn between what in them belongs originally and intrinsically to human nature and what moral and religious education adds. Besides, the Royal Society

can hardly intend that, by bringing conscience into self-consciousness, the question should be shifted onto moral ground, merely to see **Kant's** moral proof—or rather postulate—of freedom repeated: freedom inferred from the moral law of which we are conscious *a priori*, through the conclusion “You can, because you ought.”

What we have said makes it clear that by far the greatest part of our consciousness as a whole is not **self-consciousness**, but **consciousness of other things**, or the faculty of knowledge. With all its powers, this faculty is directed outward. It is the theater—and indeed, from a deeper standpoint of inquiry, the condition—of the real external world. It first apprehends that world in perception, then works what it has gained into concepts, as though chewing it over. **Thinking** consists in the endless combinations of these concepts accomplished with the aid of words. Only what remains after we subtract this by far greatest portion of our entire consciousness would therefore be **self-consciousness**. We can already see that its contents cannot be very rich. If the data we seek as proof of freedom of the will really do lie within it, we may consequently hope that they will not escape us. An **inner sense***) has also been proposed as the organ of self-consciousness, though this must be understood more figuratively than literally, since self-consciousness is immediate. Be that as it may, our next question is: what does self-consciousness contain? Or, how does a person become immediately conscious of his own self? The answer is: entirely as a **being that wills**. Anyone who observes his own self-consciousness will soon notice that its object is always his own willing. This, of course, must not be understood to include only decisive acts of will that immediately become deeds, or express resolutions together with the actions arising from them. Anyone who can hold fast to what is essential, even through differences of degree and kind, will have no hesitation in counting as manifestations of willing all desire, striving, wishing, wanting, yearning, hoping, loving, rejoicing, exulting and the like; no less than not-willing or resistance, and all abhorrence, flight, fear, anger, hatred, grief and suffering of pain—in short, all emotions and passions. These emotions and passions are only the movements of one's own will, weaker or stronger, sometimes violent and stormy, sometimes gentle, as that will is

checked or released, satisfied or unsatisfied. In their many forms, they all concern attaining or missing what is willed, and enduring or overcoming what is abhorred. They are therefore definite states of the same will that is active in resolutions and actions*). Even what are called feelings of pleasure and displeasure belong here. Though present in a great variety of degrees and kinds, they can always be traced back to states of desire or aversion: to the will itself becoming conscious of itself as satisfied or unsatisfied, checked or released. Indeed, this extends to bodily sensations, pleasant or painful, and to the countless sensations lying between these two. The essence of all these states is that they enter self-consciousness immediately as something agreeable or contrary to the will. Strictly considered, one is even immediately conscious of one's own body only as the outward-working organ of the will and the seat of receptivity to pleasant or painful sensations. Yet, as just said, these sensations themselves come down to wholly immediate states of the will, either agreeable or contrary to it. Whether or not we include these mere feelings of pleasure and displeasure, we find in any case that all those movements of the will—that changing willing and not-willing which, in its perpetual ebb and flow, forms the sole object of self-consciousness, or of the inner sense if we prefer—stand in a constant and universally acknowledged relation to what is perceived and known in the external world. As we have said, however, the latter no longer lies within immediate **self-consciousness**. As soon as we touch the external world, we have reached the boundary where self-consciousness meets the domain of **consciousness of other things**. Yet the objects perceived in that world are the material and occasion of all those movements and acts of the will. This will not be taken as *begging the question*. No one can deny that our willing always has external objects as its object: things toward which it is directed, around which it revolves, and which at least occasion it as motives. Otherwise, we should be left with a will wholly cut off from the external world and imprisoned in the dark interior of self-consciousness. Only the necessity with which those things in the external world determine the will's acts remains problematic for us at present.

*) It is already found in Cicero as “inner touch”: *Acad. quaest.*, IV, 7. More clearly in Augustine, *De lib. arb.*, II, 3 *sqq.* Then in Descartes, *Princ. phil.*, IV, 190; and fully developed in Locke.

*) It is very noteworthy that the Church Father **Augustine** already understood this perfectly, while so many modern thinkers, with their alleged “faculty of feeling,” fail to see it. In *De civit. Dei*, Lib. XIV, c. 6, he speaks of the *affections of the mind*, which he had divided in the preceding book into four categories—*desire, fear, joy and sadness*—and says: “*Will is certainly present in them all; indeed, they are all nothing but acts of will. For what are desire and joy but the will’s agreement with the things we want? And what are fear and sadness but the will’s rejection of the things we do not want?*”

We thus find self-consciousness very deeply, indeed exclusively, occupied with the **will**. Our object is now to see whether, in this its sole material, it encounters data from which the **freedom** of that very will would follow, in the sense explained above—the only clear and definite sense of the word. Toward this object we shall now steer directly, having so far approached it by tacking, yet already drawn perceptibly nearer.

Chapter II, 1



II. The Will Before Self-Consciousness.

When a person **wills**, he also wills something: his act of will is always directed toward an object and can be conceived only in relation to one. What, then, does it mean to will something? It means that the act of will, which in itself is initially only an object of self-consciousness, arises on the occasion of something belonging to the consciousness of **other things**, and thus an object of the faculty of cognition. In this relation that object is called a **motive**, and it is also the material of the act of will, since the act is directed toward it—that is, aims at some change in it, and so reacts to it: its whole essence consists in this **reaction**. This already makes it clear that the act could not occur without that object, since it would lack both an occasion and material. The question, however, is whether, once this object stands before the faculty of cognition, the act of will **must** also occur, or whether it could instead fail to occur, with either no act arising at all or a quite different, perhaps even opposite one; in other words, whether that reaction could fail to occur, or, under entirely identical circumstances, turn out differently, even oppositely. In short: does the motive necessarily call forth the act of will? Or, when the motive enters consciousness, does the will retain complete freedom to will or not to will? Here, then, the concept of freedom is taken in the abstract sense discussed above and shown to be the only one applicable here—as the mere negation of necessity—and our problem

is thereby established. We must look for the data for its solution in immediate **self-consciousness**, and to that end we will examine its testimony closely, rather than cut the knot with a summary verdict, as **Descartes** did when he simply asserted: “*Yet we are so conscious of the freedom and indifference within us that there is nothing we comprehend more evidently and perfectly.*” (*Princ. phil.*, I, § 41.) The untenability of this assertion was already recognized by **Leibniz** (*Theod.*, I, § 50, et III, § 292), although on this point he himself was only a wavering reed in the wind and, after the most contradictory pronouncements, finally arrived at the conclusion that motives incline the will but do not necessitate it. He says, namely: “*All actions are determined and never indifferent, because there is always a reason that inclines, though it does not necessitate, that things should happen in this way rather than another.*” (*Leibniz, De libertate: Opera*, ed. Erdmann, p. 669.) This gives me occasion to observe that such a middle course between the alternatives posed above cannot be maintained. We cannot, in keeping with a certain popular halfheartedness, say that motives determine the will only to some extent, that it undergoes their influence, but only up to a certain degree, and can then withdraw from it. For once we have conceded causality to a given force—that is, recognized that it acts—then, if it encounters resistance, we need only increase the force in proportion to that resistance, and it will complete its effect. Someone who cannot be won over with 10 ducats, but wavers, will be won over with 100, and so on.

We therefore put our problem to immediate **self-consciousness** in the sense established above. What light can this self-consciousness shed on that abstract question: whether or not the concept of **necessity** applies to the occurrence of an act of will once a motive has been given—that is, presented to the intellect? Or on the possibility or impossibility of the act’s failing to occur in such a case? We would find ourselves badly mistaken if we expected this self-consciousness to furnish thorough and far-reaching explanations of causality in general and motivation in particular, or of the necessity they may carry with them. For self-consciousness, as it dwells in every human being, is far too simple and limited a thing to have any say in such matters. These concepts are drawn instead from the pure understanding, which is directed outward, and can be brought up for

discussion only before the tribunal of reflective reason. That natural, simple—indeed, simpleminded—self-consciousness, by contrast, cannot even understand the question, much less answer it. Its testimony about acts of will, which everyone can listen for within himself, might be expressed as follows once stripped of everything extraneous and inessential and reduced to its bare content: “I can will, and whenever I will an action, the movable limbs of my body will carry it out at once, as soon as I will it, without fail.” In short: **“I can do what I will.”** The testimony of immediate self-consciousness goes no further, however we turn it and in whatever form we put the question. Its testimony thus always concerns the **ability to act in accordance with the will**. But this is the empirical, original, and popular concept of freedom stated at the very beginning, according to which **free** means **“in accordance with the will.”** Self-consciousness will affirm this freedom unconditionally. But it is not the freedom we are asking about. Self-consciousness affirms freedom of **action**—on the assumption of **willing**; but it is freedom of **willing** that has been asked about. We are investigating the relation of willing itself to the motive; yet the statement “I can do what I will” says nothing about this. The dependence of our doing—that is, our bodily actions—on our will, to which self-consciousness certainly testifies, is something quite different from the independence of our acts of will from external circumstances. That independence would constitute freedom of the will, but self-consciousness can testify to nothing about it, because it lies outside its sphere: it concerns the causal relation of the external world, which is given to us as consciousness of other things, to our decisions. Self-consciousness, however, cannot judge the relation of what lies entirely outside its domain to what lies within it. For no cognitive faculty can establish a relation one of whose terms can in no way be given to it. Yet the **objects** of willing, which are precisely what determine the act of will, plainly lie beyond the boundary of **self-consciousness**, in the consciousness **of other things**; only the act of will itself lies within it, and the question concerns their causal relation to that act. Self-consciousness has to do only with the act of will, together with its absolute dominion over the body’s limbs, which is what “what I will” really means. Moreover, only the exercise of this dominion—that is, **the deed**—

stamps it as an act of will, even for self-consciousness. For as long as it is taking shape it is called a **wish**; when complete, a **decision**. But even to self-consciousness, only the **deed** proves it to be a decision, since until then it remains changeable. Here we already stand at the chief source of that admittedly undeniable semblance which leads the unreflective person—that is, the philosophically untrained person—to believe that in a given case opposite acts of will would be possible for him, and to insist on the authority of his self-consciousness, which, he thinks, testifies to this. He confuses wishing with willing. He can **wish** for opposite things *); but he can **will** only **one** of them, and which one that is becomes apparent even to self-consciousness only through the **deed**. Precisely for this reason, self-consciousness can contain nothing about the law-governed necessity by which, of opposite wishes, one and not the other becomes an act of will and a deed: it learns the result entirely *after the fact*, rather than knowing it *in advance*. Opposite wishes, with their motives, rise and fall before it, alternately and repeatedly. Of each, it testifies that it will become a deed if it becomes an act of will. For this last, purely **subjective** possibility is indeed present for each, and is precisely the “I can do what I will.” But this **subjective** possibility is entirely hypothetical: it says only, “If I will this, I can do it.” It does not, however, contain the determination required for willing, since self-consciousness contains only willing, not the grounds that determine one to will; these lie in the consciousness of other things, that is, in the faculty of cognition. What decides the issue, by contrast, is **objective** possibility. This lies outside self-consciousness, in the world of objects, to which the motive and the human being as an object belong; it is therefore foreign to self-consciousness and belongs to the consciousness of other things. That **subjective** possibility is of the same kind as a stone’s possibility of giving off sparks, which is nevertheless conditional on the steel, to which the **objective** possibility belongs. I will return to this from the other side in the next section, where we will consider the will no longer from within, as here, but from without, and thus investigate the **objective** possibility of the act of will. Then, once the matter has been illuminated from two different sides, it will become entirely clear and will also be illustrated by examples.

*) See on this point “Parerga”, Teil 2, § 327.

Chapter II, 2



Thus the feeling lodged in self-consciousness, “I can do what I will,” accompanies us constantly, but says only that our decisions, or decided acts of will, though springing from the dark depths within us, will always pass at once into the perceptual world, to which our body, like everything else, belongs. This consciousness forms the bridge between the inner and outer worlds, which would otherwise remain separated by a bottomless chasm: the outer world would then contain, as objects, mere perceptions independent of us in every sense, while the inner would contain nothing but ineffectual acts of will, merely felt.—If we questioned someone entirely unreflective, he might express that immediate consciousness, so often taken for consciousness of a supposed freedom of the will, as follows: “I can do what I will: if I will to go left, I go left; if I will to go right, I go right. That depends entirely on my will alone, so I am free.” This statement is certainly perfectly true and correct; only, it already presupposes the will—it assumes that the will has already decided. It can therefore settle nothing about the will’s own freedom. For it does not concern the dependence or independence of the occurrence of the act of will itself, but only the **consequences** of that act once it occurs—or, more precisely, its inevitable manifestation as bodily action. Yet the consciousness underlying this statement is the sole reason why the unreflective—that is, philosophically untrained—person, who may nevertheless be a great scholar in other fields, takes freedom of the will to be something so immediately certain that he declares it an unques-

tionable truth. He cannot really believe that philosophers seriously doubt it; in his heart he thinks all this talk is merely a fencing exercise in scholastic dialectic and, at bottom, a joke. But precisely because the certainty supplied by that consciousness, which is indeed important, is always so readily at hand, and because a human being, as a primarily and essentially practical rather than theoretical creature, becomes far more clearly conscious of the **active** side of his acts of will—their efficacy—than of the **passive** side—their dependence—it is difficult to make the real meaning of our problem intelligible to someone philosophically untrained. It is difficult to bring him to understand that the question now concerns not the **consequences** but the **grounds** of his willing on each occasion; that his **doing** certainly depends entirely on his **willing**, but what we now want to know is what **his willing itself** depends on: nothing at all, or something? He can indeed do one thing if he wills it, and just as readily do the other if he wills it; but now he is to consider whether he is also capable of **willing** the one as well as the other. If, with this aim, we put the question to him in some such form as this: “Can you really follow either of the opposite wishes that have arisen within you? For example, when choosing between two possessions that exclude each other, can you prefer the one just as readily as the other?” he will say: “The choice may be difficult for me; nevertheless, whether I will to choose the one or the other will always depend entirely on me alone, and on no other power. Here I have complete freedom to choose whichever I will, and in doing so I will always follow my will alone.”—If we now say, “But your willing itself—what does that depend on?” the person answers from self-consciousness: “On nothing but me! I can will what I will: what I will, I will.”—He says this last without intending a tautology, or even, in the innermost depths of his consciousness, falling back on the principle of identity, which alone makes it true. Rather, pressed here to the utmost, he speaks of a willing of his willing, which is as if he spoke of an I of his I. He has been driven back to the core of his self-consciousness, where he finds his I and his will indistinguishable, but nothing remains by which to judge either. Whether, in that choice, **his very willing** of the one rather than the other—his person and the objects of choice being assumed as given—could possibly turn out otherwise than it finally does; or whether the

data just specified determine it as necessarily as the fact that in a triangle the largest side lies opposite the largest angle: this question lies so far from natural self-consciousness that it cannot even be brought to understand it, much less carry the answer within itself, ready-made or even as an undeveloped seed, needing only to express it without reflection.—As described, then, the unreflective but philosophically untrained person will still seek refuge from the perplexity the question must produce, if genuinely understood, behind that immediate certainty: “What I will, I can do, and I will what I will,” as stated above. He will try this again and again, countless times, so that it will be difficult to make him stand his ground before the actual question, which he is always trying to elude. Nor should we blame him: for the question is truly a deeply troubling one. With a probing hand it reaches into the human being’s innermost essence. It asks whether he too, like everything else in the world, is a being determined once and for all by his very constitution, possessing, like every other being in nature, definite, enduring properties from which his reactions necessarily follow when an external occasion arises. Those reactions would accordingly bear a character unchangeable from this side, and consequently, in whatever may be modifiable in them, would be entirely at the mercy of determination by external occasions. Or does he alone form an exception to the whole of nature? If we nevertheless finally succeed in making him stand his ground before this troubling question, and in making clear to him that what is being investigated is the origin of his acts of will themselves, the possible rule—or complete absence of any rule—governing their arising, we will discover that immediate self-consciousness contains no information about it. For here the unreflective person himself abandons it and reveals his perplexity through reflection and all manner of attempted explanations. He tries to draw their grounds now from his experience of himself and others, now from general rules of the understanding; but the uncertainty and wavering of his explanations show clearly enough that his immediate self-consciousness supplies no information about the question properly understood, though it had an answer ready at once when the question was misunderstood. The ultimate reason is that a person’s will is his actual self, the true core of his being. It therefore forms the ground of his consciousness, as

something simply given and present, beyond which he cannot go. For he himself is as he wills, and wills as he is. To ask him whether he could also will otherwise than he wills is therefore to ask whether he could also be someone other than himself; and he does not know. For precisely this reason the philosopher too, who differs from him only in training, must, if he wants clarity in this difficult matter, turn to his understanding, which supplies knowledge *a priori*; to reason, which reflects on that knowledge; and to experience, which presents his own and others' actions to him for the interpretation and verification of such knowledge of the understanding. He must turn to these as the final and only competent tribunal. Its verdict will certainly not be as easy, immediate, and simple as that of self-consciousness, but it will address the matter and suffice. The head has raised the question, and the head must also answer it.

Chapter II, 3



We should not, moreover, be surprised that immediate self-consciousness has no answer to that abstruse, speculative, difficult, and troubling question. For it is a very limited part of our consciousness as a whole, which, dark within, directs all its objective cognitive powers entirely outward. All its perfectly secure knowledge—that is, knowledge certain *a priori*—concerns the external world alone. There, following certain general laws rooted in itself, it can decide with certainty what is possible, impossible, or necessary outside it, and in this way produces pure mathematics, pure logic, and even a pure fundamental science of nature *a priori*. Next, the application of the forms of which it is conscious *a priori* to the data given in sensation supplies it with the real, perceptual external world, and with it experience. Further, the application of logic and the capacity for thought underlying it to that external world will supply concepts, the world of thoughts, and through these, in turn, the sciences, their achievements, and so on. **Outside**, then, great brightness and clarity lie before its eyes. But **within** it is dark, like a telescope thoroughly blackened inside: no *a priori* proposition illuminates the night of its own interior; these lighthouses shine only outward. As discussed above, the so-called inner sense has nothing before it but one's own will, to whose movements all so-called inner feelings must in fact be traced. Yet everything this inner perception of the will supplies comes down, as shown above, to willing and not willing, together with the much-praised certainty "What I will, I can do." This really means: "I immediately see

every act of my will manifest itself, in a way wholly incomprehensible to me, as an action of my body”—and, strictly speaking, is an empirical proposition for the knowing subject. Nothing beyond this is to be found here. The tribunal to which we have appealed thus has no jurisdiction over the question raised; indeed, the question cannot even be brought before it in its true sense, because it does not understand it.

I will now sum up once more, in a shorter and simpler form, the answer received to our inquiry of self-consciousness. Everyone's **self-consciousness** states very clearly that he can **do** what he wills. Now, since entirely opposite actions can also be conceived as **willed** by him, it certainly follows that he can also **do** opposite things if he wills them. Only the untrained understanding confuses this with his being able, in a given case, also to **will** opposite things, and calls this **freedom of the will**. But his being able, in a given case, to **will** opposite things is absolutely not contained in the statement above. It contains only this: of two opposite actions, if he **wills this one** he can do it, and if he **wills that one** he can do it as well. Whether, in the given case, he can **will** the one just as well as the other remains unsettled by this and requires a deeper investigation than mere self-consciousness can decide. The shortest, though scholastic, formula for this result would run: the testimony of self-consciousness concerns the will only *from the side of what follows it*; the question of freedom, by contrast, concerns it *from the side of what precedes it*.—Thus that undeniable testimony of self-consciousness, “I can do what I will,” contains and decides absolutely nothing about freedom of the will. Such freedom would consist in the particular act of will itself, in each individual case, and thus with a given individual character, not being necessarily determined by the external circumstances in which this person finds himself, but being able to turn out one way or another. On this, however, self-consciousness remains entirely silent, for the matter lies wholly outside its domain, resting as it does on the causal relation between the external world and the human being. If we ask someone of sound understanding but without philosophical training what constitutes the freedom of the will that he so confidently asserts on the testimony of his self-consciousness, he will answer: “That I can do what I will, so

long as I am not physically prevented.” Thus it is always the relation of his **doing** to his **willing** that he speaks of. But as shown in the first section, this is still merely **physical** freedom. If we ask him further whether, in a given case, he can then **will** both a thing and its opposite, he will indeed say yes in his initial eagerness. But as soon as he begins to grasp the question’s meaning, he will also begin to grow uneasy, finally lapse into uncertainty and confusion, and prefer to escape from these by taking refuge once again behind his refrain, “I can do what I will,” entrenching himself there against all grounds and reasoning. The corrective answer to his refrain, however, would run—as I hope to establish beyond doubt in the next section: “You can **do** what you will; but at any given moment of your life you can **will** only one definite thing, and absolutely nothing other than that one thing.”

The argument contained in this section would, strictly speaking, already have answered the Royal Society’s question, and answered it in the negative, although only in its essentials, since this account of the facts within self-consciousness will itself receive some further completion in what follows. But there is also, in one eventuality, a further check on this negative answer of ours. Suppose we now put the question to the authority to which we were referred above as the only competent one: the pure understanding, reason reflecting on its data, and experience following in the train of both. Suppose its verdict were that *free choice* does not exist at all, but that human action, like everything else in nature, occurs in every given case as an effect that necessarily ensues. This would give us the further certainty that immediate self-consciousness **cannot even contain** data from which the *free choice* in question could be proved. By means of the inference *from impossibility to nonexistence*, which is the only possible way to establish **negative** truths *a priori*, our decision would thus receive a rational foundation in addition to the empirical one presented so far, and would then be doubly secured. For a decisive contradiction between the immediate testimony of self-consciousness and the results drawn from the principles of the pure understanding, together with their application to experience, must not be assumed possible: our self-consciousness cannot be so deceitful. Here it should be noted that even the alleged antinomy Kant advanced on this subject

is not supposed, even by his own account, to arise from the thesis and antithesis proceeding from different sources of knowledge—for example, one from the testimony of self-consciousness, the other from reason and experience. Rather, thesis and antithesis both argue from purportedly objective grounds. But the thesis rests on nothing but lazy reason—that is, the need to come to a stop somewhere in the regress—whereas the antithesis really does have all the objective grounds on its side.

The **indirect** investigation we must now undertake, keeping to the field of the faculty of cognition and the external world before it, will at the same time cast much light back on the **direct** investigation carried out so far, and so serve to supplement it. For it will uncover the natural illusions arising from a false interpretation of that exceedingly simple testimony of self-consciousness, when self-consciousness comes into conflict with the consciousness of other things, which is the faculty of cognition and is rooted in one and the same subject as self-consciousness. Indeed, only at the close of this indirect investigation will some light dawn on the true meaning and content of the “I will” that accompanies all our actions, and on the consciousness of being their origin and exercising our own power, by virtue of which they are **our** actions. Only through this will the direct investigation pursued so far attain its completion.

Chapter III, 1



III. The Will Before the Consciousness of Other Things.

If we now turn to the faculty of knowledge with our problem, we know in advance that, since this faculty is essentially directed outward, the will cannot be an object of immediate perception for it, as it was for self-consciousness—which nevertheless proved incompetent in our inquiry. Here we can consider only **beings** endowed with a will, which stand before the faculty of knowledge as objective, external phenomena, that is, as objects of experience. As such, they must now be examined and judged partly by general rules that determine the very possibility of experience and are certain *prior to experience*, and partly by the facts supplied by experience as it actually exists, already constituted. Thus we are no longer concerned, as we were before, with the **will** itself, which lies open only to the inner sense, but with **willing beings, moved by the will**, that are objects of the outer senses. Although this places us at the disadvantage of having to consider the true object of our inquiry only indirectly and from a greater distance, this is outweighed by the advantage of now being able to use a far more perfect instrument in our investigation than obscure, dull, one-sided, direct self-consciousness, the so-called inner sense: namely, the **understanding**, equipped with all the outer senses and all the powers of objective apprehension.

We find the **law of causality** to be the most universal and fundamental form of this understanding, since only through its mediation does perception of the real external world come about at all. In such perception, we at once and quite directly apprehend the affections and changes felt in our sense organs as “**effects**” and instantly pass from them to their “**causes**” (without guidance, instruction, or experience). Through this very process of the understanding, these causes now present themselves as objects in space.*) This shows incontestably that we are conscious of the **law of causality** *prior to experience*, and therefore as a law **necessary** to the possibility of any experience at all; we have no need of the indirect, difficult, and indeed inadequate proof Kant gave of this important truth. The law of causality is established *prior to experience* as the universal rule to which all real objects of the external world are subject without exception. It owes this absence of exceptions precisely to its independence from experience. It refers essentially and exclusively to **changes**, and states that wherever and whenever anything in the objective, real, material world changes—whether great or small, much or little—something else must necessarily have **changed** immediately **before** it; and for that to change, something else must have changed before it, and so on to infinity. No starting point in this regressive series of changes, which fills time as matter fills space, can ever be discerned or even conceived as possible, let alone presupposed. For the tirelessly recurring question “What brought about this change?” never allows the understanding a final resting place, however weary it may become. A first cause is therefore just as inconceivable as a beginning of time or a boundary of space.—The law of causality states no less that once the earlier change—the **cause**—has occurred, the later change it brings about—the **effect**—must occur without fail, and thus follows **necessarily**. Through this character of **necessity**, the law of causality proves to be a form of the **principle of sufficient reason**, which is the most universal form of our entire faculty of knowledge. Just as this principle appears in the real world as causality, so it appears in the world of thought as the logical law of the ground of knowledge, and even in empty space, perceived *prior to experience*, as the law by which the position of every part depends with strict

necessity on that of all the others. To demonstrate this necessary dependence in detail is the sole subject of geometry. Thus, as I explained at the outset, **to be necessary** and **to follow from a given ground** are interchangeable concepts.

*) A thorough exposition of this doctrine can be found in the treatise on the principle of sufficient reason, § 21.

All **changes** occurring in objective things situated in the real external world are therefore subject to the law of **causality**, and so, whenever and wherever they occur, they always occur **necessarily** and without fail.—There can be no exception, since the rule is established *prior to experience* for every possible experience. As for its **application** to a given case, the only question is whether we are dealing with a **change** in a real object given in external experience. As soon as this is so, its changes fall under the application of the law of causality: that is, they must have been brought about by a cause, and for that very reason **necessarily**.

Chapter III, 2



Let us now bring our general rule—which is certain *prior to experience* and therefore valid without exception for every possible experience—closer to experience itself, and consider the real objects given in it, to whose possible changes our rule refers. We soon notice certain profound, fundamental differences among these objects, according to which they have long been classified: some are inorganic, that is, lifeless; others organic, that is, living; and these in turn are either plants or animals. Although animals are essentially alike and conform to their concept, we find them arranged in an extraordinarily varied and finely graduated scale of perfection, from those still closely related to plants and difficult to distinguish from them, up to the most fully developed, which correspond most perfectly to the concept of an animal. At the summit of this scale we see the human being—ourselves.

If, without allowing this diversity to mislead us, we consider all these beings solely as objective, real objects of experience, and accordingly proceed to apply our law of causality, established *prior to experience* as a condition of all possible experience, to whatever changes may occur in such beings, we will find that experience everywhere conforms to the law whose certainty *precedes it*. Yet the great **diversity** in the nature of all these objects of experience, recalled above, is matched by a corresponding modification in the way causality asserts its authority over them. More precisely: corresponding to the threefold distinction between inorganic bodies, plants, and animals, the causality governing all their

changes also appears in three forms: as **cause** in the narrowest sense of the word, as **stimulus**, or as **motivation**—without this modification impairing in the slightest either its validity *prior to experience* or, consequently, the necessity of the result that it establishes.

Cause in the narrowest sense of the word is that through which all mechanical, physical, and chemical changes in objects of experience occur. It is everywhere characterized by two features. First, Newton's third fundamental law applies to it: "Action and reaction are equal." That is, the preceding state, called the cause, undergoes a change equal to that of the succeeding state, called the effect.—Second, in accordance with Newton's second law, the degree of the effect always corresponds exactly to the degree of the cause, so that an increase in the latter produces an equal increase in the former. Thus, once the mode of action is known, the degree of the effect can immediately be known, measured, and calculated from the degree of intensity of the cause, and *conversely*. In applying this second feature empirically, however, we must not confuse the actual effect with its visible manifestation. For example, in compressing a body, we must not expect its volume to go on diminishing in proportion to the increase in the compressing force. For the space into which the body is forced continually diminishes, and resistance consequently increases. Although here too the actual effect, which is the increase in density, really does grow in proportion to the cause, as Mariotte's law states, this does not apply to its visible manifestation. Again, heat supplied to water will warm it up to a certain point, but beyond that point will only make it evaporate rapidly. Here, however, the same proportion once again holds between the degree of the cause and that of the effect; and so it is in many cases. **Causes in this narrowest sense** bring about the changes in all **lifeless**, that is, **inorganic** bodies. Knowledge and the presupposition of causes of this kind guide the investigation of all the changes studied by mechanics, hydrodynamics, physics, and chemistry. To be determined exclusively by causes of this kind alone is therefore the distinctive and essential characteristic of an inorganic or lifeless body.

The second kind of cause is the **stimulus**: a cause that, first, does **not** itself undergo a reaction proportionate to its action, and, second, has no uniform relation whatever between its intensity and the intensity of its effect. Here, therefore, the degree of the effect cannot be measured and determined in advance from the degree of the cause. Rather, a small increase in the stimulus may cause a very great increase in the effect, or, conversely, may entirely cancel the previous effect and even produce its opposite. For example, plants can, as we know, be driven to extraordinarily rapid growth by warmth or by lime mixed into the soil, since these causes act as stimuli to their vital force. But if the proper degree of stimulus is exceeded even slightly, the result, instead of intensified and accelerated life, will be the plant's death. Likewise, wine or opium can stimulate and considerably heighten our mental powers; but if the proper measure of stimulus is exceeded, the result will be precisely the opposite. —Causes of this kind, then, namely stimuli, determine all changes in organisms **as such**. All changes and developments in plants, and all purely organic and vegetative changes or functions in animal bodies, occur in response to **stimuli**. In this way light, warmth, air, nourishment, every drug, every touch, fertilization, and so on act upon them. —While the life of animals also has an entirely different sphere, of which I will speak shortly, the whole life of **plants**, by contrast, proceeds exclusively in response to **stimuli**. All their assimilation, growth, striving with their crowns toward the light and with their roots toward better soil, their fertilization, germination, and so on are changes in response to **stimuli**. In a few genera, these are joined by a distinctive rapid movement that likewise occurs only in response to stimuli, but on account of which they are called sensitive plants. As is well known, these are chiefly *Mimosa pudica*, *Hedysarum gyrans*, and *Dionaea muscipula*. To be determined exclusively and without exception by **stimuli** is the defining character of the plant. A **plant**, therefore, is any body whose distinctive movements and changes, in keeping with its nature, always and exclusively occur in response to **stimuli**.

Chapter III, 3



The third kind of moving cause is the one that defines the character of **animals: motivation**, that is, causality mediated by **knowledge**. It appears in the ascending scale of natural beings at the point where a more complex being, with correspondingly varied needs, could no longer satisfy them merely in response to a stimulus, which has to be awaited, but had to be capable of choosing, seizing, and indeed seeking out the means of satisfaction. In beings of this kind, therefore, mere receptivity to **stimuli** and movement in response to them are replaced by receptivity to **motives**: that is, a faculty of representation, an intellect, in countless degrees of perfection, materially manifested as a nervous system and brain, and with it consciousness. It is well known that animal life rests on a foundation of plant life, which, as such, proceeds only in response to **stimuli**. But all the movements an animal performs as an **animal**, which for that very reason depend on what physiology calls **animal functions**, occur as a result of an object known, and thus in response to **motives**. An **animal**, accordingly, is any body whose distinctive outward movements and changes, in keeping with its nature, always occur in response to **motives**: that is, to certain **representations** present to its consciousness, which is already presupposed here. However infinitely the capacity for representations, and with it consciousness, may vary in degree throughout the animal series, every animal possesses enough

of it for a motive to present itself and occasion its movement. To the self-consciousness now present, the inner moving force, whose particular expression is called forth by the motive, reveals itself as what we designate by the word **will**.

Whether a given body moves in response to **stimuli** or to **motives** can never remain doubtful even to external observation, which is our standpoint here: so manifestly different is a stimulus's mode of action from a motive's. For the stimulus always acts through direct contact, or even through being taken into the body. And even where this contact is not visible, as when the stimulus is air, light, or warmth, it still reveals itself in the unmistakable relation of the effect to the duration and intensity of the stimulus, although this relation does not remain the same at every degree of the stimulus. Where a motive causes the movement, by contrast, all such differences disappear entirely. For here the actual and immediate medium of influence is not the atmosphere but **knowledge** alone. The object acting as a motive needs only to be **perceived**, to be **known**; it makes no difference how long, whether from near or far, or how distinctly it has entered conscious apprehension. None of these differences alters the degree of the effect in the least: as soon as the object has merely been perceived, it acts in exactly the same way, provided that it is at all a determining ground of the will to be aroused here. For physical and chemical causes, and likewise stimuli, also act only insofar as the body to be affected is receptive to them. I have just said "the will to be aroused here": for, as already mentioned, what actually gives the motive its power to act—the hidden spring of the movement it calls forth—reveals itself inwardly and immediately to the being itself as what the word will designates. In bodies that move exclusively in response to stimuli (plants), we call this abiding inner condition the vital force; in bodies that move only in response to causes in the narrowest sense, we call it a force of nature, or a quality. Explanations always presuppose it as something inexplicable, because here, within these beings, there is no self-consciousness to which it would be directly accessible. But if we were to leave phenomena altogether and inquire into what Kant calls the thing in itself, might this inner condition of their reaction to external causes, present in beings without knowledge and even in lifeless beings, be essentially identical with what we call the **will** within our-

selves—as a philosopher of recent times has in fact undertaken to demonstrate to us? I leave this undecided, without, however, wishing to contradict it outright.*)

*) It goes without saying that I mean myself here, and that only the required anonymity prevented me from speaking in the first person.

Chapter III, 4



I cannot, however, leave unexamined the difference in motivation produced by what distinguishes human consciousness from that of every animal. This distinction, which is what the word **reason** properly designates, consists in the fact that human beings, unlike animals, are capable not merely of **perceptually** apprehending the external world, but also of abstracting universal concepts (*universal notions*) from it. To fix and retain these in their sensory consciousness, they designate them by words and then combine them in countless ways. Although these combinations, like the concepts of which they consist, always refer to the world known through perception, they constitute what is properly called **thinking**. Through thinking, the great advantages of the human race over all the others become possible: language, reflective awareness, looking back on the past, concern for the future, intention, resolve, the planned, concerted action of many, the state, sciences, arts, and so on. All this rests on the single capacity to have nonperceptual, abstract, universal representations, called **concepts** (that is, comprehensions of things) because each comprehends many particulars. Animals lack this capacity, even the cleverest of them: they therefore have no representations other than **perceptual** ones, and accordingly know only what is immediately present and live solely in the present. The motives that move their will must therefore always be perceptual and present. Consequently, they are allowed extremely little **choice**: only among what lies perceptually before them within their limited range of awareness and appre-

hension, and is thus present in time and space. Whichever of these is stronger as a motive immediately determines their will, making the motive's causality very conspicuous here. **Training**, which is fear working through the medium of habit, makes an apparent exception; instinct makes a somewhat **genuine** one, insofar as, through it, an animal's **overall** conduct is set in motion not properly by motives but by an inner inclination and drive. Yet this receives its more precise determination, in the details of **particular** actions and at each moment, from motives once again, and so returns to the rule. A closer discussion of instinct would take me too far from my subject here: chapter 27 of the supplements to Book 2 of *The World as Will and Representation*, volume 5 of this edition, is devoted to it.—Human beings, by contrast, through their capacity for **nonperceptual** representations, by means of which they **think and reflect**, have an infinitely wider range of awareness, embracing what is absent, past, and future. They therefore have a far greater sphere for the influence of motives, and consequently for choice, than animals, which are confined to the narrow present. As a rule, what determines human action is not what lies before sensory perception, present in space and time; rather, it is mere **thoughts**, carried everywhere in the head, that make a person independent of the impression of the present. When they fail to do this, however, we call the action irrational; conversely, we praise it as **rational** when it is performed exclusively according to well-considered thoughts and thus entirely independently of the impression of the perceptually present. The very fact that human beings are moved to action by a distinctive class of representations (abstract concepts, thoughts) that animals do not possess is visible even from outside. It stamps everything they do, even the most insignificant act, indeed all their movements and steps, with the character of **deliberateness and intention**. Their activity is thus so manifestly different from that of animals that we can positively see how, as it were, fine, invisible threads (motives consisting of mere thoughts) guide their movements, while those of animals are pulled by the coarse, visible ropes of what is perceptually present. But the difference goes no further. A thought becomes a **motive**, just as a perception becomes a **motive**, as soon as it can act on the will in question. All motives, however, are causes, and all causality carries necessity with it.

By means of the capacity for thought, a person can bring to mind the motives whose influence on the will is felt, in any chosen order, alternately and repeatedly, in order to hold them before the will. This is called **deliberation**: human beings are capable of deliberating, and through this capacity have a far greater **choice** than is possible for animals. This does indeed make them **relatively free**: free, namely, from the immediate compulsion of **perceptually present** objects acting on the will as motives, to which animals are unconditionally subject. Human beings, by contrast, determine their actions independently of present objects, according to thoughts, which are **their** motives. This **relative** freedom is probably also what educated but not deeply thinking people essentially mean by the freedom of the will that human beings plainly possess in contrast to animals. Yet it is merely **relative**, namely in relation to what is perceptually present, and merely **comparative**, namely in comparison with **animals**. Through it, only the **manner** of motivation is changed; the **necessity** of the motives' action, by contrast, is not abolished or even diminished in the slightest. The **abstract** motive, consisting of a mere **thought**, is an **external** cause determining the will just as much as the perceptual motive, consisting of a real, present object. It is therefore a cause like any other; indeed, like the others, it is always something real and material, insofar as it ultimately always rests on an impression received **from outside** at some time and place. It has only the advantage of a longer conducting wire. By this I mean that, unlike merely **perceptual** motives, it is not bound to a certain proximity in space and time, but can act across the greatest distance, through the longest time, and through the mediation of a long chain of concepts and thoughts. This follows from the constitution and exceptional receptivity of the organ that first experiences and receives its influence: the human brain, or **reason**. Yet this does not in the least abolish its **causality** or the **necessity** established with it. Only a very superficial view, therefore, can mistake this relative and comparative freedom for an absolute freedom, a *freedom of indifferent choice*. The capacity for deliberation arising from it in fact offers nothing but the very often painful **conflict of motives**, over which indecision presides, and whose battlefield is now the whole human mind and consciousness. For a person repeatedly lets the motives test their strength against one

another upon the will, which thereby finds itself in the same situation as a body on which different forces act in opposite directions—until at last the decidedly strongest motive drives the others from the field and determines the will. This outcome is called a decision, and occurs as the result of the struggle with complete **necessity**.

Chapter III, 5



Let us review the whole series of forms of causality once more. **Causes** in the narrowest sense, then **stimuli**, and finally **motives**—which divide in turn into perceptual and abstract motives—stand clearly apart. As we pass upward through the series of beings, we notice that cause and effect draw further apart, become more distinct and more unlike each other. The cause becomes less and less material and tangible; less and less seems to lie in the cause, and more and more in the effect. Taken together, these changes make the connection between cause and effect less immediately graspable and intelligible. Everything just described is least apparent in **mechanical** causality, which is therefore the easiest of all to grasp. This gave rise, in the previous century, to the mistaken endeavor, still surviving in France and recently appearing in Germany too, to reduce every other form of causality to mechanics: to explain all physical and chemical processes by mechanical causes, and then the process of life by those physical and chemical processes. A striking body moves a resting one, losing as much motion as it communicates. Here we seem to see the cause migrate into the effect: both are wholly of the same kind, precisely commensurable and tangible. This is really so with all purely mechanical effects. But as we ascend, we find less and less of this and more of the relationship described above. Consider, at each stage, the relation between heat as cause and its various effects—expansion, incandescence, melting, vaporization, combustion, thermoelectricity and so forth; or between evaporation as cause and cooling or crystallization as effects;

or between the friction of glass as cause and free electricity, with its strange phenomena, as effect; or between the slow oxidation of the plates as cause and galvanism, with all its electrical, chemical and magnetic phenomena, as effect. Cause and effect become increasingly **distinct** and **unlike**; their connection becomes **less intelligible**. The effect seems to contain more than its cause could supply, as the cause appears less and less material and tangible. All this becomes clearer still when we turn to **organic** bodies. Mere **stimuli** are now the causes: some external, such as light, warmth, air, soil and food; others internal, arising from the action of fluids and parts upon one another. Their effect presents itself as life in its endless complexity and countless differences of kind, in the manifold forms of the plant and animal worlds*).

*) A fuller account of this divergence between cause and effect is given in "Willen in der Natur," under "Astronomie," S. 307 of the 6th volume of this edition.

But has the **necessity** established by the relation between cause and effect diminished as that relation has become increasingly heterogeneous, incommensurable and unintelligible? Not at all, not in the least. With the same necessity with which a rolling ball sets a resting one in motion, a Leyden jar must discharge when touched with the other hand; arsenic must kill every living thing; and a seed that, kept dry, showed no change for thousands of years must germinate, grow and develop into a plant as soon as it is placed in suitable soil and exposed to air, light, warmth and moisture. The cause is more complicated and the effect more unlike it, but the necessity with which the effect occurs is not diminished by a hair's breadth.

In the life of a plant and the vegetative life of an animal, the stimulus differs greatly in every respect from the organic function it produces, and the two are clearly distinct. Yet they are not actually **separated**: some contact, however fine and invisible, must exist between them. Complete separation appears only in animal life, whose actions are produced by motives. Here the cause, previously still materially connected with its effect, stands wholly detached from it, of an entirely different nature: something initially immaterial, a mere representation. In the **motive** that produces an animal's movement, the difference in kind

between cause and effect, their separation, their incommensurability, the immateriality of the cause and hence its apparent insufficiency compared with the effect, have reached their highest degree. Their relation would become absolutely incomprehensible if we knew it only **from outside**, as we know the other causal relations. But here an entirely different kind of knowledge, an **inward** knowledge, supplements the outward one. We know intimately the process that occurs as effect once the cause has appeared, and give it a *term of its own*: will. Yet here too, just as with the stimulus above, we declare that the causal relation has lost none of its **necessity** as soon as we recognize it as **causal** and think it through this essential form of our understanding. We also find motivation wholly analogous to the other two forms of the causal relation already discussed: it is merely the highest stage to which they rise by a very gradual transition. On the lowest levels of animal life, the **motive** is still closely related to the **stimulus**. Zoophytes, radiates in general, and the Acephala among mollusks possess only a faint twilight of consciousness: just enough to perceive their food or prey and seize it when it offers itself, and, if need be, exchange their location for a more favorable one. On these low levels, therefore, the action of a motive lies before us as clearly, immediately, decisively and unambiguously as that of a stimulus. Small insects are drawn by the glow of light into the flame itself; flies settle trustingly on the head of a lizard that has just swallowed others of their kind before their eyes. Who would dream of freedom here? In the higher, more intelligent animals, the action of motives becomes increasingly indirect: a motive stands more clearly apart from the action it produces. We might even use this varying distance between motive and action as a measure of an animal's intelligence. In humans, that distance becomes immeasurable. Even in the cleverest animals, however, the representation that becomes the motive of their action must still be **perceptual**. Even where a choice is possible, it can only be between things present in perception. A dog hesitates between its master's call and the sight of a female dog: the stronger motive will determine its movement, which then occurs as necessarily as a mechanical effect. In mechanics too, we see a body displaced from equilibrium sway for a while first to one side and then to the other, until the side on which its center of gravity lies is decided and

it falls that way. As long as motivation is limited to **perceptual** representations, its kinship with stimulus and cause in general is also made evident by this: the motive, as an effective cause, must be something real and present, and must still act physically on the senses through light, sound or smell, however indirectly. Moreover, the cause lies as openly before the observer as the effect. He sees the motive appear and the animal's action inevitably follow, unless another equally evident motive, or training, counteracts it. It is impossible to doubt the connection between the two. Accordingly, no one will think of attributing *freedom of indifferent choice* to animals—that is, action determined by no cause.

Chapter III, 6



Where consciousness is rational—that is, capable of knowledge beyond perception, of concepts and thoughts—motives become entirely independent of the present and the actual surroundings, and are thereby hidden from the spectator. They are now mere thoughts carried about in a person’s head. Their origin, however, lies outside it, often very far away: sometimes in his own experience of past years, sometimes in what others have handed down through speech and writing, even from the remotest times. Their **origin** is nevertheless **always real and objective**, although the often difficult combination of complicated external circumstances introduces many errors, and transmission introduces many deceptions, so that motives also include much folly. Moreover, people often hide the motives of their actions from everyone else, and sometimes even from themselves, when they shrink from recognizing what really moves them to do this or that. Meanwhile, we see their actions occur and seek to discover their motives by conjecture. We assume those motives as firmly and confidently as we would the cause of any observed movement of inanimate bodies, convinced that either event is impossible without a cause. Correspondingly, in our own plans and undertakings, we reckon with the effect of motives on people with a certainty that would fully equal our calculations of the mechanical effects of mechanical devices, if we knew the individual characters of the people concerned as precisely as we know the length and thickness of the beams, the diameters of the wheels, the weight of the loads, and so forth. Everyone follows this

assumption while looking outward, dealing with others and pursuing practical ends, for human understanding is designed for those ends. But when someone tries to judge the matter theoretically and philosophically—something for which human intelligence is not really designed—and makes himself the object of judgment, he is misled by the immaterial nature of abstract motives just described. Consisting merely of thoughts, they are tied to no present moment or surrounding place, and meet their obstacles only in other thoughts as counter-motives. He is misled so far that he doubts their existence, or at least the necessity of their action, and imagines that whatever is done could just as well remain undone: that the will decides of itself, without a cause, and that each of its acts is a first beginning of an unforeseeable series of changes brought about by it. This error is especially supported by the false interpretation of the statement of self-consciousness sufficiently examined in the first section, “I can do what I will.” That statement may resound, as at any time, even while several mutually exclusive motives are acting, for the moment merely appealing to the will. Taken together, these things are the source of the natural illusion from which the error arises that self-consciousness contains certainty of freedom of our will: freedom understood as something deciding without sufficient reasons, contrary to all laws of pure understanding and of nature, whose resolutions, under given circumstances and in one and the same person, could turn out one way or the opposite.

To explain the origin of this error, so important to our subject, particularly and as clearly as possible, and thus supplement the preceding section’s inquiry into self-consciousness, let us imagine someone standing in the street and saying to himself: “It is 6 in the evening; the day’s work is done. I can go for a walk now, or go to the club. I can climb the tower to watch the sunset; I can go to the theater; I can visit this friend or that one. Yes, I can even run out through the gate into the wide world and never return. All this rests with me alone; I have complete freedom to do it. Yet I shall do none of it now, but go home just as freely to my wife.” This is exactly as though water said: “I can rise in towering waves—yes, in the sea during a storm! I can rush down swiftly—yes, in a riverbed! I can plunge down foaming and bubbling—yes, in a waterfall! I can rise freely

into the air as a jet—yes, in a fountain! I can even boil away and vanish—yes, at 80°! Yet I shall do none of these things now, but remain of my own free will, calm and clear, in the reflecting pond.” Just as water can do all this only when the determining causes of one occurrence or another appear, so that person can do what he imagines himself able to do only under the same condition. Until the causes appear, it is impossible for him; once they do, he must act, just as water must when placed in the corresponding circumstances. Strictly considered, his error—the illusion produced here by misinterpreted self-consciousness that he could do all those things right now—rests on this: only one image at a time can be present to his imagination, excluding everything else for the moment. When he pictures the motive for one of the actions proposed as possible, he immediately feels its effect on his will, which it draws toward itself. In technical language, this is called a *wish*. He now thinks he could raise this wish to an *act of will*—that is, carry out the proposed action—but this is an illusion. Reflection would immediately intervene, reminding him of the motives pulling in other directions or opposing it; he would then see that the deed does not occur. As these different, mutually exclusive motives are presented in succession, constantly accompanied by the inward “I can do what I will,” the will turns at once toward every motive imagination holds before it, like a weather vane on a well-greased pivot in an unsteady wind. It turns successively toward all the motives presented as possible, and at each one the person thinks he could **will** it and thus fix the vane at that point. This is mere illusion. His “I can will this” is in truth hypothetical, carrying the qualification “if I did not prefer to will that other thing.” That qualification, however, cancels the supposed ability to will the first. Let us return to our imagined person deliberating at 6 o’clock, and suppose he now notices me standing behind him, philosophizing about him and denying his freedom to perform all those actions possible for him. He might easily carry out one of them to refute me. But then my very denial, and its effect on his contrary spirit, would have been the motive compelling him to do it. This motive could move him only to one of the **easier** actions listed above, however—going to the theater, for example—and by no means to the last, running out into the wide world. For that, the motive would be far too

weak. Equally mistaken is someone who, holding a loaded pistol, thinks he could shoot himself with it. The mechanical means of carrying out the act is the least of what is needed. The essential thing is an extraordinarily strong, and therefore rare, motive possessing the immense force required to outweigh the desire for life—or, more accurately, the fear of death. Only once such a motive has appeared can he actually shoot himself, and must do so, unless a still stronger counter-motive, if one is possible at all, prevents the deed.

Chapter III, 7



I can do what I will: **if I will it**, I can give everything I possess to the poor and thus become one of them—if I will it! But I am unable to **will** it, because the opposing motives have far too much power over me. If, on the other hand, I had a different character, different enough for me to be a saint, then I could will it; but then I could not help willing it, and would therefore have to do it. All this is perfectly consistent with self-consciousness saying “I can do what I will.” Even today, some thoughtless dabblers in philosophy imagine that they find freedom of the will in this statement and accordingly put it forward as a given fact of consciousness. Among them, Mr. **Cousin** stands out and deserves an *honorable mention* here. In his *Cours d’histoire de la philosophie, professé en 1819, 20, et publié par Vacherot, 1841*, he teaches that freedom of the will is the most reliable fact of consciousness (*Vol. 1, p. 19, 20*). He reproaches **Kant** for proving it merely from the moral law and setting it up as a postulate when it is, after all, a fact: “*Why demonstrate what need only be recognized as a fact?*” (*p. 50*); “*Freedom is a fact, not a belief*” (*ibid.*). Germany too has no shortage of ignorant people who throw to the winds everything great thinkers have said on the subject for two centuries. Insisting on the fact of self-consciousness analyzed in the preceding section—a fact they misunderstand just as the crowd does—they proclaim freedom of the will as something actually given. But per-

haps I wrong them. They may not be as ignorant as they appear, merely hungry, and therefore ready to teach anything that might please a lofty ministry in return for a very dry piece of bread.

It is neither metaphor nor hyperbole, but plain and literal truth, that just as a ball on a billiard table cannot begin moving before it receives a blow, a person cannot rise from his chair before a motive pulls or drives him away. Once it does, his rising is as necessary and inevitable as the ball's rolling after the blow. To expect someone to do something to which no interest whatsoever prompts him is like expecting a piece of wood to move toward me without a rope to pull it. Someone asserting this in company and meeting stubborn opposition could settle the matter most quickly by having a third person suddenly cry out, loudly and earnestly, "The beams are collapsing!" The objectors would thereby learn that a motive is as powerful in throwing people out of the house as the most solid mechanical cause.

For a human being, like every object of experience, is a phenomenon in time and space. Since the law of causality applies to all such phenomena *a priori*, and therefore without exception, a human being too must be subject to it. Pure understanding declares this *a priori*; analogy carried through the whole of nature confirms it; experience testifies to it at every moment, provided we are not deceived by the following illusion. As natural beings ascend and become more complicated, their receptivity rises and grows more refined—from the merely mechanical to the chemical and electrical, then to responsiveness to stimuli, sensitivity, intelligence and finally reason. The nature of the **causes acting on them** must keep pace, corresponding at each stage to the beings on which they are to act. Consequently, causes appear less and less tangible and material, until they are no longer visible to the eye but remain accessible to the understanding. In each particular case, the understanding assumes them with unshakable confidence and discovers them through appropriate inquiry. Here the effective causes have risen to mere thoughts, which fight with other thoughts until the strongest tips the balance and sets the person in motion. Everything proceeds with just as strict a causal connection as when purely mechanical causes, combined in a complicated way, oppose one another and

the calculated result unfailingly occurs. Electrified little cork balls hopping about in every direction inside a glass appear just as causeless, because their cause is invisible, as human movements do. But judgment belongs not to the eye, but to the understanding.

If freedom of the will were assumed, every human action would be an inexplicable miracle—an effect without a cause. If we venture to picture such *freedom of indifferent choice*, we soon become aware that the understanding actually comes to a standstill: it has no form in which to think such a thing. The principle of sufficient reason—the principle of thoroughgoing determination and mutual dependence of phenomena—is the most general form of our faculty of knowledge, itself taking different forms according to the different objects of that faculty. Here, however, we are asked to think of something that determines without being determined, depends on nothing while other things depend on it, and produces *A* now without compulsion and therefore without a reason, although it could just as well produce *B*, *C* or *D*. It could do so entirely, under the same circumstances: nothing in *A* now gives it a preference over *B*, *C* or *D*, for such a preference would be motivation and hence causality. We are brought back to the concept of the **absolutely contingent** stated at the very beginning. I repeat: the understanding actually comes to a standstill here, if only we can bring it to that point.

But let us also recall what a **cause** is in general: the preceding change that makes the succeeding one necessary. No cause in the world brings forth its effect entirely or creates it from nothing. There is always something on which it acts. It merely occasions a change at this time, in this place, in this particular being, always in accordance with that being's nature; the **power** for the change must therefore already have lain within it. Every effect thus arises from two factors, one inward and one outward: the original force of what is acted upon, and the determining cause that compels that force to manifest itself here and now. All causality, and every explanation through it, presupposes an original force. This is why explanation never explains everything, but always leaves something inexplicable. We see this throughout physics and chemistry. Their explanations everywhere assume the natural forces manifested in phenomena, and the whole

explanation consists in tracing the phenomena back to those forces. A natural force itself is not subject to explanation, but is the principle of all explanation. Nor is it itself subject to causality: it is precisely what gives each cause its causality, its capacity to act. It is the common foundation of all effects of that kind and is present in each of them. Thus the phenomena of magnetism are traced back to an original force called electricity. Explanation stops there: it merely states the conditions under which such a force manifests itself, the causes that call its activity forth. The explanations of celestial mechanics presuppose gravitation as the force through which the individual causes determining the courses of celestial bodies act. Chemistry's explanations presuppose the hidden forces manifested as elective affinities in certain stoichiometric proportions. All the effects that occur punctually when brought about by the specified causes ultimately rest on those forces. In the same way, every physiological explanation presupposes the vital force, which reacts in a determinate way to specific inward and outward stimuli. So it is everywhere, without exception. Even the causes with which readily intelligible mechanics deals, such as impact and pressure, presuppose impenetrability, cohesion, rigidity, hardness, inertia, weight and elasticity: natural forces just as unfathomable as those already mentioned. Everywhere, then, causes determine nothing beyond the when and where of the **manifestations** of original, inexplicable forces. Only on the assumption of those forces are they causes at all—that is, do they necessarily produce certain effects.

What is true of causes in the narrowest sense and of stimuli is no less true of **motives**. Motivation is not essentially different from causality, but is merely one kind of it: causality passing through the medium of knowledge. Here too, the cause merely calls forth the manifestation of a force that cannot be traced back to further causes and therefore cannot be further explained. This force, here called will, is known to us not merely from outside, like the other natural forces, but also inwardly and immediately through self-consciousness. The causes directed toward it, here called motives, act only on the assumption that such a will exists and, in the particular case, has a definite nature. This specifically and individually determined nature of the will, through which its reaction

to the same motives differs in every person, constitutes what we call a person's **character**. Because we know it not *a priori* but only through experience, we call it **empirical character**. It determines, in the first place, how different kinds of motives act on the given person. It underlies every effect produced by motives, just as general natural forces underlie effects produced by causes in the narrowest sense, and the vital force underlies the effects of stimuli. Like natural forces, it is original, unchanging and inexplicable. In animals it differs with each species; in humans, with each individual. Only in the very highest and cleverest animals does a noticeable individual character already appear, though the character of the species still overwhelmingly predominates.

Chapter III, 8



- ¹ **Human character is individual:** it is different in every person. The character of the species does indeed underlie everyone, so that its chief qualities recur in each. Yet the differences of degree, the combinations of qualities and the ways they modify one another are so considerable that we may suppose moral differences of character to equal differences of intellectual ability—which is saying a great deal—and both to be incomparably greater than the bodily differences between giant and dwarf, Apollo and Thersites. The same motive therefore has a wholly different effect on different people, just as sunlight whitens wax but blackens silver chloride, and warmth softens wax but hardens clay. Consequently, knowing the motive alone does not allow us to predict the deed: we must also know the character precisely.
- ² Human character is **empirical**. We learn to know it through experience alone, not merely in others but also in ourselves. Hence we are often disappointed in ourselves as in others, discovering that we do not possess some quality—justice, unselfishness or courage, for example—to the degree we had so kindly assumed. When a difficult choice lies before us, our own resolution therefore remains as much a secret to us as someone else’s until the choice is decided. Sometimes we think it will fall this way, sometimes that, according to which motive knowledge holds more closely before the will to try its strength upon it. Meanwhile, “I can do what I will” produces the illusion of freedom of the will. At last the

stronger motive asserts its power over the will, and the choice often turns out differently from what we first supposed. Thus no one can know how another person, or even he himself, will act in a particular situation before having been in it. Only after the test has been passed is he sure of the other person, and only then of himself as well. But then he is sure: tested friends and proven servants are reliable. In general, we treat someone we know thoroughly like any other thing whose properties we have learned, confidently foreseeing what we may and may not expect from him. Whoever has done something once will do it again when the occasion arises, for good or ill. Someone needing great and extraordinary help will therefore turn to a person who has given proofs of generosity; someone wishing to hire a murderer will look among people whose hands have already been in blood. According to Herodotus (VII, 164), Gelo of Syracuse once had to entrust a very large sum of money entirely to one man, sending it abroad with him and leaving him free control over it. He chose Cadmus, who had given proof of rare, indeed unheard-of honesty and conscientiousness. His confidence was fully justified. In the same way, acquaintance with ourselves—the basis of self-confidence or self-distrust—arises only from experience, when the occasion comes. Depending on whether we have shown presence of mind, courage, honesty, discretion, tact or whatever else a particular occasion required, or have revealed our lack of these virtues, the acquaintance we have made with ourselves leaves us satisfied with ourselves afterward, or the opposite. Only precise knowledge of one's own empirical character gives a person what is called **acquired character**. Someone possesses it when he knows his own qualities, good and bad, precisely, and thus knows with certainty what he may trust himself to do and demand of himself, and what he may not. He now plays his own part—which through his empirical character he previously performed merely by natural instinct—with art and method, firmness and decorum, never, as the saying goes, falling out of character. Such a lapse always shows that, in the particular case, someone had been mistaken about himself.

Chapter III, 9



- ³ Human character is **constant**: it remains the same throughout life. Beneath the changing shell of one's years, circumstances, even knowledge and opinions, the same actual person lies like a crab in its shell, wholly unchanging and always the same. Character undergoes only apparent modifications in its direction and material, resulting from the differences between stages of life and their needs. **A person never changes**: as he has acted in one case, so he will always act again under wholly identical circumstances—which, however, also include accurate knowledge of those circumstances. Daily experience confirms this truth, but most strikingly when we meet an acquaintance again after 20 to 30 years and soon catch him at exactly the same tricks as before. Many people will deny this truth in words, yet assume it in their conduct: they never again trust someone they have once found dishonest, but rely on someone who previously proved honest. This truth makes all knowledge of people possible, and all firm trust in those who have been examined, tested and proved. Even when such trust has deceived us, we never say, "His character has changed," but "I was mistaken about him." It is also why, when judging the moral worth of an action, we first seek certainty about its motive, but then direct our praise or blame not at the motive but at the character that allowed itself to be determined by that motive: the deed's second factor, and the only one inherent in the person. On the same truth rests the fact that true honor—not chivalric honor, or fools' honor—

once lost can never be restored. The stain of a single base action clings to a person forever, branding him, as we say. Hence the proverb: "Once a thief, always a thief." It is why, when important affairs of state call for treachery and a traitor is accordingly sought, used and rewarded, prudence then commands that he be removed once the purpose is achieved: circumstances change, but his character does not. It is why a dramatist's greatest fault is failing to sustain his characters—that is, failing to develop them, like the characters portrayed by great poets, with the constancy and strict consistency of a natural force. I have demonstrated the latter in detail through an example from Shakespeare, in *Parerga*, T. 2, § 118. Indeed, the same truth makes conscience possible, insofar as even in old age it often confronts us with the misdeeds of youth: J. J. Rousseau, for example, after 40 years, with having accused the maid Marion of a theft he himself had committed. This is possible only on the assumption that character has remained unchanged. By contrast, the most ridiculous errors, the grossest ignorance and the strangest follies of our youth do not shame us in old age. That has changed: those were matters of knowledge; we have revised them and long since cast them off like the clothes of our youth. The same truth explains why someone does not actually improve even when he most clearly recognizes and indeed abhors his moral faults and defects, even when he most sincerely resolves to improve. Despite earnest resolutions and honest promises, when the occasion returns he is caught, to his own surprise, on the same paths as before. Only his **knowledge** can be corrected. He may come to see that the means he formerly used do not lead to his purpose, or bring more harm than gain; then he changes the means, not the ends. This is the basis of the American penitentiary system. It does not undertake to improve a person's **character**, his **heart**, but to set his **head** right: to show him that the ends he invariably pursues through his character would be reached far less easily, and with much greater hardship and danger, by the path of dishonesty he has followed than by honesty, work and contentment. In general, **knowledge** alone is the sphere and domain of all improvement and refinement. Character is unchanging and motives act necessarily, but they must pass through **knowledge**, the medium of motives. Knowledge, however, is capable of expansion in the most varied ways, and of

continual correction in countless degrees: all education works toward this. Developing reason through knowledge and insight of every kind is morally important because it opens access to motives from which the person would otherwise remain closed off. As long as he could not understand them, they did not exist for his will. Thus, with the same external circumstances, a person's actual situation the second time may differ entirely from the first, if only in the interval he has become able to grasp those circumstances accurately and completely. Motives to which he was previously inaccessible now act on him. In this sense the Scholastics quite rightly said: "*A final cause—an end, a motive—moves not according to its real being, but according to its being as known.*" No moral influence extends beyond correcting knowledge. Trying to remove someone's faults of character through speeches and moralizing, and thus remake his character itself, his actual morality, is just like trying to turn lead into gold by acting on it from outside, or tending an oak so carefully that it bears apricots. We find the conviction that character is unchanging already stated as an unquestionable truth by **Apuleius** in his *Oratio de magia*. Defending himself there against the charge of sorcery, he appeals to his known character and says: "*Each person's mind is a reliable indicator: always disposed by the same temperament toward virtue or malice, it provides firm grounds for accepting or rejecting an accusation.*"

- ⁴ Individual character is **inborn**: it is not a product of human art or of circumstances subject to chance, but the work of nature itself. It already reveals itself in the child, showing in miniature what it will later be on a larger scale. Thus two children, with exactly the same upbringing and surroundings, display fundamentally different characters with the utmost clarity: the same characters they will bear as old people. It is even hereditary in its basic features, but only from the father, while intelligence comes from the mother. On this I refer to Kap. 43 of the Supplements to the 4th book of *Welt als Wille u. Vorst.* (Bd. VI of this edition).

Chapter III, 10



This account of the nature of individual character does indeed imply that virtues and vices are inborn. The truth may be unwelcome to many prejudices and much old wives' philosophy, with its so-called practical interests—that is, its small, narrow concepts and limited nursery-school views. Yet it was already the conviction of the father of moral philosophy, **Socrates**, who, according to **Aristotle** (*Eth. magna*, I, 9), maintained: “*It is not in our power to become virtuous or vicious, and so on*” (“*Whether we are good or bad does not lie within our choice*”). Aristotle’s objection here is plainly poor: he himself shares Socrates’ opinion and states it most clearly in *Eth. Nicom.*, VI, 13: “*Everyone holds that our several traits of character somehow belong to us by nature: for justice, temperance, courage and the rest are ours from birth.*” (“*Each trait of character seems in some fashion to be present by nature in every person: for from the very moment of birth we have an inclination toward justice, temperance, fortitude and the remaining virtues.*”) If we survey all the virtues and vices briefly collected in Aristotle’s *de virtutibus et vitiis*, we shall find that in actual people they can all be conceived only as **inborn** qualities, and would be genuine only as such. If, instead, they arose from reflection and were deliberately assumed, they would really amount to a kind of **pretense** and be ungenuine; we could then place no reliance whatever on their continuance or on their holding firm under the pressure of circumstances. Nor is it otherwise if we add the Christian virtue of love, *charity*, which is absent from Aristotle and all the ancients. How could **one**

person's tireless goodness and another's incorrigible, deep-rooted malice—the character of the Antonines, Hadrian and Titus on one side, and of Caligula, Nero and Domitian on the other—have flown in from outside, the work of chance circumstances or mere knowledge and instruction? Nero, after all, had Seneca as his tutor. Rather, the seed of all a person's virtues and vices lies in his inborn character, the true core of the whole person. This conviction, natural to the unprejudiced person, also guided the hand of **Velleius Paterculus** when he wrote of Cato (II, 35): “*A man the very image of virtue, closer in every aspect of his nature to the gods than to men, who never did right to be seen doing so, but because he could not do otherwise*” *).

*) This passage is gradually becoming a regular weapon in the determinists' arsenal, an honor the good old historian certainly never dreamed of 1800 years ago. **Hobbes** praised it first, and **Priestley** after him. **Schelling** then reproduced it in his treatise on freedom, S. 478, in a translation somewhat falsified to suit his purposes. For that reason he does not name Velleius Paterculus, but, with equal shrewdness and refinement, says “an ancient.” Finally, I too have not failed to bring it forward, since it really does bear on the subject.

On the assumption of freedom of the will, however, it is quite impossible to see where virtue and vice—or indeed the fact that two people brought up alike act very differently, even oppositely, under entirely identical circumstances and occasions—could originate. The actual, original and fundamental difference between characters is incompatible with a freedom of the will in which opposite actions are supposed to be equally possible for every person in every situation. On that assumption, character must begin as a *blank slate*, just as the intellect does according to **Locke**, with no inborn inclination to either side. Such an inclination would already destroy the perfect balance conceived in *freedom of indifferent choice*. The ground of the observed differences in different people's conduct therefore cannot lie, on that assumption, in the **subjective**; still less can it lie in the **objective**. For then objects would determine action, and the freedom demanded would be lost altogether. At most, one escape would remain: to place the origin of those actual great differences of conduct midway between subject and object, making them arise from the different ways the sub-

jective apprehends the objective—that is, from the ways different people **know** it. But then everything would come down to correct or incorrect **knowledge** of the circumstances. Moral differences of conduct would be transformed into mere differences in the correctness of judgment, and morality would become logic. Suppose the advocates of freedom of the will finally tried to escape this awkward dilemma by saying that characters do not differ innately, but acquire their differences from external circumstances, impressions, experiences, example, teaching and so forth; and that once character had been formed in this way, differences of conduct would afterward be explained by it. We must answer, first, that character would then appear very late, whereas it is actually already recognizable in children, and most people would die before acquiring a character. Second, all those external circumstances, whose work character is supposed to be, lie wholly beyond our power and would be brought about one way or another by chance—or providence, if preferred. If character arose from those circumstances, and differences of conduct arose in turn from character, all moral responsibility for that conduct would disappear entirely, since it would ultimately and plainly be the work of chance or providence. Thus, on the assumption of freedom of the will, the origin of differences in conduct, and with them virtue, vice and responsibility, hangs unsupported, finding nowhere the smallest place to take root. It follows that this assumption, however pleasing it may look at first to an untrained understanding, fundamentally contradicts our moral convictions just as much as it contradicts the highest principle of our understanding, as we have sufficiently shown.

The necessity with which motives act, like all causes in general, as I have shown at length above, is not without a presupposition. We have now learned what that presupposition is, the ground on which this necessity stands: inborn, **individual character**. Every effect in inanimate nature is the necessary product of two factors: the general **natural force** manifesting itself here, and the particular **cause** calling forth that manifestation here. In precisely the same way, every human deed is the necessary product of the person's **character** and the **motive** that has appeared. Once these two are given, the deed follows inevitably. For a different deed to occur, either a different motive or a different character would

have to be posited. Every deed could also be predicted with certainty, indeed calculated, were character not so difficult to investigate, and were the motive not often hidden and always exposed to counteracting motives that lie solely in the person's sphere of thought, inaccessible to others. A person's inborn character already essentially determines the ends he invariably pursues. The means he adopts are determined partly by external circumstances and partly by his apprehension of them, whose accuracy depends in turn on his understanding and its cultivation. The final result of all this is his individual deeds, and thus the whole part he has to play in the world. The doctrine of individual character developed here is expressed with as much truth as poetry in one of Goethe's finest stanzas:

"As on the day that gave you to the world
The sun stood to salute the planets,
You grew at once, and onward, ever onward,
According to the law with which you entered.
So you must be; you cannot flee yourself:
So spoke the Sibyls, so the prophets;
No time, no power can break to pieces
The stamped form that unfolds in living growth."

The presupposition on which the necessity of every cause's effects rests is therefore the inward nature of each thing, whether merely a general natural force manifesting itself in it, a vital force, or will. Every being, whatever its kind, will always react to the causes acting upon it in accordance with its own particular nature. The Scholastics expressed this law, to which all things in the world are subject without exception, in the formula "*Action follows being.*" Accordingly, a chemist tests bodies with reagents, and one person tests another through the trials to which he puts him. In every case, external causes will necessarily call forth what lies within the being, for it cannot react otherwise than according to what it is.

Chapter III, 11



We must recall here that every *existence* presupposes an *essence*: whatever exists must also be **something**, must have a definite nature. It cannot exist and yet be nothing—something like a *metaphysical being*, a thing that is and merely is, without any determinations or qualities, and consequently without the definite mode of action flowing from them. Just as an *essence* without *existence* supplies no reality, as Kant explained through the familiar example of a hundred thalers, neither can an *existence* without *essence* do so. Whatever exists must have a nature essential and peculiar to it, through which it is what it is and which it always maintains. Causes necessarily call forth that nature's manifestations, but the nature itself is neither the work of those causes nor something they can modify. All this applies to a person and his will just as much as to every other being in nature. He too has an *essence* along with his *existence*: fundamental qualities that constitute his character and need only an outward occasion to manifest themselves. To expect someone to act one way on one occasion and quite differently on another, with the same occasion in each case, would therefore be like expecting the same tree that bore cherries this summer to bear pears next summer. Strictly considered, freedom of the will means *existence* without *essence*: something being and yet **being nothing**, which in turn means **not being at all**, and is therefore a contradiction.

Insight into this, and into the *a priori* certainty and therefore exceptionless validity of the law of causality, explains why all truly profound thinkers of every age, however different their other views, agreed in affirming the necessity of acts of will when motives appear and in rejecting *freedom of choice*. Indeed, precisely because the incalculably great majority of the crowd, incapable of thought and surrendered to semblance and prejudice, has always stubbornly resisted this truth, they sharpened it to its utmost point, asserting it in the most decisive, even defiant expressions. The best known is **Buridan's** ass, which, however, people have searched for in vain for about a hundred years in **Buridan's** surviving writings. I myself possess an edition of his *Sophismata*, apparently printed as early as the 15th century, without place of printing, year or page numbers. I have often searched it unsuccessfully for the example, although asses appear as examples on almost every page. **Bayle**, whose article **Buridan** is the foundation of everything written on the subject since, says quite incorrectly that only Buridan's **one** sophism is known, whereas I have a whole quarto volume of his *Sophismata*. **Bayle**, having discussed the matter so fully, should also have known something that seems to have escaped notice even since: the example, which has become a symbol or type of the great truth I defend here, is far older than **Buridan**. It occurs in **Dante**, who held all the knowledge of his age, lived before Buridan, and speaks not of asses but of human beings in the following words opening the fourth canto of his *Paradiso*:

Between two foods, equally distant and inviting,

A man would starve to death before

*He freely brought one of them to his teeth *).*

*) *Placed between two foods equally distant and equally moving him, a person would die of hunger before, exercising absolute freedom, he brought either of them to his teeth.*

Indeed, it already occurs in **Aristotle**, *De coelo*, II, 13, in these words: “*And the argument about someone who is intensely hungry and thirsty, but equally so, and equally distant from food and drink: for he too must remain at rest*” (“*Likewise what is said of someone exceedingly thirsty and hungry, when he stands equally distant from things to eat and drink: for he must remain at rest*”). **Buridan**, hav-

ing inherited the example from these sources, exchanged the human being for an ass merely because this impoverished Scholastic habitually takes either Socrates and Plato, or an *ass*, for his examples.

The question of freedom of the will is truly a touchstone by which profound minds can be distinguished from superficial ones, or a boundary stone where the two part company. The former all maintain that, given character and motive, an action follows necessarily; the latter cling with the crowd to freedom of the will. Then there is a middling sort who, feeling embarrassed, tacks back and forth, shifts the point at issue for himself and others, takes refuge behind words and phrases, or twists and turns the question until no one knows any longer what it meant. **Leibniz** already behaved so, being far more a mathematician and polymath than a philosopher*). To bring such back-and-forth talkers to the point, however, we must put the question to them as follows and not depart from it:

*) Leibniz's instability on this point is clearest in his letter to Coste, *Opera phil.*, ed. Erdmann, p. 447; next in the *Théodicée*, § 45–53.

- ¹ For a given person under given circumstances, are two actions possible, or only **one**?—The answer of all profound thinkers: only **one**.
- ² Could the past course of a given person's life have turned out differently in any respect, however slight, in any event or scene, from the way it did turn out? On the one hand, his character stands immutably fixed; on the other, the circumstances acting upon him were necessarily determined throughout, down to the smallest detail, by external causes that always occur with strict necessity, their chain of equally necessary links extending backward into infinity.—No! is the consistent and correct answer.

The conclusion from both propositions is: **Everything that happens, from the greatest to the smallest, happens necessarily.** *Whatever occurs, occurs necessarily.*

Anyone alarmed by these propositions still has something to learn and something else to unlearn. Afterward, however, he will recognize them as the richest source of comfort and reassurance. Our deeds are certainly no first beginning,

and nothing truly new comes into existence through them. Rather, **through what we do, we merely learn what we are.**

The conviction, though not clearly known yet felt, that everything happens with strict necessity also underlies the ancients' firmly established belief in *fate*, or *destiny*, as well as the fatalism of Muslims, and even the ineradicable belief in *omens* found everywhere. Even the smallest chance occurrence happens necessarily, and all events, so to speak, keep time together, so that everything echoes in everything. Finally, this is connected even with the fact that someone who, without the slightest intention and entirely by accident, has maimed or killed another mourns this *deed requiring expiation* throughout his life, with a feeling that seems akin to guilt. Others too regard him with a peculiar discredit as a *person needing expiation*—an ill-fated person. Indeed, the felt conviction that character is unchanging and its manifestations necessary has probably not been without influence even on the Christian doctrine of election by grace. Finally, I will not suppress the following wholly incidental observation, which anyone may accept or reject as he pleases, according to his views on certain matters. If we do not assume the strict necessity of everything that happens through a causal chain linking all events without distinction, but allow this chain to be interrupted at countless points by absolute freedom, all **foreseeing of the future**—in dreams, clairvoyant trance states and *second sight*—becomes **objectively**, and therefore absolutely, impossible and thus inconceivable. There would then be no objectively real future that could even possibly be foreseen, whereas at present we doubt only the subjective conditions, and hence the subjective possibility, of such foreseeing. Even this doubt can no longer find a place among the well-informed today, after countless testimonies from the most credible sources have established such anticipations of the future.

I add a few further considerations as corollaries to the established doctrine that everything happens necessarily.

What would become of this world if necessity did not run through all things and hold them together, presiding especially over the generation of individuals? A monstrosity, a heap of rubble, a grimace without sense or meaning—the work, that is, of true and actual chance.

To wish that some event had not happened is foolish self-torment: it means wishing for something absolutely impossible, and is as unreasonable as wishing that the sun rose in the west. Since everything that happens, great or small, occurs with **strict** necessity, it is utterly futile to ponder how slight and accidental the causes of an event were, and how very easily they might have been different. This is an illusion: all those causes occurred with just as strict a necessity and acted with just as complete a power as those through which the sun rises in the east. Rather, we should regard events as they occur with the same eyes with which we regard the printed words we read, knowing well that they stood there before we read them.

Chapter IV, 1



IV. Predecessors.

In support of my claim above concerning the judgment of all profound thinkers on our problem, I will call to mind a few of the great men who have spoken in this sense.

First, to reassure those who might perhaps believe that religious grounds stand against the truth I defend, I recall that Jeremiah (10, 23) already said: “A person’s doings do not lie within his own power, and it lies in no one’s might how he walks or directs his steps.” But I appeal above all to **Luther**, who in a book written expressly for the purpose, *De servo arbitrio*, attacks freedom of the will with all his vehemence. A few passages from it suffice to characterize his view, which he supports, naturally, not with philosophical but with theological grounds. I cite them from the edition of Seb. Schmidt, Strasbourg 1707.—There, S. 145, we read: “Thus it is found written, all at once, in the hearts of all that free will is nothing, though this is obscured by so many opposing disputations and by the great authority of so many men.”—S. 214: “At this point I would have the defenders of free will take warning, that they may know they are deniers of Christ when they assert free will.”—S. 220: “All the testimonies of Scripture that speak of Christ will fight against free will. But these are innumerable—indeed, the whole of Scripture. Therefore, if we plead the case with Scripture as judge, I shall have prevailed in every way, so that not one iota or titlle remains that does not condemn the doctrine of free will.”—

Now to the philosophers. The ancients need not be considered seriously here, since their philosophy, still in a state of innocence, as it were, had not yet brought to distinct consciousness the two deepest and most troubling problems of modern philosophy: the question of the freedom of the will and the question of the reality of the external world, or the relation of the ideal to the real. How far the problem of the freedom of the will had become clear to the ancients, incidentally, can be seen fairly well from Aristotle's *Ethica Nicom.*, III, c. 1–8, where one will find that his thinking on the subject essentially concerns only physical and intellectual freedom, which is why he speaks only of the voluntary and the involuntary (*hekousion* and *akousion*), taking “voluntary” and “free” as one and the same. The far more difficult problem of **moral freedom** has not yet presented itself to him, although his thoughts do at times reach that far, especially *Eth. Nicom.*, II, 2, and III, 7, where, however, he falls into the error of deriving character from deeds instead of the reverse. Likewise he criticizes quite wrongly the conviction of Socrates that I cited above; in other places, however, he has made it his own again, e.g. *Nicom.*, X, 10: “Now what comes from nature is clearly not up to us, but is present, through certain divine causes, in those who are truly fortunate” (“What is bestowed by nature is plainly not in our power, but, proceeding from some divine cause, is present in those who are truly fortunate”). Shortly after: “Character must therefore somehow exist beforehand, congenial to virtue, loving what is noble and loathing what is base” (“Dispositions, then, must in some way be present beforehand, suited to virtue, such as embrace the honorable and are offended by the shameful”); which agrees with the passage I adduced above, as also with *Ethica magna*, I, 11: “One who chooses to be the best will not be so unless nature too is present, though he will be better” (“For one will not be the best of all simply as he may wish, unless nature too has provided it; he will, however, rightly be better”). In the same sense Aristotle treats the question of the freedom of the will in the *Ethica magna*, I, 9–18, and the *Ethica Eudemia*, II, 6–10, where he comes somewhat closer to the real problem; yet everything is wavering and superficial. It is his method everywhere not to go directly into the matters themselves, proceeding analytically, but rather, synthetically, to draw conclu-

sions from outward marks; instead of penetrating to reach the core of things, he holds to external indications, even to words. This method easily leads astray and, with deeper problems, never reaches its goal. Here he comes to a halt before the supposed opposition between the necessary and the voluntary (anankaion and hekousion), as before a wall; but only beyond this wall lies the insight that the voluntary is **necessary** precisely as such, by virtue of the motive, without which an act of will is as little possible as without a willing subject, and which motive is a cause no less than the mechanical kind, from which it differs only in what is inessential; indeed he himself says (Eth. Eudem., II, 10): “for that for the sake of which is one of the causes” (“for that for whose sake a thing is done is one of the number of causes”). That is precisely why this opposition between the voluntary and the necessary is fundamentally false, even though many would-be philosophers still fare today just as Aristotle did.

Cicero presents the problem of the freedom of the will already quite clearly, in the book *De fato*, c. 10 and c. 17. The subject of his treatise, to be sure, leads to it very easily and naturally. He himself sides with freedom of the will; but we see that Chrysippus and Diodorus must already have become conscious of the problem, more or less distinctly.—Also noteworthy is **Lucian’s** thirtieth Dialogue of the Dead, between Minos and Sostratus, which denies freedom of the will and, with it, responsibility.

But in a certain sense the Fourth Book of Maccabees, in the Septuagint (in Luther it is missing), is already a treatise on freedom of the will, insofar as it sets itself the task of proving that reason (logismos) has the power to overcome all passions and emotions, and supports this with the Jewish martyrs in the second book.

The oldest clear recognition of our problem known to me appears in **Clement of Alexandria**, when he says (Strom. I, § 17): “Neither praises nor reproaches, neither honors nor punishments are just, if the soul does not have the power of impulse and aversion, but vice is involuntary” (“neither praises, nor reproaches, nor honors, nor punishments are just, if the soul does not have free power both of seeking and of abstaining, but vice is involuntary”); then, after an intervening clause referring to what was said earlier: “**so that above all God, at least, is**

not the cause of vice in us” (“so that, most of all, God may not be the cause of vice for us”). This highly noteworthy concluding clause shows in what sense the Church at once grasped the problem and what decision, as suiting its interest, it immediately anticipated.—Almost 200 years later we find the doctrine of free will already treated at length by **Nemesius**, in his work *De natura hominis*, Kap. 35 at the end, and Kap. 39–41. Freedom of the will is here identified outright with the power of choice, or elective decision, and accordingly asserted and demonstrated with the greatest zeal. Yet it is at any rate already an airing of the matter.

But the fully developed consciousness of our problem, with everything attached to it, we find first in the Church Father **Augustine**, who therefore comes into consideration here, although he is far more theologian than philosopher. Immediately, however, we see it throw him into marked embarrassment and uncertain wavering, which leads him as far as inconsistencies and contradictions, in his three books *De libero arbitrio*. On the one hand he does not wish, like **Pelagius**, to concede so much to freedom of the will that original sin, the necessity of redemption and free election by grace would thereby be abolished, and a person could consequently become righteous and worthy of eternal blessedness by his own powers. He even gives it to be understood, in the Argument to the books *De lib. arb.*, taken from *Lib. I, c. 9* of the *Retractationes*, that on this side of the controversy (which Luther later defended so vehemently) he would have said still more had those books not been written before the appearance of **Pelagius**, against whose opinion he then composed the book *De natura et gratia*. Meanwhile he says already in *De lib. arb. III, 18*: “But now man is not good, nor is it in his power to be good, either because he does not see what kind of person he ought to be, or because, seeing it, he is unwilling to be the kind of person he sees he ought to be.”—Soon after: “either through ignorance he has no free choice of the will to choose what he should rightly do; or, carnal habit resisting—which by the violence of mortal succession has in some way grown naturally into him—he sees what should rightly be done, and wills it, and cannot accomplish it”; and in the Argument

just mentioned: “Therefore, unless the will itself is freed by God’s grace from the servitude by which it was made a slave of sin, and is helped to overcome its vices, mortals cannot live rightly and piously.”

Chapter IV, 2



On the other hand, however, three considerations moved him to defend the freedom of the will:

- ¹ His opposition to the **Manichaeans**, against whom the books *De lib. arb.* are expressly directed, because they denied free will and assumed another primal source of evil as well as of ills. He already alludes to them in the last chapter of the book *De animae quantitate*: “Free will has been given to the soul, and those who try to undermine it with frivolous reasonings are so blind that, etc.”
- ² The natural illusion I have exposed, by which “I can do what I will” is taken for freedom of the will, and “**voluntary**” is taken as immediately identical with “**free**”: *De lib. arb.* I, 12. “For what lies so much within the will as the will itself?”
- ³ The need to bring man’s moral responsibility into harmony with the justice of God. For a most serious difficulty did not escape Augustine’s acuteness, one whose removal is so hard that, as far as I know, all later philosophers, with the exception of three, whom we shall therefore examine more closely at once, have preferred to creep softly around it, as though it did not exist. Augustine, on the other hand, states it quite unreservedly, with noble candor, right in the opening words of the books *De lib. arb.*: “Tell me, I pray you: is God not the author of evil?”—And then at greater length, right in the second chapter: “But the mind

is troubled by this: if sins come from these souls which God created, and those souls from God, how are sins not, after a short interval, traced back to God?" To which the interlocutor replies: "What you have just said plainly is what torments me enough when I think of it."—This most disquieting consideration **Luther** took up again and brought out with all the vehemence of his eloquence, *De servo arbitrio*, S. 144: "But that God must be such a one as imposes **necessity** on us by his own **freedom**, natural reason itself is compelled to confess.—If foreknowledge and omnipotence are granted, it follows naturally, by irrefutable consequence, that we have not been made by ourselves, and neither live nor do anything, but through his omnipotence.—The foreknowledge and omnipotence of God are in diametrical conflict with our free will.—All men are compelled by inevitable consequence to admit that we are made not by our own will but by necessity; that thus we do not do what we please, by right of free will, but as God has foreknown and *acts*, by infallible and immutable counsel and power: and so on."

We find **Vanini**, at the beginning of the 17th century, wholly filled with this insight. It is the core and soul of his persistent revolt against theism—a revolt concealed, under the pressure of the age, as cleverly as possible. On every occasion he returns to it and never tires of setting it out from the most varied points of view. For example, in his *Amphitheatrum aeternae providentiae*, exercitatio 16, he says: "If God wills sins, then he does them: for it is written, 'Whatever he willed, he has done.' If he does not will them, they are nonetheless committed: he must therefore be called improvident, or powerless, or cruel, since he either does not know how, or is unable, or neglects to bring about what he wills. ————The philosophers say: if God did not want the worst and most nefarious actions to flourish in the world, he would doubtless, with a single nod, banish and sweep away all outrages beyond the bounds of the world: for which of us can resist the divine will? How are crimes committed against God's will, if even in the act of sinning he furnishes the wicked with strength? Besides, if man falls contrary to God's will, God will be inferior to man, who opposes him and prevails. From this they deduce: God desires this world just as it is; had he wanted a better one, he would have a better one."—And in exercitatio 44 it

reads: "An instrument is moved as it is directed by its principal; but our will in its operations stands as an instrument, God as the principal agent: therefore if it operates badly, this must be imputed to God.——Our will depends wholly on God, not only as to motion but also as to substance: hence there is nothing that can truly be imputed to it, neither on the side of substance nor of operation, but everything to God, who has so formed the will and so moves it. ———Since the essence and motion of the will are from God, the operations of the will, whether good or bad, must be ascribed to him, if the will stands to him as an instrument." But with **Vanini** one must keep in view that he consistently employs the stratagem of putting forward his real opinion, in the person of an opponent, as the one he abhors and wants to refute, and of demonstrating it convincingly and thoroughly; in order then, in his own person, to oppose it with shallow reasons and lame arguments and thereupon to depart in triumph, *as if the business had been well done*—relying on the malice of his reader. By this craftiness he deceived even the highly learned Sorbonne, which, taking all that for good coin, trustingly set its imprimatur before his most godless writings. With all the heartier joy it saw him, three years later, burned alive, after his blasphemous tongue had first been cut out. For this, after all, is the truly forceful argument of the theologians, and since it has been taken from them, matters have gone very much backward.

Among philosophers in the narrower sense, if I am not mistaken, **Hume** is the first who did not creep around the grave difficulty first raised by Augustine, but sets it out openly—without, however, mentioning Augustine or Luther, let alone Vanini—in his *Essay on Liberty and Necessity*, where it says, toward the end: "The ultimate author of all our volitions is the creator of the world, who first set this immense machine in motion and placed all beings in that particular position from which every subsequent event must follow by unavoidable necessity. Human actions, therefore, either can have no baseness at all, since they proceed from so good a cause, or, if they have any baseness, they must implicate *our creator* in the same guilt, since he is acknowledged to be their ultimate cause and author. For just as a man who has fired a mine is answerable for all the consequences, whether the fuse he used was long or short, so wherever a continu-

ous chain of necessary causes is fixed, that Being, finite or infinite, who produces the first is likewise the author of all the rest *).” He makes an attempt to resolve this difficulty, but admits at the end that he considers it insoluble.

*) A translation of this and the other English passages will be welcome to many German readers:

“The ultimate originator of all our acts of will is the creator of the world, who first set this immeasurable machine in motion and brought all beings into the particular situation from which every later occurrence had to follow with unavoidable necessity. For this reason human actions are either capable of no wickedness at all, since they proceed from so good a cause; or else, if they can be bad in any way, they involve our creator in the same guilt, since he is, by general acknowledgment, their ultimate cause, their originator. For as a man who sets off a mine is responsible for all its consequences, whether the sulfur fuse was long or short, so, wherever an unbroken linkage of necessarily operating causes stands firm, the being, whether finite or infinite, that brings about the first is also the originator of all the rest.”

Chapter IV, 3



Kant too, independently of his predecessors, comes upon the very same stumbling block, in the Critique of Practical Reason, S. 180 ff. of the fourth edition, and S. 232 of Rosenkranz's edition: "It seems, nevertheless, that as soon as one assumes that God, as the universal original being, is the **cause** also of the **existence of substance**, one must also concede that human actions have their determining ground in that which is wholly beyond his power, namely in the causality of a supreme being distinct from him, on whom the existence of the former and the entire determination of his causality depend wholly and entirely.—Man would be a Vaucanson automaton, built and wound up by the supreme master of all works of art, and self-consciousness would indeed make him a thinking automaton, in which the consciousness of his spontaneity, if it is taken for freedom, would be mere illusion, since it deserves to be so called only comparatively, because the nearest determining causes of his movement, and a long series of them up to their determining causes, are indeed internal, while the last and highest is nonetheless found wholly in an alien hand."—He now tries to remove this great difficulty through the distinction between thing in itself and appearance; but this so obviously leaves the matter essentially unchanged that I am convinced he was not in earnest about it. He himself also admits the inadequacy of his solution, S. 184, where he adds: "but is any other that has been tried, or may be tried, easier and more comprehensible? One might rather say that the dogmatic teachers of metaphysics showed more of

their **cunning** than of their sincerity in putting this difficult point out of sight as far as possible, in the hope that if they did not speak of it at all, no one would readily think of it.”

After this highly noteworthy assembling of the most heterogeneous voices, all saying the same thing, I return to our Church Father. The grounds with which he hopes to remove the difficulty, already felt by him in its full gravity, are theological, not philosophical, and therefore not of unconditional validity. Their support is, as I said, the third reason, in addition to the two cited above, why he seeks to defend a *liberum arbitrium* conferred on man by God. Such a thing, since it would interpose itself as a separating partition between the Creator and the sins of his creature, would really be sufficient to remove the whole difficulty—if only it remained at least **conceivable** under serious and deeper reflection, as it is easily said in words and may do well enough for a thinking that goes not much further than words. But how is one to imagine that a being which, in its whole *existence* and *essence*, is the work of another can nonetheless determine itself originally and from the ground up, and consequently be responsible for its doing? The proposition that *action follows being*, that is, that the effects of every being follow from its constitution, overturns that assumption, yet is itself unassailable. If a person acts badly, it is because he is bad. To that proposition, however, attaches its corollary: *therefore, from whatever source a being has its existence, from that same source comes its action*. What would one say of the watchmaker who was angry at his watch because it ran wrong? However gladly one might make the will a *blank slate*, one will still be unable to avoid admitting that if, for example, of two people one follows, in moral respects, a way of acting entirely opposite to the other’s, this difference, which must after all spring from something, has its ground either in external circumstances, in which case the guilt plainly does not fall on the people, or else in an original difference of their wills themselves, in which case guilt and merit again do not fall on them, if their whole being and essence is the work of another. Since the great men cited have strained in vain to find an exit from this labyrinth, I willingly confess that to conceive the moral responsibility of the human will without its aseity exceeds my powers of comprehension as well. It was without doubt this

same incapacity that dictated the seventh of the eight definitions with which **Spinoza** opens his *Ethics*: “A thing is called free that exists from the necessity of its own nature alone and is determined to act by itself alone; but necessary, or rather compelled, that which is determined by another to exist and to operate.” For if a bad action springs from the nature—that is, the innate constitution—of the human being, the guilt plainly lies with the author of this nature. That is why free will was invented. But from what the action is then supposed to spring, on the assumption of free will, is absolutely impossible to see; for free will is at bottom a merely **negative** property and says only that nothing compels or hinders a person from acting one way or another. This never makes clear **from what** the action finally does spring, since it is not supposed to come from the innate or created constitution of the person, for then it would be charged to his Creator; nor from external circumstances alone, for then it would have to be ascribed to chance; so that the person would remain guiltless in any case—while he is nonetheless held responsible for it. The natural image of a free will is an unloaded balance: it hangs there quietly and will never leave its equilibrium unless something is laid in one of its pans. As little as the balance can produce motion out of itself, can free will bring forth an action out of itself; because, precisely, from nothing comes nothing. If the balance is to sink to one side, a foreign body must be laid upon it, which is then the source of the motion. Likewise the human action must be produced by something that acts **positively** and is something more than a merely **negative** freedom. This, however, can be only one of two things: either the motives do it in and of themselves, that is, the external circumstances—in which case the person is plainly not responsible for the action, and, besides, all people would then have to act exactly alike under like circumstances; or else it springs from his susceptibility to such motives, hence from innate character, that is, from the inclinations originally inherent in the person, which can differ among individuals and by virtue of which the motives take effect. But then the will is no longer free: for these inclinations are the weight laid in the pan of the balance. Responsibility

falls back on the one who put them in, that is, whose work the person with such inclinations is. Therefore he is responsible for his doing only in the case that he is himself his own work, that is, has aseity.

The whole standpoint set out here lets us gauge how much hangs on the freedom of the will, which forms an indispensable gulf between the Creator and the sins of his creature; from which it becomes comprehensible why the theologians cling to it so tenaciously, and why their squires, the professors of philosophy, support them in it so dutifully and so zealously that, deaf and blind to the most cogent counterproofs of great thinkers, they hold fast to free will and fight for it *as for altar and hearth*.

But to conclude, at last, my account of **Augustine**, interrupted above: his opinion on the whole comes to this, that man really had a wholly free will only before the Fall, but after it, fallen prey to original sin, has to hope for his salvation from election by grace and from redemption—which is speaking like a Church Father.

Chapter IV, 4



Meanwhile, through **Augustine** and his dispute with the Manichaeans and Pelagians, philosophy awoke to consciousness of our problem. From then on it gradually became clearer to philosophy, through the Scholastics, as **Buridan's** sophism and the passage from **Dante** cited above bear witness.—But the first to get to the bottom of the matter was, to all appearances, **Thomas Hobbes**, whose work devoted expressly to this subject, *Quaestiones de libertate et necessitate, contra Doctorem Branballum*, appeared in 1656 and is now rare. In English it is found in *Th. Hobbes moral and political works*, one folio volume, London 1750, S. 469 ff., from which I set down the following principal passage. S. 483:

- ⁶ Nothing takes a beginning from itself, but only from the action of some other immediate agent outside itself. Therefore, when a man first has an appetite or will for something for which he had neither appetite nor will immediately before, the cause of his will is not the will itself but something else, not in his own disposing. So, since it is beyond controversy that the will is the necessary cause of voluntary actions, and since, by what has just been said, the will is also necessarily *caused* by other things over which it has no disposal, it follows that voluntary actions all have necessary causes and are therefore *necessitated*.

⁷ I hold *that* to be a *sufficient* cause from which nothing is lacking that is needed to produce the *effect*. The same is also a *necessary* cause. For if it were possible for a *sufficient* cause not to bring forth its *effect*, then something needed to produce it would be lacking, and so the cause was not *sufficient*. But if it is impossible for a *sufficient* cause not to produce its effect, then a *sufficient* cause is a *necessary* cause. Hence it is manifest that whatever is produced is produced *necessarily*. For whatever is produced has had a *sufficient* cause to produce it, or else it would never have been; and therefore *voluntary* actions too are *necessitated*.

⁸ That ordinary definition of a free agent (namely, that a free agent is one which, when everything needed to produce the effect is present, can nevertheless fail to produce it) implies a contradiction and is nonsense, since it amounts to saying that the cause may be *sufficient*, that is to say *necessary*, and yet the effect not follow.—

S. 485. Every event, however contingent it may seem or however *voluntary* it may be, is produced *necessarily* *).

*) 6. Nothing begins of itself, but each thing through the action of some other, immediate cause lying outside it. Hence, when a person now wishes or wills something that he neither wished nor willed immediately before, the cause of his willing is not this willing itself but something else, not dependent on him. Accordingly, since the will is indisputably the necessary cause of voluntary actions, and, according to what has just been said, the will is necessarily caused by other things independent of it, it follows that all voluntary actions have **necessary** causes and are therefore **necessitated**.

⁷ I recognize as a **sufficient** cause one from which nothing is missing that is needed to produce the effect. Such a cause, however, is at the same time a **necessary** cause. For if it were possible for a **sufficient** cause not to bring forth its effect, something needed to produce that effect would have had to be lacking to it; but then the cause was not **sufficient**. If, however, it is impossible for a **sufficient** cause not to bring forth its effect, then a **sufficient** cause is also a **necessary** cause. From this it plainly follows that everything that is produced is **neces-**

sarily produced. For everything that has been produced has had a **sufficient** cause that produced it; otherwise it would never have come into being. Therefore **voluntary** actions too are necessitated.

- ⁸ That common definition of a free agent (namely, that it would be one which, even when everything needed to produce the effect was present together, could still **fail** to produce it) contains a contradiction and is nonsense, since it says that a cause could be **sufficient**—that is, **necessary**—and the effect nevertheless fail to occur.

S. 485. “Every event, however **contingent** it may seem or however **voluntary** it may be, occurs **necessarily**.”

In his famous book *De cive*, c. 1, § 7, he says: “Everyone is borne toward the pursuit of what is good for him and toward flight from what is bad for him, above all from the greatest of natural evils, which is death; and this by a necessity of nature no less than that by which a stone is borne downward.”

Immediately after **Hobbes** we see **Spinoza** permeated by the same conviction. A few passages will suffice to characterize his teaching on this point:

Eth., P. I, prop. 32. “Will cannot be called a free cause, but only a necessary one.”—Coroll. 2. “For will, like everything else, requires a cause by which it is determined to act in a certain way.”

Ibid., P. II, scholium ultimum. “As for the fourth objection (concerning Buridan’s ass), I say that I grant entirely that a man placed in such an equilibrium (one, that is, who perceives nothing but thirst and hunger, and such food and such drink, which are equally distant from him) will perish of hunger and thirst.”

Ibid., P. III, prop. 2. Schol. “The decrees of the mind arise in the mind with the same necessity as the ideas of things actually existing. Those, therefore, who believe that they speak or keep silent, or do anything at all, from a free decree of the mind are dreaming with open eyes.”—Epist. 62. “Each thing is necessarily determined by some external cause to exist and to act in a certain and determinate way. For example, a stone receives from an external cause that impels it a certain quantity of motion, with which it will afterward necessarily continue to

move. Imagine now that the stone, while it continues to move, thinks and knows that it is striving, as far as it can, to continue in motion. This stone, since it is conscious only of its own striving and is by no means indifferent, will surely believe that it is perfectly free and that it perseveres in motion for no other reason than that it wills to. And this is that human freedom which all boast of having, and which consists in this alone, that people are conscious of their appetite and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined.”——“With this I have sufficiently explained what my opinion is concerning free and constrained necessity, and concerning the fictitious freedom of human beings.”

A noteworthy circumstance, however, is that **Spinoza** arrived at this insight only in his last years (that is, in his forties). Earlier, in 1665, while he was still a Cartesian, he had decisively and warmly defended the opposite opinion in his *Cogitata metaphysica*, c. 12, and had even said, in direct contradiction to the scholium ultimum of Part II just cited, concerning Buridan’s sophism: “For if we put a human being in the place of the ass, placed in such an equilibrium, the human being must be regarded not as a thinking thing but as the most contemptible ass, if he perishes of hunger and thirst.”

I shall have to report the same change of opinion and conversion further on of two other great men. This proves how difficult, and how deeply buried, true insight into our problem is.

Hume, in his *Essay on liberty and necessity*, from which I have already had to cite a passage above, writes with the clearest conviction of the necessity of individual acts of will given motives, and sets it forth very plainly in his generally accessible manner. He says: “Thus it appears that the conjunction between motives and voluntary actions is as regular and uniform as that between cause and effect in any part of nature.” And further on: “It seems almost impossible, therefore, to engage in either science or action of any kind without acknowledging the doctrine of necessity and that inference from motives to voluntary actions, from character to conduct.”*)

*) “Thus it follows that the connection between motives and voluntary actions is as regular and uniform as the connection between cause and effect in any part of nature can possibly be.”———“It therefore seems almost impossible to undertake anything, either in science or in actions of any kind, without acknowledging the doctrine of necessity and that inference from motives to acts of will, from character to mode of conduct.”

Chapter IV, 5



But no writer has demonstrated the necessity of acts of will so thoroughly and convincingly as **Priestley**, in his work devoted exclusively to this subject, *The Doctrine of philosophical necessity*. Anyone whom this book, written with such exceeding clarity and accessibility, fails to convince must have an understanding truly paralyzed by prejudice. To characterize his results I set down a few passages, which I cite from the second edition, Birmingham 1782.

Preface, S. XX. “To my understanding there is no absurdity more glaring than the notion of philosophical liberty.”—S. 26. “Without a miracle, or the intervention of some foreign cause, no volition or action of any man could have been otherwise than it has been.”—S. 37. “Though an inclination or affection of mind is not gravity, it influences me and acts upon me as certainly and necessarily as that power does upon a stone.”—S. 43. “To say that the will is *self-determined* gives no idea at all, or rather implies an absurdity, namely, that a *determination*, which is an *effect*, takes place without any cause at all. For setting aside everything that comes under the name of *motive*, there is really nothing left to produce the determination. Let a man use whatever *words* he pleases, he can have no more *conception* of how we can sometimes be determined by motives and sometimes without any motive than he can have of a scale being sometimes weighed down by weights and sometimes by a kind of substance that has no weight at all, which, whatever it may be in itself, must, with respect to the scale, be *nothing*.”—S. 66. “In proper philosophical language, the motive

ought to be called the *proper cause* of the action. It is as much so as anything in nature is the cause of anything else.”—S. 84. “It will never be in our power to choose two things when all the previous circumstances are exactly the same.”—S. 90. “A man, indeed, when he reproaches himself for some particular action in his past conduct, may fancy that, if he were in the same situation again, he would have acted differently. But this is a mere *deception*; and if he examines himself strictly and takes in all circumstances, he may be satisfied that, with the same inward disposition of mind and with precisely the same view of things that he had then—to the exclusion of all others that he has acquired by reflection *since*—he could not have acted otherwise than he did.”—S. 287. “In short, there is no choice in the case but between the doctrine of necessity and absolute nonsense.”—*).

*) S. XX. “For my understanding there is no more palpable absurdity than the concept of moral freedom.”—S. 26. “Without a miracle, or the intervention of some external cause, no act of will or action of any person could have turned out otherwise than it did turn out.”—S. 37. “Although an inclination or determination of my mind is not gravity, it nevertheless has as sure and necessary an influence and effect on me as that force has on a stone.”—S. 43. “The expression that the will is something **self-determining** gives no concept at all, or rather contains an absurdity, namely this: that a **determination**, which is an effect, occurs without any cause. For, setting aside everything understood under the name of **motive**, there is in fact nothing left that could produce that determination. Let a person use whatever **words** he likes; he can have no more **concept** of our being determined to something sometimes by motives and sometimes without any motives at all than he can have of a scale pan being sometimes drawn down by weights and sometimes by a kind of substance that had no weight whatever and that, whatever it might be in itself, would be **nothing** with respect to the scale pan.”—S. 66. “In proper philosophical expression the motive ought to be called the **real cause** of the action: for it is that as much as anything in nature is the cause of another.”—S. 84. “It will never lie in our power to make two different choices when all the preceding circumstances are exactly the same.”—S. 90. “Admittedly, a person who reproaches himself for

some particular action in his past course of life can imagine that, if he were in the same position again, he would act differently. But this is mere **delusion**: if he examines himself strictly and takes all circumstances into account, he can convince himself that, with the same inner disposition and exactly the same view of things that he had then, to the exclusion of all other views obtained **since** through reflection, he could not have acted otherwise than he did act.” — S. 287. “In short, there is no other choice here than that between the doctrine of necessity and absolute nonsense.”

Now it must be noted that things went with **Priestley** exactly as they did with **Spinoza** and with yet another very great man, to be cited at once. For **Priestley** says in the preface to the first edition, S. XXVII: “I was not, however, a ready convert to the doctrine of necessity. Like Dr. Hartley himself, I gave up my liberty with great reluctance, and in a long correspondence that I once had on the subject I maintained the doctrine of liberty very strenuously and did not at all yield to the arguments then proposed to me.”*)

*) “I have not, however, been easily converted to the doctrine of necessity. Like Dr. Hartley himself, I gave up my freedom only with great reluctance: in a long correspondence that I once conducted on this subject, I defended the doctrine of freedom very zealously and in no way yielded to the grounds that were set against me.”

The third great man to whom the same thing happened is **Voltaire**, who reports it with the amiability and naïveté peculiar to him. In his *Traité de métaphysique*, chap. 7, he had defended the so-called freedom of the will at length and with spirit. But in his book *Le philosophe ignorant*, written more than forty years later, he teaches the strictest necessitation of acts of will, in the 13th chapter, which he concludes thus: “Archimedes is just as necessitated to stay in his room when he is locked in it as when he is so deeply absorbed in a problem that the idea of going out does not enter his mind:”

Fate leads the willing and drags the unwilling.

“*The ignorant man who thinks thus has not always thought the same*, but he is at last compelled to yield.” In the book that follows, *Le principe d'action*, he says in chap. 13: “A ball that strikes another, a hunting dog that runs necessarily and

willingly after a stag, that stag clearing an immense ditch with no less necessity and will: all this is no more invincibly determined than we are in everything we do.”

This uniform conversion of three such supremely eminent minds to our insight must surely give pause to anyone who sets out to assail well-founded truths with the “but surely I can do what I will” of his simple-minded self-consciousness—words that have nothing to do with the matter.

Chapter IV, 6



After these, his nearest predecessors, it need not surprise us that **Kant** took the necessity with which the empirical character is determined to actions by motives as a matter already settled, with him as with others, and did not pause to prove it anew. He opens his “Ideas for a General History” thus: “Whatever concept one may form of the **freedom of the will** for metaphysical purposes, its **appearances**, human actions, are determined by universal laws of nature just as much as any other natural occurrence.”—In the Critique of Pure Reason (S. 548 of the first, or S. 577 of the fifth edition) he says: “Because the empirical character itself must be drawn from the appearances as effect, and from the rule of these which experience supplies, all actions of the human being, in appearance, are determined from his empirical character and the other cooperating causes according to the order of nature; and if we could investigate all the appearances of his power of choice to the very bottom, there would be no single human action that we could not predict with certainty and recognize as necessary from its preceding conditions. With regard to this empirical character, therefore, there is no freedom, and it is only in accordance with it that we can consider the human being if we merely **observe** and, as happens in anthropology, want to investigate physiologically the moving causes of his actions.”—In the same work, S. 798 of the first, or S. 826 of the fifth edition, we read: “The will may well be free, but this can concern only the intelligible cause of our willing. For as to the phenomena of its manifestations, that is, actions, we must, in

accordance with an inviolable fundamental maxim without which we can exercise no reason in empirical use, never explain them otherwise than all the other appearances of nature, namely according to their unchangeable laws.”—Further, in the Critique of Practical Reason, S. 177 of the fourth edition, or S. 230 of the Rosenkranz edition: “One may therefore grant that if it were possible for us to have so deep an insight into a person’s way of thinking, as it shows itself through inner as well as outer actions, that every incentive to it, even the slightest, became known to us, together with all the external occasions acting upon it, one could calculate a person’s future conduct with certainty, just as one calculates a lunar or solar eclipse.”

To this, however, he links his doctrine of how freedom can coexist with necessity, by virtue of the distinction between the intelligible character and the empirical. Since I wholly profess that view, I shall return to it further below. **Kant** set it out twice: in the Critique of Pure Reason, S. 532–554 of the first, or S. 560–582 of the fifth edition, and still more clearly in the Critique of Practical Reason, S. 169–179 of the fourth edition, or S. 224–231 of the Rosenkranz edition. These profoundly thought passages must be read by everyone who wants to gain a thorough understanding of how human freedom is compatible with the necessity of actions.—

From the achievements of all these noble and venerable predecessors, the present treatment of the subject differs so far chiefly in two points. First, guided by the prize question, I have strictly separated the inner perception of the will in self-consciousness from the outer, and considered each of the two by itself; only in this way did it become possible to uncover the source of the illusion that works so irresistibly on most people. Second, I have considered the will in connection with all the rest of nature, which no one before me has done; only in this way could the subject be treated with the thoroughness, methodical insight and completeness of which it is capable.

Now a few more words about some writers who have written since **Kant**, but whom I do not regard as my predecessors.

Schelling has supplied an explanatory paraphrase of **Kant's** supremely important doctrine, just praised, concerning the intelligible and empirical character, in his "Inquiry into Human Freedom," S. 465–471. By the vividness of its coloring, this paraphrase can help make the matter more accessible to some than Kant's thorough but dry presentation can. Yet I cannot mention it without censuring, for the honor of truth and of **Kant**, that **Schelling**, here where he presents one of the most important and admirable of Kant's doctrines—in my view the most profound of them all—does not state plainly that what he now sets out belongs, as to its content, to **Kant**. Instead he expresses himself so that the great majority of readers, who do not have the contents of the great man's voluminous and difficult works exactly in mind, must suppose they are reading **Schelling's** own thoughts. How fully the result has matched the intention here I will show by just one proof among many. Even today a young professor of philosophy at Halle, Mr. Erdmann, says in his book of 1837, titled "Body and Soul," S. 101: "even if Leibniz, similarly to Schelling in his treatise on freedom, lets the soul determine itself before all time," etc. **Schelling** thus stands to **Kant** here in the fortunate position of **Amerigo** to **Columbus**: the foreign discovery is stamped with his name. But he has his cleverness to thank for it, not chance. For he begins, S. 465: "In general, it was **idealism** that first raised the doctrine of freedom to that domain," etc., and now the Kantian thoughts follow immediately. So instead of saying **Kant** here, as honesty demands, he shrewdly says **idealism**. Under this ambiguous expression, however, everyone will understand **Fichte's** and **Schelling's** first, Fichtean philosophy, not **Kant's** doctrine, since Kant protested against the name **idealism** for his philosophy (e.g., Prolegomena, S. 51, and S. 155, Rosenkr.) and even inserted a "Refutation of Idealism" into the second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason, S. 274. On the following page **Schelling** very shrewdly mentions the "Kantian concept" in a passing phrase, namely to placate those who already know that it is Kantian wealth that is being so pompously unpacked here as his own merchandise. But then, on S. 472, in defiance of all truth and justice, it is even said that **Kant** had not risen to that view in theory, etc., whereas from the two immortal passages of **Kant** that I recommended above for reading, anyone can see plainly that pre-

cisely this view originally belongs to him alone—a view that a thousand such minds as Messrs. **Fichte** and **Schelling** would never have been capable of grasping without him. Since I had to speak here of **Schelling's** treatise, I could not keep silent on this point, but have merely done my duty toward that great teacher of humanity who, alone beside **Goethe**, is the just pride of the German nation, by vindicating for him what indisputably belongs to him alone—the more so in a time to which **Goethe's** saying applies with perfect precision: “the tribe of boys is master of the course.”—Moreover, in the same treatise **Schelling** has made no more scruple of appropriating the thoughts, indeed the words, of **Jakob Böhme** without disclosing his source.

Apart from this paraphrase of Kantian thoughts, those “Inquiries into Freedom” contain nothing that could serve to give us new or thorough clarification of it. This announces itself right at the outset in the definition: freedom is said to be “a capacity for good and evil.” Such a definition may serve for the catechism, but in philosophy it says nothing and therefore gives us nothing to work with. For good and evil are far from being simple concepts (*notiones simplices*) that, clear in themselves, would need no explanation, fixing and grounding. In general, only a small part of that treatise deals with freedom; its main content is rather a detailed report about a God with whom the honorable author betrays intimate acquaintance, since he even describes this God's origin. It is only to be regretted that he does not say a single word about how he came by this acquaintance. The treatise opens with a web of sophisms whose shallowness anyone will recognize who does not let himself be intimidated by the boldness of the tone.

Since then, and as a result of this and similar productions, “intellectual intuition” and “absolute thinking” have taken the place of clear concepts and honest inquiry in German philosophy. Overawing, bewildering, mystifying, throwing sand in the reader's eyes by every sort of trick has become the method, and throughout, design rather than insight guides the exposition. Through all this, philosophy, if one still wishes to call it that, has had to sink lower and lower, until at last it reached the lowest stage of degradation in the ministerial creature **Hegel**. To stifle again the freedom of thought won by **Kant**, he now made phi-

losophy, the daughter of reason and future mother of truth, an instrument of state purposes, of obscurantism and Protestant Jesuitism. And to cover the disgrace and at the same time bring about the greatest possible stupefaction of minds, he drew over it the cloak of the hollowest verbiage and the most senseless gibberish ever heard, at least outside the madhouse.

Chapter IV, 7



In England and France, philosophy on the whole stands almost where **Locke** and **Condillac** left it. **Maine de Byran**, called by his editor, Mr. **Cousin**, “the first French metaphysician of my time,” is in his *Nouvelles considérations du physique et moral*, published in 1834, a fanatical adherent of *freedom of indifferent choice*, and takes it as something that goes entirely without saying. Several of the more recent German philosophical scribblers do no differently: *freedom of indifferent choice*, under the name of “moral freedom,” appears with them as a settled matter, just as if all the great men cited above had never existed. They declare freedom of the will to be given immediately in self-consciousness and thereby so unshakably established that all arguments against it can be nothing but sophisms. This lofty confidence springs merely from the fact that these good souls do not at all know what freedom of the will is and means, but in their innocence understand by it nothing other than the mastery of the will over the limbs of the body that we analyzed in our second section—a mastery that surely no reasonable person has ever doubted, and whose expression is precisely that “I can do what I will.” This, they suppose in all honesty, is freedom of the will, and they insist that it is beyond all doubt. It is precisely the state of innocence into which, after so many great predecessors, the Hegelian philosophy has set the German thinking mind back. To people of this stamp one might indeed call out:

“Are you not like the women, who forever
Come back to nothing but their first word,
When one has spoken reason for hours?”

In some of them, however, the theological motives indicated above may be silently at work.

And then again, the medical, zoological, historical, political and belletristic writers of our day—how eagerly they seize every opportunity to mention “the freedom of man,” “moral freedom”! They fancy themselves somebody for it. They do not, to be sure, venture an explanation of it; but if one were permitted to examine them, one would find that by it they think either nothing at all or else our good old honest, well-known *freedom of indifferent choice*, however grand the phrases in which they may dress it—a concept whose untenability will probably never be got across to the great mob, but of which scholars ought to take care not to speak with so much innocence. That is precisely why there are also some timid ones among them, highly amusing, who no longer dare to speak of freedom of the **will** but, to be refined about it, say “freedom of the **spirit**” instead and hope to slip through with that. What they think by it I am fortunately able to tell the reader who looks at me inquiringly: nothing, absolutely nothing—except that it is, in good German manner and art, an indecisive, indeed really meaningless expression, which affords their emptiness and cowardice a welcome hiding place from which to slip away. The word “spirit,” properly a figurative expression, everywhere designates the **intellectual** faculties, as opposed to the will; but these are by no means supposed to be free in their operation. They are to adapt, conform and submit themselves first to the rules of logic and then to the particular **object** of their knowing, so that they may apprehend purely—that is, **objectively**—and it may never be said: “*Will stands in place of reason.*” In general, this “spirit” that knocks about everywhere in present German literature is a thoroughly suspicious fellow, whom one should therefore ask for his passport wherever he is caught. Serving as a mask for poverty of thought joined with cowardice is his most frequent trade.

Incidentally, the word **Geist**, as is well known, is related to the word **gas**, which, derived from Arabic and alchemy, means vapor or air, just as spiritus, pneuma (“breath”) and animus are related to anemon (“winds”).

Such, then, is the state of things regarding our theme, in the philosophical and in the wider learned world, after all that the great minds cited have taught about it. This confirms once more that nature has not only at all times produced very few real thinkers, as rare exceptions, but that these few themselves have always existed only for very few. That is precisely why delusion and error continually hold sway.—

On a moral subject the testimony of the great poets also carries weight. They do not speak after systematic investigation, but human nature lies open to their penetrating vision, and so their statements strike the truth directly.—In **Shakespeare’s** *Measure for measure*, A. 2, Sc. 2, Isabella begs the regent Angelo for mercy for her brother, who is condemned to death:

Angelo. I will not do it.

Isab. But could you, if you would?

Ang. Look, what I *will* not, that I *cannot* do*).

*) **Angelo.** I will not do it.

Isabella. But could you do it, if you wanted to?

Angelo. Look, what I do not **will**, that I **cannot** do.

In *Twelfth night*, A. 1, we read:

Fate, show your force; we do not own ourselves.

What is decreed must be, and let it be so**).

***) Now, O Fate, you can show your power:

What is to be must come to pass, and no one is his own.

Walter Scott too, that great connoisseur and painter of the human heart and its most secret stirrings, has brought that deep-lying truth plainly to light in his *St. Ronans Well*, Vol. 3, chap. 6. He portrays a dying, repentant sinner who on her deathbed seeks to ease her anguished conscience by confessions, and in the midst of these he has her say:

“Go, and leave me to my fate. I am the most detestable wretch that ever lived—detestable to myself, worst of all, because even in my penitence there is a secret whisper telling me that, were I as I have been, I would again act over all the wickedness I have done, and much worse. Oh, for Heaven’s help to crush the wicked thought!” ***)

***) “Go, and leave me to my fate. I am the most wretched and abominable creature that ever lived—most abominable to myself. For even in the midst of my remorse something whispers to me secretly that, if I were again as I have been, I would commit again all the wickedness I have committed, and even worse besides. Oh, for Heaven’s help to stifle the worthless thought.”

A corroboration of this poetic portrayal is supplied by the following parallel fact, which at the same time confirms in the strongest way the doctrine of the constancy of character. In 1845 it passed from the French newspaper *La Presse* into the *Times* of July 2, 1845, from which I translate it. The heading reads: Military Execution at Oran. “On March 24, the Spaniard Aguilar, *alias* Gomez, had been sentenced to death. On the day before the execution he said, in conversation with his jailer: ‘I am not as guilty as I have been made out to be: I am accused of having committed 30 murders, whereas I have in fact committed only 26. From childhood on I thirsted for blood: when I was 7½ years old, I stabbed a child. I murdered a pregnant woman, and at a later time a Spanish officer, as a result of which I found myself obliged to flee from Spain. I fled to France, where I committed two crimes before I entered the Foreign Legion. Of all my crimes I repent most of the following: In 1841, at the head of my company, I captured a deputy commissary general, who was escorted by a sergeant, a corporal and 7 men; I had them all beheaded. The death of these people weighs heavily on me: I see them in my dreams, and tomorrow I shall see them again in the soldiers ordered to shoot me. **Nevertheless, if I were to regain my freedom, I would murder others still.**’”

The following passage in Goethe’s *Iphigenia* (A. 4, Sc. 2) also belongs here:

Arkas: For you have not heeded the counsel of loyalty.

Iphigenia: What I was able to do, I have gladly done.

Arkas: You may yet change your mind in time.

Iphigenia: **That, once and for all, does not lie in our power.**

A famous passage in Schiller's *Wallenstein* also expresses our fundamental truth:

"A person's deeds and thoughts, know this,

Are not like the sea's blindly driven waves.

The inner world, his microcosm, is

The deep shaft from which they eternally well up.

They are **necessary**, like the fruit of the tree;

Chance, in its juggling, cannot transform them.

Once I have examined the kernel of the person,

I also know his willing and his doing."

Chapter V, 1



V. Conclusion and Higher View.

I have gladly recalled here all those glorious predecessors, poets and philosophers alike, in the truth I defend. Still, it is not authorities but reasons that are the philosopher's weapon. I have therefore conducted my case with reasons alone, and yet I hope to have given it such evidence that I am now entitled to draw the inference *from impossibility to nonexistence*. Thereby the negative answer to the question posed by the Royal Society—grounded above, in the examination of self-consciousness, directly and factually, and therefore *a posteriori*—is now grounded indirectly and *a priori* as well: for what does not exist at all cannot have data in self-consciousness either, from which it could be proved.

Even if the truth defended here may be among those that run against the preconceived opinions of the shortsighted crowd, and may even give offense to the weak and ignorant, this has not been allowed to keep me from setting it out plainly and without reserve. I speak here not to the people but to an enlightened Academy, which did not pose its very timely question to fortify prejudice but to honor truth.—Moreover, the honest inquirer after truth, so long as the task is still to establish and authenticate a truth, will always look solely to its grounds and not to its consequences; the time for those will come once the truth itself stands firm. To examine the grounds alone, heedless of conse-

quences, and not to ask first whether a recognized truth agrees with the system of our other convictions or not—this is what **Kant** already recommends, and I cannot refrain from repeating his words here: “This confirms the maxim, already recognized and praised by others, of pursuing in every scientific inquiry one’s course undisturbed, with all possible exactness and candor, without turning aside for anything it might perhaps offend against outside its own field, but carrying it out by itself, as far as one can, truly and completely. Frequent observation has convinced me that when this business has been brought to its end, what had seemed to me very questionable midway, with regard to other doctrines outside it, finally agreed in an unexpected way perfectly with what had turned up of itself, without the least regard for those doctrines, without partiality or preference for them—provided I only left that misgiving out of sight for as long as I attended solely to my business until it was completed. Writers would spare themselves many errors, much wasted effort (because it was built on illusion), if they could only resolve to go to work with a little more candor.” (Critique of Practical Reason, S. 190 of the fourth edition, or S. 239 of Rosenkranz’s.)

Our metaphysical knowledge as a whole is surely still worlds away from having such certainty that we should reject any thoroughly proven truth merely because its consequences do not fit with it. On the contrary, every truth won and established is a conquered portion of the whole territory of the problems of knowledge, and a firm point at which to set the levers that will move other burdens—indeed, a point from which, in favorable cases, one may swing up all at once to a higher view of the whole than one has had before. For the interconnection of truths in every field of knowledge is so great that whoever has made himself entirely secure in the possession of a single one may at any rate hope to conquer the whole from there. As in a difficult algebraic problem a single positively given quantity is of inestimable value because it makes the solution possible, so in the most difficult of all human problems, which is metaphysics, the certain knowledge, proved *a priori* and *a posteriori*, of the strict necessity with which deeds follow from given character and given motives is such an inestimable datum, and starting from it alone one can arrive at the solution of the

whole problem. Therefore everything that cannot show firm scientific authentication must give way to such a well-grounded truth where it stands in its path, and not the truth to it. Nor may that truth ever consent to accommodations and restrictions in order to bring itself into harmony with unproven and perhaps mistaken assertions.

One more general remark may be allowed me here. A look back at our result prompts the reflection that, with regard to the two problems already identified in the previous section as the deepest of modern philosophy, though not clearly present to the ancients—namely, the problem of freedom of the will and that of the relation between the ideal and the real—the sound but crude understanding is not merely incompetent. It even has a decided natural bent toward error, and to bring it back from this a philosophy already far advanced is needed. For it is indeed natural to it, in matters of **knowing**, to attribute far too much to the **object**, which is why **Locke** and **Kant** were needed to show how very much of it springs from the subject. In matters of **willing**, by contrast, it has the opposite bent: to attribute far too little to the **object** and far too much to the **subject**. It lets willing proceed entirely from **the latter**, without duly taking into account the factor lying in the **object**, the motives, which actually determine the whole individual character of actions, while only what is general and essential in them, their basic moral character, proceeds from the **subject**. Such a perversity, natural to the understanding in speculative inquiries, need not surprise us, however, since it was originally destined solely for practical purposes and by no means for speculative ones.—

If, as a result of our account so far, we have found all freedom of human action wholly removed and that action recognized as throughout subject to the strictest necessity, we have thereby been led to the point from which we shall be able to grasp **true moral freedom**, which is of a higher kind.

Chapter V, 2



There is, namely, one more fact of consciousness, which I have so far set entirely aside in order not to disturb the course of the inquiry. This is the wholly distinct and certain feeling of **responsibility** for what we do, of **accountability** for our actions, resting on the unshakable certainty that we ourselves are **the doers of our** deeds. By virtue of this consciousness it never occurs to anyone—not even to someone fully convinced of the necessity, set out so far, with which our actions occur—to excuse a transgression by appeal to that necessity and to shift the guilt from himself onto the motives, since once they appeared the deed was unavoidable. For he sees very well that this necessity has a **subjective** condition, and that *objectively*, that is, under the existing circumstances and so under the influence of the very motives that determined him, a quite different action, even the exact opposite of his own, was entirely possible and could have happened, **if only he had been a different person**: it was on that alone that the matter turned. For him, because he is this person and no other, because he has such and such a character, no other action was indeed possible; but in itself, that is, *objectively*, it was possible. The **responsibility** of which he is conscious therefore falls, first and ostensibly, merely on the deed, but fundamentally on **his character**: for **this** he feels responsible. And for **this** the others too hold him responsible, since their judgment at once leaves the deed behind in order to fix the qualities of the doer: “he is a bad man, a villain”—or “he is a scoundrel”—or “he is a small, false, base soul”—so runs their

judgment, and their reproaches come back to his **character**. The deed, together with its motive, comes into consideration there merely as testimony to the doer's character, but counts as a sure symptom of it, by which he is irrevocably and forever fixed. Aristotle therefore says most truly: "We praise those who have acted; for deeds are signs of a settled disposition, since we would praise even someone who had not acted, if we believed him to be of that kind."—*Rhetorica*, I, 9. (*We celebrate those who have acted with praise; but works are signs of a habit, since we would praise even one who had not acted, if we believed him to be of such a kind.*) So it is not at the passing deed but at the enduring qualities of the doer, that is, at the character from which the deed came, that hatred, abhorrence and contempt are cast. Hence in all languages the epithets of moral badness, the terms of abuse that denote it, are predicates of the **person** rather than of actions. They are attached to the **character**: for it has to bear the guilt, of which it was merely convicted on the occasion of the deeds.

Where the **guilt** lies, the **responsibility** must lie as well; and since this is the sole datum that entitles us to infer moral freedom, the **freedom** too must lie in the same place, that is, in the **character** of the human being. This holds all the more since we have convinced ourselves sufficiently that freedom is not to be found immediately in individual actions, which, on the presupposition of the character, occur under strict necessity. The character, however, as was shown in the third section, is innate and unchangeable.

Freedom in this sense, then, the only one for which the data are at hand, we now wish to consider somewhat more closely, so that, having inferred it from a fact of consciousness and found its place, we may also comprehend it philosophically, as far as that may be possible.

In the third section it emerged that every action of a human being is the product of two factors: his character and the motive. This by no means signifies that the action is something intermediate, a compromise, as it were, between motive and character; rather it does full justice to both, in that, in its entire possibility, it rests on both at once, namely on the fact that the operative motive meets this character and that this character is determinable by such a motive. The character is the empirically known, persistent and unchangeable constitution of an

individual will. Since this character is just as necessary a factor in every action as the motive, this explains the feeling that our deeds proceed from ourselves, or that “I will” which accompanies all our actions and by virtue of which everyone must acknowledge them as **his** deeds, for which he therefore feels morally responsible. This, once again, is precisely that “I will, and always will only what I will” found above in the examination of self-consciousness, which misleads the crude understanding into stubbornly asserting an absolute freedom of doing and refraining, a *freedom of indifferent choice*. But it is nothing more than the consciousness of the second factor of the action, which by itself would be wholly incapable of producing the action, yet equally incapable, once the motive enters, of leaving it undone. Only by being set in activity in this way, however, does that factor make its own constitution known to the faculty of knowledge, which, directed essentially outward and not inward, learns even the constitution of its own will only empirically, from its actions. This closer and ever more intimate acquaintance is what is properly called **conscience**, which for just this reason also speaks **directly** only **after** the action; **before** it, at most **indirectly**, in that, by means of reflection and a backward look at similar cases on which it has already pronounced, it is taken into account in deliberation as something that will occur in the future.

Here is the place to recall the account, already mentioned in the previous section, which **Kant** gave of the relation between empirical and intelligible character, and thereby of the compatibility of freedom with necessity—an account that belongs among the most beautiful and profoundly conceived things that this great mind, indeed that human beings, have ever produced. I need only appeal to it, since it would be superfluous prolixity to repeat it here. But only from it can one comprehend, so far as human powers allow, how the strict necessity of our actions nevertheless coexists with that freedom to which the feeling of responsibility bears witness, and by virtue of which we are the doers of our deeds and these are morally attributable to us.—That relation of the empirical to the intelligible character set out by **Kant** rests entirely on what makes up the basic feature of his whole philosophy, namely the distinction between phenomenon and thing in itself. Just as for him the complete **empiri-**

cal reality of the world of experience coexists with its **transcendental ideality**, so does the strict **empirical necessity** of action coexist with its **transcendental freedom**. The empirical character, namely, like the whole human being as an object of experience, is a mere phenomenon, and therefore bound to the forms of all phenomena—time, space and causality—and subject to their laws. By contrast, the condition and foundation of this whole phenomenon, which as thing in itself is independent of these forms and therefore subject to no difference of time, and so persisting and unchangeable, is his **intelligible character**, that is, his will as thing in itself, to which, in this capacity, absolute freedom does indeed belong, that is, independence of the law of causality (as a mere form of phenomena). This freedom, however, is a **transcendental** one, that is, one that does not emerge in the phenomenon but exists only insofar as we abstract from the phenomenon and all its forms in order to arrive at what, outside all time, is to be thought as the inner essence of the human being in himself. By virtue of this freedom all the deeds of a human being are his own work, however necessarily they proceed from the empirical character when it meets the motives; for this empirical character is merely the phenomenon of the intelligible one in our **faculty of knowledge**, bound to time, space and causality—that is, it is the manner in which the essence in itself of our own self presents itself to that faculty. Accordingly, the **will** is indeed free, but only in itself and outside the phenomenon. In the phenomenon it already presents itself with a determinate character, to which all its deeds must conform, and they must therefore, when more closely determined by the motives that have been added, necessarily turn out thus and not otherwise.

Chapter V, 3



This path leads, as is easily foreseen, to the conclusion that we must no longer seek the work of our **freedom**, as the common view does, in our individual actions, but in the whole being and essence (*existence and essence*) of the human being himself. This must be thought of as his free deed, which presents itself to the faculty of knowledge bound to time, space and causality alone as a multiplicity and diversity of actions. Precisely because of the original unity of what presents itself in them, however, those actions must all bear exactly the same character, and they therefore appear strictly necessitated by the motives of the moment, by which they are called forth and determined in detail. Thus for the world of experience the principle that *action follows being* stands firm without exception. Every thing acts in accordance with its constitution, and its acting, which follows upon causes, makes that constitution known. Every human being acts according to what he is, and the action, accordingly necessary each time, is determined in the individual case solely by the motives. **Freedom**, which therefore cannot be found in *action*, **must lie in being**. It has been a fundamental error of all ages, a hysteron proteron—the later put before the earlier—to ascribe necessity to *being* and freedom to *action*. The reverse is true: **freedom lies in being alone**; but from it and the motives *action* follows with necessity, and **from what we do we recognize what we are**. On this, and not on the supposed *freedom of indifferent choice*, rest the consciousness of responsibility and the moral tendency of life. Everything depends on what someone **is**: what

he **does** will result from it of itself, as a necessary corollary. The consciousness of acting on our own authority and as the original source, which undeniably accompanies all our deeds despite their dependence on motives, and by virtue of which they are **our** deeds, therefore does not deceive. But its true content reaches further than the deeds and begins higher up, since our being and essence itself, from which all deeds necessarily proceed (on the occasion of motives), is in truth comprised in it. In this sense one may compare that consciousness of acting on our own authority and as the original source, like the consciousness of responsibility that accompanies our acting, to a pointer that indicates a more distant object than the nearer one lying in the same direction at which it seems to point.

In a word: a human being always does only what he wills, and yet does it necessarily. But this is because he already **is** what he wills: for from what he **is**, everything he does at any time follows necessarily. If one considers his doing *objectively*, that is, from outside, one recognizes apodictically that, like the working of every natural being, it must be subject to the law of causality in all its strictness; *subjectively*, by contrast, everyone feels that he always does only what he **wills**. But this says merely that his working is the pure expression of his own very essence. Every natural being, even the lowest, would therefore feel the same, if it could feel.

Freedom is thus not abolished by my account but merely moved out of the domain of individual actions, where it demonstrably cannot be found, up into a higher region, less easily accessible to our knowledge: that is, it is transcendental. And this is also the sense in which I should like that saying of Malebranche, “*freedom is a mystery*,” to be understood, under whose aegis the present treatise has tried to solve the task set by the Royal Society.

Appendix, 1



Appendix, Supplementing the First Section.

Following the division of freedom into physical, intellectual and moral that I laid down at the very outset, and now that the first and the last have been treated, I still have to discuss the second. This I shall do only for the sake of completeness, and therefore briefly.

The intellect, or faculty of cognition, is the **medium of motives**: it is through this, that is, that they act upon the will, which is the true core of the human being. Only so far as this medium of motives is in a normal condition, performs its functions properly, and so presents the motives to the will for its choice unfalsified, just as they lie before it in the real external world, can the will decide in accordance with its nature, that is, with the person's individual character, and thus express itself **unhindered**, according to its own essential being. Then the person is **intellectually free**; that is, his actions are the pure result of his will's reaction to motives that lie before him in the external world just as they lie before everyone else. Accordingly they are then imputable to him, morally and legally as well.

This intellectual freedom is **abolished** either because the medium of motives, the faculty of cognition, is disordered, whether lastingly or only for a time, or because external circumstances, in a particular case, falsify the apprehension of the motives. The former is the case in madness, delirium, paroxysm and sleep-

drunkenness; the latter in a decisive and blameless error, for example when someone pours out poison instead of medicine, or takes a servant coming in at night for a robber and shoots him, and the like. For in both cases the motives are falsified, so that the will cannot decide as it would under the circumstances at hand if the intellect had delivered them to it correctly. Crimes committed under such circumstances are therefore not punishable by law either. For the laws proceed from the correct presupposition that the will is not morally free—in which case it could not be **steered**—but is subject to compulsion by motives. Accordingly they seek to set against any possible motives to crime stronger counter-motives, in the punishments they threaten, and a criminal code is nothing other than a register of counter-motives to criminal acts. But if it turns out that the intellect, through which these counter-motives were to act, was unable to take them in and hold them before the will, then their effect was impossible: they did not exist for it. It is as if one found that one of the threads meant to set a machine in motion had snapped. Guilt in such a case therefore passes from the will to the intellect; but the intellect is subject to no punishment, and the laws, like morality, have to do with the will alone. The will alone is the true human being: the intellect is merely its organ, its feelers extended outward, that is, the medium through which motives act upon it.

Just as little are such deeds **morally** imputable. For they are no trait of the person's character; he either did something other than what he thought he was doing, or was incapable of thinking of what should have restrained him, that is, of admitting the counter-motives. It is as when a substance to be examined chemically is exposed to the action of several reagents, so that one may see for which it has the strongest affinity: if, after the experiment, it turns out that through some accidental obstacle one of the reagents could not act at all, the experiment is invalid.

The intellectual freedom that we have here considered as wholly abolished can also be merely **diminished**, or partially abolished. This happens especially through emotion and through intoxication. **Emotion** is the sudden, violent excitation of the will by a representation that bursts in from outside and becomes a motive, one of such vividness that it darkens all the others that could

work against it as counter-motives and does not let them come distinctly into consciousness. These latter are mostly of an abstract nature, mere thoughts, whereas the former is something perceptual, something present; so they do not, as it were, get their shot, and thus do not get what in English is called *fair play*: the deed is already done before they could counteract. It is as if, in a duel, one man fired before the word of command. Here too, then, both legal and moral responsibility is abolished, more or less according to the circumstances, but always only in part. In England a murder committed in complete rashness and without the slightest reflection, in the most violent and suddenly aroused anger, is called *manslaughter* and is punished lightly, or sometimes not at all.—

Intoxication is a state that predisposes to emotions, since it heightens the vividness of perceptual representation, weakens thinking *in the abstract*, and in addition increases the energy of the will. In place of responsibility for the deeds, responsibility for the intoxication itself steps in here; hence it is not excused in law, although intellectual freedom is here partly abolished.

Of this intellectual freedom—*the voluntary and the involuntary in respect of thought*—**Aristotle** already speaks, though very briefly and inadequately, in the *Ethic. Eudem.*, II, c. 7 et 9, and somewhat more fully in the *Ethic. Nicom.*, III, c. 2.—It is this freedom that is meant when *forensic medicine* and criminal justice ask whether a criminal was in a state of freedom and was therefore accountable. In general, then, all those crimes are to be regarded as committed in the absence of intellectual freedom in which the person either did not know what he was doing, or was utterly incapable of considering what should have restrained him, namely the consequences of the deed. In such cases, accordingly, he is not to be punished.

Those, by contrast, who think that no criminal ought to be punished, simply because **moral** freedom does not exist and all the actions of a given person consequently cannot fail to occur, proceed from a false view of punishment: that it is a visitation upon crimes for their own sake, a requiting of evil with evil on moral grounds. Such a thing, though Kant taught it, would be absurd, pointless and wholly unwarranted. For how could one human being be entitled to set himself up as the absolute judge of another in moral respects, and as such to

torment him for his sins! Rather, the law, that is, the threat of punishment, has the purpose of being the counter-motive to crimes not yet committed. If in a particular case it fails of this effect, it must be carried out, because otherwise it would fail of it in all future cases too. The criminal for his part suffers the punishment in this case actually in consequence of his moral constitution, which, together with the circumstances that were the motives, and his intellect, which held out to him the hope of escaping punishment, inevitably brought the deed about. He could be wronged in this only if his moral character were not his own work, his intelligible deed, but the work of another. The same relation of deed to consequence holds when the consequences of his vicious doing come about not by human laws but by natural ones, for example when dissolute excesses bring on terrible diseases, or when, in attempting a burglary, he comes to grief through some accident—for example, in the pigsty he breaks into at night to carry off its usual occupant, he finds in its place the bear, whose keeper put up at this inn that evening, and who comes toward him with open arms.