



On the Freedom of the Will

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

Plain English Translation

MOUSEIA



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Translated by Michael Berardi

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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 in Trondheim on January 26, 1839. **Motto:** *Freedom is a mystery.*

The question set by the Royal Society is:

Can human freedom of the will be proved from self-consciousness?

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

I. Definitions.

This question is important, serious, and difficult. In essence, it is also one of the central problems of all medieval and modern philosophy. Great precision is therefore certainly called for, along with an analysis of the main concepts in the question.

¹ **What does freedom mean?**

On close examination, this is a **negative** concept. By it we mean only the absence of anything that obstructs or restrains. Whatever does the obstructing, however, must be something positive, since it exerts a force. Depending on what kind of obstruction is possible, the concept has three very different forms: physical, intellectual, and moral freedom.

a) **Physical freedom** is the absence of **material** obstacles of any kind. So we speak of an open sky, a clear view, open air, an open field, a free space, free heat (heat that is not chemically bound), free electricity, and the free flow of a river once mountains or locks no longer hold it back, and so on. Even free lodging, free meals, a free press, and a postage-free letter mean the absence of burdensome conditions that usually come with such things and obstruct our enjoyment of them. Most often, though, we think of freedom as a quality of animals. Their distinguishing feature is that their movements come from **their will** and are voluntary. We therefore call these movements **free** when no material obstacle makes them impossible. These obstacles can take very different forms, but what they obstruct is always the will. For simplicity, then, we prefer to approach the concept from its positive side. We use it to mean anything that moves solely through its own will, or acts solely from its own will. This reversal changes nothing essential in the concept. Accordingly, in this physical sense of freedom, animals and human beings are called **free** when neither bonds, imprisonment, nor paralysis—in short, no **physical, material** obstacle—hinder their actions, and these actions instead follow their **will**.

This **physical meaning** of freedom, especially as a quality of animals, is its original, direct, and therefore most common meaning. For that very reason, it is not open to doubt or dispute: experience can always confirm its reality. As soon as an animal acts only from its own will, it is **free** in this sense. No account is taken here of what might influence its will itself. In its original, direct, and therefore everyday meaning, freedom concerns only **the ability to act**—that is, the absence of **physical** obstacles to action. So we say: the bird in the air is free, and so is the wild animal in the forest; human beings are free by nature; only the free person is happy. We also call a people free. By this we mean that it is governed only by laws, and has made those laws itself. In that case it always follows only its own will. Political freedom therefore belongs under physical freedom.

But as soon as we leave this **physical** freedom behind and consider its two other forms, we are no longer dealing with the everyday meaning of the concept. We are dealing with a **philosophical** meaning, which, as everyone knows, opens the

way to many difficulties. It divides into two entirely different forms: intellectual and moral freedom.

b) **Intellectual freedom**, what Aristotle calls *the voluntary and involuntary in thought*, is considered here only to make the classification complete. I will therefore take the liberty of postponing its discussion until the very end of this essay. By then, the concepts it requires will already have been explained in the preceding discussion, so it can be dealt with briefly. In the classification, however, it had to take its place beside physical freedom, to which it is most closely related.

c) I will therefore turn straight to the third kind, **moral freedom**. This is the *freedom of choice* that the Royal Society is asking about.

Chapter I, 2



This concept connects with physical freedom in a way that also explains why it must have developed much later. As I have said, physical freedom concerns only material obstacles. As soon as these are absent, that freedom is present. But people noticed that in some cases a person could face no material obstacle and still be kept by motives alone—threats, promises, dangers, and the like—from acting as he would otherwise certainly have wanted. So they asked whether such a person had still been free. Could a strong opposing motive really obstruct an action that followed his actual will, and make it impossible, just as a physical obstacle could? Common sense could answer this without much difficulty. A motive can never work in the same way as a physical obstacle. A physical obstacle can easily exceed human bodily strength altogether and without qualification. A motive, by contrast, can never be irresistible in itself or have unconditional power. It can always possibly be outweighed by a **stronger opposing motive**, provided such a motive exists and can determine the particular person's will in that case. We often see even what is usually the strongest motive of all, preserving one's life, outweighed by other motives. Examples include suicide and sacrificing one's life for others, for opinions, or for all sorts of interests. Conversely, people have sometimes endured every degree of the most carefully devised torture on the rack simply because they thought they would otherwise lose their lives. This showed that motives do not exert a purely objective and absolute compulsion. Still, they might exert a subjective and rela-

tive one—one that applies to the particular person concerned. The result would be the same. So the question remained: is the will itself free?—The concept of freedom, previously understood only in relation to **being able to act**, had now been applied to **willing**. The problem had arisen of whether willing itself was **free**. But a closer look shows that the original, purely experience-based, everyday concept of freedom cannot be connected with **willing** in this way. 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 agrees with itself. Of course it does, but saying so tells us nothing. According to this experience-based concept, “I am free when I can **do** what I **will**.” Here the words “what I will” already settle the question of freedom. But now that we are asking whether **willing** itself is free, the question would accordingly become: “Can you also **will** what you will?” This amounts to making willing depend on another act of willing behind it. Suppose the answer were yes. A second question would arise at once: “Can you also will what you will to will?” This would push the question back endlessly. We would always be thinking of one act of willing as dependent on an earlier or deeper one. We would try in vain to reach, by this route, a final act of willing that we would have to think of and accept as dependent on nothing at all. But if we were willing to assume such an act, we could just as well choose the first as any arbitrarily chosen last one. That would reduce the question to the very simple one: “Can you will?” Whether merely answering yes to this question settles the freedom of willing is precisely what we wanted to know. It remains unsettled. So the original, experience-based concept of freedom, drawn from action, resists a direct connection with the concept of will. To apply freedom to the will nonetheless, people therefore had to change the concept by making it more abstract. They did this by taking **freedom** to mean, in general, only the absence of all **necessity**. Here the concept keeps the **negative** character I assigned to it at the outset. So we must first discuss **necessity**, the **positive** concept that gives this **negative** one its meaning.

We ask, then: what does **necessary** mean? The usual explanation is: “What is necessary is something whose opposite is impossible, or something that cannot be otherwise.” This merely explains a word. It restates the concept without

increasing our understanding. Instead, I offer this definition of the thing itself: **what is necessary is what follows from a given sufficient ground**. Like every correct definition, this statement can also be reversed. That sufficient ground may be logical, mathematical, or physical, in which last case it is called a cause. The **necessity** will accordingly be logical (as with a conclusion when the premises are given), mathematical (for example, the equality of a triangle's sides when its angles are equal), or physical and real (as with the occurrence of an effect as soon as its cause is present). But in every case the consequence follows with equally strict necessity once the ground is given. We recognize something as necessary only insofar as we understand it as following from a given ground. Conversely, as soon as we recognize something as following from a sufficient ground, we see that it is necessary. For all grounds compel their consequences. This definition of the thing itself is so fitting and complete that necessity and consequence from a given sufficient ground are interchangeable concepts: either can always be put in place of the other*).—The absence of necessity would therefore be the same as the absence of a determining sufficient ground. Yet we think of **the contingent** as the opposite of **the necessary**. There is no contradiction here. Anything contingent is contingent only in **relative** terms. In the real world, the only place where anything contingent can be found, every event is **necessary** in relation to its cause. But it is **contingent** in relation to everything else it happens to meet in space and time. Now, since freedom is defined by the absence of necessity, what is free would have to depend on no cause whatsoever. It would therefore have to be defined as the **absolutely contingent**. This is a highly problematic concept. I cannot guarantee that it can even be thought, yet strangely it coincides with the concept of **freedom**. In any case, **what is free** remains what is necessary in no respect, which means what depends on no ground. Applied to the human will, this concept would mean that an individual will is not determined in its expressions (acts of will) by causes, or by sufficient grounds of any kind. Otherwise its acts would be necessary rather than free, since whatever follows from a given ground, of whatever kind, is always **necessary**. This is the basis of **Kant's** definition: freedom is the ability to begin a series of changes **by itself**. Reduced to its true meaning, "by itself"

means “without a preceding cause.” But that is the same as “without necessity.” So although this definition makes freedom look like a positive concept, a closer look brings out its negative nature again.—A free will, then, would be a will not determined by grounds. Anything that determines something else must be a ground, and in the case of real things, a real ground—that is, a cause. A free will would therefore be determined by nothing at all. Its individual expressions (acts of will) would come entirely and originally from itself, without being made necessary by preceding conditions, and therefore without being determined by anything according to a rule. At this point we can no longer think clearly. The principle of sufficient reason, in all its meanings, is the essential form of our entire capacity for knowledge, yet here we are supposed to give it up. Still, there is a *technical term* for this concept too: *freedom of choice between alternatives with nothing determining the choice*. This, incidentally, is the only clear, fixed, and definite concept of what is called freedom of the will. We cannot depart from it without getting caught in wavering, foggy explanations that conceal a hesitant refusal to take a definite position—as when people speak of grounds that do not necessarily bring about their consequences. Every consequence of a ground is necessary, and every necessity is a consequence of a ground. The immediate consequence of assuming such *freedom of choice*, and one that characterizes the concept itself, must therefore be established as its distinguishing feature: a human individual who has this freedom can equally well perform two diametrically opposed actions under given external circumstances that are completely specified in every particular.

*) A discussion of the concept of necessity can be found 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**. This latter is our ability to know other things. Even before those other things appear in it, this ability contains certain forms governing how they appear. These are therefore conditions that make their objective existence possible—that is, their existence as objects for us. As is well known, these forms include time, space, and causality. Although these forms of knowledge lie within us, they do so only to let us become conscious of **other things** as such, and they relate entirely to those things. So even though these forms lie within us, we must not regard them as belonging to **self-consciousness**. Rather, they make **consciousness of other things**—that is, objective knowledge—possible. Nor will I let the two meanings—*consciousness and conscience*—of the word used in the question lead me to include moral impulses in self-consciousness. These human impulses are known as conscience, or sometimes practical reason, with the categorical imperatives **Kant** attributes to it. I exclude them partly because they arise only through experience and reflection, and thus through consciousness of other things. I also exclude them because no sharp and indisputable boundary has yet been drawn between what originally belongs to human nature itself in these impulses and what moral and religious education adds. Besides, the Royal Society can hardly intend to include conscience in self-

consciousness in order to shift the question onto moral ground. That would merely repeat **Kant's** moral proof—or rather, postulate—of freedom from the moral law of which we are conscious *independently of experience*, through the inference “You can, because you ought.”

What I have said shows that by far the greater part of our consciousness as a whole is not **self-consciousness**. It is **consciousness of other things**, or our ability to know other things. This ability directs all its powers outward. It is the stage on which the real external world appears (indeed, from a deeper standpoint of inquiry, the condition of that world). It first grasps that world through perception. It then works what it has gained in this way into concepts, as though chewing it over again. **Thinking** consists in combining these concepts endlessly with the help of words.—So **self-consciousness** would be only what remains after we subtract this by far greatest part of our consciousness as a whole. We can already see that its contents cannot be very rich. So if it really does contain the data we are looking for to prove freedom of the will, we may hope not to miss them. An **inner sense***) has also been proposed as the organ of self-consciousness. But this should be understood more figuratively than literally, since self-consciousness is immediate. However that may be, our next question is: what does self-consciousness contain? Or: how does a human being 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. Of course, this does not mean only definite acts of will that immediately become deeds, or explicit decisions together with the actions that follow from them. Anyone who can recognize what is essential despite differences in degree and kind will also readily count all desiring, striving, wishing, wanting, longing, hoping, loving, rejoicing, celebrating, and the like as expressions of willing. The same goes for not willing or resisting: all loathing, fleeing, fearing, anger, hatred, grieving, and suffering pain—in short, all emotions and passions. These emotions and passions are simply weaker or stronger movements of one's own will, sometimes violent and stormy, sometimes quiet. This will may be held back or set loose, satisfied or unsatisfied. In all their varied forms, these movements concern getting or failing

to get what we will, and enduring or overcoming what we loathe. They are therefore definite states of the same will that is active in decisions and actions*). Even what we call feelings of pleasure and displeasure belong here. They come in a great variety of degrees and kinds, but they can always be traced back to states of desire or loathing. That is, they can be traced back to the will itself becoming conscious of itself as satisfied or unsatisfied, held back or set loose. This extends even to pleasant or painful bodily sensations and the countless sensations between those two extremes. The essential feature of all these states is that they enter self-consciousness immediately as something that agrees with the will or goes against it. Indeed, on close examination, we are immediately conscious even of our own body only as the organ through which the will acts outwardly and as the seat of our sensitivity to pleasant or painful sensations. But as I have just said, these sensations themselves come down to entirely immediate states of the will that either agree with it or go against it. Whether or not we include these mere feelings of pleasure or displeasure, we find in any case that all these movements of the will relate throughout to what we perceive and know in the external world. This relationship is acknowledged on all sides. This changing willing and not willing, with its constant ebb and flow, is the sole object of self-consciousness—or, if one prefers, of the inner sense. But as I have said, what we perceive and know in the external world no longer lies within immediate **self-consciousness**. As soon as we touch on the external world, we therefore reach the boundary where self-consciousness meets **consciousness of other things**. The objects perceived in that world are the material and the occasion for all these movements and acts of the will. This must not be taken as *begging the question*. No one can deny that our willing always has external objects that it aims at and revolves around, and that these objects, as motives, at least give rise to it. Otherwise we would be left with a will completely cut off from the external world and locked inside the dark interior of self-consciousness. For now, the only thing still in question is the necessity with which those things in the external world determine acts of will.

*) 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 supposed “faculty of feeling” fail to see it. In *De civit. Dei*, Lib. XIV, c. 6, he speaks of the *emotions of the mind*, which in the preceding book he has placed under four categories: *desire, fear, joy, and sadness*. He says: “*For the will is present in them all; indeed, they are all nothing other than acts of will. For what are desire and joy but the will agreeing with the things we want? And what are fear and sadness but the will disagreeing with the things we do not want?*”

So we find self-consciousness very much occupied with the **will**—in fact, exclusively so. Our concern is whether, in this its sole subject matter, it finds data that establish the **freedom** of that very will in the sense explained above, the only clear and definite sense of the word. We will now head straight toward this question. Up to this point we have approached it only by tacking back and forth, but we have already come noticeably closer.

Chapter II, 1



II. The will as it appears to self-consciousness.

When someone **wills**, they will something. An act of will always aims at an object. We can think of it only in relation to such an object. What does it mean, then, to will something? It means this: an act of will is itself, at first, only an object of self-consciousness. But it arises in response to something that belongs to our consciousness of **other things**. That something is an object of our faculty of knowledge. In this connection we call it a **motive**. It also provides the act of will with its subject matter. The act aims at it, meaning that it seeks some change in it and so reacts to it. This **reaction** makes up the act's whole nature. It is already clear from this that the act could not occur without that object. It would lack both an occasion and something to act on. But here is the question. Once this object is present to the faculty of knowledge, **must** the act of will occur? Or could it fail to occur, with either no act of will arising or a completely different, perhaps even opposite one? In other words, could that reaction fail to happen? Or could it be different, or even opposite, under exactly the same circumstances? In short: does the motive necessarily produce the act of will? Or, when the motive enters consciousness, does the will retain complete freedom to will or not to will? Here we use the concept of freedom in the abstract sense discussed above and shown to be the only one applicable here: simply the absence of necessity. This defines our problem. We must look for the facts needed to solve it in immediate **self-consciousness**. To do this, we will

examine its testimony closely. We will not cut the knot with a sweeping decision, as **Descartes** did. He simply asserted: *"But we are so conscious of the freedom and indifference within us that there is nothing we grasp more clearly and completely."* (*Princ. phil.*, I, § 41.) **Leibniz** already pointed out that this assertion is untenable (*Theod.*, I, § 50, et III, § 292). Yet on this point he himself was only a reed swaying in the wind. After making the most contradictory statements, he finally reached the conclusion that motives incline the will but do not necessitate it. He says: *"All actions are determined and never indifferent, because there is always a reason that inclines, but does not necessitate, things to happen this way rather than another."* (*Leibniz, De libertate: Opera*, ed. Erdmann, p. 669.) This leads me to point out that no such middle course between the alternatives stated above can hold. We cannot adopt a certain popular half-measure and say that motives determine the will only to some extent: that it feels their influence, but only up to a certain point, and can then escape it. Once we grant a given force causal power, and so recognize that it has an effect, any resistance only calls for an increase in that force in proportion to the resistance. It will then 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 can this self-consciousness tell us about that abstract question? Does the concept of **necessity** apply to the occurrence of an act of will once a motive is given—that is, presented to the intellect—or does it not? Can the act fail to occur in that case, or can it not? We would be badly mistaken to expect this self-consciousness to give us thorough, far-reaching answers about causality in general, motivation in particular, or the necessity either might involve. Self-consciousness, as it exists in everyone, is much too simple and limited to have a say in such matters. These concepts come instead from pure understanding, which is directed outward. They can be discussed only before the tribunal of reflective reason. Natural, simple, indeed naive self-consciousness cannot even understand the question, much less answer it. Each person can listen inwardly to its testimony about acts of will. Stripped of everything foreign and inessential, and reduced to its bare content, that testimony

would run something like this: “I can will. And when I will an action, the movable parts 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.**” Immediate self-consciousness says nothing beyond this, however we turn its statement around or frame the question. Its testimony always concerns our **ability to act according to our will**. But this is the empirical, original, everyday concept of freedom set out at the very beginning. In that sense, **free** means “**in accordance with the will.**” Self-consciousness will affirm this freedom without reservation. But it is not the freedom we are asking about. Self-consciousness affirms freedom of **action**—on the assumption that **we will**. Our question concerns freedom of **willing**. We are investigating the relation between willing itself and the motive. The statement “I can do what I will” says nothing about this. Self-consciousness does indeed tell us that our actions, meaning our bodily actions, depend on our will. But that is quite different from our acts of will being independent of external circumstances. Such independence would constitute freedom of the will. Self-consciousness can tell us nothing about it because it lies outside its sphere. It concerns the causal relation of the external world, given to us in our consciousness of other things, to our decisions. Self-consciousness cannot judge the relation between something entirely outside its range and something within it. No faculty of knowledge can establish a relation if one of its terms cannot be given to it in any way. Clearly, the **objects** of willing, which determine the act of will, lie outside the bounds of **self-consciousness**. They belong to our consciousness **of other things**. Only the act of will itself lies within self-consciousness. And our question concerns the causal relation of those objects to this act. Self-consciousness deals only with the act of will and its absolute control over the parts of the body. That control is what is really meant by “what I will.” In fact, only the exercise of this control—**the deed**—marks it as an act of will even for self-consciousness. While it is still taking shape, it is called a **wish**. Once complete, it is called a **decision**. But even self-consciousness has proof that it is a decision only when the **deed** occurs. Until then it can change. Here we have already reached the main source of an illusory appearance that certainly cannot be denied. It leads the unreflective person—someone with no philosophical train-

ing—to think that opposite acts of will are possible for them in a given case. They insist that their self-consciousness tells them so. They are confusing wishing with willing. They can **wish** for opposite things *), but they can **will** only **one** of them. Even self-consciousness learns which one only from the **deed**. For that very reason, self-consciousness can tell us nothing about the law-governed necessity through which one of two opposite wishes, rather than the other, becomes an act of will and a deed. It learns the result entirely *after the event*, not *in advance*. Opposite wishes, with their motives, rise and fall before it, alternately and repeatedly. Of each it says that it will become a deed if it becomes an act of will. This last, purely **subjective** possibility does exist for each wish. It is precisely what “I can do what I will” means. But this **subjective** possibility is entirely conditional. It says only: “If I will this, I can do it.” It does not include the determining factor needed for willing. Self-consciousness contains only willing, not the grounds that determine it. Those grounds lie in our consciousness of other things, that is, in our faculty of knowledge. What decides the matter, by contrast, is **objective** possibility. But that lies outside self-consciousness, in the world of objects. Both the motive and the human being considered as an object belong to that world. Objective possibility is therefore foreign to self-consciousness and belongs to our consciousness of other things. That **subjective** possibility is like a stone’s capacity to give off sparks. This capacity is conditional on the steel, which carries the **objective** possibility. I will return to this from the other side in the next section. There we will no longer consider the will from within, as we do here, but from outside. We will thus investigate the **objective** possibility of an act of will. Once the matter has been lit up from these two different sides, it will become completely clear. Examples will also illustrate it.

*) See “Parerga”, Teil 2, § 327.

Chapter II, 2



The feeling within self-consciousness, “I can do what I will,” is always with us. But it says only this: our decisions, or settled acts of will, always pass straight into the world of perception, even though they arise in the dark depths within us. Our body belongs to that world like everything else. This consciousness forms the bridge between the inner and outer worlds. Without it, a bottomless chasm would keep them apart. The outer world would contain only perceptions as objects, independent of us in every sense. The inner world would contain only acts of will that we felt but that had no effect. If we questioned someone with no philosophical preconceptions, they would express this immediate consciousness roughly as follows. It is the consciousness so often mistaken for consciousness of a supposed freedom of the will: “I can do what I will. If I will to go left, I go left. If I will to go right, I go right. It depends entirely on my will alone. So I am free.” This statement is certainly completely true and correct. But it already presupposes the will. It assumes that the will has already decided. So it can establish nothing about the will’s own freedom. It says nothing at all about whether the occurrence of the act of will itself is dependent or independent. It concerns only the **consequences** of that act once it occurs. More precisely, it concerns the act’s inevitable appearance as a bodily action. But the consciousness behind that statement is the sole reason why the unreflective person considers freedom of the will so immediately certain. Such a person lacks philosophical training, though they may be a great scholar in other fields. They

declare this freedom to be an unquestionable truth. They cannot really believe that philosophers seriously doubt it. In their heart they think all this talk is just a fencing exercise in academic argument, and basically a joke. The certainty supplied by that consciousness is indeed important, and they always have it readily at hand. Besides, a human being is primarily and essentially a practical being, not a theoretical one. We are far more clearly conscious of the **active** side of our acts of will—their effectiveness—than of the **passive** side—their dependence. For these reasons it is hard to make someone without philosophical training grasp the real meaning of our problem. It is hard to get them to understand that we are now asking not about the **consequences** of their willing on each occasion, but about its **grounds**. Their **actions** certainly depend on their **willing** alone. But we now want to know what **that willing itself** depends on. Does it depend on nothing at all, or on something? They can certainly do one thing if they will it, and equally do the other if they will it. But they must now consider whether they are also capable of **willing** either one. To make this clear, suppose we ask: “Can you really follow either of two opposite wishes that have arisen within you? For example, if you must choose between two things you could own, and cannot have both, can you prefer either one just as well as the other?” They will say: “Perhaps I may find it hard to choose. But whether I will to choose one or the other will always depend entirely on me alone, and on no other power. I have complete freedom to choose whichever I will. And in doing so I will always follow only my own will.” If we then ask, “But what does your willing itself depend on?” they answer from self-consciousness: “On nothing but me! I can will what I will. What I will is what I will.” They say this last part without intending a tautology. Nor, even at the deepest level of their consciousness, are they appealing to the principle of identity, which alone makes it true. Instead, pressed to the limit here, they speak of willing their own willing. That is like speaking of an I belonging to their I. They have been driven back to the core of their self-consciousness. There they find that their I and their will cannot be distinguished, but nothing remains with which to judge either. Take that choice, with their person and the objects of choice assumed as given. Could **their willing** one thing rather than the other possibly turn out any dif-

ferently from the way it finally does? Or do those given facts determine it as necessarily as the fact that a triangle's largest side lies opposite its largest angle? This question lies so far beyond natural self-consciousness that it cannot even be brought to understand it. Still less does it carry the answer within itself, ready-made or even as an undeveloped seed, needing only to state it without reflection. As explained, the unreflective person without philosophical training will keep trying to escape the perplexity that the question must cause if truly understood. As noted above, they take refuge behind the immediate certainty: "I can do what I will, and I will what I will." They will try this again and again, countless times. It will be hard to make them stop and face the real question, which they always try to slip away from. We should not blame them. The question really is deeply troubling. Its probing hand reaches into the innermost nature of a human being. It asks whether a person, like everything else in the world, is a being whose own constitution fixes what they are once and for all. Do they, like every other being in nature, have definite, lasting properties? Do their reactions to external occasions necessarily follow from those properties, so that their reactions have a character unchangeable from this side? And does this leave whatever may be changeable in those reactions entirely subject to determination by external occasions? Or does the human being alone form an exception to all of nature? Suppose we finally manage to make this person stop and face that troubling question. Suppose we make it clear that we are investigating the origin of their acts of will themselves: whether those acts arise according to some rule or with no rule at all. We will then discover that immediate self-consciousness has no information about this. The unreflective person now abandons it themselves. They reveal their bewilderment by thinking things over and trying all sorts of explanations. They try to ground these explanations sometimes in experience of themselves and others, sometimes in general rules of the understanding. But their uncertain, shifting explanations show clearly enough that immediate self-consciousness gives no answer to the question properly understood. Earlier, it had an answer ready at once to the question misunderstood. The ultimate reason is that a person's will is their actual self, the true core of their being. It therefore forms the basis of their consciousness, as some-

thing simply given and present, beyond which they cannot go. For they themselves are as they will, and will as they are. So asking whether they could will differently from the way they do means asking whether they could be someone other than themselves. And they do not know that. For just this reason, a philosopher, who differs from them only in training, must also look elsewhere to reach clarity in this difficult matter. They must turn to their understanding, which supplies knowledge *independent of experience*; to reason, which reflects on that knowledge; and to experience, which presents their own and others' actions for interpreting and checking this knowledge supplied by the understanding. These form the final and only competent authority. Its decision will not be as easy, immediate, and simple as that of self-consciousness. But it will address the question and answer it adequately. The head raised the question, and the head must answer it.

Chapter II, 3



We should not be surprised that immediate self-consciousness has no answer to that obscure, speculative, difficult, and troubling question. It is a very limited part of our consciousness as a whole. That consciousness is dark within and directs all its objective powers of knowledge outward. All its completely certain knowledge—knowledge certain *independently of experience*—concerns only the external world. There it can decide with certainty what is possible, impossible, or necessary, according to certain general laws rooted in itself. In this way it produces pure mathematics, pure logic, and even a pure science of nature's foundations, *independently of experience*. Next, it applies the forms it is conscious of *independently of experience* to the facts given in sensation. This supplies it with the real external world of perception, and with experience. Further, applying logic and the power of thought underlying it to that external world supplies concepts and the world of thoughts. These in turn supply the sciences, their achievements, and so on. **Out there**, then, all is bright and clear before its eyes. But **inside** it is dark, like a well-blackened telescope. No principle known *independently of experience* lights up the night of its own interior. These lighthouses shine only outward. As discussed above, the so-called inner sense has nothing before it but our own will. All so-called inner feelings can really be traced back to the movements of that will. But as shown above, everything this inner perception of the will supplies comes down to willing and not willing, along with the much-praised certainty: "What I will, I can do." This really means: "I see

every act of my will appear at once, in a way completely incomprehensible to me, as an action of my body.” Strictly speaking, for the knowing subject this is a statement based on experience. Nothing beyond this can be found here. So the court we have approached has no authority to judge the question raised. In fact, the question in its true sense cannot even be put before that court, since it does not understand it.

I will now restate the answer to our inquiry at self-consciousness in a shorter, simpler form. Everyone’s **self-consciousness** says very clearly that they can **do** what they will. We can also think of them **willing** completely opposite actions. It certainly follows that they can also **do** opposite things if they will. Only an untrained understanding confuses this with being able to **will** opposite things in a given case, and calls this **freedom of the will**. But the statement above contains absolutely no claim that someone can **will** opposite things in a given case. It says only that, of two opposite actions, if they **will this one**, they can do it; and if they **will that one**, they can do that too. Whether they can **will** either one in the given case remains unsettled. That calls for a deeper investigation than self-consciousness alone can decide. The shortest formula for this result, though put in academic terms, would be: self-consciousness speaks about the will only *from the side of what follows it*; the question of freedom concerns *the side of what precedes it*. So the undeniable testimony of self-consciousness, “I can do what I will,” contains and decides absolutely nothing about freedom of the will. Such freedom would mean that the act of will on each occasion, in each individual case and with a given individual character, was not necessarily determined by the external circumstances in which this person then found themselves. Instead, it could turn out this way or another. Self-consciousness remains completely silent about this. The matter lies entirely outside its range, since it rests on the causal relation between the external world and the human being. Ask someone of sound understanding but without philosophical education what constitutes the freedom of the will they assert so confidently on the testimony of self-consciousness. They will answer: “The fact that I can do what I will, as long as I am not physically prevented.” So they are always speaking about the relation between their **action** and their **willing**. But as shown in the

first section, this is still only **physical** freedom. Ask further whether, in that situation, they can **will** either a thing or its opposite in the given case. In their initial eagerness they will say yes. But as soon as they begin to grasp what the question means, they will also begin to have doubts. Finally they will become uncertain and confused. Their preferred escape will be to retreat behind their refrain, "I can do what I will," and entrench themselves there against all arguments and reasoning. But the corrected reply to their refrain would be as follows, 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 discussion in this section would, strictly speaking, already answer the Royal Society's question, and answer it in the negative. This is only the main outline of an answer, however. The account of the facts within self-consciousness will also be filled out somewhat in what follows. But in one eventuality we can also check this negative answer. We can now put the question to the authority to which we were referred above as the only competent one: pure understanding, reason reflecting on its data, and experience following in the wake of both. Suppose its decision were that *freedom of choice* does not exist at all. Instead, human action, like everything else in nature, occurs in each given case as an effect that necessarily follows. This would also assure us that immediate self-consciousness **cannot even contain** facts from which the *freedom of choice* in question could be proved. Our decision would then gain a rational basis in addition to the empirical basis already presented, and so would be doubly secured. This would happen through the inference *from impossibility to nonexistence*, the only possible way to establish **negative** truths *independently of experience*. For we cannot assume that a definite contradiction is possible between the immediate testimony of self-consciousness and the results of the principles of pure understanding, together with their application to experience. Our self-consciousness cannot be so deceitful. Here we should note that even the supposed antinomy Kant set out on this subject is not meant, even by Kant himself, to arise from the thesis and antithesis coming from different sources of knowledge. It is not that one starts, say, from the testimony of self-conscious-

ness and the other from reason and experience. Instead, both thesis and antithesis argue from supposedly objective grounds. But the thesis rests on nothing but lazy reason: the need to stop somewhere in the backward search for grounds. The antithesis, by contrast, really has all the objective grounds on its side.

We must now undertake this **indirect** investigation. It will stay within the field of the faculty of knowledge and the external world presented to it. But it will also cast much light back on the **direct** investigation carried out so far, and so help to complete it. It will expose the natural errors that arise from misreading that very simple testimony of self-consciousness when self-consciousness comes into conflict with consciousness of other things. This latter consciousness is the faculty of knowledge. It is rooted in one and the same subject as self-consciousness. Indeed, only at the end of this indirect investigation will some light dawn on the true meaning and content of the “I will” that accompanies all our actions. It will also illuminate our consciousness that these actions originate in us and are under our own power, which makes them **our** actions. Only then will the direct investigation carried out so far be complete.

Chapter III, 1



III. The will as seen by consciousness of other things.

Let us now take our problem to our capacity for knowledge. We know in advance that this capacity is directed outward by its very nature. The will therefore cannot be an object of direct perception for it. The will was such an object for self-consciousness, though self-consciousness proved unable to judge our question. Here we can examine only **beings** that have a will. They appear before our capacity for knowledge as objective, external phenomena—that is, as objects of experience. We must now study and judge them as such. We must partly use general rules that are certain *a priori* and hold for experience as a whole, as conditions of its possibility. We must partly use the facts that actual, existing experience provides. So we are no longer dealing with the **will** itself, as it is open only to the inner sense. We are dealing with **beings that will and are moved by the will**, and that are objects of the outer senses. This puts us at a disadvantage: we must examine the true object of our inquiry only indirectly and from farther away. But that is more than offset by an advantage. We can now use a much better tool in our inquiry than direct self-consciousness, the so-called inner sense, with its dim, dull, one-sided awareness. Our tool is the **understanding**, equipped with all the outer senses and all the powers needed to grasp things objectively.

The most general and basic form of this understanding is the **law of causality**. Indeed, only through this law do we come to perceive the real external world. We immediately and quite directly take the sensations and changes felt in our sense organs as “**effects**.” Without guidance, instruction, or experience, we instantly move from them to their “**causes**.” Through this very process of understanding, these causes now present themselves as objects in space *). This makes one thing indisputably clear. We are aware of the **law of causality *a priori***, and thus as a law **necessary** for any experience at all to be possible. We do not need the indirect, difficult, and even inadequate proof Kant gave for this important truth. The law of causality is established *a priori* as the general rule to which all real objects in the external world are subject, without exception. It admits no exceptions precisely because it is *a priori*. It applies essentially and exclusively to **changes**. It says that whenever and wherever anything changes in the objective, real, material world—whether large or small, much or little—something else must necessarily have **changed** just **before** it. For that earlier thing to change, something else must have changed before it, and so on to infinity. This backward chain of changes fills time as matter fills space. No starting point for it can ever be found, or even thought possible, much less assumed. The endlessly renewed question, “What brought about this change?” never lets the understanding reach a final resting place, however tired it may become. A first cause is therefore just as unthinkable as a beginning of time or a boundary of space.—The law of causality also says that once the earlier change—the **cause**—has occurred, the later change it brings about—the **effect**—must occur without fail. It therefore follows **necessarily**. This character of **necessity** shows that the law of causality is a form of the **principle of sufficient reason**. That principle is the most general form of our entire capacity for knowledge. In the real world it appears as causality. In the world of thought it appears as the logical law governing the grounds for knowledge. Even in empty space, which we perceive *a priori*, it appears as the law by which the positions of all parts depend on one another with strict necessity. Showing this necessary dependence in spe-

cific detail is the sole subject of geometry. That is precisely why, as I explained at the outset, **being necessary** and **following from a given ground** are interchangeable concepts.

*) A thorough account of this theory is given in the treatise on the principle of sufficient reason, § 21.

All **changes** in objects situated in the real external world are therefore subject to the law of **causality**. Whenever and wherever they occur, they always occur **necessarily** and without fail.—There can be no exception. The rule is established *a priori* for all possible experience. To **apply** it to a particular case, we need ask only whether the case involves a **change** in a real object given in external experience. If it does, the object's changes fall under 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 closer to experience itself. The rule is certain *a priori* and therefore holds without exception for all possible experience. We will examine the real objects found in experience, whose possible changes our rule concerns. We soon notice some deep, basic differences among them. These have long been used to classify them. Some are inorganic, that is, lifeless. Others are organic, that is, living. The latter are either plants or animals. Animals are essentially alike and fit their shared concept. Yet we find them arranged in a very varied and finely graded scale of perfection. It starts with animals still closely related to plants and hard to distinguish from them. It rises to the most fully developed animals, which most perfectly fit the concept of an animal. At the top of this scale we see human beings—ourselves.

Let us not be distracted by this variety. Instead, let us consider all these beings simply as objective, real objects of experience. We can then apply the law of causality to any changes they may undergo. This law is established *a priori* as a condition of any experience being possible. We will find that experience everywhere agrees with the law that is certain *a priori*. But the great **differences** in the nature of these objects of experience, just recalled, are matched by a corresponding change in how causality governs them. More precisely, there are three forms of the causality that governs all their changes. These correspond to the threefold division into inorganic bodies, plants, and animals. They are **cause** in

the narrowest sense of the word, **stimulus**, and **motivation**. These different forms do not in the least weaken causality's *a priori* validity, or the necessity of the result that it imposes.

A **cause** in the narrowest sense of the word brings about all mechanical, physical, and chemical changes in objects of experience. It always has two distinguishing features. First, Newton's third fundamental law applies to it: "Action and reaction are equal." That is, the earlier state, called the cause, undergoes a change equal to that in the later state, called the effect.—Second, in keeping with Newton's second law, the degree of the effect always exactly matches the degree of the cause. So strengthening the cause brings an equal strengthening of the effect. Once we know how the effect works, we can know, measure, and calculate its degree from the intensity of the cause, and *the other way around*. But when applying this second feature to experience, we must not confuse the actual effect with its visible appearance. For example, when compressing a body, we must not expect its size to keep shrinking in proportion to the increase in the compressing force. The space into which we force the body keeps getting smaller, so resistance increases. Here too the actual effect, which is an increase in density, does grow in proportion to the cause, as Mariotte's law states. But this does not apply to the effect's visible appearance. Again, heat supplied to water will raise its temperature up to a certain point. Beyond that point it will only cause rapid evaporation. In evaporation, however, the same proportion between the degree of the cause and that of the effect applies again. The same holds in many cases. **Causes in this narrowest sense** bring about the changes in all **lifeless**, that is, **inorganic** bodies. Knowing and assuming causes of this kind guides our study of all the changes that are the subject of mechanics, hydrodynamics, physics, and chemistry. Being determined exclusively by causes of this kind is therefore the true and essential mark of an inorganic or lifeless body.

The second kind of cause is the **stimulus**. First, this is a cause that does **not** itself undergo a reaction proportional to its action. Second, there is no proportional relation at all between its intensity and the intensity of its effect. We therefore cannot measure or predict the degree of the effect from the degree of

the cause. Instead, a small increase in the stimulus can cause a very large increase in the effect. Or, the other way around, it can completely cancel the earlier effect and even produce the opposite one. For example, as everyone knows, plants can be made to grow extraordinarily fast by warmth or by lime mixed into the soil. These causes act as stimuli to their vital force. But if the proper degree of stimulus is exceeded even a little, the result will not be stronger, faster life. It will be the plant's death. Likewise, we can use wine or opium to heighten our mental powers and increase them considerably. But if the proper amount of stimulus is exceeded, the result will be exactly the opposite.—This kind of cause, then, namely stimuli, determines all the changes in organisms **as such**. All the changes and developments of plants occur in response to **stimuli**. So do all the purely organic and vegetative changes, or functions, of animal bodies. Light, heat, air, food, every drug, every touch, fertilization, and so on affect them in this way.—Animal life also has an entirely different sphere, which I will discuss in a moment. But the whole life of **plants** proceeds exclusively through **stimuli**. All their assimilation, growth, reaching toward the light with their crowns and toward better soil with their roots, their fertilization, germination, and so on are changes in response to **stimuli**. A few particular genera also have a distinctive rapid movement. This too occurs only in response to stimuli, though it has earned them the name sensitive plants. As is well known, the main examples are *Mimosa pudica*, *Hedysarum gyrans*, and *Dionaea muscipula*. Being determined exclusively and without exception by **stimuli** is the defining feature of a plant. Thus a **plant** is any body whose characteristic movements and changes, suited to its nature, always occur exclusively in response to **stimuli**.

Chapter III, 3



The third kind of moving cause marks out **animals**. It is **motivation**: causality that works through **knowledge**. It appears at the point in the scale of natural beings where a more complex being, with many different needs, could no longer meet them simply in response to a stimulus. A stimulus has to be waited for. Instead, the being had to be able to choose, take hold of, and even seek out the means of meeting its needs. In beings of this kind, mere sensitivity to **stimuli** and movement in response to them are therefore replaced by sensitivity to **motives**. This means a capacity for representations, an intellect, in countless degrees of perfection. In material terms it appears as a nervous system and brain, and with it comes consciousness. It is well known that animal life rests on a basis of plant life, which as such proceeds only in response to **stimuli**. But all movements an animal makes as an **animal** depend on what physiology calls **animal functions**. They occur as a result of an object that is known, and thus in response to **motives**. An **animal** is therefore any body whose characteristic external movements and changes, suited to its nature, always occur in response to **motives**. These are particular **representations** present to its consciousness, whose existence we already assume here. Across the range of animals, the capacity for representations, and with it consciousness, may have infinitely many degrees. Still, every animal has enough of it for the motive to present itself and

bring about movement. Self-consciousness is now present too. To it, the inner moving force, whose particular expression is called forth by the motive, reveals itself as what we call **will**.

Even observation from outside, which is our standpoint here, can never leave it doubtful whether a given body moves in response to **stimuli** or to **motives**. A stimulus and a motive work in such visibly different ways. A stimulus always acts through direct contact or even through being taken into the body. Even when this contact is not visible, as when the stimulus is air, light, or heat, it still reveals itself. The effect has an unmistakable relation to the stimulus's duration and intensity, though this relation does not stay the same at every degree of stimulus. But when a motive causes movement, all these differences disappear. Here the actual, immediate medium of influence is not the atmosphere. It is **knowledge** alone. The object acting as a motive needs only to be **perceived**, to be **known**. It makes no difference how long it has been perceived, whether from nearby or far away, or how clearly it has entered awareness. None of these differences changes the degree of the effect at all. As soon as the object has been perceived, it acts in exactly the same way—provided that it is a determining ground for the will to be stirred into action here. For physical and chemical causes, and likewise stimuli, also act only insofar as the body they are to affect is receptive to them. I just said, "the will to be stirred into action here." As already mentioned, what we call will is what here makes itself known to the being itself, inwardly and directly. It is what actually gives the motive its power to act, the hidden spring driving the movement the motive brings about. In bodies that move exclusively in response to stimuli—plants—we call this enduring inner condition 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 assume it as something that cannot be explained. For inside these beings there is no self-consciousness to which it would be directly accessible. These beings lack knowledge and may even lack life. Yet they have this inner condition for their reaction to external causes. Suppose we were to leave phenomena altogether and inquire into what Kant calls the thing in itself. Might that inner condition

then be essentially identical with what we call **will** in ourselves, as a recent philosopher has actually tried to prove to us? I leave that question open, though without wishing simply to deny it *).

*) Of course I mean myself here. Only the required anonymity prevented me from speaking in the first person.

Chapter III, 4



But I must discuss the difference that the special character of human consciousness, as opposed to all animal consciousness, makes to motivation. This special character is what the word **reason** actually means. It consists in this: unlike an animal, a human being is not limited to **perceiving** the external world through the senses. We can also draw general concepts (*universal notions*) from it. To fix and hold these in our sensory consciousness, we give them names. We then combine them in countless ways. These combinations, like the concepts they consist of, always refer to the world known through perception. But they make up what we call **thinking**. Thinking makes possible the great advantages the human species has over all others: language, reflection, looking back at the past, concern for the future, intentions, resolutions, planned joint action by many people, the state, sciences, arts, and so on. All this rests on a single ability: having abstract, general representations that are not presented to the senses. We call them **concepts**—that is, collections of things—because each includes many individual things. Animals, even the cleverest, lack this ability. They therefore have only **perceptual** representations. They know only what is present at the moment and live only in the present. So the motives that move their will must always be perceptual and present. As a result, they have very little **choice**. They can choose only among things directly presented to their limited field of perception and power of comprehension, things present in time and space. Of these, whichever is the stronger motive immediately determines their will. This

makes the motive's causal role very obvious. **Training** is an apparent exception: it is fear acting through habit. Instinct is to some extent a **real** exception. Through instinct, an animal's **overall** behavior is set in motion not really by motives but by an inner pull and drive. Yet motives again determine the details of **individual** actions at each moment. So it 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, can have representations that are **not presented to the senses**. Through these we **think and reflect**. This gives us an infinitely wider field of view, covering what is absent, past, and future. So the range in which motives can affect us, and therefore our range of choice, is far greater than an animal's, confined as it is to the narrow present. As a rule, what determines our actions is not what lies before our sensory perception, present in space and time. Instead, it is mere **thoughts**, which we carry around in our heads everywhere. These make us independent of the impression of the present. When they fail to do so, we call our actions unreasonable. On the other hand, actions are praised as **reasonable** when they follow well-considered thoughts alone and are therefore entirely independent of the impression made by what is presently perceived. Humans are driven by a special class of representations—abstract concepts and thoughts—that animals do not have. This is even visible from outside. It gives all human actions, even the most insignificant, indeed every movement and step, the character of being **planned and intended**. Human activity thus differs so obviously from that of animals that we can almost see fine, invisible threads guiding human movements. These threads are motives made up of mere thoughts. Animal movements, by contrast, are pulled by the thick, visible ropes of what is presently perceived. But the difference goes no further. A thought becomes a **motive** just as a perception **does**: as soon as it can act on the will in question. All motives, however, are causes, and all causality brings necessity with it. Through our ability to think, we can bring to mind the motives whose influence on our will we feel. We can do so in any order, taking turns and repeating them, to hold them before our will. This is called **deliberating**. We can deliberate, and this ability gives us a

much wider **choice** than an animal can have. In this respect we are indeed **relatively free**. We are free from the immediate compulsion of objects **presently perceived** that act on the will as motives. Animals are wholly subject to this compulsion. Humans, by contrast, determine themselves independently of present objects, according to thoughts that are **their** motives. At bottom, this **relative** freedom is probably what educated but not deeply thoughtful people mean by freedom of the will, which humans clearly have over animals. Yet it is only **relative**: relative to what is presently perceived. And it is only **comparative**: in comparison with **animals**. It changes only the **way** motivation works. It does not in the least remove, or even lessen, the **necessity** with which motives act. An **abstract** motive consisting of a mere **thought** is an **external** cause determining the will, just as a perceptual motive consisting of a real, present object is. It is therefore a cause like any other. Like other causes, it is even always something real and material, since it ultimately always rests on an impression received **from outside** at some time and place. Its only advantage is the length of its conducting wire. By this I mean that, unlike purely **perceptual** motives, it is not bound to a certain closeness in space and time. It can act across the greatest distance and the longest time, and through a long chain of concepts and thoughts that transmit it. This results from the nature and exceptional receptiveness of the organ that first experiences and receives its influence: the human brain, or **reason**. But this does not in the least remove its **causal power** or the **necessity** that comes with it. Only a very superficial view, then, can take this relative and comparative freedom for absolute freedom, a *freedom of choice indifferent between alternatives*. The ability to deliberate that comes from it actually gives us nothing but the often painful **conflict of motives**. Indecision presides over it, and its battlefield is the person's whole mind and consciousness. We repeatedly let the motives test their strength against one another on our will. This puts the will in the same position as a body on which different forces act in opposite directions. At last, the decisively strongest motive drives the others from the field and determines the will. This outcome is called a decision, and it follows from the struggle with complete **necessity**.

Chapter III, 5



Let us look once more at the whole range of forms of causality. Within it we can clearly distinguish **causes** in the narrowest sense of the word, then **stimuli**, and finally **motives**, which in turn divide into perceptual and abstract motives. As we move from lower to higher beings in this respect, we notice that cause and effect move further apart, become more clearly distinct, and differ more in kind. The cause becomes less and less material and tangible. As a result, less and less seems to be contained in the cause, and more and more in the effect. Taken together, all this makes the connection between cause and effect harder to grasp and understand directly. Everything just mentioned applies least to **mechanical** causality, which is therefore the easiest kind to understand. This gave rise, in the last century, to the mistaken attempt to reduce every other kind of causality to mechanical causality, explaining all physical and chemical processes through mechanical causes, and then explaining the process of life through those physical and chemical processes. This effort continues in France and has recently appeared in Germany too. One body strikes another that is at rest and moves it. The first loses as much motion as it gives the second. Here we seem to see the cause pass over into the effect. Both are entirely of the same kind, exactly measurable against each other, and tangible. This is really true of all purely mechanical effects. But we will find that it becomes less and less true, and that what was said above takes its place, the higher we go, if we consider the relation between cause and effect at each level. Examples are the relation between heat as a cause

and its various effects, such as expansion, glowing, melting, vaporization, combustion, thermoelectricity, and so on; between evaporation as a cause and cooling or crystallization as effects; between rubbing glass as a cause and free electricity, with its strange phenomena, as an effect; or between the slow oxidation of plates as a cause and galvanism, with all its electrical, chemical, and magnetic phenomena, as an effect. So cause and effect become more and more **distinct** and **different in kind**, and their connection becomes **harder to understand**. The effect seems to contain more than the cause could supply, as the cause proves less and less material and tangible. All this becomes still clearer when we turn to **organic** bodies. Here the causes are mere **stimuli**. Some are external, such as those of light, heat, air, soil, and food; some are internal, as fluids and parts act on one another. Their effect is life, with its infinite complexity and countless differences of kind, appearing in the varied forms of the plant and animal worlds. *)

*) A more detailed account of this growing separation of cause and effect can be found in "Willen in der Natur," under "Astronomie," p. 307 of volume 6 of this edition.

But as the relation between cause and effect becomes increasingly different in kind, impossible to measure on a common scale, and hard to understand, has the **necessity** it establishes also decreased? Not at all, not in the slightest. Just as necessarily as a rolling ball sets a stationary one in motion, a Leyden jar must discharge when touched with the other hand; arsenic must kill every living thing; and a seed that has shown no change for thousands of years while stored dry must germinate, grow, and develop into a plant as soon as it is put in suitable soil and exposed to air, light, warmth, and moisture. The cause is more complex and the effect is more different in kind, but the necessity with which it occurs is not a hair less.

In plant life and in an animal's vegetative life, the stimulus is indeed very different in every respect from the organic function it produces, and the two are clearly distinct. Yet they are not actually **separate**. There must be some contact between them, however subtle and invisible. Complete separation occurs only in animal life, whose actions are brought about by motives. Here the cause,

which until now still had a material connection with the effect, stands entirely detached from it. It is of a completely different nature: something initially immaterial, a mere representation. So in the **motive** that makes an animal move, the difference in kind between cause and effect, their separation, the impossibility of measuring them on a common scale, and the immaterial nature of the cause—and thus its apparent lack of sufficient content to account for the effect—have reached their highest point. The relation between them would become absolutely incomprehensible if, like the other causal relations, we knew it only **from outside**. But here knowledge of a completely different kind, **inner** knowledge, supplements our knowledge from outside. We are intimately familiar with the process that takes place here as the effect once the cause has appeared. We give it a *special term*: will. Yet here too, just as with the stimulus discussed above, the causal relation has lost none of its **necessity**. We say as much as soon as we recognize it as a **causal relation** and think of it through this form essential to our understanding. We also find motivation completely analogous to the other two forms of the causal relation discussed above. It is simply the highest level to which they rise in an entirely gradual transition. At the lowest levels of animal life, the **motive** is still closely related to the **stimulus**. Zoophytes, radiates in general, and the headless mollusks have only a faint glimmer of consciousness. They have just enough to perceive their food or prey and seize it when it presents itself, and perhaps to move to a more favorable spot. At these low levels, then, the effect of a motive is still as clear, direct, definite, and unmistakable to us as the effect of a stimulus. Small insects are drawn by the glow of a light right into its flame. Flies trustingly land 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, motives act less and less directly. The motive becomes more clearly separated from the action it produces. We could even use these differences in the distance between motive and action as a measure of animals' intelligence. In human beings this distance becomes immeasurable. But even in the cleverest animals, the representation that becomes the motive for what they do must still be **perceptual**. Even where a choice becomes possible, it can only be between things currently presented to

their senses. A dog stands hesitating between its master's call and the sight of a female dog. The stronger motive will determine its movement. But then the movement follows as necessarily as a mechanical effect. Even in a mechanical case, we see a body thrown off balance rock first to one side and then to the other for a time, until it becomes clear which side its center of gravity is on, and it falls that way. As long as motivation is limited to **perceptual** representations, its relationship to the stimulus and to causes in general is also obvious in another respect. The motive, as the effective cause, must be something real and present. Through light, sound, or smell, it must still act physically on the senses, even if very indirectly. Moreover, the cause is as open to the observer here as the effect. The observer sees the motive appear and the animal's action inevitably follow, unless another equally obvious motive, or training, works against it. It is impossible to doubt the connection between the two. So no one would think of attributing to animals a *freedom of choice indifferent to its alternatives*—that is, action not determined by any cause.

Chapter III, 6



But when consciousness is rational—that is, capable of knowledge that is not perceptual, of concepts and thoughts—motives become entirely independent of the present moment and the actual surroundings. They are therefore hidden from an observer. They are now mere thoughts that a person carries around in their head. Yet their origin lies outside it, often very far away: sometimes in the person's own experience of past years, sometimes in accounts passed on by others through speech and writing, even from the most distant times. Their **origin** is **always real and objective**. Still, the often difficult task of combining complex external circumstances introduces many errors, and accounts passed on by others introduce many deceptions. Consequently, motives also include many foolish ideas. Added to this, people often hide the motives for their actions from everyone else, and sometimes even from themselves, when they shrink from recognizing what is really moving them to do one thing or another. Meanwhile, we see their actions take place and try to discover their motives by guesswork. We assume those motives as firmly and confidently as we would assume a cause for any movement of lifeless bodies that we had seen occur. We are convinced that the one is as impossible without a cause as the other. Accordingly, in the other direction, when making our own plans and undertaking projects, we calculate how motives will affect people. We would do this with exactly the same certainty with which we calculate the mechanical effects of mechanical devices, if we knew the individual characters of the people we were dealing with as pre-

cisely as we know the length and thickness of beams, the diameters of wheels, the weight of loads, and so on. Everyone follows this assumption as long as they look outward, deal with other people, and pursue practical aims. Human understanding is designed for these purposes. But suppose someone tries to judge the matter theoretically and philosophically, which human intelligence is not really designed to do, and makes themselves the object of their judgment. Then they are misled by the immaterial nature, described above, of abstract motives consisting of mere thoughts. These motives are not tied to any present moment or surroundings, and even the obstacles they encounter are only other thoughts acting as opposing motives. This misleads the person so far that they doubt the existence of these motives, or at least the necessity of their effects. They think that what is done could just as well be left undone, that the will decides by itself, without a cause, and that each of its acts is a first beginning of an incalculable series of changes it brings about. This error is especially encouraged by a false interpretation of the statement of self-consciousness examined sufficiently in the first section: "I can do what I will." This is particularly so when that statement makes itself heard, as it does at any time, even under the influence of several mutually exclusive motives that, for the moment, merely urge the will toward action. All this together is the source of the natural illusion from which the error arises that our self-consciousness gives us certainty of our will's freedom. Freedom here means that, contrary to all the laws of pure understanding and of nature, the will decides without sufficient grounds, and that under given circumstances, in one and the same person, its decisions could go either one way or the opposite way.

To explain in specific and unmistakable terms how this error, so important to our subject, arises, and thus to supplement the investigation of self-consciousness in the preceding section, let us imagine a man standing, perhaps, in the street and saying to himself: "It is 6 p.m. The day's work is over. I can take a walk now, or I can go to the club. I can also climb the tower to watch the sunset. I can also go to the theater. I can also visit this friend or that one. In fact, I can also run out through the town gate into the wide world and never come back. All this is entirely up to me. I have complete freedom to do it. Yet I am

doing none of it now, but going home to my wife just as freely.” This is exactly as if water were to say: “I can rise in high waves (yes—in the sea during a storm); I can rush rapidly downhill (yes—in a riverbed); I can plunge down, foaming and surging (yes—in a waterfall); I can rise freely into the air as a jet (yes—in a fountain); finally, I can even boil away and disappear (yes—at a temperature of 80°). Yet I am doing none of this now, but freely remaining still and clear in the reflecting pond.” Water can do all those things only when the causes determining one or another of them occur. In just the same way, the man can do what he imagines he can do only under that same condition. Until the causes occur, it is impossible for him. But once they do, he must do it, just as water must act once it is placed in the corresponding circumstances. His error, and in general the illusion arising here from misinterpreted self-consciousness that he can do all those things right now, rests, on closer inspection, on this: only one image at a time can be present to his imagination, and for the moment it excludes everything else. When he imagines the motive for one of the actions he has proposed as possible, he immediately feels its effect on his will, which is drawn toward it. This is technically called a *wish*. But he now thinks that he can also raise this to an actual *act of will*—that is, carry out the proposed action. This, however, is an illusion. Reflection would immediately step in and remind him of the motives pulling him in other directions or opposing the action. He would then see that the action does not take place. As he imagines different, mutually exclusive motives one after another, with the inner statement “I can do what I will” constantly accompanying them, the will turns, as it were, like a weathervane on a well-oiled pivot in a shifting wind. It immediately turns toward every motive that the imagination presents to it, toward all the possible motives in succession. At each one, the man thinks he can **will** it, and so fix the vane at that point. This is pure illusion. For his “I can will this” is really conditional and carries the qualification “if I did not prefer to will that other thing.” But this qualification cancels out that ability to will. Let us return to the man we imagined deliberating at 6 p.m. Suppose he now notices that I am standing behind him, philosophizing about him and denying his freedom to perform all those actions that are possible for him. He might very well perform one of them to refute me.

But in that case, my denial and its effect on his urge to contradict me would have been precisely the motive compelling him to do it. Even so, this motive could move him only to one or another of the **easier** actions listed above, such as going to the theater, but certainly not to the last one, running off into the wide world. The motive would be far too weak for that. Many people are equally mistaken when, holding a loaded pistol, they think they can shoot themselves with it. The mechanical means of carrying it out is the least important part. The main thing is an extremely strong and therefore rare motive, with the enormous power needed to outweigh the desire to live, or more accurately, the fear of death. Only once such a motive has appeared can they actually shoot themselves, and must do so—unless an even stronger opposing motive, if such a thing is possible at all, prevents the act.

Chapter III, 7



I can do what I will. **If I will it**, I can give everything I own to the poor and so become poor myself—if I will it! But I am unable to **will** it, because the opposing motives have far too much power over me for me to do so. If, on the other hand, I had a different character, so different that I was a saint, then I would be able to will it. But then I would also be unable to avoid willing it, and so would have to do it. All this fits perfectly well with self-consciousness's statement "I can do what I will." Even today, some thoughtless pretenders to philosophy imagine they see freedom of the will in this statement, and accordingly present that freedom as a given fact of consciousness. Mr. **Cousin** stands out among them and therefore 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 criticizes **Kant** for having proved it only from the moral law and put it forward as a postulate, when it is actually a fact: "*Why demonstrate what it is enough to establish as a fact?*" (*p. 50*) "*Freedom is a fact, not a belief*" (*ibid.*). Germany, too, has no shortage of ignorant people who dismiss everything great thinkers have said about this over the last two centuries. They insist on the fact of self-consciousness analyzed in the preceding section, which they misunderstand just as the general public does, and proclaim freedom of the will as a

given fact. But perhaps I am being unfair to them. They may not be as ignorant as they seem, but merely hungry, and therefore willing, for a very dry piece of bread, to teach anything that might please a high government ministry.

This is neither a metaphor nor an exaggeration, but the plain, literal truth: just as a billiard ball cannot start moving before it receives a push, a person cannot get up from their chair before a motive pulls or drives them away. But then their getting up is as necessary and inevitable as the ball's rolling after the push. And expecting someone to do something that no interest whatever prompts them to do is like expecting a piece of wood to move toward me without a rope pulling it. If someone made such an assertion in company and met stubborn opposition, the quickest way out of the argument would be to have a third person suddenly shout in a loud and serious voice: "The beams are collapsing!" The opponents would then realize that a motive is as powerful in throwing people out of a house as the most tangible 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 objects *a priori*, and therefore without exception, human beings too must be subject to it. Pure understanding tells us this *a priori*; analogy drawn through the whole of nature confirms it; and experience bears witness to it at every moment. We must simply not let ourselves be deceived by a misleading appearance. It arises because, as natural beings become more complex at higher and higher levels, their responsiveness rises and becomes more refined: from the merely mechanical to the chemical, electrical, responsive to stimuli, capable of sensation, intellectual, and finally rational. The nature of the **causes acting on them** must keep pace with this development and must, at each level, correspond to the beings they are to affect. Consequently, the causes also appear less and less tangible and material. In the end they are no longer visible to the eye, though still accessible to the understanding. In each individual case the understanding assumes them with unshakable confidence and discovers them through proper investigation. For here the effective causes have risen to the level of mere thoughts, which struggle with other thoughts until the most powerful one decides the outcome and sets the person in motion. All this takes place with a causal connection just as strict

as when purely mechanical causes work against one another in a complex combination and the calculated result unfailingly occurs. Electrified little cork balls jumping about in every direction inside a glass give just as much of an appearance of having no cause, because their cause is invisible, as human movements do. But judgment belongs to the understanding, not to the eye.

If freedom of the will were assumed, every human action would be an inexplicable miracle—an effect without a cause. And if we try to imagine such a *freedom of choice indifferent to its alternatives*, we will soon find that the understanding quite literally comes to a standstill. It has no form for thinking anything of the kind. For the principle of sufficient reason, the principle that phenomena are determined throughout and depend on one another, is the most general form of our capacity for knowledge. It takes different forms according to the different objects of that capacity. But here we are supposed to think of something that determines without being determined, that depends on nothing while other things depend on it, and that, without being necessitated, and therefore without a ground, now produces *A*, although it could just as well produce *B*, *C*, or *D*. It could do so completely, under the very same circumstances—that is, without there now being anything in *A* that would give it preference over *B*, *C*, or *D*. For such a preference would be motivation, and thus causality. This brings us back to the concept of the **absolutely contingent** established at the very beginning. I repeat: the understanding quite literally comes to a standstill here, if we can only get it to consider this.

But now let us also remember what a **cause** is in general: the preceding change that makes the following change necessary. No cause anywhere in the world produces its effect entirely, or makes it out of nothing. Rather, something is always already there for it to act on. The cause merely brings about a change at this time, in this place, and in this particular being. The change always agrees with the nature of that being, so the **force** needed for it must already have been present in that being. Every effect therefore comes from two factors, one internal and one external: the original force of what is acted on, and the determining cause that compels that force to express itself here and now. All causality, and every explanation based on it, presupposes an original force. That is precisely

why such an explanation never explains everything, but always leaves something inexplicable. We see this throughout physics and chemistry. Their explanations everywhere presuppose the natural forces that express themselves in phenomena, and the entire explanation consists in tracing the phenomena back to these forces. A natural force itself cannot be explained. Rather, it is the principle of all explanation. Nor is it itself subject to any causality. Rather, it is precisely what gives every cause its causality—that is, its ability to produce an effect. The force itself is the common basis of all effects of this kind and is present in each of them. Thus the phenomena of magnetism are traced back to an original force called electricity. Explanation stops here. It merely states the conditions under which such a force expresses itself—that is, the causes that bring it into action. Explanations in celestial mechanics presuppose gravitation as the force through which the individual causes determining the movements of celestial bodies act. Explanations in chemistry presuppose the hidden forces that express themselves as elective affinities according to certain stoichiometric ratios. All the effects that occur precisely when brought about by specified causes ultimately depend on these forces. In the same way, all explanations in physiology presuppose the vital force, which reacts in definite ways to specific internal and external stimuli. This is the case everywhere, without exception. Even the causes studied by mechanics, which is so easy to grasp, such as impact and pressure, presuppose impenetrability, cohesion, rigidity, hardness, inertia, gravity, and elasticity. These are natural forces just as unfathomable as those already mentioned. Everywhere, then, causes determine nothing more than when and where original, inexplicable forces **express themselves**. Only on the assumption of these forces are they causes at all—that is, do they necessarily bring about certain effects.

What is true of causes in the narrowest sense and of stimuli is no less true of **motives**. For motivation is not essentially different from causality, but is only one kind of it: causality that passes through the medium of knowledge. Here too, then, the cause only brings about the expression of a force that cannot be traced back to further causes and therefore cannot be explained further. But this force, which is called will here, is known to us not merely from outside, like

the other natural forces, but also from within and directly, through self-consciousness. Only on the assumption that such a will exists, and in the individual case that it has a definite nature, do the causes directed toward it, here called motives, take effect. This specifically and individually determined nature of the will, by which its reaction to the same motives differs in each person, makes up what is called that person's **character**. More precisely, it is called **empirical character**, because it is known not *a priori* but only through experience. This character directly determines how different kinds of motives affect a given person. It underlies all the effects produced by motives, just as the general forces of nature underlie effects produced by causes in the narrowest sense, and the vital force underlies the effects of stimuli. Like the forces of nature, it is original, unchanging, and inexplicable. In animals it differs from species to species; in human beings it differs from individual to 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



Human character is: 1. **individual**: it is different in every person. The character of the species does underlie everyone, so the main traits recur in each person. But the degree of these traits varies so greatly, and they combine with and modify one another in so many different ways, that we can assume the moral differences between characters equal the differences between intellectual abilities. That is saying a great deal. And both kinds of difference are incomparably greater than the physical differences between a giant and a dwarf, Apollo and Thersites. The same motive therefore has completely different effects on different people. Similarly, sunlight turns wax white but silver chloride black; heat softens wax but hardens clay. So knowing the motive alone does not let us predict the action. We must also know the person's character precisely.

- ² Human character is **empirical**. We come to know it only through experience, not just in others but also in ourselves. So we are often disappointed in ourselves, just as we are in others, when we discover that we do not have some quality—justice, unselfishness, or courage, for example—to the degree we had kindly assumed. That is also why, when we face a difficult choice, our own decision remains as much a mystery to us as someone else's until the choice is settled. Now we think it will go one way, now the other, depending on which motive our capacity for knowledge presents more closely to the will, testing its strength against it. Here the thought “I can do what I will” produces the sem-

blance of freedom of the will. Finally, the stronger motive asserts its power over the will, and the choice often turns out differently from what we first expected. Ultimately, then, no one can know how another person, or even they themselves, will act in a particular situation until they have been in it. Only after the test can we be sure of the other person, and only then of ourselves. But then we are sure: tried friends and tested servants are dependable. In general, we treat a person we know well like any other thing whose properties we have learned. We confidently predict what we can and cannot expect from that person. Anyone who has done something once will do it again when the occasion arises, whether for good or for evil. So someone who needs great, extraordinary help will turn to a person who has shown generosity. Someone who wants to hire a murderer will look among people who already have blood on their hands. According to Herodotus's account (VII, 164), Gelo of Syracuse found himself having to entrust a very large sum of money entirely to one man. He had to send the man abroad with it, leaving him free to dispose of it. He chose Cadmus, who had given proof of rare, indeed unheard-of honesty and conscientiousness. His trust was fully justified.—In the same way, we become acquainted with ourselves only through experience, as occasions arise. This acquaintance is the basis of our confidence, or lack of confidence, in ourselves. Depending on whether we have shown good judgment, courage, honesty, discretion, tact, or whatever else a situation called for—or whether a lack of these virtues came to light—we are afterward pleased with ourselves or the opposite, because of what we have learned about ourselves. Only precise knowledge of our own empirical character gives us what is called **acquired character**. Someone has this when they know their own qualities, good and bad, precisely, and so know for certain what they can trust themselves to do and demand of themselves, and what they cannot. Previously, guided by their empirical character, they played their own role merely by instinct. Now they play it with skill and method, firmly and appropriately, without ever, as people say, acting out of character. Acting out of character always shows that, in that particular case, someone was mistaken about themselves.

Chapter III, 9



- ³ Human character is **constant**: it stays the same throughout life. Beneath the changing shell of a person's age, circumstances, and even knowledge and opinions is the same actual person, like a crab in its shell, completely unchanging and always the same. Character undergoes the apparent changes that result from different ages and their needs only in its direction and subject matter. **A person never changes.** As someone has acted in one case, they will always act again under completely identical circumstances. These circumstances, however, must include a correct knowledge of the circumstances themselves. Everyday experience confirms this truth. But its most striking confirmation comes when we meet an acquaintance again after 20–30 years and soon catch them at exactly the same tricks as before.—Some people may deny this truth in words. Yet they assume it in their own actions, never again trusting someone they have once found dishonest, but relying on someone who has proved honest before. This truth makes all knowledge of human character possible, as well as firm trust in those who have been tested, tried, and proved reliable. Even when such trust has let us down, we never say, “His character has changed,” but, “I was mistaken about him.”—This truth explains why, when we want to judge an action's moral worth, we first try to establish its motive for certain. But then we direct our praise or blame not at the motive but at the character that let itself be determined by that motive. Character is the action's second factor and the only

one inherent in the person.—The same truth explains why true honor—not chivalric honor, or fools’ honor—can never be restored once lost. The stain of a single shameful act clings to a person forever, branding them, as people say. Hence the saying, “Steal once, and you are a thief for life.”—It explains why, in important affairs of state, when betrayal happens to be wanted and a traitor is therefore sought, used, and rewarded, prudence calls for getting rid of him once the goal is reached. Circumstances change, but his character does not.—It explains why a playwright’s greatest fault is inconsistency in the characters: failing to carry them through with the constancy and strict consistency of a force of nature, as great writers do. I have demonstrated this last point with a detailed example from Shakespeare in *Parerga*, T. 2, § 118.—Indeed, this same truth makes conscience possible, insofar as conscience often confronts us even in old age with the wrongs we committed in youth. For example, 40 years later it still confronted J. J. Rousseau with his accusation that the maid Marion had committed a theft that he himself had committed. This is possible only on the assumption that character has stayed 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 part of us has changed: those things concerned our knowledge. We have moved beyond them and long since put them aside, like our youthful clothes.—The same truth explains why a person does not really improve, even with the clearest awareness of their moral faults and failings, even with disgust at them, and even with the most sincere intention to improve. Despite serious resolutions and honest promises, when the occasion comes again, they find themselves, to their own surprise, back on the same paths as before. Only their **knowledge** can be corrected. They may therefore come to see that certain means they used before do not lead to their goal, or bring more harm than benefit. Then they change their means, not their goals. This is the basis of the American penitentiary system. It does not try to improve a person’s **character**, or **heart**. Instead, it tries to put their **thinking** right and show them that the dishonest path they have followed would make it far harder, and involve far greater hardships and dangers, to reach the goals their character makes them pursue without change than the path of honesty, work, and con-

tentment with little. In general, **knowledge** alone is the sphere and scope of all improvement and refinement. Character does not change; motives act with necessity. But they have to pass through **knowledge**, which is the medium of motives. Knowledge, however, can be expanded in the most varied ways and continually corrected to countless degrees. All education works toward this. Developing reason through knowledge and insight of every kind has moral importance because it opens the way for motives to which a person would otherwise remain closed. As long as someone could not understand these motives, they did not exist for that person's will. Thus, even with the same outward circumstances, a person's situation the second time may actually be completely different from the first. This happens if only in the meantime they have become able to understand those circumstances correctly and fully. Motives can now act on them to which they were previously unreceptive. In this sense the Scholastics said, quite correctly: *a final cause* (goal, motive) *moves us not according to its actual existence, but according to its existence as something known*. But no moral influence goes beyond correcting knowledge. Trying to remove someone's faults of character by talk and moral lectures, and so to remake their character itself, their actual morality, is exactly like trying to turn lead into gold by acting on it from outside, or to make an oak bear apricots by carefully tending it.

We already find the conviction that character cannot change stated as something beyond doubt by **Apuleius** in his *Oratio de magia*. There, defending himself against the charge of sorcery, he appeals to his known character and says: *"Each person's character is a reliable sign: always inclined by the same nature toward virtue or wickedness, it provides solid grounds for accepting or rejecting a charge."*

- ⁴ Individual character is **inborn**. It is not a product of artifice or of circumstances subject to chance, but a work of nature itself. It already appears in the child, showing on a small scale what it will later be on a large one. That is why, with exactly the same upbringing and surroundings, two children display radically different characters in the clearest way. These are the same characters they will

have in old age. Character is even hereditary in its basic traits, but only from the father; intelligence, on the other hand, comes from the mother. On this I refer to Kap. 43 of the supplements to Book 4 of *Welt als Wille u. Vorst.* (Bd. VI of this edition).

Chapter III, 10



This account of the nature of individual character does imply that virtues and vices are inborn. This truth may be unwelcome to many prejudices and much spinning-wheel philosophizing, with its so-called practical interests—that is, its small, narrow concepts and limited schoolroom views. But it was already the conviction of **Socrates**, the father of moral philosophy. According to **Aristotle** (*Eth. magna*, I, 9), he maintained: “*It is not in our power to become good or bad, etc.*” (*It is not a matter of our own choice whether we are good or bad.*) Aristotle’s objection here is plainly poor. He himself also shares Socrates’s opinion and expresses it very clearly in *Eth. Nicom.*, VI, 13: “*For everyone thinks that each trait of character belongs to us in some way by nature: we are just, self-controlled, brave, and have the other traits right from birth.*” (*For individual traits seem in some way to be present by nature in all people: we have an inclination toward justice, self-control, courage, and the other virtues as soon as we are born.*) And if we look over all the virtues and vices in Aristotle’s book *de virtutibus et vitiis*, where they are brought together in a short survey, we will find that in real people they can all be conceived only as **inborn** qualities. Only as such would they be genuine. If instead they arose from reflection and were adopted by choice, they would really amount to a kind of **pretense** and be false. We could then never count on their lasting or holding up under the pressure of circumstances. Nor is it any different 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, deeply rooted wickedness have drifted in from outside, the work of chance circumstances or mere knowledge and instruction? How could this explain the character of the Antonines, Hadrian, and Titus on the one hand, and Caligula, Nero, and Domitian on the other? Nero, after all, had Seneca as his tutor.—Rather, the seed of all a person's virtues and vices lies in their inborn character, the actual core of the whole person. This conviction, natural to anyone without preconceptions, also guided the hand of **Velleius Paterculus** when he wrote the following about Cato (II, 35): “*A man who was the very image of virtue, and in his whole nature closer to gods than to human beings: he never did right in order to seem to do so, but because he could not act otherwise.*”*)

*) This passage is gradually becoming a standard piece of equipment in the determinists' arsenal—an honor the good old historian certainly never dreamed of 1800 years ago. **Hobbes** was the first to praise it, followed by **Priestley**. Then **Schelling** reproduced it in his treatise on freedom, S. 478, in a translation somewhat distorted to suit his purposes. That is also why he does not name Velleius Paterculus, but says, with as much cunning as condescension, “an ancient writer.” Finally, I too have not wanted to neglect quoting it, since it really is relevant.

On the assumption of freedom of the will, however, it is simply impossible to see where virtue and vice are actually supposed to come from. The same applies more generally to the fact that two people brought up alike act quite differently, even in opposite ways, under completely identical circumstances and occasions. The actual, original, fundamental differences between characters cannot be reconciled with the assumption of a freedom of the will that makes opposite actions equally possible for every person in every situation. On that assumption, a person's character must start out as a *blank slate*, as the intellect does according to **Locke**. It must have no inborn inclination to one side or the other, since that would already destroy the perfect balance conceived in *freedom of choice through indifference*. So, on that assumption, the reason for the different ways different people act cannot lie in the **subjective** side. Still less can it lie in the **objective** side, since then objects would determine action, and the freedom

demanded would be lost altogether. At most, one way out would remain: to locate the origin of those great actual differences in behavior midway between subject and object. They would arise from the different ways the subjective side apprehends the objective side—that is, from the way different people **know** it. But then everything would come down to correct or incorrect **knowledge** of the circumstances at hand. The moral difference between ways of acting would become a mere difference in the accuracy of judgment, and morality would turn into logic. Suppose, finally, that supporters of freedom of the will tried to escape this awkward dilemma by saying that there are no inborn differences between characters, but that such differences arise from external circumstances, impressions, experiences, examples, teachings, and so on. Once character had come into being in this way, it would explain the subsequent differences in action. The first answer is that character would then arrive very late—although in fact it can already be recognized in children—and most people would die before acquiring one. The second is that all the external circumstances supposedly producing character lie entirely outside our power. They are brought about one way or another by chance, or, if one prefers, by providence. So if character arose from them, and differences in action then arose from character, all moral responsibility for those differences would disappear completely. They would clearly be, in the end, the work of chance or providence. Thus, on the assumption of freedom of the will, we see the origin of differences in action, and with them virtue or vice together with responsibility, left hanging without any support and unable to find even a small place to take root. This shows that, however much that assumption may appeal at first sight to an untrained understanding, it is fundamentally just as much at odds with our moral convictions as it is, as has been amply shown, with the highest basic rule of our understanding.

As I showed in detail above, motives act with necessity, like all causes in general. But this necessity is not without a precondition. We have now learned what that precondition is, the ground on which it rests: inborn **individual character**. Every effect in inanimate nature is the necessary product of two factors: the general **force of nature** expressing itself here, and the particular **cause** that calls

forth its expression here. In exactly the same way, every human action is the necessary product of a person's **character** and the **motive** that has appeared. Given these two, the action follows without fail. For a different action to occur, there would have to be either a different motive or a different character. Every action could even be predicted with certainty, indeed calculated, if character were not so hard to investigate, and if the motive were not often hidden and always exposed to the opposing force of other motives. These other motives lie solely within the person's thoughts, inaccessible to others. A person's inborn character already essentially determines the general goals they pursue without change. The means they use to reach them are determined partly by outward circumstances and partly by how they grasp those circumstances. How accurately they grasp them depends in turn on their understanding and its training. The final result of all this is the person's individual actions, and thus the entire role they have to play in the world.—So one of Goethe's finest stanzas expresses the result of the account of individual character given here both accurately and poetically:

“As on the day that gave you to the world
The sun stood to greet the planets,
You grew at once and kept on growing,
By the law under which you first began.
This you must be; you cannot escape yourself,
So the Sibyls said, and so the prophets;
And no time and no power can break apart
The stamped form that develops as it lives.”

The precondition on which the necessary effects of all causes depend is therefore the inner nature of each thing. This may be simply a general force of nature expressing itself in that thing, or it may be a vital force, or it may be will. Whatever kind of being it is, it will always react to the causes acting on 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*. In keeping with it, the chemist tests substances with

reagents, and one person tests another through the trials they put them through. In every case external causes will necessarily call forth what lies within a being, since it cannot react otherwise than according to what it is.

Chapter III, 11



Here we should remember that every *existence* presupposes an *essence*. That is, anything that exists must also be **something**: it must have a definite nature. It cannot exist yet be nothing, like the so-called *metaphysical being*—a thing that is and does nothing but be, without any defining features or properties, and consequently without any definite way of acting that follows from them. An *essence* without *existence* cannot give us something real, as Kant explained with his well-known example of a hundred thalers. Just as little can an *existence* without an *essence*. Anything that exists must have an essential nature of its own, through which it is what it is. It always maintains that nature, whose expressions are necessarily called forth by causes. But this nature itself is not the work of those causes at all, nor can they modify it. All this applies to a human being and their will just as much as to all other beings in nature. A person, too, has an *essence* as well as an *existence*: fundamental properties that make up their character and need only an occasion from outside to appear. So expecting someone to act one way on one occasion and completely differently on another, when the occasion is the same, would be like expecting the same tree that bore cherries this summer to bear pears next summer. Examined closely, freedom of the will means an *existence* without an *essence*. This means that something is, yet **is nothing**—which in turn means that **it is not**. So it is a contradiction.

Insight into this, as well as into the validity of the law of causality, which is certain *independently of experience* and therefore allows no exceptions, explains why all truly deep thinkers of every age have agreed on this point, however different their other views may have been. They have maintained that acts of will follow necessarily when motives appear, and have rejected *free choice*. The unimaginably great majority of the crowd, incapable of thought and at the mercy of appearances and prejudices, has always stubbornly resisted this truth. For that very reason, these thinkers have even pushed it to extremes, asserting it in the most decisive, indeed most defiant terms. The best-known example is **Buridan's** ass. Yet for about a hundred years people have searched in vain for it in **Buridan's** surviving writings. I myself own an edition of his *Sophismata*, evidently printed back in the 15th century, with no place of printing, date, or page numbers. I have often searched it in vain for this example, although asses appear as examples on almost every page. **Bayle**, whose article **Buridan** is the basis of everything written about the matter since, says quite incorrectly that we know of only **one** sophism by Buridan. I have a whole quarto volume of his *Sophismata*. And since **Bayle** deals with the matter at such length, he should have known something that apparently no one has noticed since, either: this example, which has become something of a symbol or model of the great truth I am defending here, is much older than **Buridan**. It appears in **Dante**, who possessed all the knowledge of his age, lived before Buridan, and speaks not of asses but of people. These words open the fourth book of his *Paradiso*:

Between two foods, equally distant and tempting

In the same way, a person would starve to death

Before freely bringing either one to their teeth).*

**) Placed between two foods equally far away and offering the same inducement, a person would die of hunger before, exercising absolute freedom, bringing either of them to their teeth.*

Indeed, it already appears in **Aristotle**, *De coelo*, II, 13, in these words: “*And the argument about someone who is intensely but equally hungry and thirsty, and equally far from food and drink: this person too must necessarily remain still.*” (Likewise, what is said about someone intensely thirsty and hungry, when equally

far from things to eat and drink: that person must necessarily remain at rest.)

Buridan, who inherited the example from these sources, replaced the person with an ass simply because this limited Scholastic habitually uses either Socrates and Plato or an *ass* for his examples.

The question of freedom of the will really is a touchstone for distinguishing deep thinkers from superficial ones, or a boundary marker where the two part ways. The former all maintain that, given character and motive, the action necessarily follows. The latter, along with the crowd, cling to freedom of the will. Then there is an intermediate kind who feel awkward and maneuver back and forth, shift the target for themselves and others, take refuge behind words and phrases, or twist and turn the question until no one knows any longer what it was getting at. **Leibniz** already did this. He was much more a mathematician and a scholar of many subjects than a philosopher*). But to bring such evasive talkers to the point, we must put the question to them as follows and refuse to move away from it:

*) Leibniz's lack of any firm position on this point appears most clearly in his letter to Coste, *Opera phil*, ed. Erdmann, p. 447; and 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 deep thinkers: only **one**.
- ² Consider the life a given person has already lived. On the one hand, their character is fixed and unchanging. On the other, the circumstances whose influence they had to undergo were necessarily determined, throughout and down to the smallest detail, by external causes. These causes always arise with strict necessity, and their chain, made up entirely of equally necessary links, extends backward to infinity. Given this, could that life have turned out differently in any respect, even in the slightest, in any event or scene, from the way it did?—No! That is the consistent and correct answer.

The conclusion from these two propositions is: **everything that happens, from the greatest to the smallest, happens necessarily.** *Whatever happens, happens necessarily.*

Anyone frightened by these propositions still has some things to learn and others to unlearn. Afterward, however, they will recognize them as the richest source of comfort and peace of mind.—Our actions are certainly not a first beginning, so nothing truly new comes into existence through them. Rather, **through what we do, we merely learn what we are.**

The ancients' firmly held belief in *fate*, in *destiny*, also rests on a conviction, felt even if not clearly understood, of the strict necessity of everything that happens. So does the fatalism of Muslims, and even the ineradicable belief in *omens* found everywhere. For even the smallest chance event occurs necessarily, and all events, so to speak, keep time with one another, so that everything echoes in everything else. Finally, this is also connected with the following fact: someone who has maimed or killed another person without the slightest intention, entirely by accident, mourns this *deed requiring atonement* throughout their life, with a feeling that seems akin to guilt. Other people also regard them with a peculiar kind of discredit, as a *person requiring expiation* (an unlucky person). Indeed, the felt conviction that character cannot change and that its expressions are necessary probably also had some influence on the Christian doctrine of election by grace.—Finally, I do not want to hold back the following entirely incidental observation. Anyone may accept or reject it as they please, depending on what they think about certain matters. Suppose we do not accept the strict necessity of everything that happens through a causal chain linking all events without distinction. Suppose instead we let this chain be broken at countless points by absolute freedom. Then all **foreseeing of the future**—in dreams, in clairvoyant trance, and in *second sight*—becomes impossible even **objectively**, and therefore absolutely impossible and inconceivable. For there would then be no objectively real future that could even possibly be foreseen. As things stand, by contrast, we doubt only the subjective conditions for this, and thus its subjective possibility. And nowadays even this doubt can no longer find a place among well-informed people, since countless testimonies from the most trustworthy sources have established these anticipations of the future.

I will add a few more reflections as consequences of the established account of the necessity of everything that happens.

What would become of this world if necessity did not run through all things and hold them together, and especially govern the generation of individuals? A monster, a heap of rubble, a meaningless, senseless grotesque shape—the work, that is, of true and actual chance.—

Wishing 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 would rise in the west. Precisely because everything that happens, great or small, occurs with **strict** necessity, it is completely pointless to reflect on how trivial and accidental the causes were that brought that event about, and how very easily they might have been different. That is an illusion. They all occurred with just as strict a necessity and acted with just as complete a power as the causes through which the sun rises in the east. Instead, we should view events as they occur in just the same way as the printed words we read, knowing full well that they were already there before we read them.

Chapter IV, 1



IV. Earlier Thinkers.

To support my claim above about the judgment of all deep thinkers on our problem, I will recall a few of the great men who have spoken in this sense.

First, I want to reassure anyone who might think that religious grounds stand against the truth I am defending. So I remind them that Jeremiah (10, 23) already said: “A person’s actions are not within their power, and it is in no one’s power how to walk or how to direct their steps.” But I appeal above all to **Luther**. In a book written for exactly this purpose, *De servo arbitrio*, he attacks freedom of the will with all his vehemence. A few passages from it are enough to show his view. Naturally he supports it not with philosophical reasons but with theological ones. I cite them from the edition of Seb. Schmidt, Strasbourg 1707.—In the same book, S. 145, it says: “At the same time, then, it is found written in the hearts of all that free choice is nothing, even though this is clouded by so many arguments to the contrary and by the great authority of so many men.”—S. 214: “At this point I would like those who defend free choice to be warned, so that they know they are deniers of Christ when they assert free choice.”—S. 220: “All the testimonies of Scripture that speak of Christ will fight against free choice. And these are countless—indeed, all of Scripture. So if we argue the case with Scripture as judge, I will win in every way, so that not one iota or dot is left that does not condemn the doctrine of free choice.”—

Now to the philosophers. The ancients need not be taken seriously here. Their philosophy was still, so to speak, in a state of innocence. It had not yet brought to clear awareness 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. We can see fairly well how far the ancients understood the problem of freedom of the will from Aristotle's *Ethica Nicom.*, III, c. 1–8. There one finds that his thinking about it essentially concerns only physical and intellectual freedom. That is why he always speaks only of the voluntary and the involuntary (*hekousion kai akousion*), treating “voluntary” and “free” as one and the same. The far harder problem of **moral freedom** has not yet come before him. His thoughts do sometimes reach that far, especially in *Eth. Nicom.*, II, 2, and III, 7. But there he makes the mistake of deriving character from deeds instead of the other way around. He also criticizes quite wrongly the conviction of Socrates that I cited above. Elsewhere, though, he makes that conviction his own again, for example *Nicom.*, X, 10: “Now it is clear that what comes from nature is not up to us, but is present, through some divine causes, in those who are truly fortunate.” (So it is clear that what is given by nature is not in our power, but comes from some divine cause and is present in those who are truly fortunate.) Soon after: “So character must somehow already be present, kindred to virtue, loving what is noble and disliking what is shameful.” (So there must already be in some way a character suited to virtue, one that embraces the honorable and is offended by the base.) This agrees with the passage I gave above, and also with *Ethica magna*, I, 11: “A person who chooses to be the best will not be so unless nature is also present, though they will be better.” (For not whoever wishes will be the best of all, unless nature has also supplied it. They will, however, rightly be better.) In the same sense Aristotle treats the question of freedom of the will in the *Ethica magna*, I, 9–18, and in the *Ethica Eudemia*, II, 6–10. There he comes somewhat closer to the real problem. Yet everything remains wavering and superficial. His method everywhere is not to go straight into the matter and proceed analytically. Instead he proceeds synthetically, drawing conclusions from outward marks. Rather than pressing inward to reach the core of things,

he holds to outward signs, even to words. This method easily leads astray, and with deeper problems it never reaches its goal. Here, then, he stops before the supposed opposition between the necessary and the voluntary (anagkaion kai hekousion) as before a wall. Only beyond that wall lies the insight that what is voluntary is **necessary** precisely as such. It is necessary by virtue of the motive. Without a motive, an act of will is as impossible as it is without a willing subject. And the motive is a cause, just like the mechanical kind, from which it differs only in inessentials. Aristotle himself says (Eth. Eudem., II, 10): “For that for the sake of which is one of the causes.” (For that for whose sake something is done is counted among the causes.) That is exactly why the opposition between the voluntary and the necessary is completely false. Yet many so-called philosophers today are still in the same position as Aristotle.

Cicero sets out the problem of freedom of the will already fairly clearly, in his book *De fato*, c. 10 and c. 17. The subject of his treatise does indeed lead to it very easily and naturally. He himself sides with freedom of the will. But we can see that Chrysippus and Diodorus must already have become aware of the problem, more or less clearly.—Also worth noting is **Lucian’s** thirtieth Dialogue of the Dead, between Minos and Sostratus. It denies freedom of the will, and with it responsibility.

But in a certain way the fourth book of Maccabees, in the Septuagint (it is missing in Luther’s Bible), is already a treatise on freedom of the will. It sets itself the task of proving that reason (logismos) has the power to overcome all passions and emotions. It supports this with the Jewish martyrs in the second book.

The oldest clear recognition of our problem that I know of appears in **Clement of Alexandria**. He says (Strom. I, § 17): “Neither praise nor blame, neither honors nor punishments are just, if the soul does not have the power to move toward something and away from it, but vice is involuntary.” (Neither praise nor blame, neither honors nor punishments are just, if the soul does not have the free power both to desire and to refrain, but vice is involuntary.) Then, after a clause in between that refers back to something said earlier: “**so that, above all, God at least is not to blame for our vice**” (so that above all God may not

be the cause of vice for us). This highly noteworthy closing clause shows in what sense the Church at once took up the problem, and what decision it immediately anticipated as suiting its interest.—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. Here freedom of the will is simply identified with the power of choice, or the decision to choose, and is therefore eagerly asserted and demonstrated. Even so, it is already an airing of the matter.

But we find the fully developed awareness of our problem, with everything connected to it, first in the Church Father **Augustine**. He was far more a theologian than a philosopher, but for this reason he comes into consideration here. At once, however, we see that the problem puts him into marked embarrassment and uncertain wavering. In his three books *De libero arbitrio*, this leads him into inconsistencies and contradictions. On the one hand, he does not want to grant as much to freedom of the will as **Pelagius** did. Doing so would abolish original sin, the need for redemption, and the free election by grace, and so a person could become righteous and worthy of blessedness by their own powers. In the *Argumento in libros de lib. arb. ex Lib. I, c. 9*, *Retractationum desumpto*, he even lets it be understood that he would have said still more for this side of the controversy (which Luther later defended so fiercely) if those books had not been written before **Pelagius** appeared. Against the view of Pelagius he then wrote the book *De natura et gratia*. In the meantime, he already says in *De lib. arb. III, 18*: “But now a human being is not good, and does not have it in their power to be good, either because they do not see what they ought to be, or because they see it and do not will to be what they see they ought to be.” Soon after: “Either through ignorance a person has no free choice of will to choose what to do rightly; or else, when carnal habit resists—a habit that has in some way grown naturally in us through the violent force of mortal succession—they see what should be done rightly, and will it, and cannot carry it out.” And in the *Argumentum* just mentioned: “So unless the will itself is freed by the grace of God from the slavery 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, the following three reasons moved him to defend the freedom of the will:

- ¹ His opposition to the **Manichaeans**. The books *De lib. arb.* are expressly aimed against them, because they denied free will and assumed another original source of evil, and of ills as well. He already alludes to them in the last chapter of the book *De animae quantitate*: “Free choice has been given to the soul. Those who try to shake it with trifling reasonings are so blind that, etc.”
- ² The natural illusion, which I have exposed, by which “I can do what I will” is taken for freedom of the will, and “**voluntary**” is taken to be at once the same as “**free**”: *De lib. arb.* I, 12. “For what lies so fully in the will as the will itself?”
- ³ The need to bring human moral responsibility into agreement with the justice of God. Augustine’s sharp mind did not miss a most serious difficulty here. It is so hard to remove that, as far as I know, all later philosophers except three, whom we will therefore look at more closely in a moment, have preferred to tiptoe quietly around it, as though it did not exist. Augustine, by contrast, states it with noble candor, quite plainly, right in the opening words of the books *De lib. arb.*: “Tell me, please, whether God is not the author of evil?”—And then at greater length, right in the second chapter: “But this troubles the mind: if sins come from these souls that God created, and those souls come

from God, how are sins not traced back to God after only a short step?" The other speaker in the dialogue replies: "What you have just said plainly is what torments me quite enough when I think about it."—**Luther** took up this most troubling reflection again and brought it out with all the vehemence of his eloquence, *De servo arbitrio*, S. 144. "But natural reason itself is forced to admit that God must be one who imposes **necessity** on us through God's own **freedom**.—Once foreknowledge and omnipotence are granted, it follows naturally, by irrefutable consequence, that we were not made by ourselves, and do not live or do anything by ourselves, but through God's omnipotence.—God's foreknowledge and omnipotence stand in direct opposition to our free choice.—All people are forced by inevitable consequence to admit that we do not come to be through our own will but by necessity. So we do not do what we please, by the right of free choice, but as God has foreseen and *acts*, with infallible and unchangeable counsel and power, etc."

At the start of the 17th century we find **Vanini** completely filled with this insight. It is the core and soul of his persistent revolt against theism, which, under the pressure of his time, he hid as cleverly as he could. He comes back to it on every occasion and never tires of setting it out from the most varied points of view. For example, in his *Amphitheatro aeternae providentiae*, exercitatio 16, he says: "If God wills sins, then God does them. For it is written, 'God has done all that God willed.' If God does not will them, they are committed anyway. Then God must be called unforeseeing, or powerless, or cruel, since God either does not know how to get what God wishes, or cannot, or neglects to. ————The philosophers say: if God did not want the worst and most wicked actions to flourish in the world, God would undoubtedly wipe out all shameful deeds and drive them beyond the limits of the world with a single nod. For who among us can resist the divine will? How are crimes committed against God's will, if God even supplies the wicked with strength in the very act of sinning? Besides, if a human being falls against the will of God, God will be inferior to the human being, who opposes God and prevails. From this they conclude: God desires this world just as it is. If God wanted a better one, God would have a better one."—And in exercitatio 44 it says: "An instrument is

moved as its principal agent directs it. But our will, in its workings, stands as an instrument, and God as the principal agent. So if the will works badly, this must be charged to God.——Our will depends wholly on God, not only as to its motion but also as to its substance. So nothing can truly be charged to the will, neither on the side of substance nor of operation. It is all to be charged to God, who has formed the will in this way and moves it in this way.——— Since the essence and the motion of the will come from God, the workings of the will, whether good or bad, must be ascribed to God, if the will stands to God as an instrument.” With **Vanini**, however, one must keep in mind that he uses the same stratagem throughout. In the person of an opponent, he sets out his real opinion as the one he abhors and wants to refute, and he proves it convincingly and thoroughly. Then, in his own person, he opposes it with shallow reasons and lame arguments, and walks off in triumph, *as though a job well done*—counting on the malice of his reader. By this slyness he even fooled the very learned Sorbonne. It took all of that at face value and trustingly put its Imprimatur on his most godless writings. It watched with all the more heartfelt joy when, three years later, he was burned alive, after his blasphemous tongue had first been cut out. For this, after all, is the theologians’ truly powerful argument, and since it has been taken away from them, things have gone very much backward.

Among philosophers in the narrower sense, **Hume** is, if I am not mistaken, the first who did not tiptoe around the heavy difficulty that Augustine first raised. He states it openly, though without mentioning Augustine or Luther, let alone Vanini. It is in his *Essay on liberty and necessity*, where, toward the end, it says: “The ultimate author of all our volitions is the creator of the world. The creator first set this immense machine in motion and placed all beings in that particular position from which every later event must follow by unavoidable necessity. So human actions either can have no wrongness at all, since they come from so good a cause, or, if they do have some wrongness, they must involve *our creator* in the same guilt, since the creator is acknowledged to be their ultimate cause and author. A man who sets off a mine is answerable for all the consequences, whether the fuse he used was long or short. In the same way, wher-

ever a continuous chain of necessary causes is fixed, the Being who produces the first, whether finite or infinite, is also the author of all the rest" *). He makes an attempt to solve this difficulty, but admits at the end that he considers it unsolvable.

*) Some German readers will welcome a translation of this and the other English passages:

"The ultimate author of all our acts of will is the Creator of the world, who first set this immense machine in motion and put all beings into the particular position from which every later event had to follow with unavoidable necessity. For this reason, human actions are either capable of no wickedness at all, because they come from so good a cause; or, if they can be wicked in any way, they involve our Creator in the same guilt, since the Creator is acknowledged to be their ultimate cause, their author. For just as a man who lights a mine is responsible for all the consequences, whether the fuse was long or short, so wherever an unbroken chain of necessarily working causes is fixed, the being, finite or infinite, that brings about the first is also the author of all the rest."

Chapter IV, 3



Kant, too, independently of his predecessors, runs up against 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, after all, that as soon as we assume that God, as the universal original being, is also the **cause** of the **existence of substance**, we must also admit that the actions of a human being have their determining ground in something entirely outside the human being's power. That is, they have it in the causality of a highest being distinct from the human, on which the human's existence and the whole determination of the human's causality depend entirely.—The human being would be a Vaucanson automaton, built and wound up by the supreme master of all works of art. Self-consciousness would indeed make it a thinking automaton. But in it the consciousness of its spontaneity, if that is mistaken for freedom, would be mere illusion. For spontaneity deserves that name only in a comparative sense: the nearest determining causes of its movement, and a long series of them reaching up to their own determining causes, are indeed internal, but the last and highest is found entirely in a foreign hand."—He now tries to remove this great difficulty through the distinction between thing in itself and phenomenon. But this so plainly changes nothing essential in the matter that I am convinced he was not serious about it. He himself also admits that his solution falls short, S. 184, where he adds: "But is any other solution, whether one that has been tried or one that may yet be tried, easier and more graspable? One

might rather say that the dogmatic teachers of metaphysics have shown more **cunning** than honesty in this, by keeping this difficult point out of sight as far as possible, in the hope that if they never spoke of it, probably no one would easily think of it.”

After this very noteworthy collection of highly different voices, which all say the same thing, I return to our Church Father. The reasons by which he hopes to remove the difficulty, which he already felt in its full weight, are theological, not philosophical. So they are not unconditionally valid. Supporting them is, as I said, the third reason, in addition to the two given above, why he tries to defend a *free choice* granted to human beings by God. Such a free choice, since it would stand in the middle and separate the Creator from the sins of the creature, would really be enough to remove the whole difficulty. That is so, if only it also remained at least **conceivable** under serious and deeper reflection. It is easily said in words, and it may satisfy thinking that goes hardly further than words. But how are we to picture that a being that is, in its whole *existence* and *essence*, the work of another can nevertheless determine itself from the very beginning and from the ground up, and so be responsible for its doing? The principle “*action follows being*”—that is, the effects of every being follow from its nature—overturns that assumption, but is itself unshakable. If a person acts badly, it is because they are bad. But a corollary attaches to that principle: *therefore the place where a being’s existence comes from is the place where its action comes from*. What would we say of a watchmaker who was angry at their watch because it ran wrong? However much we might like to make the will a *blank slate*, we cannot avoid admitting the following. Suppose, for example, that of two people one follows a way of acting, in moral terms, that is quite the opposite of the other’s. This difference must come from somewhere. Its ground lies either in outward circumstances, in which case the guilt clearly does not fall on the people, or in an original difference in their wills themselves. In that case too, guilt and merit again do not fall on them, if their whole being and nature is the work of another. The great men I have named have strained in vain to find a way out of this labyrinth. So I readily admit that to think the moral responsibility of the human will without its self-existence also goes beyond my power of

understanding. Without doubt the same inability dictated the seventh of the eight definitions with which **Spinoza** opens his Ethics: “That thing will be called free which exists from the necessity of its own nature alone and is determined to act by itself alone. But a thing is called necessary, or rather compelled, if it is determined by another to exist and to act.”

If a bad action springs from the nature of the human being, that is, from the inborn constitution, then the guilt clearly lies with the author of this nature. That is why the free will was invented. But from what the action is then supposed to spring, once free will is assumed, is absolutely impossible to see. For free will is at bottom a merely **negative** property. It says only that nothing compels the person or hinders them from acting this way or that. But that never makes clear **what** the action finally springs from. It is not supposed to come from the person’s inborn or created constitution, because then it would fall on their Creator. Nor is it supposed to come from outward circumstances alone, because then it would have to be put down to chance. So in any case the person would stay blameless—while they are nevertheless held responsible for it. The natural picture of a free will is an unloaded scale. It hangs there calmly and will never leave its balance unless something is put into one of its pans. A free will can no more produce an action out of itself than the scale can produce movement out of itself, because nothing comes from nothing. If the scale is to sink to one side, a foreign body must be laid on it, and that body is then the source of the movement. In the same way, the human action must be produced by something that works **positively** and is something more than a merely **negative** freedom. But this can be only one of two things. Either the motives do it in and of themselves, that is, the outward circumstances. Then the person is clearly not responsible for the action, and all people would also have to act exactly alike in equal circumstances. Or else the action springs from the person’s receptiveness to such motives, and so from the inborn character, that is, from the inclinations originally dwelling in the person, which can differ from one individual to another and by virtue of which the motives work. But then the will is no longer free. For these inclinations are the weight laid in the scale’s pan. The

responsibility falls back on whoever put them there, that is, on whoever's work the person with such inclinations is. So a person is responsible for their doing only if they are their own work, that is, have self-existence.

The whole view of the matter set out here lets us gauge how much hangs on freedom of the will. It forms an indispensable gulf between the Creator and the sins of the creature. That makes it understandable why the theologians hold on to it so stubbornly. It also explains why their shield-bearers, the philosophy professors, dutifully support them so eagerly in this. Deaf and blind to the most conclusive counterproofs of great thinkers, they hold on to free will and fight for it *as for their altars and hearths*.

But to close my account of **Augustine** at last, which I interrupted above: his opinion as a whole is that the human being really had a fully free will only before the Fall. After the Fall, having come under original sin, the human being must hope for salvation from election by grace and from redemption.—That is speaking just like a Church Father.

Chapter IV, 4



In the meantime, **Augustine** and his dispute with the Manichaeans and the Pelagians had awakened philosophy to an awareness of our problem. From then on the Scholastics gradually saw it more clearly, as **Buridan's** sophism and the passage from **Dante** quoted above show.—But the first to get to the bottom of the matter was, by all appearances, **Thomas Hobbes**. He devoted a work specially to this subject, *Quaestiones de libertate et necessitate, contra Doctorem Branbhallum*, which appeared in 1656. It is rare now. In English it can be found in *Th. Hobbes moral and political works*, one volume in folio, London 1750, S. 469 ff. I give the following main passage from it. S. 483:

- ⁶ Nothing takes a beginning from itself. It begins from the action of some other immediate agent outside itself. So when a person first has an appetite or will for something that they had no appetite or will for just before, the cause of that will is not the will itself but something else, which is not theirs to command. Now there is no dispute that the will is the necessary cause of voluntary actions. And what has just been said shows that the will is itself necessarily *caused* by other things, which it does not control. It follows that voluntary actions all have necessary causes, and therefore are *necessitated*.
- ⁷ I hold *a cause* to be *sufficient* when nothing is missing that is needed to produce the *effect*. Such a cause is also a *necessary* cause. For suppose it were possible for a *sufficient* cause not to bring forth its *effect*. Then something needed to pro-

duce the effect would be missing, 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. From this it is clear that whatever is produced is produced *necessarily*. For whatever is produced has had a *sufficient* cause to produce it; otherwise it would not have come to be. And so *voluntary* actions are *necessitated* as well.

- 8 The ordinary definition of a free agent (namely, that a free agent is one that, when all the things needed to produce the effect are present, can nevertheless fail to produce it) contains a contradiction and is nonsense. It is the same as saying that the cause may be *sufficient*, that is, *necessary*, and yet the effect not follow.—

S. 485. Every event, however much a matter of chance it may seem, and however *voluntary* it may be, is produced *necessarily* *).

*) 6. Nothing starts by itself. Each thing starts through the working of some other, immediate cause that lies outside it. So when a person now wishes or wants something that they neither wished nor wanted just before, the cause of their wanting is not this wanting itself but something else, something that does not depend on them. Now the will is, beyond dispute, the necessary cause of voluntary actions. And, according to what was just said, the will is necessarily caused by other things that are independent of it. It follows that all voluntary actions have **necessary** causes, and so are **necessitated**.

- 7 I recognize as a **sufficient** cause one that lacks nothing needed to bring about its effect. Such a cause is at the same time a **necessary** cause. For if it were possible for a **sufficient** cause not to bring about its effect, then it would have to have lacked something needed to bring that effect about. But then the cause was not **sufficient**. And if it is impossible for a **sufficient** cause not to bring about its effect, then a **sufficient** cause is also a **necessary** cause. From this it plainly follows that everything that is brought about is brought about **necessarily**. For everything that has been brought about had a **sufficient** cause that brought it about; otherwise it would never have come into being. So **voluntary** actions are necessitated too.

⁸ That common definition of a free agent (namely, that it would be something which, even when everything needed to bring about the effect is present, could still **fail** to bring it about) contains a contradiction and is nonsense. For it says that a cause can be **sufficient**, that is, **necessary**, and the effect can still fail to appear.

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

In his famous book *De cive*, c. 1, § 7, he says: Everyone is driven to pursue what is good for them and to flee what is bad for them, and above all the greatest of natural evils, which is death; and this happens by a necessity of nature no less than the necessity by which a stone is driven downward.

Right after **Hobbes** we see **Spinoza** filled with the same conviction. A few passages will be enough to show what his teaching on this point is:

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

Ibid., P. II, scholium ultimum. As for the fourth objection (about Buridan’s ass), I say that I fully grant this: a person placed in such a balance (that is, one who perceives nothing but thirst and hunger and a certain food and a certain drink, both equally far from them) will die of hunger and thirst.

Ibid., P. III, prop. 2. Schol. The decisions of the mind arise in the mind by the same necessity as the ideas of things that actually exist. So those who believe they speak or keep silent, or do anything at all, from a free decision of the mind are dreaming with their eyes open.—Epist. 62. Each thing is necessarily determined by some external cause to exist and to act in a certain fixed way. For example, a stone receives from an external cause that pushes it a certain quantity of motion, with which it will necessarily keep moving afterward. Now imagine that the stone, while it keeps moving, thinks and knows that it is trying, as much as it can, to keep moving. This stone is conscious only of its own effort and is not at all indifferent. So it will believe that it is perfectly free and that it stays in motion for no other reason than that it wants to. And this is that human freedom which everyone boasts of having, and which consists in this

alone: that people are conscious of their appetite and ignorant of the causes that determine them.—With this I have explained well enough what my opinion is about free and compelled necessity, and about the invented human freedom.

A remarkable fact, however, is that **Spinoza** reached this insight only in his last years (that is, in his forties). Earlier, in 1665, when he was still a Cartesian, he had firmly and warmly defended the opposite opinion in his *Cogitata metaphysica*, c. 12. In direct contradiction to the final scholium of Part II just quoted, he had even said this about Buridan's sophism: If we put a human being in the place of the ass, in such a balance, that human being must be regarded not as a thinking creature but as the most disgraceful of asses, if they die of hunger and thirst.

I will have to report the same change of opinion and conversion about two other great men further below. This proves how difficult and deeply hidden the right insight into our problem is.

Hume, in his *Essay on liberty and necessity*, from which I already had to quote a passage above, writes with the clearest conviction that individual acts of will are necessary once the motives are given. He presents this very plainly, in his usual manner, which everyone can follow. He says: So it appears 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. And further on: It seems almost impossible, then, to take part in science or in action of any kind without accepting the doctrine of necessity and this inference from motives to voluntary actions, from character to conduct*).

*) "So 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."———"So it seems almost impossible to undertake anything, whether in science or in actions of any kind, without accepting the doctrine of necessity and that inference from motives to acts of will, from character to way of acting."

Chapter IV, 5



But no writer has shown the necessity of acts of will as fully and as convincingly as **Priestley**, in his work devoted entirely to this subject: *The Doctrine of philosophical necessity*. Anyone who is not convinced by this book, which is written with great clarity and is easy to follow, must have an understanding truly paralyzed by prejudice. To show what his results are, I give a few passages, which I cite from the second edition, Birmingham 1782.

Preface S. XX. There is no absurdity more glaring to my understanding than the notion of philosophical liberty.—S. 26. Without a miracle, or the intervention of some foreign cause, no volition or action of any person could have been other 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 this force does upon a stone.—S. 43. Saying that the will is *self-determined* gives no idea at all, or rather it implies an absurdity, namely that a *determination*, which is an *effect*, takes place without any cause at all. For leaving out everything that comes under the name of *motive*, there is really nothing left to produce the determination. Let a person use whatever *words* they please, they can have no more *conception* of how we can sometimes be determined by motives and sometimes without any motive, than they can have of a scale sometimes being 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 be *nothing* with respect to the scale.—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 person, indeed, who reproaches themselves for some particular action in their past conduct may imagine that if they were in the same situation again, they would act differently. But this is a mere *deception*. If they examine themselves strictly and take in all the circumstances, they may be satisfied that, with the same inward disposition of mind and exactly the same view of things that they had then, leaving out all the others they have acquired by reflection *since*, they could not have acted otherwise than they 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 glaring 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 differently from the way it did turn out.”—S. 37. “Although an inclination or state of my mind is not gravity, it still has as sure and necessary an influence and effect on me as that force has on a stone.”—S. 43. “The statement that the will is something that **determines itself** gives no concept at all, or rather contains an absurdity, namely this: that a **determination**, which is an effect, occurs without any cause. For leaving out everything understood by the name **motive**, nothing in fact remains that could produce that determination. Let someone use whatever **words** they like, they can have no more **concept** of our being determined sometimes by motives and sometimes to something without any motives at all, than of a scale being pulled down sometimes by weights and sometimes by a kind of substance that has no weight at all and that, whatever it may be in itself, would be **nothing** with respect to the scale.”—S. 66. “In proper philosophical language the motive should be called the **actual cause** of the action. For it is that as much as anything in nature is the cause of something else.”—S. 84. “It will never be in our power to make two different choices when all previous circumstances are exactly the same.”—S. 90. “Admittedly, a person who reproaches themselves for some particular action in their past life can imagine that if they were in the same position again, they would act differently.

But this is a mere **delusion**. If they examine themselves strictly and take all the circumstances into account, they can convince themselves that, with the same inner state of mind and exactly the same view of things that they had at the time, leaving out all other views gained **since** through reflection, they could not have acted otherwise than they did.”—S. 287. “In short, there is no other choice here than between the doctrine of necessity and absolute nonsense.”

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

*) “I have not, however, been easy to win over 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 carried on about this subject, I eagerly maintained the doctrine of freedom, and in no way gave way to the arguments that were set against me.”

The third great man to whom the same thing happened is **Voltaire**, who reports it with the charm and naive openness that are his own. 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 ends like this: Archimedes is just as necessitated to stay in his room when he is locked in as when he is so deeply absorbed in a problem that the idea of going out does not occur to him:

The fates lead the willing and drag the unwilling.

The ignorant person who thinks this way has not always thought the same way, but is at last forced to give in. In the book that follows, *Le principe d'action*, he says in chap. 13: A ball that pushes another, a hunting dog that runs necessarily

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

That three such eminent minds were converted in the same way to our insight must surely give pause to anyone who sets out to challenge well-founded truths with the “but I can do what I will” of a simple-minded self-consciousness, a remark that has nothing to do with the matter.

Chapter IV, 6



After these nearest predecessors of his, it should not surprise us that **Kant** took the necessity with which motives determine the empirical character to actions as a settled matter. It was settled for him and for others too, so he did not stop to prove it again. He opens his “Ideas toward a Universal History” like this: “Whatever idea one may form, for metaphysical purposes, of the **freedom of the will**, its **appearances**, human actions, are determined by universal laws of nature, just as much as any other natural event.”—In the Critique of Pure Reason (S. 548 of the first edition, or S. 577 of the fifth) he says: “Since the empirical character itself must be drawn from the phenomena as an effect, and from their rule, which experience supplies, all of a person’s actions, as phenomena, are determined by their empirical character and the other causes that work with it, according to the order of nature. And if we could investigate all the phenomena of their power of choice down to the ground, there would be no single human action that we could not predict with certainty and recognize as necessary from its preceding conditions. With respect to this empirical character there is therefore no freedom. And only according to this can we consider a person, if we merely **observe** and, as is done in anthropology, want to investigate the moving causes of their actions physiologically.”—In the same work, S. 798 of the first edition, or S. 826 of the fifth, it says: “Even if the will is free, this can concern only the intelligible cause of our willing. As for the phenomena of its expressions, that is, actions, we must by an inviolable basic maxim, without

which we can use no reason in its empirical use, never explain them otherwise than all the other phenomena of nature, namely by their unchangeable laws.”—Further, in the Critique of Practical Reason, S. 177 of the fourth edition, or S. 230 of Rosenkranz’s: “So we can grant the following. Suppose it were possible for us to have so deep an insight into a person’s way of thinking, as it shows itself in inner as well as outer actions, that every incentive to it, even the slightest, became known to us, and likewise all the outer occasions acting on these incentives. Then one could calculate a person’s future conduct with certainty, just like a lunar or solar eclipse.”

Kant ties to this his doctrine that freedom and necessity can exist together. He bases it on the distinction between the intelligible character and the empirical. I fully accept this view, so I will return to it further below. **Kant** presented it twice: in the Critique of Pure Reason, S. 532–554 of the first edition, or S. 560–582 of the fifth, and still more clearly in the Critique of Practical Reason, S. 169–179 of the fourth edition, or S. 224–231 of Rosenkranz’s. These deeply thought passages must be read by everyone who wants a thorough understanding of how human freedom can be reconciled with the necessity of actions.—

Up to here, this treatment of the subject differs from the achievements of all these noble and venerable predecessors chiefly in two points. First, following the guidance of the prize question, I have kept the inner perception of the will in self-consciousness strictly apart from the outer perception, and considered each by itself. Only this made it possible to uncover the source of the illusion that works so irresistibly on most people. Second, I have considered the will in connection with the whole of the rest of nature. No one before me did that. Only this made it possible to treat the subject with the thoroughness, methodical insight, and completeness of which it is capable.

Now a few words about some writers who wrote after **Kant**, but whom I do not regard as my predecessors.

Schelling has given an explanatory paraphrase of **Kant’s** doctrine of the intelligible and empirical character, which I just praised as highly important. It is in his “Inquiry into Human Freedom,” S. 465–471. The liveliness of its coloring can help make the matter easier for some readers to grasp than Kant’s thorough

but dry presentation can. Still, I cannot mention this paraphrase without protesting, for the honor of truth and of **Kant**. **Schelling** is presenting one of the most important and admirable of all Kant's doctrines, and in my view the most profound. Yet he does not say clearly that what he now sets out belongs to **Kant** as far as its content goes. Instead he words it so that the great majority of readers must suppose they are reading **Schelling's** own thoughts. Most readers do not have the content of the great man's long and difficult works clearly in mind. I will show how well the result has matched this aim with just one example out of many. Even today a young professor of philosophy in 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. So **Schelling** stands to **Kant** in the fortunate position of **Amerigo** to **Columbus**: another's discovery is stamped with his name. But he owes this to his cleverness, not to chance. For he begins, S. 465: "In general, it was **idealism** that first raised the doctrine of freedom into that domain," etc. The Kantian thoughts follow immediately. Honesty would have him say **Kant** here. Instead he cleverly says **idealism**. But this expression has many meanings. Everyone here will understand by it **Fichte's** and **Schelling's** first, Fichtean philosophy, and not **Kant's** doctrine. Kant protested against the name **idealism** for his philosophy (for example Prolegomena, S. 51, and S. 155, Rosenkranz). He even inserted a "Refutation of Idealism" into the second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason, S. 274. On the following page **Schelling** very cleverly mentions "the Kantian concept" in a passing phrase. This is to soothe those who already know that the wealth being unpacked so grandly here as his own goods is Kant's. But then, S. 472, against all truth and justice, he even says that **Kant** had not risen to that view in theory, etc. Yet anyone can see clearly from the two immortal passages of **Kant** that I recommended above for reading that precisely this view belongs originally to him alone. Without Kant, a thousand more heads like Messrs. **Fichte** and **Schelling** would never have been able to grasp it. Since I had to speak here of **Schelling's** treatise, I could not stay silent on this point. I have only done my duty toward that great teacher of humanity, who, quite alone beside **Goethe**, is the rightful pride of the German nation. I

have claimed for him what undeniably belongs to him alone. This matters all the more in an age to which **Goethe's** saying truly applies: "the crowd of boys is master of the road."—Besides, in the same treatise **Schelling** had just as little hesitation in making the thoughts, and even the words, of **Jakob Böhme** his own, without revealing his source.

Apart from this paraphrase of Kant's thoughts, that "Inquiry into Freedom" contains nothing that could give us new or thorough clarification about freedom. The definition right at the start already announces this: freedom is "a capacity for good and evil." Such a definition may suit the catechism. In philosophy it says nothing, and so nothing can be done with it. For good and evil are far from being simple concepts (*notiones simplices*) that are clear in themselves and need no explanation, pinning down, or grounding. In general, only a small part of that treatise is about freedom. Its main content is a detailed report about a God with whom the author shows intimate acquaintance, since he even describes God's origin for us. It is only a pity that he does not say in a single word how he came by this acquaintance. The treatise begins with a web of sophisms. Anyone who does not let the boldness of the tone intimidate them will see how shallow they are.

Since then, as a result of this work and others like it, "intellectual intuition" and "absolute thinking" have taken the place of clear concepts and honest inquiry in German philosophy. Impressing, bewildering, and mystifying people, and throwing sand in the reader's eyes by all sorts of tricks, has become the method. All the way through, intention rather than insight guides the presentation. Because of all this, philosophy—if one still wants to call it that—has had to sink more and more, and ever deeper. At last it reached the lowest step of degradation in the minister's creature **Hegel**. He wanted to smother again the freedom of thought that **Kant** had won. So he made philosophy, the daughter of reason and future mother of truth, into a tool of the state's purposes, of obscurantism, and of Protestant Jesuitism. And to hide the disgrace, and at the same time to dull people's heads as much as possible, he drew over it the cloak of the emptiest word-mongering and the most senseless gibberish ever heard, at least outside the madhouse.

Chapter IV, 7



In England and France, philosophy, taken as a whole, still stands almost where **Locke** and **Condillac** left it. **Maine de Byran**, called “the foremost French metaphysician of my time” by his editor, Mr. **Cousin**, is a fanatical believer in *freedom of choice through indifference* in his *Nouvelles considérations du physique et moral*, which appeared in 1834. He takes it as something that goes entirely without saying. Some recent German philosophical scribblers do no differently. Under the name “moral freedom,” *freedom of choice through indifference* appears in their writing as a settled matter, just as if all the great men cited above had never existed. They declare the freedom of the will to be given directly in self-consciousness. They say this settles it so firmly that all arguments against it can be nothing but sophisms. This lofty confidence comes simply from the fact that these good people do not know what freedom of the will is and means. In their innocence they understand by it nothing other than the control of the will over the limbs of the body, which we analyzed in our second section. No reasonable person has ever doubted that control, and “I can do what I will” is exactly its expression. This, they honestly think, is freedom of the will, and they insist that it is beyond all doubt. It is precisely this state of innocence to which Hegelian philosophy, after so many great predecessors, has set the German thinking mind back. To people of this stamp one could indeed call out:

“Are you not like women, who always
Go back to nothing but their first word,
When someone has spoken sense for hours on end?”

Still, with some of them the theological motives hinted at above may be quietly at work.

And then there are the medical, zoological, historical, political, and literary writers of our day. How very eagerly they seize every chance to mention “the freedom of man” and “moral freedom”! They think it makes them somebody. They do not go into an explanation of it, of course. But if we were allowed to examine them, we would find that by it they mean either nothing at all or our old, honest, well-known *freedom of choice through indifference*, however grand the phrases they dress it in. Convincing the great crowd that this concept cannot stand will probably never succeed. But scholars should take care not to speak of it with so much innocence. That is also why some of them are timid, and very amusing. They no longer dare to speak of freedom of the **will**. To be refined, they say “freedom of the **spirit**” instead and hope to slip through with it. Fortunately I can tell the reader who looks at me with that question what they are thinking by it. Nothing, absolutely nothing—except that, in good German fashion and art, it is an undecided, indeed really empty expression. It gives their emptiness and cowardice a welcome refuge for slipping away. The word “spirit” is really a figurative expression. Everywhere it means the **intellectual** faculties, as opposed to the will. But these faculties are by no means supposed to be free in their working. They must first adapt, bend, and submit themselves to the rules of logic. Then they must do so to the particular **object** of their knowing in each case. That way they grasp purely, that is, **objectively**, and it is never said, “*will stands in place of reason.*” In general, this “spirit” that roams about everywhere in present-day German literature is a thoroughly suspicious fellow. Wherever he is caught, one should ask him for his passport. His most frequent trade is to serve as a mask for poverty of thought joined with cowardice. Besides, the word **Geist** is known to be related to the word **gas**. Gas

comes from Arabic and alchemy and means vapor or air. In the same way spiritus (breath), pneuma (breath, wind), and animus (soul) are related to anemon (winds).

That, then, is how things stand on our subject in the philosophical world and in the wider learned world, after everything the great minds I have named have taught about it. This confirms once more that nature has at all times produced only very few real thinkers, as rare exceptions. It also confirms that these few themselves have always existed for only very few people. That is exactly why delusion and error keep their rule continually.—

On a moral subject the testimony of the great poets also carries weight. They do not speak after systematic inquiry, but human nature lies open to their deep gaze. So what they say strikes the truth directly.—In **Shakespeare**, *Measure for measure*, A. 2, Sc. 2, Isabella begs the regent Angelo for mercy for her brother, who has been condemned to death:

Angelo. I will not do it.

Isab. But can you if you would?

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

In *Twelfth night*, A. 1, it says:

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

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

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

What is meant to be must happen, and no one belongs to themselves.

Walter Scott too, that great connoisseur and painter of the human heart and its most secret stirrings, has brought this deep-lying truth clearly into daylight, in his *St. Ronans Well*, Vol. 3, chap. 6. He portrays a dying, repentant female sinner, who tries on her deathbed to ease her tormented conscience with confessions. In the middle 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. Even in my repentance there is a secret whisper telling me that if I were as I have been, I would act over again 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 miserable and abominable creature who ever lived—most abominable to myself. For in the middle of my remorse something whispers to me secretly that if I were again as I have been, I would commit all the wickednesses I have committed once more, and even worse ones besides. Oh, for Heaven’s help, to choke this worthless thought.”

The following fact, which runs parallel to this poetic portrayal, gives evidence for it, and at the same time confirms the doctrine of the constancy of character in the strongest way. In 1845 it passed from the French newspaper *La Presse* into the *Times* of July 2, 1845, and I translate it from there. The headline reads: Military Execution at Oran. “On March 24, the Spaniard Aguilar, *alias* Gomez, was 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, though I have committed only 26. From childhood I thirsted for blood. When I was 7½ years old, I stabbed a child. I murdered a pregnant woman, and later a Spanish officer, and because of that I was forced to flee from Spain. I escaped to France, where I committed two crimes before I entered the Foreign Legion. Of all my crimes, I repent most of the following: In the year 1841, at the head of my company, I took prisoner a deputy commissary general who was escorted by a sergeant, a corporal, and 7 men. I had them all beheaded. The death of these men weighs heavily on me. I see them in my dreams, and tomorrow I will see them in the soldiers ordered to shoot me. **Nevertheless, if I were given my freedom again, I would murder others.**”

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

Arkas: For you have not listened to the advice of loyalty.

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

Arkas: You will still change your mind in time.

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

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

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

Are not like the sea's blindly moving waves.

The inner world, a person's microcosm, is

The deep shaft from which they well up forever.

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

Chance, with its juggling, cannot change them.

Once I have examined a person's core,

Then I also know their willing and their acting."

Chapter V, 1



V. Conclusion and Higher View.

I was glad to recall all those glorious predecessors, poets and philosophers alike, who held the truth I defend. Still, a philosopher's weapons are reasons, not authorities. So I have argued my case with reasons alone, and I hope I have made it so clear that I am now entitled to draw the conclusion *from* "cannot be" to "is not." Earlier, when I examined self-consciousness, I gave a direct and factual answer, and so an *a posteriori* one, denying the question the Royal Society posed. Now that denial is also established indirectly and *a priori*. For something that does not exist at all cannot have any data in self-consciousness from which it could be proved.

The truth I defend here may well be one that runs against the preconceived opinions of the short-sighted crowd. It may even offend the weak and ignorant. That could not stop me from setting it out openly and holding nothing back. After all, I am speaking here not to the people but to an enlightened academy. It did not pose its very timely question to shore up prejudice, but to honor the truth.—Besides, an honest seeker of truth looks only at the grounds of a truth, never at its consequences, as long as the task is still to establish it and make it credible. The time for consequences comes once the truth itself stands firm. To ignore the consequences, to examine only the grounds, and not even to ask first whether a recognized truth agrees with the system of our other convictions—

this is what **Kant** already recommends. I cannot help repeating his words here: “This strengthens a maxim that others have already recognized and praised: in every scientific inquiry, we should go on our way undisturbed, with all possible precision and openness. We should pay no attention to anything outside the field that the inquiry might happen to clash with. Instead, we should carry it out by itself, as truly and completely as we can. Repeated observation has convinced me of this. Halfway through the work, a point sometimes seemed very troubling to me, in view of other doctrines outside it. But once the work was finished, I found that if I had only kept that worry out of sight until then and attended to my work alone, the point agreed perfectly in the end, in an unexpected way, with what had turned up by itself, with no regard at all for those doctrines and without bias or fondness for them. Writers would save themselves many errors and much wasted effort (because it rested on illusion) if they could only decide to go to work with a little more openness.” (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 very far from having such certainty that we should reject a thoroughly proved truth just because its consequences do not fit with other things. On the contrary, every truth that has been won and established is a conquered piece of the whole territory of the problems of knowledge. It is also a firm point on which to set the levers that will move other loads. In favorable cases, it is even a point from which one swings up all at once to a higher view of the whole than one had before. For truths are so closely linked in every field of knowledge that anyone who has taken secure possession of a single one may hope, at the very least, to conquer the whole from there. Take a difficult algebra problem. One quantity that is positively given is priceless, because it makes the solution possible. In the same way, metaphysics is the most difficult of all human tasks. In it, the certain knowledge—proved *a priori* and *a posteriori*—of the strict necessity with which actions follow from a given character and given motives is just such a priceless given fact. Starting from it alone, one can reach the solution of the whole problem. So anything that cannot show firm scientific backing must give way to such a well-

founded truth wherever it stands in its path. The truth must not give way to it. It must never agree to compromises and limits just to bring itself into line with claims that are unproved and perhaps mistaken.

Let me make one more general remark. Looking back at our result, we can see something about the two problems that the previous section already named as the deepest in modern philosophy, though the ancients were not clearly aware of them. They are the problem of freedom of the will and the problem of the relation between the ideal and the real. On both, the healthy but unrefined understanding is not only unqualified to judge. It even has a definite natural tendency toward error, and it takes a philosophy that is already far advanced to bring it back. When it comes to **knowing**, it is really natural for the understanding to credit the **object** with far too much. That is why **Locke** and **Kant** were needed, to show how much of it comes from the subject. When it comes to **willing**, it has the opposite tendency: it credits the **object** with far too little and the **subject** with far too much. It lets willing come wholly from **the subject**. It fails to count properly the factor that lies in the **object**, the motives. Yet the motives really determine the whole individual character of actions, while only what is general and essential in them, their basic moral character, comes from the **subject**. We should not be surprised by such a natural perversity of the understanding in speculative inquiry. It was originally meant only for practical purposes, and not at all for speculative ones. —

Our account so far has shown that all freedom of human action is completely removed, and that action is subject throughout to the strictest necessity. That very result has led us to the point where we will be able to grasp **true moral freedom**, which is of a higher kind.

Chapter V, 2



There is one more fact of consciousness that I have so far left entirely aside, so as not to disturb the course of the inquiry. This is the completely clear and certain feeling of **responsibility** for what we do, of **being accountable** for our actions. It rests on the unshakable certainty that we ourselves are **the doers of our** deeds. Because of this awareness, it never occurs to anyone to excuse a wrongdoing by this necessity and to shift the guilt from themselves onto the motives, on the grounds that once the motives appeared the deed could not fail to happen. This is true even of someone who is fully convinced of the necessity, set out above, with which our actions occur. For such a person sees very well that this necessity has a **subjective** condition. They see that, *objectively*, a quite different action was entirely possible under the given circumstances, that is, under the influence of the motives that determined them. It could even have been exactly the opposite of theirs, and it could have happened, **if only they had been a different person**. That alone was the cause. For them, because they are this person and no other, because they have this particular character, no other action was possible. But in itself, that is, *objectively*, it was possible. So the **responsibility** they are aware of falls, first of all and on the surface, only on the deed. At bottom, however, it falls on **their character**. For **that character** they feel responsible. And others, too, hold them responsible for **it**. 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.”

That is their verdict, and their reproaches come back to his **character**. The deed, together with the motive, counts here only as evidence of the doer's character. But it is taken as a sure symptom of that character, by which the person is fixed irrevocably and for good. Aristotle therefore says, very rightly: "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 that kind of person."—*Rhetorica*, I, 9. (*We celebrate with praise those who have acted; deeds are signs of a habit; for we would also praise one who had not acted, if we believed him to be such.*) So hatred, disgust, and contempt are aimed not at the passing deed but at the lasting qualities of the doer, that is, at the character from which the deed came. That is why, in all languages, the words that name moral badness, the insulting names for it, are predicates of the **person** rather than of the actions. They are attached to the **character**. For the character has to bear the guilt, of which it was convicted merely on the occasion of the deeds.

Where the **guilt** lies, the **responsibility** must lie too. This responsibility is the only fact that entitles us to infer moral freedom. So the **freedom** must lie in the same place: in a person's **character**. This is all the more so because we have convinced ourselves sufficiently that freedom cannot be found directly in individual actions, since these occur with strict necessity once the character is given. And the character, as was shown in the third section, is inborn and unchangeable.

So we want to look somewhat more closely at freedom in this sense, the only one for which there is any evidence. We have inferred it from a fact of consciousness and found where it is located. Now we want to understand it philosophically as well, as far as that may be possible.

The third section showed that every human action is the product of two factors: the person's character and the motive. This does not mean at all that the action is something in between, a kind of compromise between the motive and the character. It satisfies both fully, because its whole possibility rests on both at once. That is, it rests on the fact that the acting motive meets this character, and that this character can be determined by such a motive. The character is the lasting and unchangeable nature of an individual will, as it is known

through experience. This character is as necessary a factor in every action as the motive is. That explains the feeling that our deeds come from ourselves, the “I will” that accompanies all our actions. Because of it, everyone must acknowledge their actions as **their own** deeds, and so feels morally responsible for them. This is again the very “I will, and I always will only what I will” that we found earlier, when we examined self-consciousness. It misleads the unrefined understanding into stubbornly asserting an absolute freedom to do or not to do, a *free choice of indifference*. But it is nothing more than the awareness of the second factor of the action. By itself, this factor would be quite unable to bring the action about. But when the motive appears, it is just as unable to refrain from it. Only when it is set in motion in this way does it reveal its own nature to the faculty of knowledge. That faculty is directed essentially outward, not inward. It learns even the nature of its own will only from experience, from the will’s actions. This closer acquaintance, which keeps growing more intimate, is what we really call **conscience**. For that very reason, conscience speaks up **directly** only **after** the action. **Before** the action it speaks at most **indirectly**. Through reflection and a look back at similar cases on which it has already pronounced, it can be counted in our deliberation as something that will come later.

This is the place to recall the account that **Kant** gave of the relation between the empirical and the intelligible character, and through it of how freedom can be reconciled with necessity. I already mentioned it in the previous section. It is among the most beautiful and profound things that this great mind, indeed that any human beings, have ever produced. I need only refer to it, since it would be needless length to repeat it here. But only from it can we understand, as far as human powers allow, how the strict necessity of our actions can still exist alongside the freedom to which the feeling of responsibility bears witness. By virtue of this freedom we are the doers of our deeds, and the deeds are morally to be charged to us.—This relation of the empirical to the intelligible character, as **Kant** set it out, rests entirely on what forms the basic feature of his whole philosophy: the distinction between phenomenon and thing in itself. In his system, the complete **empirical reality** of the world of experience exists

alongside its **transcendental ideality**. In the same way, the strict **empirical necessity** of action exists alongside its **transcendental freedom**. The empirical character, like the whole human being, is a mere phenomenon, as an object of experience. So it is 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 is the person's **intelligible character**. That is, it is the person's will as thing in itself. As a thing in itself, it is independent of those forms, and so not subject to any difference of time. It is therefore lasting and unchangeable. In that capacity it does have absolute freedom, that is, independence from the law of causality (which is a mere form of phenomena). But this freedom is **transcendental**. That is, it does not show up in the phenomenon. It exists only to the extent that we set aside the phenomenon and all its forms, in order to reach what must be thought of, outside all time, as the inner essence of the human being in itself. By virtue of this freedom, all of a person's deeds are their own work, however necessarily they follow 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**, which is bound to time, space, and causality. In other words, it is the way the essence in itself of our own self presents itself to that faculty. Accordingly, the **will** is free, but only in itself and outside the phenomenon. In the phenomenon it already presents itself with a definite character, to which all its deeds must conform. And so, once the motives that come along determine it more closely, those deeds must turn out necessarily this way and no other.

Chapter V, 3



As is easy to see, this path leads to the conclusion that we must no longer look for the work of our **freedom** in our individual actions, as the common view does. We must look for it in the whole being and essence of the human being (*existence and essence*). That being must be thought of as the person's free act. For the faculty of knowledge, which is tied to time, space, and causality, this act presents itself only as a multitude and variety of actions. But the original unity of what presents itself in them means that all of them must bear exactly the same character. So they appear strictly determined by necessity through the motives of the moment, which call them forth and fix them in detail. Therefore, for the world of experience, the rule that *action follows being* holds without exception. Every thing acts according to its nature, and its acting, which follows on causes, makes that nature known. Every person acts according to what they are. The action that is necessary on that basis is determined, in the individual case, by the motives alone. So **freedom**, which cannot be found in *action*, **must lie in being**. It has been a basic error in every age, a putting of the later before the earlier, to assign necessity to *being* and freedom to *action*. It is the other way around. **Freedom lies in being alone**. But from being and the motives, *action* follows with necessity. And **from what we do, we recognize what we are**. On this, and not on the supposed *free choice of indifference*, rest the awareness of responsibility and the moral tendency of life. Everything depends on what a person **is**. What they **do** will follow from that by itself, as a

necessary consequence. Despite their dependence on motives, all our deeds are undeniably accompanied by an awareness of acting by our own power and as the original source of what we do. This awareness is what makes them **our** deeds, and it does not deceive us. But its true content reaches further than the deeds and begins higher up. For our being and essence itself, from which all deeds necessarily proceed (on the occasion of the motives), is truly included in it. In this sense, we can compare that awareness of acting by our own power and as the original source, and likewise the awareness of responsibility that accompanies our acting, to a pointer. It points to an object farther away than the nearer one lying in the same direction, which it seems to point to.

In a word: a human being always does only what they will, and yet does it necessarily. The reason is that they already **are** what they will. For everything they do at any time follows necessarily from what they **are**. If we look at their doing *objectively*, that is, from outside, we recognize with absolute certainty that it must be subject to the law of causality in its full strictness, like the working of every natural being. *Subjectively*, however, everyone feels that they always do only what they **will**. But this says merely that their acting is the pure expression of their own essence. So every natural being would feel the same, even the lowest, if it could feel.

So my account has not abolished **freedom**. It has only moved it out of the area of individual actions, where it demonstrably cannot be found, and up into a higher region that is not so easily reached by our knowledge. That is, freedom is transcendental. This is also the sense in which I would like Malebranche's saying, "*Freedom is a mystery*," to be understood. Under its shield the present treatise has tried to solve the task set by the Royal Society.

Appendix, 1



Appendix, to Supplement the First Section.

At the very beginning I divided freedom into physical, intellectual, and moral freedom. The first and the last have now been dealt with. So I still have to discuss the second, intellectual freedom. I do this only for the sake of completeness, and so I will be brief.

The intellect, or the faculty of knowledge, is the **medium of motives**. Motives act on the will through it, and the will is the real core of a human being. The will can decide according to its own nature, that is, according to the person's individual character, only if this medium is in a normal state. The medium must do its work properly. It must present the motives to the will for its choice unaltered, exactly as they exist in the real outer world. Only then can the will express itself **without hindrance**, in line with its own essence. In that case the person is **intellectually free**. That is, their actions are the pure result of their will's reaction to motives that exist in the outer world for them just as they do for everyone else. And then the actions can be attributed to them, both morally and legally.

This intellectual freedom is **removed** in one of two ways. In the first, the medium of motives, the faculty of knowledge, is disordered, either permanently or only for a while. In the second, outside circumstances falsify how the motives are grasped in a particular case. The first happens in madness, delirium,

paroxysms, and sleep-drunkenness. The second happens with a definite error that is not the person's fault. For example, someone pours poison instead of medicine. Or someone takes a servant who enters at night for a robber and shoots him. And the like. In both cases the motives are falsified. So the will cannot decide as it would under the circumstances if the intellect had handed the motives over to it correctly. Crimes committed in such circumstances are therefore also not punishable by law. The laws start from a correct assumption. The will, they assume, is not morally free, because in that case it could not be **steered**. Instead it is subject to compulsion by motives. Accordingly, the laws want to set stronger counter-motives, in the form of the punishments they threaten, against any motives there may be for crimes. A criminal code is nothing other than a list of counter-motives to criminal acts. But suppose it turns out that the intellect, through which these counter-motives had to work, was unable to take them in and hold them before the will. Then they could not have any effect. For the will they did not exist. It is like finding that one of the threads meant to set a machine moving has snapped. In such a case the fault passes from the will to the intellect. But the intellect is not subject to any punishment. The laws, like morality, deal only with the will. It alone is the real human being. The intellect is merely its organ, its feelers toward the outside. That is, it is the medium through which motives act on the will.

Nor, in the same way, can such deeds be attributed to a person **morally**. They are not a trait of the person's character. Either they did something other than what they thought they were doing, or they were unable to think of what should have held them back, that is, to admit the counter-motives. It is like what happens when a substance that is to be tested chemically is exposed to the action of several reagents, to see which one it has the strongest affinity for. Suppose that after the experiment we find that, because of some accidental obstacle, one reagent could not act at all. Then the experiment is invalid.

The intellectual freedom that we have just treated as completely removed can also be merely **reduced**, or removed in part. This happens especially through emotion and through intoxication. **Emotion** is the sudden, violent excitement of the will by a representation that pushes in from outside and becomes a

motive. This representation is so vivid that it darkens all the others that could work against it as counter-motives, and does not let them come clearly into consciousness. These other representations are mostly abstract in nature, mere thoughts, while the first is something perceptual and present. So the counter-motives do not, as it were, get a shot off. They do not get what in English is called *fair play*. The deed is already done before they could act against it. It is as if, in a duel, one man fires before the command is given. So here too both legal and moral responsibility are removed, depending on the circumstances, to a greater or lesser degree, but always only in part. In England a murder committed in complete haste, without the slightest reflection, in the most violent and suddenly aroused anger, is called *manslaughter*. It is punished lightly, and sometimes not at all.—**Intoxication** is a state that predisposes a person to emotions. It raises the vividness of perceptual representations, weakens thinking *in the abstract*, and also increases the energy of the will. Here, in place of responsibility for the deeds, responsibility for the intoxication itself takes over. That is why intoxication is not excused in law, even though intellectual freedom is partly removed here.

Aristotle already speaks of this intellectual freedom, “*the voluntary and the involuntary with respect to thought*,” 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.—This is the freedom meant when *forensic medicine* and criminal justice ask whether a criminal was in a state of freedom, and was therefore accountable for their acts.

In general, then, we should regard as committed in the absence of intellectual freedom all those crimes in which the person either did not know what they were doing, or was simply unable to consider what should have held them back, namely the consequences of the deed. In such cases, then, they are not to be punished.

Some people, by contrast, think that no criminal should be punished, simply because **moral** freedom does not exist and so all the actions of any given person are inevitable. These people start from a false view of punishment. They think punishment is a penalty sent down on crimes for their own sake, a repaying of

evil with evil, on moral grounds. But such a thing, even though Kant taught it, would be absurd, pointless, and entirely unjustified. For how could anyone have the right to set themselves up as the absolute judge of another person in moral matters, and as such to torment that person for their sins! Rather, the law, that is, the threat of punishment, has the purpose of being the counter-motive to crimes not yet committed. If it fails to have this effect in a particular case, it must be carried out. Otherwise it would fail in all future cases as well. In that case the criminal, for their part, really suffers the punishment because of their moral nature. That nature, together with the circumstances that were the motives, and with their intellect, which held out to them the false hope of escaping punishment, unavoidably brought about the deed. They could be wronged in this only if their moral character were not their own work, their intelligible deed, but the work of someone else. The relation of the deed to its consequence is the same when the consequences of their vicious conduct come about not by human laws but by laws of nature. One example is when dissolute debauchery brings on terrible diseases. Another is when they come to grief by accident while attempting a burglary. For instance, they break into a pigsty at night to carry off its usual occupant. Instead of the pig they find the bear whose handler stopped at this inn that evening, and the bear comes toward them with open arms.