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RESEÑA

Kant on Freedom of the Will and the Development of Classical German Philosophy

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With the present translation volume, J. Noller and J. Walsh have undoubtedly rendered a service to any scholar interested to delve into Kant's theory of free will from a historical and a systematic perspective. The core of the volume consists of two major parts. First, a detailed introduction by the editors which – in addition to introducing the translated texts – encompasses the background figures of eighteenth-century German philosophy who were key to the development and reception of Kant's doctrines on free will (Leibniz, Wolff and Baumgarten, among others) and provides an overview of the main systematic issues in Kant's own account. Second, the main part devoted to the translation – in most cases for the first time – of selected texts from as early as 1786 until 1800. Among the authors of these texts, we find prominent thinkers such as Reinhold, Fichte and Schelling, but also lesser known, although equally subtle and perspicacious figures as for instance Hermann Andreas Pistorius, Johann August Heinrich Ulrich, Carl Christian Erhard Schmid or Salomon Maimon.

This main part is in turn divided thematically in five sections which are to reflect the major topics discussed in the early reception of Kant's theory of freedom: *Freedom and Determinism*, *Freedom and Imputability*, *Freedom and Consciousness*, *Freedom and Skepticism* and *Freedom and Choice*. In view of the limitations of space that must be observed in this format, I will be focusing only on selected texts from some of these sections which I take to be particularly worth remarking either for intrinsic systematic reasons or in view of current discussions.

A significant criticism against Kant's notion of transcendental freedom as presented in the first *Critique* stems from Hermann Andreas Pistorius, who takes as the basis of his treatment the famous *Elucidations of Professor Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason"* written by Johann Schulze (1784). Pistorius levels one of the formal charges that will become more virulent in figures such as F. H. Jacobi (see e.g. *David Hume über den Glauben oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch*, p. 109) and will be adopted even by the advocates of Critical Philosophy (see, for instance, Schelling's *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie*, AA I,2, 72), namely, that of *inconsistency* (*KFW*, p. 4) or *self-contradictoriness*.[2] In Pistorius' case, this formal charge is applied to, amongst others, two different aspects of Kant's notion of transcendental freedom as a form of causality. On the one hand, even the hypothetically posited thought of attributing freedom – and thus a form of causality – to reason represents according to Pistorius a violation of Kant's own Critical prescription of restricting the use of the concepts of the understanding to the field of experience. This charge is well known to contemporary Kant scholars and is also famously formulated one year later (1787) by the above-mentioned Jacobi (*David Hume über den Glauben*, pp. 108–112). On the other hand, Pistorius attacks the *internal* consistency of the very concept of transcendental freedom as the capacity (*Vermögen*) to begin a new state (see *CPR*, A 533/B 561) by observing that such a freedom, insofar as it entails the notion of beginning, "seems to presuppose temporal determinations, which it is also supposed to exclude" (*KFW*, p. 6).

The present volume itself documents the impact this criticism had within the Kant reception: in the translation from Karl Heinrich Heydenreich's *On Moral Freedom* we find Heydenreich's attempt to avoid this

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2 The acronym *KFW* stands for the book reviewed here: *Kant's Early Critics on Freedom of the Will*. Throughout this text, I will refer to the work reviewed by this acronym.

issue pointed out by Pistorius followed by the remark: "I have not deviated from this definition (of freedom in the cosmological sense, S. C.) for no reason. The representation of *beginning* obviously contradicts the concept of freedom" (*KFW*, p. 128). However, it is to my mind debatable to what extent Heydenreich succeeds in this attempt. In fact, Heydenreich's preferred variant, namely the notion of "new states", still seems to be subject to Pistorius' objection since identifying something as *new* entails the admission that it did not exist *before* and thus still implies temporal determinations.

A noteworthy systematic attempt to bring logical clarity into this debate is the one undertaken by the Leibnizian-Wolffian professor for moral philosophy at Jena Johann August Heinrich Ulrich in his *Eleutheriology* (1788). Ulrich determines the logical relation between the concepts of necessity and chance and therefore between the doctrines of determinism and indeterminism as that of a *contradiction* and infers from this that the principle *tertium non datur* applies to them, which he puts in his famous wording "there is absolutely no middle path between necessity and chance" (*KFW*, p. 12). This claim will be taken up by C. C. E. Schmid in his *Attempt at a Moral Philosophy* from 1790 and considered as 'unattacked, undoubted by any reasonable person and unrefuted' (*KFW*, p. 77 footnote). A distinctive feature of Ulrich's position lies in the fact that he does concede the representation of moral necessity and even the possibility of it being efficacious with regard to the will, but reduces this relation of efficacy between the ought and the will to *natural causality* (*KFW*, p. 10), a step that also seems to be reflected in Schmid's mentioned book (*KFW*, p. 72). In this sense, Ulrich does not take transcendental freedom to be necessary for the possibility of moral necessity and stands in this regard in stark contrast with Kant's position in the second *Critique* (see *CPrR*, AA 05: 28f.). Unfortunately, the reader is left with no explanation on how the representation of moral necessity can be upheld within the exclusive rule of determinism. Furthermore, I take Ulrich's conceptual division between natural and moral necessity to be deficient. Indeed, he claims that "necessity is either a *physical* (natural necessity) or a *moral* one" (*KFW*, p. 9). As his use of "either ... or" (*entweder ... oder*) suggests, he seems to view this division as *exhaustive*. If this is the case, however, then we are allowed to raise the question of why he does not even contemplate the possibility of a further kind of necessity we seem to be familiar with, namely a kind of necessity which is, on the one hand, *unconditioned* (and thus distinct from natural necessity according to Ulrich's own definition of the latter, see *KFW*, p. 9) but which, on the other hand, is *not* prescriptive (and therefore different from moral necessity), one which we could call *metaphysical* necessity.

It is worth mentioning that Ulrich's text presented in this volume might be of interest not only to non-German, but also to German readers who wish to have access to a non-revised version of Ulrich's text. In fact, the only modern edition of Ulrich's *Eleutheriology* in German available on the market contains a number of linguistic modifications by the editor (H. F. Rudolph 2019).

To my mind, two of the highlights of this collection are the translations of Reinhold since these texts document the remarkable change in Reinhold's stand towards Kant. The first one contains translations from *On the Complete Foundation of Ethics*, which is part IV of the second volume of Reinhold's *Contributions* (1794). The second is a translation of the full text of *Some Remarks on the Concept of the Freedom of the Will, Posed by I. Kant in the Introduction to the Metaphysical Foundations of the Doctrine of Right* (1797). By making available both texts in a single volume the editors have done a particularly welcome service to scholars of classical German philosophy. Indeed, when reading these two texts the reader easily comes to see the dynamism of the debate of the time and the transformation in the perception of Kant in the eyes of one of the major figures at the root of German Idealism. In the first of these texts, Reinhold serves as a defender of what he takes to be Kant's doctrine of freedom and morality and aims to prevent the Kantian position from being misunderstood (*KFW*, pp. 95f.). Reinhold's approach is based on his resolute distinction between practical reason, faculty of desire and will which he will also defend in the essay of 1797 (*KFW*, p. 240). Specially the identification of practical reason and will leads according to Reinhold to the abolition of the very concept of morality given the confusion of the legislative and executive functions. Such a view, he claims, "is absolutely contrary to not only the convictions [...] of the freedom indispensable to morality and immorality but also to the spirit and the letter of the entire doctrine of the *Critique of Practical Reason*" (*KFW*, p. 96). As the editors suggest in their notes, the positions rejected by Reinhold here are those defended by C. C. E. Schmid. In the passage just quoted, we not only find the distinction that would become famous amongst the friends of Kant's Critical philosophy between the *letter* and the *spirit* (*Buchstabe und Geist*) of Kant (see R.-P. Horstmann 2004, pp. 48–51), but we also see how Reinhold thinks he is siding with Kant on this point both concerning the letter and the spirit. Later in the text, he will explicitly claim that Schmid's notion of morality "deviates entirely from the concept which the *Critique of Practical Reason* presents" (*KFW*, p. 103). Against this background, it is all the more striking to see how Reinhold only three years later, in the second text, poses a series of questions to Kant's account of freedom as presented in the introduction to the *Metaphysics of Morals* and adds: "[o]n the basis of the Kantian theory of freedom, I can either not answer these questions at all or can answer them only in accordance with the principles of *intelligible fatalism*" (*KFW*, p. 245), that is, the doctrine presented precisely by C. C. E. Schmid in his aforementioned *Attempt at a Moral Philosophy* (*KFW*, pp. 72–82). Thus, we hereby witness Reinhold's determined alienation from Kant on the occasion of the publication of the *Metaphysics of Morals* (on this point see Zöller 2005, specially pp. 73–76).

As I mentioned at the beginning, one of the advantages of this volume lies in its capacity to be of substantial use to both historical and systematic investigations into Kant's conception of freedom as well as the origins of what would come to be known as classical German philosophy. In this review, I have tried to do justice to both aspects of the volume.

Noller and Walsh's volume is a formidable step to filling the void regarding the availability of English translations of texts key to the first reception of Kant's practical philosophy and can thus, when it comes to Kant's account of freedom, be considered as the analogue to the contributions provided by Sassen (2000) and Watkins (2009) for the field of Kant's theoretical philosophy (see *KFW*, p. XVI).

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