

KANT ON RELATIVE SPONTANEITY

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Abstract. I argue that examining Kant's lectures on metaphysics can help in understanding why in the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant thinks that compatibilism cannot deliver a concept of transcendental freedom. The key element that the lectures can shed light on is how Kant thinks that under compatibilism certain mental states (but not all) are part of a causal chain. In his *L₁ metaphysics* and *Mrongovius metaphysics* lectures Kant discusses at length the issue of external conditions that ground our maxims and our spontaneity, thus arriving at a distinction between a power of free choice (*Willkür*) that is intellectual and free only in some regard, and a power of free choice that is intellectual and free without qualification. The former is externally conditioned despite being an act of maxim-formation, and thus can explain why Kant in the 5:93-96 section of the second *Critique* believes that under compatibilism our actions are part of an external causal chain.

Keywords: free will, Kant, spontaneity, compatibilism, lectures on metaphysics.

INTRODUCTION

On pages 5:93 – 5:96 of the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant argues that compatibilism cannot deliver a transcendental concept of freedom, but only a psychologic or comparative notion of freedom because, despite arguing that our mental states are inner, belong to us and are spontaneous in some regard, this does not guarantee the agent's independence from an external causal series, and therefore compatibilism cannot prove that we possess the absolute spontaneity required for transcendental freedom. In the second *Critique* Kant does not go into enough detail as to why he thinks certain mental states are part of an external causal series (which instead of making the agent active, it renders him passive). I will hence make use of material prior to the publication of the second *Critique* to clarify what conditioned mental states look like for Kant. I will make use of Kant's lectures on metaphysics because unlike other notes or *Reflexionen* they offer a more systematic and in-depth discussion of concepts. I will only make use of the *L₁ metaphysics* (mid-1770s) and *Mrongovius metaphysics* (1782-1783) lectures as these precede the relevant discussion in the second *Critique*.

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I will make use of what Kant has to say in the Empirical and Rational Psychology sections of his lectures, as that is where freedom (both practical and transcendental freedom) is discussed. I will examine the content only from a conceptual standpoint insofar as the conceptual analyses Kant provides are relevant to understanding the charge against compatibilism, i.e. in explaining why certain mental activities despite belonging to the active agent (which is thus supposedly spontaneous) are nonetheless part of a causal series extending into the past¹. Because the focus is on conceptual analyses that are common to both sets of lectures mentioned (L₁ and Mrongovius lectures), I will not discuss here the development of Kant's thought on the topic of freedom from the mid-1770s to the second *Critique*, and will not touch on the topic of the reliability of Kant's lectures².

In the first section I will discuss Kant text concerning the compatibilist theory of freedom and the material principle for action that compatibilists such as Wolff have used in explaining moral actions. In the second section I will examine text from the L₁ and Mrongovius lectures. The conclusion of this research will be that actions based on pragmatic imperatives are based on ends which for Kant are determined by factors external to the agent, hence our mental states can be determined by causal series, agents thus lacking the absolute spontaneity required by transcendental freedom.

I. CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON

1. THE PRINCIPLE OF PERFECTION (5:40)

I will begin by discussing a few differences between ends as giving rise to maxims (or as incorporated into maxims) and ends as a causal factor. This is relevant since in the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant discusses compatibilism in

¹ I will not discuss theological determinism as I will explain briefly in section II.

² Steve Naragon, in "Kant's Lectures" (in Sorin Băiașu and Mark Timmons (eds.), *The Kantian Mind*, Routledge, 2023, pp. 479–493) and Naragon and Ameriks in the introduction to the Cambridge edition of Kant's lectures on metaphysics (Imm. Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, edited and translated by Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon, Cambridge University Press, 2001) have tackled at length with the issue of how these lectures can be used reliably. More recently commentators have begun comparing Kant's lectures (especially the L₁ metaphysics) with Baumgarten's *Metaphysics* given that Kant had used Baumgarten's textbook as a guide during his lectures. Differences between Kant and Baumgarten have been examined by Henry Allison ("Freedom of the Will in Baumgarten and Kant's ML₁", in Courtney D. Fugate and John Hymers (eds.), *Baumgarten and Kant on Metaphysics*, Oxford University Press, 2018, 171–182), Heiner F. Klemme ("Kant's Metaphysics of Freedom (1775 – 1782): Theoretical and Practical Perspectives," in Courtney D. Fugate (ed.), *Kant's Lectures on Metaphysics. A Critical Guide*, pp. 179–193), and Michael Walschots, "Incentives of the Mind: Kant and Baumgarten on the Impelling Causes of Desire," (*Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/agph-2022-0108/html?lang=en>, accessed: 08 August 2024).

two different instances. One has to do at page 5:40 with the principle of morality, the other with the agent's causal efficacy. Of course, for Kant the moral law is part of an agent's causal efficacy as the law of an agent's actions, but I suggest there is a difference between on the one hand something being a law for action and on the second hand stating what that law is. I argue that the latter is what Kant has in mind when discussing Wolff's principle of perfection at page 5:40 as a material principle of action. Here the discussion concerns the principles of action that a Wolffian agent has versus the laws of action that Kant believes should regulate that same agent's will.

I wish to stress the difference between the critique of Wolffian perfectionism made at page 5:40 and the criticism of compatibilism (Wolffian among other varieties) at pages 5:93-96. I suggest that the difference consists in Kant discussing at page 5:40 what the proper principles of morality and thus of practical reason are. This is hence a discussion about material vs formal principles of morality, and as such is largely normative. In the turnspit fragment on compatibilism the discussion is mostly causal: the issue is whether or not the agent can possess absolute spontaneity in his actions at all granted the influence of objects on the agent's actions. This distinction is important since the first discussion concerns the pure or formal origin of normative principles for actions, while the second concerns us as acting a priori or independently of other causal factors and through ourselves. In other words, the distinction concerns the purity of practical reason vs the absolute spontaneity of our actions.

Granted that such a distinction is at play in Kant's different treatments of Wolffian philosophy in the second *Critique*, the conclusions Kant arrives at will be different as well:

1) Thus, at 5:40 the conclusion is that the principle of perfection cannot be a formal principle of practical reason. This is because the understanding ascribes the attribute of perfection to means suited to attaining some end. This principle determines the will, and since the principle is itself determined by the object (serving as end), the principle of action cannot be formal, i.e. determined by practical reason through itself alone.

2) At 5:96 the conclusion is not about principles of action being suited or not as moral laws for practical reason, but about causal principles external to the agent and whether they can secure the agent's absolute spontaneity, i.e. transcendental freedom. The conclusion here is that although external objects do not necessitate our actions (and do not force us to act a certain way) such that we do act on some internal ground, this does not entail that we do possess absolute spontaneity.

The mentioned distinction is worth discussing since in the lectures themselves Kant discusses the agent's spontaneity, and hence has fewer remarks about practical reason as a pure faculty. Nonetheless, Kant even in the lectures does say that reason has a legislative function, but does not go on discussing the purity of practical reason itself or the distinction between formal and material principles of the understanding and of reason. My contention is that discussing the

lecture material of the L_1 metaphysics and *Mrongovius* metaphysics lectures is relevant mostly for the passages at 5:93-96, since in these lectures the focus is not on the normativity of principles, but on the causal issue of relative and absolute spontaneity.

2. COMPATIBILISM (5:93 – 96)

The compatibilism that Kant argues against in the turnspit passages has the following features ascribed to a free will:

- transcendental freedom is a psychological property;
- given that everything that is psychological is also empirical, it follows that for them freedom is an empirical property;
- being a psychological property also entails it being an inner property;
- being an inner and empirical property entails that freedom can be known better through an “investigation of the *nature of the soul*” (5:94)

The direct counter position to this compatibilism is to regard freedom as an external property. But given its requirement for absolute independence of everything natural, that would mean that freedom would have to be a completely transcendent concept. Thus, freedom would be a mere cosmological and transcendent concept³. The threat here would be that only God as a creator would possess this freedom, while we are deprived of absolute spontaneity (as created beings). Since this issue is distinct from the problem posed by compatibilism, its discussion is reserved for pages 5:99-100. Insofar as compatibilism is concerned, Kant argues only against the empirical concept it proposes for transcendental freedom. Distinguishing compatibilism from the theological determinism discussed later is important insofar as compatibilism can be true according to Kant even when treating about proximate causal factors. Theological determinism goes a step further in that it excludes our freedom given the supposed absolute spontaneity that only the first cause in a series has (namely God).

Determinism is integral to compatibilism according to Kant because compatibilism takes appearances to be things in themselves. Thus, the causal relations which hold between appearances in transcendental idealism hold (in some manner) between things in themselves. These supposedly “causal” relations exclude causal relations of another type, e.g. causation through freedom. Hence, given some causal series and a present action, the latter is wholly determined and necessitated by immediate causal conditions⁴. It is debatable whether this determination is absolute or not,

³ In fact, Kant in the *Mrongovius Metaphysics* discusses transcendental freedom as part of the Cosmology section and not as part of the Rational Psychology (as was the case in the L_1 Metaphysics).

⁴ Notice how this absolute conditioning holds even when considering only immediate antecedent conditions, hence compatibilism does not need a recourse to the first cause to explain our actions being determined. In other words, compatibilism (as presented by Kant) does not collapse into theological determinism.

since compatibilism (via Leibniz and Wolff) can argue that some action is determined and necessitated actually given some causal series, while under a different actual causal series my present action would have been different. However, I think Kant's general argument against compatibilism still stands, since his argument is not that compatibilism collapses into a sort of Spinozistic necessitarianism, but that compatibilism does not deliver a concept of transcendental freedom, i.e. a concept securing the agent's absolute spontaneity.

We see Kant saying about the empirical freedom that compatibilism delivers to be only a "comparative" freedom (5:95), one which is independent (at least to some degree) from external circumstances, but reliant on the agent's internal (or mental) states. However, compatibilists such as Wolff or Leibniz do not deny that these states are not themselves part of a causal series. This is why Kant in my opinion talks about our internal states not being wholly independent of external factors (part of a causal series). He thus says that despite being mere representations, and not outer objects, they still necessitate our actions:

... it does not matter whether the causality determined in accordance with a natural law is necessary through determining grounds lying *within* the subject or *outside* him, or in the first case whether these determining grounds are instinctive or thought by reason, if, as is admitted by these men themselves, these determining representations have the ground of their existence in time and indeed in the *antecedent state*, and this in turn in a preceding state, and so forth, these determinations may be internal and they may have psychological instead of mechanical causality, that is produce actions by means of representations and not by bodily movements; they are always *determining grounds* of the causality of a being insofar as its existence is determinable in time and therefore under the necessitating conditions of past time, which are thus, when the subject is to act, *no longer within his control* and which may therefore bring with them psychological freedom...⁵

The main points Kant makes in this passage are the following:

- laws of nature apply to inner representations;
- these inner representations can necessitate our actions through those laws of nature;
 - inner representations can so determine⁶ our actions because they too are in time;
 - being in time means being part of a causal series (as antecedent states that are also determined by states prior to themselves);
 - being part of a causal chain determining our action grants only psychological freedom, i.e. relative spontaneity, but not absolute spontaneity (or transcendental freedom).

⁵ Imm. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:96 (Kant's emphasis), in Imm. Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, edited and translated by Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

⁶ I use "determine" here in the sense of hypothetical necessitation, since compatibilists have shown that representations do not absolutely necessitate actions.

What is unclear here is whether all our representations are part of a causal chain such that even our representations of the moral law would in fact be empirically conditioned. If this were the case, then Kant's conclusion in the second *Critique* would have to be that there is no such thing as absolute spontaneity in a human agent. Yet, his conclusion is that we do possess transcendental freedom. The question is then whether Kant thinks that only some representations are part of a causal chain, and which representations are those? And why are some representations (say representations of duties) not part of a causal chain?

I argue that the representations that are part of a causal series for Kant are representations of ends, and that the faculty of understanding (in the narrow sense, i.e. distinguished from pure practical reason) cannot grant absolute spontaneity precisely because it can only deliver material principles or maxims incorporating such ends. Representations of ends are part of a causal series because they are representations of objects affecting us. The mental activity proceeds as follows:

- we are affected by external objects
- we represent some pleasurable end (a future state of affairs)
- we represent some means for attaining that end
- by performing the previous two mental activities we arrive at a maxim prescribing the best means for attaining our desired end.

If I am correct then what Kant would argue is that all these mental activities do not guarantee a transcendental concept of freedom, i.e. they do not prove that we are absolutely spontaneous. These mental processes would guarantee only a "comparative" freedom because although we make use of our own powers (described above) in choosing and doing an action, all these mental activities (choosing the means and the maxim of action) are determined by something external. This does not exclude the fact that we might as well be acting on ends and be transcendently free, however through themselves such actions cannot be used in proving our absolute spontaneity. This is thus an explanatory dead-end that ends-means actions would lead us into.

If we return briefly to Kant's discussion of perfection (5:41), we will see there that the ends he talks about are always material. This makes sense given that a perfection in the practical sense is the most appropriate means for attaining a state of affairs:

... if an end as an *object* which must precede the determination of the will by a practical rule and contain the ground of the possibility of such a determination – hence as the *matter* of the will taken as its determining ground – is always empirical; then it can serve as the Epicurean principle of the doctrine of happiness but never as the pure rational principle of the doctrine of morals and of duty...⁷

⁷ *Ibidem*, 5:41, Kant's emphasis.

The obvious objection to such a reconstruction of Kant's argument against compatibilism is that it is not just the understanding that is used in forming maxims incorporating ends, but that pure practical reason has ends of its own. Yet, the objection goes, practical reason is at the same the guarantee of our absolute spontaneity. My answer is that we are talking of different types of ends here, where the ends of pure reason can merely lead to formal principles for action, whereas the ends of the understanding are concrete states of affairs. This means that while through pure reason an agent could begin through itself a causal series, through the mere use of the understanding the agent can only continue a causal series rooted in objects external to the agent. Kant here could not say of the causal series that it is exclusively internal, simply because of the nature of ends. A representation of an end is a representation formed out of a synthesis of intuitions or perceptions such that the representation of an end can be a representation of a future state of affairs. However, the intuitions and perceptions that are part of the representation of that end can only be obtained through the agent being affected by external objects. The latter are already part of a causal series stretching into the past, hence through affecting us these objects are in fact determining our actions unless we have transcendental freedom, and not just a comparative notion of freedom in play.⁸

As already discussed, here Kant is talking about the types of principles suited for being moral laws. Material principles devise a means for attaining an end. This end itself can only be empirical, hence it being at the basis of material principles makes these empirical as well, e.g. principles suited for attaining happiness, but not suited for morality. As mentioned, here these principles are said to be external to pure practical reason and thus an external determination of our will. However, ends themselves do serve as causal factors, and I am suggesting that because of this we can have a suggestion as to how at least some of our representations might be connected to a causal series. Thus the fragment at 5:41 helps us with is to minimally suggest a way to understand why certain representations might be connected externally to a causal series. After all, it is only the moral law of practical reason that is entirely internal, i.e. it is a product of our reason alone without any other empirical addendum. And it is only when the agent through its will acts on pure practical reason that the agent is transcendently free.

I now proceed to suggest that Kant's lectures on metaphysics preceding the second *Critique* make it even clearer how at least some of our representations could be causally tied to a causal series external to the agent's choices.

⁸ I am of course not suggesting that this external causal series is absolutely necessitating our actions. After all, compatibilists such as Leibniz or Wolff have shown that the determination of our actions can be hypothetical, not absolute. Kant is arguing that this hypothetical determination leads to a comparative notion of freedom (and to relative spontaneity, as I will discuss later), but not to transcendental freedom.

II. KANT'S LECTURES ON METAPHYSICS⁹

In this section I begin by discussing the L_1 metaphysics with a subsection each for the Empirical and Rational psychologies since ends and external conditions are discussed in different manners according to whether we are talking about normative issues (practical freedom), or spontaneity (transcendental freedom). I will afterward briefly discuss the Mrongovius metaphysics examining especially its commonalities with the L_1 's Empirical Psychology.

The available metaphysics lectures we have from Kant range from the 1760s to 1790s. I will here discuss the lectures surrounding the time of publication of the first and second *Critique*, so the L_1 (or Pölitz) metaphysics (mid-1770s) and the Mrongovius metaphysics (1782-1783). The structure of these lectures mainly follows that of Baumgarten's *Metaphysics*. Hence, Kant includes in his lectures both an Empirical Psychology and a Rational Psychology. The first contains knowledge gained empirically, while the latter rationally (or *a priori*). Since practical freedom is something of which we have empirical knowledge, it is discussed in the Empirical Psychology. Transcendental freedom should in theory be discussed solely in the Rational Psychology section, however this is the case only with the L_1 lectures. In the Mrongovius lectures all references to transcendental freedom (which are brief) are included in the Empirical Psychology. This is mostly because at this time of his career Kant denies any *a priori* knowledge of transcendental freedom, thus its removal from Rational Psychology.

Freedom is included in both the Empirical Psychology and in the Rational Psychology. In the Empirical Psychology freedom is discussed in its psychological or empirical aspect, i.e. as practical freedom. In the Rational Psychology the discussion is centered around transcendental freedom.

⁹ Kant's lectures on metaphysics have been put to use recently mostly in reconstructing Kant's action theory by Patrick Frierson (*Kant's Empirical Psychology*, Cambridge University Press, 2014), and Richard McCarty (*Kant's Theory of Action*, Oxford University Press, 2009). Interpretations of Kant's metaphysics lectures have been provided by Henry Allison (*Kant's Theory of Freedom*, Cambridge University Press, 1990 and *Kant's Conception of Freedom. A Developmental and Critical Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, 2020), Karl Ameriks ("Kant's Deduction of Freedom and Morality", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 19, 1, 1981, pp. 53–79), and Dieter Schönecker (*Kants Begriff transzendentaler und praktischer Freiheit*, DeGruyter, 2005). My methodological focus here is on the differences between practical and transcendental freedom in the lectures, thus I will not discuss Allison's and Schönecker's argument for practical freedom being a type of transcendental freedom in the L_1 metaphysics. And since my focus is on how we are practically free with regard to all imperatives, I will not address Ameriks' contention that practical freedom in the L_1 metaphysics is closer to a compatibilist conception of freedom.

1. L₁ METAPHYSICS (MID-1770S)

1.1. Empirical Psychology

The topic of interest to us, that of what role ends play in action and how they are connected to external causal chains, is discussed at least in the L₁ lectures in both the Empirical and Rational Psychology. In the Empirical psychology Kant is interested in the types of maxims and the normativity of each type of maxim. In the Rational Psychology Kant addresses the topic of spontaneity.

I will begin by discussing the Empirical Psychology first since aside from normative issues Kant also provides an action theory. This is relevant insofar as we are interested in how certain actions despite being free and normative still originate in external object and our representations of them. Kant makes it clear that our actions are not necessitated by stimuli as they are in the case of animals. Our power of choice (*Willkür*) is thus not a “*arbitrium brutum*,” but “*liberum*”¹⁰. We are not necessitated by stimuli, instead we are only affected by them¹¹. This means that agents can choose to act on stimuli (and thus incorporate them into maxims) without being necessitated by said stimuli. Thus, in the Empirical Psychology our actions are free even in non-moral and immoral situations. As Kant points out, our actions are still normative in some sense, since when acting toward some end, the latter prescribes the appropriate means (hence action) in attaining it. Thus Kant arrives at these three types of necessities (or necessitations) implied by our maxims:

1. Problematic necessitation, typical of technical prescriptions;
2. Pragmatic necessitation, prescribing an end as necessary with regard to a given end;
3. Moral necessitation, which is “the necessity of the power of choice, not as means to an end, but rather because it is in itself necessary.”¹²

While the ends we act on are empirical, the necessitation of a maxim itself is objective: this results from some means being deemed necessary to pursue for the given end. Hence, despite the end itself being empirical, the necessitation is, in Kant’s terms, objective: “All propositions of practical necessitation are expressed by imperatives <imperativos> that the action *should* happen, i.e., it is good that the action happen. Here there is thus no stimulus <stimulus>, and this practical necessitation is objective.”¹³

¹⁰ “This is the power of free choice <*arbitrium liberum*>, so far as it is defined psychologically or practically.” (Kant, L₁ metaphysics, 28:255).

¹¹ “The sensitive power of [free] choice is <*arbitrium sensitivum [liberum]*> is only affected or impelled by the stimuli <*stimulis*>, but the brute one <*brutum*> is necessitated.” (*ibidem*).

¹² *Ibidem*, 28:257.

¹³ *Ibidem* (Kant’s emphasis).

While Kant does not explicitly make the claim that our free power of choice (*arbitrium liberum*) is guaranteed by our ability to act normatively, this does seem to be the case since otherwise our actions would be necessitated by stimuli as is the case with the *arbitrium brutum*. Hence, our practical freedom is guaranteed whenever pursuing one of the three sort of normative actions¹⁴. For our current interest this means that although we are being affected by external objects (via stimuli), we are not necessitated in our actions by these objects, and instead we can incorporate these stimuli into maxims for our actions (pragmatic necessitation). The stimuli that are part of a maxim are called thus “impelling causes”¹⁵ and sometimes “incentives”¹⁶. However, even if stimuli are called this way and it looks as if they are direct causes for our actions, the picture is more complicated than that. In fact, as Kant acknowledges, these stimuli have to be picked up by the agent and form a representation of a motive in order to truly be considered impelling causes or incentives for our actions¹⁷.

Kant does directly address the difference between the pragmatic imperatives and the moral ones (or between pragmatic necessitation and moral necessitation as worded in these lectures). This is relevant to our discussion since the distinction is drawn in terms of whether or not the action is conditioned or not be an end:

If the motives enunciate the absolute good <bonum absolutum>, then they are moral motives <motiva moralia>. But to the extent the motives <motiva> enunciate the comparative good <bonum comparativum>, to that extent they say only what is good in a conditional way; to that extent they are only pragmatic motives <motiva pragmatica>. Thus the moral motives <motiva moralia> must not be confused with the pragmatic ones.¹⁸

Moral necessitation prescribes an action that is absolutely good, while pragmatic necessitation prescribes only an action that is only comparative good. This is because the action is deemed good at all because it is good for some given end. Hence the predicate of goodness is ascribed to an action based on empirical circumstances, i.e. its appropriateness for an end. Unlike the *Groundwork* Kant in these lectures is not addressing whether we act out of duty or just according to it, hence an action being only comparatively good does not mean it is an immoral action. The focus is solely on whether or not a maxim is devised for prescribing a means for an end or for prescribing an action that is good regardless of our own ends.

¹⁴ “This practical freedom rests on independence of choice from necessitation by stimuli <independentia arbitrii a necessitatione per stimulus>.” (idem) “The power of free choice, so far as it acts according to motives of the understanding, is freedom...” (*ibidem*, 28:255).

¹⁵ Idem.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 28:258.

¹⁷ The impelling causes are “according to the laws of sensibility and according to the laws of the understanding. Th subjective impelling causes <causae impulsivae subjectivae> are stimuli <stimuli>, and the objective ones <objectivae> are motives.” (*ibidem*, 28:255).

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 28:258.

Even if the end does prescribe an action (under pragmatic necessitation) this conditioning that Kant talks about does not amount to a type of absolute or even hypothetical necessitation. It cannot amount to a conditioning that supposes absolute necessitation simply because our actions are practically free. This freedom is granted by our use of the understanding in forming maxims and prescribing the necessary actions for a given end. However, it might be possible that pragmatic necessitation does suppose hypothetical necessitation. There is no evidence in the lectures that Kant sees the two types of necessitation as denoting the same thing or even have some shared traits. I think this is simply because all these issues discussed up to now have been part of the Empirical Psychology section of the lectures.

This section of the lectures cannot prove our transcendental freedom (even if it is mentioned several times), but only our practical freedom. Thus, when it comes to both pragmatic and moral necessitation we only have the guarantee that when acting on such necessitations we are practically free. The issue of whether we are in addition also transcendently free is left to the Rational Psychology¹⁹. It follows that acting through a pragmatic necessitation does not mean that we are only relatively spontaneous (as we could be absolutely spontaneous when acting pragmatically), and that acting through a moral necessitation does not guarantee our absolute spontaneity (as it may well be the case that we are relatively or comparatively spontaneous when acting morally). Kant's own proof for us having transcendental freedom (and thus being absolutely spontaneous in our actions) aims to show that we are transcendently free not just when acting morally, but at all times for all actions. However, as the proof itself goes beyond the scope of this paper, I will not discuss the argumentative strategy per se. Instead, I will again only highlight what Kant has to say about external conditions and how they may determine our actions. The Empirical Psychology served in showing how conditions can determine the power of choice in forming maxims, indicating that despite the use of our understanding in forming maxims (or motives), our understanding can still be conditioned by an external factor.

1.2. Rational Psychology

In the Rational Psychology conditions for actions are discussed in the context of spontaneity. Spontaneity is used here as a causal term for actions in general and not restricted to cognitive processes. Kant here introduces the dichotomy between external and internal principles of action, with the former being an object's action on another, and the latter a self-activity of an object. This self-activity is the spontaneity of an agent or object. However, this spontaneity itself is either relative

¹⁹ At least as far as the L₁ metaphysics is concerned. The Mrongovius metaphysics lectures also have a Rational Psychology section included, but it lacks a proof for our transcendental freedom.

(or “comparative” or “qualified” spontaneity), or absolute (spontaneity without qualification). The examples provided by Kant for qualified spontaneity (or what I have called in this paper relative spontaneity for simplicity) are that of a watch and of a turnspit. This spontaneity is also called automatic in reference to the fact that the agent through its own powers brings about an action (thus it has some spontaneity), but the agent’s powers are active in the first place because of another object’s action (hence this spontaneity being only “comparative” or “qualified”). Thus, as we see in Kant’s examples provided below, a body can roll itself (through its own powers), but another agent has to trigger or set it in motion; a watchmaker devises the watch, but the latter works through its own. Had these objects been able to set themselves in motion without an external causal factor, they would have been in possession of absolute spontaneity (or spontaneity without qualification):

...the human soul is free in the transcendental sense <in sensu transcendentali> [...] this means absolute spontaneity, and is self-activity from an *inner principle* according to the power of free choice. Spontaneity <spontaneitas> is either absolute or without qualification <absoluta vel simpliciter talis>, or qualified in some respect <secundum quid talis>. – Spontaneity in some respect <spontaneitas secundum quid> is when something acts spontaneously *under a condition*. So, e.g., a body which is shot off moves spontaneously, but in some respect <secundum quid>. This spontaneity <spontaneitas> is also called automatic spontaneity <spontaneitas automatica>, namely when a machine moves itself according to an inner principle, e.g., a watch, a turnspit. But the spontaneity is not without qualification <simpliciter talis> because here the inner principle <principium> was determined by an external principle <principium externum>. The internal principle <principium internum> with the watch is the spring, with the turnspit the weight, but the external principle <principium externum> is the artist who determines the internal principle <principium internum>. The spontaneity which is without qualification <spontaneitas simpliciter talis> is an absolute spontaneity.²⁰

It is again worth mentioning here the difference between how an external condition is treated in the Empirical Psychology as a condition of normative principles (pragmatic necessitation), while here in the Rational Psychology the external condition is a causal factor or principle. In the case of normative principles stimuli are external conditions, while in the Rational Psychology the external condition is God. This is because at the time of the L_1 metaphysics Kant sees our transcendental freedom (or absolute spontaneity) threatened by our status of being created beings: God has created the entire world, therefore also us as agents. Thus, God is to us agents an external condition that puts in motion our own abilities and powers in the same way the watchmakers puts in motion a clock. But if we are self-created agents such as God supposedly is, then how are we free in any way?

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 28:267sq.

Hence, for Kant the problem of us really only having a relative or comparative type of spontaneity arises. In short Kant's solution is that we possess an I that is a substance in its own right, such that every action and even act of thinking has to be accompanied by the transcendental freedom of the agent in question.

I will not further discuss this argument (which is specific to the L₁ metaphysics alone) as our interest lies in delineating what an external condition is for Kant in his metaphysics lectures leading up to the second *Critique*. As seen up to now, in the L₁ metaphysics the external condition is the stimuli (itself an affect) used in representing a motive, while in the Rational Psychology it is a more general notion that initiates the causal action of another substance even if the latter through its own powers completes the causal action through itself.

2. MRONGOVIUS METAPHYSICS (1782-1783)

The Mrongovius metaphysics record Kant's lectures on metaphysics in the timeframe of 1782 to 1783, and is thus closest to both the first *Critique* and the second *Critique*. These lectures no longer discuss transcendental freedom and absolute spontaneity in the Rational Psychology since Kant dispenses with the proof for transcendental freedom provided in the L₁'s Rational Psychology. I find this to be an odd move on Kant's part since it leaves the relation between practical freedom and transcendental freedom up in the air. As seen the L₁ metaphysics had clearly delineated the topics proper to each aspect of freedom, with practical freedom being a concept about normativity and independence from necessitation by stimuli, while transcendental freedom concerned solely our absolute spontaneity which we did have even when acting merely on pragmatic imperatives. Instead, what Kant has to say on the issue of transcendental freedom in the Mrongovius metaphysics is that it is a topic for speculative metaphysics (so not for Rational Psychology or even Rational Theology²¹), and that it does not threaten the existence of practical freedom.

Despite all that, the Empirical Psychology of the Mrongovius metaphysics retains the main points made by Kant in the Empirical Psychology of the L₁ lectures given that the power of choice is still determined by motives that are either good in some respect or good without qualification:

²¹ In the *Mrongovius Metaphysics* Kant does touch on the topics discussed in the L₁ metaphysics: he discusses transcendental freedom in the Cosmology section, but of course there the discussion is whether such freedom exists at all (say in God), and not whether human agents may possess such a causal power (a question dealt with in the Rational Psychology and Rational Theology). Kant also talks about spontaneity, though not concerning freedom in general but only as a predicate of our higher cognitive faculties (reason and understanding) as opposed to the passivity of the lower cognitive faculty which is passive (namely sensibility). Finally, the Rational Psychology of the *Mrongovius Metaphysics* does address the topic of freedom more generally, though only as a practical postulate necessary for morality and without providing a proof for its existence (Kant, *Mrongovius Metaphysics*, 29:918).

The power of free choice <arbitrium liberum> is determined by motives <per motiva>. Since these originate only in the understanding, they are intellectual impelling causes <causae impulsivae intellectuales>. These are the concepts of the good. The power of free choice <arbitrium liberum> is will <voluntas>. Freedom is thus a faculty for acting according to the concepts of good and evil.²²

Nonetheless, the emphasis is different in these lectures as Kant calls the causes of our actions intellectually impelling causes. The emphasis in the L₁ lectures had been on us being sensibly affected and taking up these stimuli into a representation that becomes the cause of action, whereas now the emphasis is on all motives being intellectual causes, despite the influence of stimuli on the agent. This is in fact beneficial for our purposes since we set out to prove that our intellectual activity as such can be determined by something external which can therefore be part of a causal series extending into the past and distinct from our own actions. Whereas the L₁'s Empirical Psychology had introduced a distinction between actions that were good in some respect, and actions that were good without qualification, in the Mrongovius' Empirical Psychology that same distinction is drawn in terms of how much the understanding is involved in forming the motive for action. Thus, if the motive is a representation formed out of stimuli, the cause is intellectual in some respect (or relatively), since here both the understanding and stimuli are used by the agent in forming that motive. If on the other hand only the understanding is required to form a motive for action (as is the case with moral actions), then the cause is intellectual without qualification (as only the understanding is actively producing the cause for action). Kant discusses this distinction in great detail and even analyzes an example to clearly delineate the causal contribution of the understanding in determining the agent's power of choice:

The intellectual impelling causes <causae impulsivae intellectuales> are either in some respect <secundum quid> or without qualification <simpliciter talis>. A cause that is impelling in some respect <causa impulsiva secundum quid> is when I merely choose a good means for attaining my end which proceeds from a stimulus <stimulo>, e.g., when someone writes a book, he commonly claims to be doing it out of love of truth, although he is just as often doing it to earn money. [...] A future life of comfort was his end; this was thus a cause which is impelling in some respect <causa impulsiva secundum quid>. But if someone writes a book simply from a love of truth and allows it to be made public only upon his death, when he cannot hope for any more profit from the world, then his end is good and the intellectual impelling cause <causa impulsiva intellectualis>. This depends on no other stimuli <stimulo>. Morality has such simply intellectual <simpliciter intellectuale> laws, and yet freedom must be presupposed with morality.²³

²² *Ibidem*, 29:896.

²³ *Ibidem*, 29:898 sq.

Again, because transcendental freedom by itself is not discussed at greater length (as was the case in the L₁ lectures), we are not sure whether morality is supposed to provide the proof for us possessing transcendental freedom or absolute spontaneity. However, in these lectures as in the L₁ lectures practical freedom is guaranteed for us regardless of what imperative we act on because acting on imperatives means acting against stimuli (in accordance with the definition of practical freedom). Thus at this stage of Kant's conception of freedom it is not clear whether we can equate acting on pragmatic imperatives alone with being spontaneous only in a relative but not absolute sense. If we assume that there is continuity of thought between the Kant of the L₁ metaphysics and Kant of the Mrongovius metaphysics, then equating the two does not stand. Morality in the Mrongovius metaphysics would only prove that we have the ability to act with absolute spontaneity, and as such this spontaneity would have to apply equally to all our actions regardless of what imperatives we act upon.

However, if we compare what Kant has to say in these Mrongovius lectures with what he says in the second *Critique* regarding compatibilism, then the latter does not admit of actions that are determined by the understanding alone. Instead they require an external principle for action such that the understanding cannot be able to determine the will through itself alone. Thus, our spontaneity under Kant's reconstruction of compatibilism is only a relative spontaneity, but never an absolute spontaneity as required for the agent's transcendental freedom.

