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Jacqueline Mariña, TRANSFORMATION OF THE SELF IN THE THOUGHT OF FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER

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(79–81). The case for the causal closure of the physical does not succeed either (109–113). The problem of evil is not conclusive (136ff).

Moreover, Menssen and Sullivan contend that revelation claims do have good explanatory power with respect to the following facts (or what they call CUE-facts): Humans have a special place in the universe (234ff); consciousness has a function (242ff); humans have libertarian freedom (245ff); human beings are equal and have inalienable rights (251ff). I cannot go into the details of these arguments but their discussions are in general of a high quality. I think the authors have made a very good case for the possibility of a kind of non-standard natural theology, one that starts with revelation claims in the very beginning.

In conclusion, it is useful to compare Menssen and Sullivan's work to *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* by William Abraham. Although both books agree that we should begin with revelation claims in some sense, the approaches are in fact quite different. Menssen and Sullivan do not argue that we should begin with the *acceptance* of some revelation claims; nor do they make use of the idea of *oculus contemplationis*. Their contention is that if we adopt the methodology of IBE, we can treat the entire content of revelation claims as the hypothesis to illuminate the data we have. While the starting point is different, the project is still a kind of natural theology. As indicated by their book title, they look at revelation *from a philosophical standpoint*. In contrast, Abraham's argument is that natural theology is not necessary because revelation can stand on its own feet. However, the two projects are not contradictory either. In fact Abraham writes the foreword for Menssen and Sullivan's book, and both Menssen and Sullivan's recommendations of Abraham's book appear on its back cover. In response to both books, I suggest that if revelation can stand on its own feet, this does not mean that a supportive natural theology is impossible. In fact Menssen and Sullivan's strategy of using IBE to vindicate revelation claims can fit in Abraham's complex rational appraisal of revelation. So both projects are in fact complementary, and together they show that we do need to take robust revelation claims seriously in both natural theology and revealed theology.

Transformation of the Self in the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher, by Jacqueline Mariña. Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. 270. Cloth (\$110.00).

ERIC REITAN, Oklahoma State University

Friedrich Schleiermacher is often called the "father" of modern theology. But in her excellent new book, Jacqueline Mariña introduces us to Schleiermacher the philosopher, explicating Schleiermacher's philosophical achievements in an intellectual history that traces the evolution of Schleiermacher's thinking, especially concerning the self and its ethical

transformation, through his engagement with such figures as Kant, Spinoza, and Leibniz.

In so doing, Mariña has created a text that should be valued not only by theologians interested in understanding the philosophical underpinnings of Schleiermacher's theology, but also by anyone interested in nineteenth-century philosophy or the intersections of ethics and the philosophy of religion. Mariña's book is one of only a handful on Schleiermacher's philosophy, and may be the most helpful in terms of identifying his distinctive philosophical ideas and how they ground his better-known theological innovations.

In the first chapter we encounter Schleiermacher's youthful efforts to wrestle with Kant over the questions of how the moral law can motivate the will and, more significantly, how to resolve "the antinomy of agency"—that is, the problem of how agency is possible if it requires *both* that an act "be explicable in terms of the agent's character" *and* "that an agent should be the initiator of an act if it is to be attributable to him or her" (39).

Schleiermacher's efforts here are inconclusive and, as Mariña notes, marred by philosophical mistakes. But they set the stage for what Mariña portrays as a deeply fruitful and lifelong engagement with Kant. Indeed, Mariña exposes Schleiermacher as a philosopher for whom Kant offers both the foundation for further thinking and the critical foil against which his own thinking develops. This may be the chief lesson of the first chapter, as it becomes a driving theme throughout the book.

In the next two chapters we encounter Schleiermacher's youthful defense of Spinozism. In chapter 2, Mariña explicates his defense of the idea that "there are no genuine individuals, and hence no real (noumenal) agents" (43). In chapter 3 we witness him drawing out the implications of this idea for personal identity. Insofar as Schleiermacher later rejected Spinozism, what is most interesting here is, again, the deeply Kantian approach Schleiermacher adopts. For example, Mariña shows us how, in criticizing the Leibnizian Jacobi, Schleiermacher proceeds "as if Jacobi must agree with Kant's critical idealism as Schleiermacher understands it" (53), even though Jacobi explicitly endorsed a position at odds with it.

This internalization of Kantian themes persisted through Schleiermacher's career, especially in terms of his appropriation of the distinction between the phenomenal—the world as it appears through the activity of the understanding (necessary for transforming the field of immediate experience into cognitively comprehensible objects of experience)—and the noumenal, that is, reality as it is in itself. This distinction was especially important for Schleiermacher's understanding of subjectivity. He never rejected the view, expressed in early defenses of Spinoza, that the noumenal self—which unites the field of experience and through its activity makes of it a world of objects that can be cognitively grasped—remains in its intrinsic nature incapable of being cognized.

At the same time, Schleiermacher was convinced even in his Spinozistic phase that "the transcendental activity of the self" brings the soul "into

contact with what is genuinely real" (75), even if the nature of this reality cannot be cognized.

These ideas persisted and became instrumental in Schleiermacher's critical appropriation of Leibniz—the focus of chapter 4. It is here that we first encounter the core notion of Schleiermacher's theology, "the feeling of absolute dependence," which Mariña argues is at least partly an echo of Leibniz's idea of an immediate communication of the absolute to the creature "in virtue of our continual dependence."

But Schleiermacher rejected the insularity Leibniz attributed to the monads, their inability to effect one another, partly because of his Kantian commitment that "the self knows itself only in its relation to that which is different from it and stands outside of it" (110). Self-knowledge *depends* on the self's receptivity to being effected by others, and so requires positing such receptivity. More significantly, Schleiermacher saw the possibility of genuine interaction among selves, and transformation on the basis of it, as necessary for ethics.

Despite these differences, Leibniz's understanding of the self as rooted in the absolute offers Schleiermacher the key to understanding freedom. His first step towards such understanding is Kantian: consciousness has a transcendental unity "which is not itself determined by any sensation, representation, or emotion" (129). That is, this unity is not determined by anything connected to the empirical self.

But this merely establishes the *possibility* of a transcendent self not bound by empirical causal laws. For an *account* of such a self, Schleiermacher turns to Leibniz's view of a self rooted in an absolute that transcends the empirical world. As Mariña puts it, "because the soul is directly receptive to the divine influence, it is not a mere turnspit, reacting mechanically to *outside* influences. The transcendental light of consciousness that opens out into the world is a light preserved in its being in and through spirit's relation to the infinite and absolute" (131). The true self—conceived as the common root of both the active and receptive powers encountered in consciousness—is a kind of contact point with the divine.

Here, Mariña's prose testifies to the beauty of Schleiermacher's synthesis but leaves some critical questions unanswered. For example, how can that which is absolutely dependent on God acquire genuine agency *of its own* in relation to the empirical world, as opposed to being just a limited extension of *God's* agency? And how could Schleiermacher *justify* this interpretation of the self in light of his skepticism about the knowability of the noumenal?

The latter question admits of an implicit answer in the subsequent development of Schleiermacher's ethics in chapters 5 and 6. These chapters are too rich to do justice here. What follows is an attempt to synthesize *some* core themes.

Mariña argues that, for Schleiermacher, the possibility of genuine ethics requires selves that are both free in relation to the empirical world (requiring a ground beyond that world) and subject to being transformed by

other selves encountered in that world (requiring “embodiment” within that world). For Schleiermacher, this possibility will be realized only if the empirical is constituted by the free activity of a self in response to that which is given to it by something *other* than itself, especially by other *selves*.

Real ethical activity is possible, for Schleiermacher, only on the assumption that the empirical world is *jointly* constituted by selves that have *freedom* in relation to that world by virtue of their rootedness in God, but a freedom *limited* by a givenness that needs to be accommodated. And *what* is given is precisely that which other selves contribute. But the self retains significant freedom in terms of *how* it receives what is given. As such, how it constitutes its world involves an exercise of freedom that exceeds what we find in Kant.

Hence, Schleiermacher’s justification for embracing his view of the self may be precisely this: it is a necessary postulate for ethics. If so, we have another place in which Schleiermacher is Kant’s student.

In any event, while the self cannot be an object of direct knowledge for itself, insofar as it expresses itself in the empirical world and so provides some of the givenness of that world to which other selves must respond in their own constituting activity, the self can discover itself *in* the world. Part of what it discovers is its own unique *perspective* on the world. As Mariña explicates it, the *individuality* of each self is a function of that unique perspective, and as such is given by its contingent situatedness in the empirical world. And selves can, through an exercise of imagination motivated by love, come to an approximate understanding of *others’* individuality.

The goal of ethical life—the highest good—is a coordination of such selves, each valuing and harmonizing itself with the individuality of all other selves. In short, the end of ethics is loving community. And what is loved is the individual *qua* individual. Here is a crucial point where, according to Mariña, Schleiermacher corrected Kant. For Kant, the individual was to be valued only *qua* rational being. But, as Schleiermacher notes, our rationality is the least individuating thing about us. It isn’t the individual self that becomes the object of love for Kant, but rather the rationality that this self shares with all rational beings. But it is *individuals* that constitute a loving community, and so these individuals need to be valued *as such*. For Schleiermacher, such valuation calls for more than what *reason* finds of value in the individual (the individual’s rationality). And so real ethical relations must engage the desires.

The attainment of the highest good therefore requires a transformation of selves at the level of their contingent desires. Such transformation is possible because the self’s spontaneous activity plays a crucial role in the constitution of its world—a world of which the empirical self, with its contingent desires, is a *part*. Hence, not only can I come to understand myself through how I am reflected in my world (including in the activity of other selves); I also have the capacity, in the light of what I discover, to transform myself through my spontaneous activity.

And unlike Kant, who saw no hope for achieving his *summum bonum* in the empirical world, Schleiermacher perceives that world as providing the setting in which selves can be transformed, so that contingent desires are coordinated by both the universal laws of reason and the empathetic valuation of individuality, thereby realizing the highest good of loving community.

In fact, through his religious commitments Schleiermacher sees this “ensoulment” of nature as not merely a possibility but an inevitable feature of the world’s history. The job of the ethicist is simply to describe this process. In chapter 7, Mariña looks at Schleiermacher’s theological view of Christ as the person whose perfected God-consciousness—constituted by the complete passivity of his human desires so that the divine reality at His root can express itself fully as universal love for humanity—transforms the community formed around Him. Because Schleiermacher saw the empirical world as the setting in which selves could impact and transform one another, he had the resources to articulate a Christology according to which Christ could effect the historic attainment of the highest good. But even apart from this theology, Mariña can use Schleiermacher’s discussion of Christ’s transforming impact to highlight how, within Schleiermacher’s thought, “contact with another person and incorporation into a community founded by such an individual can be the occasion for ethical transformation” (187).

In the final chapter, Mariña explores how Schleiermacher’s thought bears on religious pluralism. Here, the chief lesson is that different religions have positive value insofar as they can promote the kind of self-consciousness from which love springs.

Overall, this is an extraordinarily rich and provocative book deserving careful study. Those who pursue such study will be rewarded with not only a deeper understanding of Schleiermacher, but a deeper appreciation of philosophy’s potential to help us better understand ourselves and our world.

Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament: Essays 2002–2008, by Thomas Nagel. Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. 171. \$27.95 (cloth).

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In an essay published in 2007 and titled, “A Time of Transition,” Jürgen Habermas offered this surprising estimation: “Christianity, and nothing else, is the ultimate foundation of liberty, conscience, human rights, and democracy, the benchmarks of Western civilization. To this day, we have no other options. . . . We continue to nourish ourselves from this source. Everything else is postmodern chatter.”¹ Such a judgment, rendered by

¹Jürgen Habermas, “A Time of Transition,” published in Italian by Feltrinelli (2007)