



Revolution in *Gesinnung*: an interpretation of moral rigorism

Revolución en la *Gesinnung*: una interpretación desde el rigorismo moral

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Abstract

In the context of the studies on the Kantian work *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, the doctrine of the “revolution in *Gesinnung*” is analyzed, with the objective of evaluating its coherence with the Kantian moral philosophy exposed in this work, especially with moral rigorism. For this purpose, a qualitative methodology of bibliographical analysis of specialized literature on the Kantian work is employed, contrasting two lines of interpretation, namely, that which interprets *Religion* as enigmatic and contradictory, on the one hand, and, on the other, that which defends its coherence. As a result of the investigation, the following hypothesis is expected to be verified: the doctrine of the revolution in *Gesinnung* is consistent with the moral philosophy expounded in the *Religion*, since, by virtue of moral rigorism and the duty to become better moral subjects, a single subjective foundation of the adoption of maxims, a fundamental disposition (*Gesinnung*) good or bad, is demanded, therefore, the revolution in *Gesinnung* becomes necessary.

Keywords: *Gesinnung*, revolution, morality, rigorism, religion.

Resumen

En el contexto de los estudios sobre la obra kantiana *La Religión dentro de los límites de la mera razón*, se analiza la doctrina de la “revolución en la *Gesinnung*”, con el objetivo de evaluar su coherencia con la filosofía moral kantiana expuesta en la obra señalada, especialmente, con el rigorismo moral. Para ello se emplea una metodología cualitativa de análisis bibliográfico de literatura especializada sobre la obra kantiana, contraponiendo dos líneas de interpretación, a saber, por un lado, la que interpreta la *Religión* como enigmática y contradictoria, y, por el otro, la que defiende su coherencia. Como resultado de la investigación, se espera verificar la siguiente hipótesis: la doctrina de la revolución en la *Gesinnung* es coherente con la filosofía moral expuesta en la *Religión*, ya que, en virtud del rigorismo moral y el deber de ser mejores sujetos morales, se exige un único fundamento subjetivo de la adopción de máximas, una disposición fundamental (*Gesinnung*) buena o mala, por lo tanto, se hace necesaria la revolución en la *Gesinnung*.

Palabras clave: *Gesinnung*, revolución, moral, rigorismo, religión.

1. Introduction

Around Kant's work *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1998), various interpretations have been offered (Pasternack and Fugate, 2024). In this respect, we can point to two predominant lines of interpretation: First, that of the “conundrum” (Pasternack, 2020, Pasternack and Fugate, 2021; Muchnik and Pasternack, 2017, Chignell, 2014) or traditional (Rodríguez, 2019, p. 18), i.e. of those who consider that *Religion* presents “conundrums”, “internal contradictions”, “irrationalities” (Wolterstorff, 1991), “wobbles” (Michalson, 1990) and “inconsistencies” (Quinn, 1984). Secondly, that which defends its internal coherence and consistency (Pasternack, 2014, 2017, 2020; Wood 2020; Rodríguez 2019), which we can call integral or affirmative (Rodríguez, 2019, p. 18).

The core of the discussion regarding *Religion* (1998) is the coherence between the doctrines of radical evil (*radicalen Bösen*) and revolution in the fundamental disposition (*Revolution in der Gesinnung*). On the one hand, Kant affirms a natural propensity or inclination towards evil in the human being (AA 06: 32-39), and, on the other hand, he affirms his ability to change his

fundamental disposition (*Gesinnung*), a *change of heart*, after a free choice of this (AA 06: 44-53), without denying or affirming divine help.

The approach of a supposed contradiction in *Religion* (1998) arises from a theological reading of the text, specifically, with Karl Barth. He points out that Kant contradicts himself by affirming an Augustinian view of moral evil and, at the same time, a Pelagian view of human freedom in relation to grace or divine help (Muchnik and Pasternack, 2017). In the same vein, Wolterstorff (1991) sees contradictions and irrationalities between the Stoic maxim defended by Kant, namely that “a person's moral worth is determined entirely by that person himself” (p. 48), and the idea that a person's moral status ultimately depends on divine action. Others, such as Michalson, Quinn and Hare, see in *Religion* (1998) a contradiction between Kant's supposedly Augustinian approaches and Enlightenment principles (Allison, 2002; Damstra, 2023; Muchnik and Pasternack, 2017). Ultimately, “the interpretative consensus is thus that Kant is at war with himself and presents various Christian theses that undermine his core moral principles” (Muchnik and Pasternack, 2017, p. 266).

A reading removed from Barthian theological prejudices allows one to interpret *Religion* (1998) in an entirely different way. The Kantian doctrines of radical evil and revolution in the fundamental disposition can only be properly understood in their relation to the whole work, including the Prefaces. There it can be observed that the purpose of *Religion* (1998) is to conduct an “experiment” (*Versuch*) (AA 06: 12, 15-16) which consists in determining the “association”, “compatibility” or “union” (*Vereinigung*) (AA 06: 13, 12) that can exist between the *historisches System* (AA 06: 12, 19) or the Historical System of Religion (HSR), and the *Vernunftsystem der Religion* (AA 06: 12, 20-21) or the Pure Rational System of Religion (PRSR) (Pasternack, 2014).

Religion (1998) seeks to compare the HSR and the PRSR, to assess their compatibility and to determine whether in both systems there is everything essential and necessary for salvation, that is, if in them we find “what we must do to become worthy of happiness” (Pasternack, 2014, p. 10). As Pasternack (2014) puts it: “the formula tested by the *Religion* experiment is whether Pure Rational Faith (*Reiner Vernunftglaube*) = Saving Faith (*seligmachender Glaube*)” (p. 3).

Within this integral interpretation of *Religion* (1998), the one that affirms its internal coherence, this research aims to evaluate the coherence of the Kantian doctrine of the revolution in *Gesinnung* with the moral philosophy expounded within *Religion*. To this end, we will analyze this doctrine, expounded on general remark Part One of *Religion*, on the basis of the moral rigorism defended by Kant at the beginning of this. Our hypothesis is that the doctrine of the revolution in the *Gesinnung* is consistent with the moral philosophy expounded in the *Religion*, since, by virtue of moral rigorism and the duty to become better moral subjects, a single subjective basis for the adoption of maxims, a fundamental disposition (*Gesinnung*) good or bad, is demanded, thus necessitating the revolution in *Gesinnung*.

2. Moral rigorism and revolution in the *Gesinnung*

According to Kant, rigorism is the view that “between an evil and a good disposition [*Gesinnung*] (the inner principle of maxims) according to which the morality of an action must be judged, there is no intermediate position” (AA 06: 23, 9-10). Since only the moral law can determine or move the free will, a morally good person will be one who has incorporated the moral law as a motive or incentive into his maxim. Conversely, a morally bad person will be one who has included in his maxim something contrary to the moral law. In other words, a subject cannot rationally hold the maxims of morality and self-love (or happiness) at the same time (Damstra, 2023). Therefore, it cannot happen that a person has a mixture of a good and a bad fundamental disposition (syncretism) or a neutral one (indifferentism). Both positions are called “latitudinarian” by Kant (AA 06: 22, 26) and are opposed to rigorism.

Kant's defense of rigorism stems from his well-known attempt to ground morality in a priori principles rather than empirical knowledge. Kant observes that, from the empirical point of view, the most plausible position is some form of latitudinarianism. In contrast to this, Kant argues for a position that is consistent with the principle of moral autonomy, according to which “our moral status is determined by our free choice of maxims.” (Damstra, 2023, p. 2) In this sense, rigorism is based on the so-called “Incorporation Thesis” (Pasternack, 2014, p. 90), according to

which, a person acts freely when he chooses and incorporates into his maxim a motive or incentive, be it respect for the law or inclinations (self-love). In Kant's words:

The freedom of the power of choice [*Willkühr*] has the characteristic, entirely peculiar to it, that it cannot be determined to action through any incentive *except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim* (has made it into a universal rule for himself, according to which he wills to conduct himself); only in this way can an incentive, whatever it may be, coexist with the absolute spontaneity of the power of choice [*Willkühr*] (of freedom). (AA 06: 23, 1-3; 24, 1-5)

Against the indifferentist position, a person will be morally good when he incorporates in his maxim the incentive of the moral law and will be morally bad when he includes in his maxim a motive opposed to the moral law. Thus, “his disposition [*Gesinnung*] as regards the moral law is never indifferent (never neither good nor bad)” (AA 06: 24, 13-15). This implies that, from the rigorist position, a person who acts against the moral law cannot simply plead ignorance or remain indifferent, but, rather, must take responsibility for that “positive resistance to it” (Allison, 2002, p. 338).

The thesis of incorporation also serves to refute the syncretistic position, since it would be contradictory that, having included the moral law in his maxim, the person can be considered evil at the same time and in the same sense. In this way, syncretism opposes the two fundamental theses of rigorism: “(a) there is a singular supreme maxim; and (b) that supreme maxim is either good or evil” (Pasternack 2014, p. 91).

Kantian rigorism claims that we always act based on a *Gesinnung* or fundamental/supreme maxim and that this can be either good or evil. In other words, we act according to the supreme maxim of morality (good *Gesinnung*) or according to the maxim of egoism or self-love (bad *Gesinnung*). The supreme good maxim could be formulated as follows: “Act according to self-love only if this does not conflict with any moral duties” (Damstra, 2023, p. 4). On the other hand, its counterpart would be: “Self-love is a sufficient ground to act even when this may conflict with one's moral duties” (Damstra, 2023, p. 4).

With regard to the notion of *Gesinnung*, we will first try to define it from a purely linguistic point of view, and then look at how Kant used the term in *Religion* (1998). *Gesinnung* has been

translated into English as attitude, mentality, state of mind or fundamental moral disposition (Pasternack, 2014), comportment of mind (Munzel, 1999). Others have opted for conviction (Palmquist, 2016) or meta-maxim (Hills, 2014). On the other hand, it has been translated into Spanish as *intención*, *disposición de ánimo*, *actitud fundamental* or *disposición moral de fondo* (Crespo, 2012). However, it is recognized that none of these translations conveys the full meaning of the concept in German and most prefer to keep the term in its original language.

Crespo (2007) provides us with an approach to the notion of *Gesinnung* from its Greek equivalent *phroneo*, which refers to an orientation of the human being to something (pp. 230-231)¹, and adds that the being of man necessarily includes an orientation to something that is at the basis of and is the origin of human thinking, feeling and acting (Crespo, 2007, pp. 230-231). According to Crespo (2007), Luther translated the Pauline text of Philippians 2:5: *τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* (“Have among yourselves the same sentiments as Christ Jesus”) into German as *Ein jeder sei gesinnet wie Jesus Christus auch war*. As can be seen, Luther translated the verb *phroneite* as *gesinnt*. Thus *Gesinnung*, in its relation to *phroneo*, has the sense of the fundamental direction of the life of human persons from which their particular actions flow (Crespo, 2012, p. 231).

Munzel, for her part, points out that the meaning of *Gesinnung* in ordinary language is *sittliche Haltung*, i.e. moral attitude. According to her, *Gesinnung* should therefore be translated literally as “moral-mindedness, or morally principled-mindedness” (Munzel, 1999, p. 17). Furthermore, Munzel gives us a key clue to understanding the notion of *Gesinnung* by referring us to a passage (KpV 06: 447), in which Kant points out that *Gesinnung* is equivalent to the Latin *animus*, which refers to the soul not as a principle of life (*anima*), but as a principle of intellection and sensation. “Its range of meaning includes intellect, understanding, mind, thought, reason, and spirit” (Munzel, 1999, p. 17). Thus, Munzel is inclined to translate *Gesinnung* as comportment of mind, for according to her, it captures both the sense of *Haltung* and *animus*. Thus, the idea of *Gesinnung* as comportment of mind is intended to convey the sense of an attitude informed “by

¹ All translations into English of texts in Spanish are authored by me.

principles one consistently adopts in setting and pursuing one's purposes and in guiding one's choice making" (Munzel, 1999, p. 18).

We consider that both *phroneo* and *animus*, as they have been presented above, give us clear clues to understand what Kant himself wanted to convey with the notion of *Gesinnung*: a fundamental orientation, disposition or attitude that is at the basis of all human activity that can be qualified as moral.

In *Religion*, Kant defines *Gesinnung* as "the first subjective ground of the adoption of maxims [*der erste subjektive Grund der Annehmung der Maximen*]" (AA 06: 25, 5-6), which implies that all moral activity acquires the character of that subjective foundation, which is *Gesinnung*.

In other passages of the *Religion*, Kant refers to *the Gesinnung* as "*oberste Maxime*" (AA 06: 31, 23; 36, 6), i.e. "higher maxim" (Placencia, 2018, p. 191), "fundamental maxim" (Wood, 2020, p. 97) or super-maximum (Crespo, 2012, p. 71). *Gesinnung* is the maxim of maxims, "a ground (*Grund*) of particular maxims" (Damstra, 2023, p. 4), the ultimate subjective foundation of action and, as such, it is the self-imposed fundamental rule or norm that subjectively determines the will.

In *Religion* itself, Kant uses the terms *Gesinnung* and *Herz* (heart) interchangeably when he speaks, for example, of the good and bad heart of man (AA 06: 29, 14-15; 30, 12; 37, 22-23) or when referring to the change of heart (AA 06: 47, 22-28; 51, 7-21). In fact, he also refers to man's heart as "the first subjective ground of his maxims" (AA 06: 51, 7-21). *Gesinnung*, therefore, is the basis of people's moral life or, in Kant's words, it determines "the human being's moral constitution" (AA 06: 66, 30).

From the understanding of *Gesinnung* as a supreme maxim, some scholars have established that there are two types of maxims, namely, first-order and second-order maxims: First-order maxims are the practical principles of the volition, while second-order maxims are the practical principles of the will, and Kant usually refers to them as the inner attitude (*Gesinnung*) (Torralba, 2011, p. 31). In other words, the second-order maxims underlie the first-order maxims, and the latter find in them their *raison d'être* or ultimate justification. This "underlying maxim is the *Gesinnung*" (Hill, 2014, p. 82) and corresponds to a kind of foundation to which actions are referred (Placencia, 2018, p. 192).

Taking into account what has been stated so far, we can define *Gesinnung* as “the enduring character or disposition of an agent, which underlies and is reflected in particular choices” (Allison, 1990, p. 136) or as the foundation that accompanies actions in a stable and permanent way over time (Placencia, 2018, p. 192). *Gesinnung* is, then, the 'source' from which all actions flow, whether they are performed out of duty, that is, out of respect for the moral law, or out of inclination (Crespo, 2007, p. 243). It is a maxim “that provides a direction or orientation for the moral life of the agent viewed as a whole” (Allison, 1990, p. 141). It is therefore appropriate to translate *Gesinnung* as fundamental moral disposition (Crespo, 2012, p. 67), fundamental disposition/attitude.

In *Religion*, Kant makes known some characteristics of *Gesinnung*. Firstly, as a consequence of moral rigorism, *Gesinnung* can be morally qualified as bad or good. Kant states that a person can have a good or a bad *Gesinnung*, but not both at the same time, nor a mixture of them. A good *Gesinnung* is one in which the maxims of happiness or self-respect (based on inclinations) are subordinated to the maxims of morality (based on respect for the law). The opposite corresponds to bad *Gesinnung*. As Hills (2014) summarizes it, “*Gesinnung* is ultimately a choice between putting the moral law above self-love, and vice versa. An evil person puts self-love over morality, a good person does the opposite” (p. 79). In Kant's words:

Hence the difference, whether the human being is good or evil, must not lie in the difference between the incentives that he incorporates into his maxim (not in the material of the maxim) but in their *subordination* (in the form of the maxim): *which of the two he makes the condition of the other*. It follows that the human being (even the best) is evil only because he reverses the moral order of his incentives in incorporating them into his maxims. He indeed incorporates the moral law into those maxims, together with the law of self-love; since, however, he realizes that the two cannot stand on an equal footing, but one must be subordinated to the other as its supreme condition, he makes the incentives of self-love and their inclinations the condition of compliance with the moral law- whereas it is this latter that, as *the supreme condition* of the satisfaction of the former, should have been incorporated into the universal maxim of the power of choice as the sole incentive. (AA 06: 36, 13-33)

From the perspective of Gressis (2010), when Kant says that one cannot be good and bad at the same time (rigorism), he does not mean that the incentives or motives of happiness and morality do not coexist, he states that one cannot act based on both types of maxims at the same time. The inclinations, in a person who possesses a good *Gesinnung*, are the source of the maxims of self-love or egoism, have not been eradicated. In the same way, a person with a bad *Gesinnung* has not lost the ability to act according to the maxims of morality. In this sense, a person with a bad *Gesinnung* “promotes her happiness at the expense of morality only in *some cases*” (Gressis, 2010, p. 394). Likewise, “someone has adopted a good *Gesinnung* in place of an evil one, she still occasionally fails to do her duty either out of frailty or impurity” (Gressis, 2010, p. 394). It is a question, then, of what kind of maxim takes the place of supreme maxim, of what subjective principle ultimately determines the will.

This interpretation would seem to suggest that good and bad *Gesinnungen* coexist in the person. If this is true, it is not consistent with Kantian rigorism. For Kant one cannot be a good and a bad person at the same time. Either all actions arise from a good *Gesinnung* or from a bad one. Although the incentives or motives of happiness and those of morality continue to coexist, it is the moral quality of the *Gesinnung* that determines which motives will be incorporated into the maxim of action.

Secondly, *Gesinnung* is described as both innate and acquired. This is rather enigmatic. As Palmquist (2016) puts it, “this claim surely rates as one of the most difficult to understand in Kant’s entire philosophical corpus” (p. 61). First, that it is innate does not mean that one is born with good or bad *Gesinnung*. Kant explains that *Gesinnung* is acquired or adopted by free choice (*Willkühr*), “for otherwise it could not be imputed” (AA 06: 25, 7-9).

One possible interpretation is that *Gesinnung* is innate “in the sense that it has *‘always been’* present (phenomenally), it nevertheless must have somehow been *‘adopted’* in some way (noumenally)” (Palmquist, 2016, p. 61). In other words, *Gesinnung* has been acquired by the will (*Wille*) in a timeless or “nontemporal ‘fact’ of human nature” (Palmquist, 2016, p. 62), whereas we cannot identify a point in time at which by act of volition (*Willkühr*) we have acquired it for the first time, so to speak, which gives it, phenomenally, an innate character. Pasternack (2014) has

called this timeless choice of *Gesinnung* the “*Gesinnung* choice” (p. 86), on this ultimately depends on our “moral status” (Pasternack, 2014, p. 100).

What is problematic is that, for Kant, the choice of *Gesinnung* is conditioned by our natural propensity for evil and by the dispositions for animality [*Thierheit*] and humanity [*Menschheit*] (AA 06: 26), from which the maxims of self-love or happiness arise; so that, in principle, all people would choose an evil *Gesinnung* (Damstra, 2023; Pasternack, 2014; Rodríguez, 2019). This timeless choice, understood as an intelligible or noumenal act, Kant calls it radical evil (Rodríguez, 2019). This implies that all persons possess an evil *Gesinnung* until proven otherwise, that is, until the person undergoes a “revolution in *Gesinnung*” (AA 06: 47, 24), that is,

If by a single and unalterable decision a human being reverses the supreme ground of his maxims by which he was an evil human being (and thereby puts on a "new man"), he is to this extent, by principle and attitude of mind, a subject receptive to the good”. (AA 06: 47, 36-48, 3)

Thirdly, *Gesinnung* is unknowable: “there cannot be any further cognition of the subjective ground or the cause of this adoption” (AA 06: 25, 9-10). This unknowability of the attitude underlying actions brings us back to what Kant points out in the second *Critique*, when he says: “it is an insoluble problem for human reason how a law can be by itself and immediately a determining foundation of the will (which is, then, the essential of all morality)” (AA 05: 72). Precisely, the moral law is constituted as a determining foundation of the will when the *Gesinnung* adopts respect for the law as its motive. But how this happens is not accessible to our reason, for *Gesinnung* is a kind of foundation of determination that is not situated in the phenomenal order but is constitutive for what appears in it (Placencia, 2018, p. 192).

Kant often points out that we cannot know our own *Gesinnung*, especially when it comes to knowing whether there is a good *Gesinnung* at the bottom of an apparently good (law-conforming) action. That is, for Kant, a good action is not sufficient to say that the person possesses a good *Gesinnung*, because it can be performed with selfish motivations (AA 06: 47) or performed according to the letter and not according to the spirit of the law (AA 06: 30), i.e. in a conditional way (Peters, 2018). This is not the case when it comes to an action contrary to the law, since, in these cases, it is indeed possible to infer that the person possesses a bad *Gesinnung*. Consequently,

a bad action is enough to discover that one possesses a bad *Gesinnung*, but a good action is not enough to judge the *Gesinnung* as good. It is necessary that the person demonstrates in a series of actions *in perpetuum* that he has resolved to follow the law unconditionally or to act out of duty.

This unknowable character of *Gesinnung* implies that it itself cannot be understood as a conscious subjective representation (La Rocca, 2013, p. 144), but as an objective structure, to which moral evaluation refers (La Rocca, 2013, p. 152). Thus, *Gesinnung* has the character of a *regulative idea* (La Rocca, 2013, p. 148; Placencia, 2018, p. 192), in the sense that it refers to an intelligible act to which we have no access, but to which, nevertheless, all our actions are referred, in turn, on the ideal plane, at least as a projected totality of them (Placencia, 2018, p. 192). Consequently, the relation of *Gesinnung* to actions is not causal in a psychological sense, as if a good *Gesinnung* automatically generates good actions. It is rather a logical relation (Allison, 1990), since, for Kant, *Gesinnung* “cannot consist in a disposition that causally determines choices and actions” (Peters, 2018, p. 513).

The relationship between *Gesinnung* and its empirical manifestations must be defined in terms of its “moral identity” (Peters, 2018, p. 516), since, ultimately, the moral value of actions depends on the underlying *Gesinnung*. Thus, according to Peters (2018) *Gesinnung* can be understood as the formal cause (in the Aristotelian sense) of the moral value of actions, it is “the moral quality inhering in a complete series of actions and choices [...], that in virtue of which they receive an ultimate moral quality, which makes them (with regard to their moral quality) what they are” (2018, p. 515). Therefore, according to this interpretation, only someone who knows the totality of actions, from an eternal perspective or from the perspective of grace (Pasternack, 2014), can judge whether a person possesses a good *Gesinnung*, i.e. God, a holy and just being who “knows hearts” (AA 06: 48).

As can be seen, Kantian rigorism implies a radical view with respect to *Gesinnung*: one possesses either a good or a bad *Gesinnung*. In biblical terms, one is either a good tree or a bad one. For Kant, a person is a “good tree” when she “has incorporated into his maxim the incentive implanted in him for the moral law” (AA 06: 45, 18-19) not sometimes, but once and for all. This is what the revolution in *Gesinnung* consists in. It is not enough to reform habits, nor to act in

accordance with the law in order to be “*morally* good (pleasing to God)” (AA 06: 47, 19), a “*change of heart* is necessary” (AA 06: 47, 12), which is nothing else than to choose the maxims of morality as the supreme subjective foundation of all maxims, over those of happiness or self-love. In conclusion, given the rigorism and the duty to become good people, the “revolution is necessary” (AA 06: 47, 33-34).

3. Augustinism, radical evil and revolution in the *Gesinnung*

The coherence between moral rigorism and the necessity of the revolution of the fundamental disposition (*Gesinnung*) has been established. However, since we affirm the coherence of *Religion*, it remains to be clarified how the two doctrines are compatible with the doctrine of radical evil. As we noted in the introduction, the enigma interpretation points out that Kant contradicts himself by affirming, first, an Augustinian position of moral evil and then, the possibility of moral revolution or conversion without divine help. In this sense, the interpretation of Barthian heritage suggests that Kant would be affirming a kind of Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism, by denying divine help or making it dependent on human effort, respectively (González, 2015, 2020; Pasternack, 2014, 2020).

Under the integral interpretation of *Religion* (1998), the Augustinian features of the doctrine of moral evil are to be understood only as methodological statements. Kant is not defending Augustinianism, but expounds the doctrine of *peccatum originarium* within the HSR, and then compares it with the doctrine of radical evil within the PRSR and assesses their compatibility. The result is that Kant rejects the Augustinian version of moral evil, in order to affirm two forms or dimensions of radical evil, which we might call phenomenal and noumenal.

The phenomenal dimension of radical evil consists in a natural *propensio* (*Hange*) to evil. This is not an inclination or propensity that incapacitates the human being from doing or even desiring good (as in anti-Pelagian, Calvinist and orthodox Lutheran Augustinianism), but a “subjective ground of the possibility of the deviation of the maxims from the moral law” (AA 06: 29, 7-9). Secondly, the noumenal form of radical evil consists in the already explained timeless

choice of *Gesinnung*. In this respect, Kant is clear in affirming that, despite radical evil (in its two dimensions), the capacity to do good has not been lost or has not disappeared (AA 06: 46).

Just as Kant affirms a propensity to evil, he also affirms an “original disposition [*Anlage*] to good” (AA 06: 26), which is incompatible with the Augustinian view of moral evil in its most radical versions. As Pasternack (2020) points out: “Part One of the *Religion*, thus, rather than offering a position even compatible with Augustinianism, instead advances an account of moral evil fundamentally at odds with it.” (p. 110).

Regarding the role of grace or the divine supplement in the revolution of the fundamental disposition, Kant can be said to posit a kind of semi-Pelagianism, if one wants to put it in those terms (González, 2015, 2020; Pasternack, 2014, 2020). Based on the axiom “we must, then we can” or on “the command that we *ought* to become better human beings” (AA 06: 45, 7-8), Kant affirms the human capacity to choose good *Gesinnung*, that is, to choose the maxims of morality over those of happiness or egoism.

Just as the human being has chosen a bad *Gesinnung*, he is also capable of choosing a good one. However, Kant leaves open the possibility of the divine supplement to this moral revolution or conversion, when he states: “Granted that some supernatural cooperation is also needed to his becoming good or better, whether this cooperation only consist in the diminution of obstacles or be also a positive assistance” (AA 06: 44, 24-26). But he immediately clarifies that “the human being must nonetheless make himself antecedently worthy of receiving it; and he must *accept* this help (which is no small matter), i.e. he must incorporate this positive increase of force into his maxim” (AA 06: 44, 26-31).

In short, Kant rejects the Augustinian view of efficacious grace (in Calvinism) or monergism, to affirm a kind of semi-Pelagianism, “*concursum*” or “synergism” (Pasternack, 2020, p. 110), aligned with the Arminian and Pietist doctrine of “prevenient grace” (Muchnik & Pasternack, 2017, p. 263), i.e. a divine supplement that can be accepted or rejected by the person. With this, Kant safeguards his doctrine of human freedom and moral autonomy (Chignell, 2014).

4. Conclusions

A proper understanding of Kantian theory of the fundamental disposition (*Gesinnung*) presented in *Religion* (1998) allows us to overcome interpretations that see in its inconsistencies and internal contradictions. Although Kant affirms a natural inclination or propensity to evil, it does not determine the moral character of the person, any more than does the original disposition to good. What shapes and defines the moral identity of a person is his or her *Gesinnung*, understood as the supreme maxim, the regulative idea, the formal cause of actions, and which, moreover, is freely chosen, redundantly enough, by the subject.

Following the axiom *we must, then we can*, and the Stoic maxim that a person's moral value depends on him or herself, it can be asserted that each person's ability to choose his or her *Gesinnung* is fully consistent with rigorism. So, the revolution of the fundamental disposition becomes necessary.

Kant's rigorist view is quite radical and complex at the same time, for not even a good action can be a sign of possessing a good *Gesinnung*, since it can be an action in conformity with the law, i.e. an action conditioned by the maxims of happiness or self-love. Here Kant introduces something which, far from solving the problem, accentuates it even more, namely the distinction between *virtus phaenomenon* and *virtus noumenon* (AA 06: 47), i.e. conditional law-abiding (motivated by the maxims of happiness) and law-abiding for the sake of duty (motivated by respect for the law), respectively. For the former, only a moral change is required, for the latter, a “*change of heart* is necessary” (AA 06: 47, 12).

At this point we find ourselves at the limit of PRSR, for (1) the choice of the initially evil *Gesinnung* is timeless and (2) no one except God can know the moral status of the person. This is a kind of moral agnosticism (Michalson, 1990), which reminds us of the classic Augustinian statement: *quandoquidem nemo scit hominum, quid agatur in homine, nisi spiritus hominis qui in ipso est?* (*quandoquidem nemo scit hominum, quid agatur in homine, nisi spiritus hominis qui in ipso est?*) (Augustine, *Confessions* X, 3, 3). In short, what can be understood as an enigma is rather the limit of rational speculation, the rest belongs to the realm of faith (KrV, BXXX).

5. References

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