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Ethical theology and its dissolution in Kant

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I. The Concept of Dissolution

Before entering into Kant's theological construction, I wish briefly to comment on the notion of *dissolution* present in transcendental philosophy. When the object of reflexion is no longer reality, but rather the a priori conditions for the possibility of knowing or the conditions which make possible the praxis of man, this progressive reflexion converts itself into a reflexion on reflexion, into an inquiry into the conditions of the possibility of the previous conditions. Taken to its ultimate consequences, such a process fatally leads to the end of philosophy, that is, to its termination. From an existential perspective, the continuous exercise of the critique could have no other outcome but nihilism[1]. When the critique is thus radicalized, it accepts nothing as firmly established and can thus not detain itself. The philosophical task then acquires a kinetic character: it becomes a movement that does not possess within itself its own end, so that its pursuit leads necessarily to its termination. Since human knowledge cannot be self-grounded, the obsessive inquiry as to its conditions of possibility ends simply in the declaration of its impossibility[2].

It is interesting to note how Kant ends the *Critique of Pure Reason:* the goal of critical philosophy is, according to Kant, to bring "human reason in its hitherto unsated thirst of knowledge to complete satisfaction"[3]. If, however, the critique kineticizes philosophy, then the latter loses its praxic character, which consists precisely in possessing the truth and thus satiating man's desire to know. In a sense, critical philosophy does not recognize the limit of reason and thus presents the

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1 Cfr. LLANO, A., *Metafísica y Lenguaje,* EUNSA, Pamplona 1984, p. 28. Cfr. INCIARTE, F., *El reto del positivismo lógico*, Rialp, Madrid 1974, pp. 56-57.
2 Cfr. LLANO, A., *cit.,* p. 28.
3 KANT, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Wolfgang Schwarz, Scientia Verlag Aalen, Darmstadt 1982, p. 259.

possibility of reasoning *ad infinitum.* If reason is solely occupied with concepts, it ends by being in conflict with itself and thus contradictory. This is precisely what Kant seems to be aware of when he affirms the unconditioned necessity of an idea of a supreme being among possible beings, but at the same time permits reason the possibility of transcending this God so determined by reason. Kant says: "One cannot dispel the thought, but one also cannot bear it, that a being conceived by us as the highest among all possible beings should, as it were, say to himself: I am from eternity to eternity, apart from me there is nothing, except what is something solely through my will. But whence am I?"[4]. The thought of a supreme being is thus problematized, since the possibility of a further inquiry leading to a higher principle is foreseen. Before such a dilemma, speculative reason cannot continue; it must detain itself and such is possible due to the method adopted: scientific inquiry, which reaches conclusions while at the same time proceeding further, is applicable to phenomena and not to things in themselves. Since it is impossible in the phenomenal world to know the existence of the necessary being that is God, the ideal of the highest being is not an objective principle of reason, but rather subjective. Such a principle of reason which Kant refers to as heuristic or regulative tells us nothing as to the existence of God, but merely provides a principle by which to explain the world; as Kant notes: "We thereby regard all conjunction in the world *as if* it were springing from an all-sufficient necessary cause, in order to found on it the rule of a systematic and lawful unity in explaining that conjunction; the ideal is not the assertion of an in itself necessary existence"[5]. The idea of a necessary being, in Kant's own words, "takes care of nothing but reason's formal interest," which is to explain the diversity of concepts by means of the highest unifying principle. Since this highest principle is a construct of human reason, immanent to reason, it would seem that Kant's interest is centered on the activity of reason, on man himself, rather than on God or the world. If the principle of the highest being only permits us to consider the world as if it proceeded from a necessary cause, and if this regulative principle is no more than a hypothesis immanent to reason and as such valid only for the human mind, then it would seem that the goal of Kant's philosophy, which is to satiate man's desire for knowledge is to remain unrealized, since the illusion of unity, or its hypothesis, cannot be the object of this desire, only the use of the categories as applied to knowledge provided by the senses can lead to the truth, or perhaps it might be considered that knowledge of the autonomy and creativity of man's reason is sufficient for Kant, as it seems that reason's primary interest is itself. The object of the initial inquiry, namely God, is thus replaced by human reason, and we have thus the dissolution of the theological inquiry.

The reason for this rather long introduction is to focus briefly on the influence of Kantian philosophy at the present time in religion and in the theological enterprise — an influence which is labeled as that of modernity rather than as that of Kantianism, but which has its roots in Kant. Excessive rationalization in theolo-

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 196.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

gical inquiry nullifies the primary object of the inquiry, that is, God. It is not surprising then that there be an immanentization of the transcendent, talk about God becomes talk about man and thus theology becomes, in effect, anthropology. When theology takes this anthropological turn, then our understanding of God is made possible through a functional hermeneutics, that is, God is conceived through the needs of man and He can thus be substituted by anything that can satisfy those needs. The interest of such a hermeneutics is primarily in the meaning that God has for man; the truth, which is the objective of the philosophical pursuit, is thus, in a sense, silenced or replaced. This is, I believe, although presented in a reductionist manner here, the result of Kant's theological construction — a construction, which is characterized not only by its rationalism but also by its voluntarism, given Kant's identification of the will with practical reason. We could probably say that for Kant, as for Voltaire, if God did not exist, he would have to be created, and this is precisely what is evident in following the development of Kant's theology: God is posited so as to satisfy the interest or need of human reason. Kant notes, in effect, that the concept of God not lacking, His existence is to be invented: "For what I assume as a hypothesis must be known to me, at least in its properties, to a degree that requires me to invent only its existence, not its concept"[6].

II. The Interests of Reason

The notion of interest in Kant's philosophy is thus fundamental to an understanding of his theology. According to Kant, reason has two uses — one theoretical and the other practical —, both of which are inextricably tied to the interests of reason. The theoretical use of reason may be either speculative, that is, referred to an object or to concepts of an object which cannot be reached in experience, or may be applied simply to the knowledge of nature, in which case it is referred to objects that can be given in experience[7]. If reason proceeds from the existence of things to their cause, then reason is being used speculatively; however, since experience of God is not possible, reason offers no speculative knowledge of God. As is well known, things in Kant can be considered in a two-fold manner; such as they are given in experience, as they appear to us — things thus considered are called phenomena —, and things as they are in themselves, or as Kant names them, noumena. Knowledge of things such as they are in themselves — and God is such a noumenal object — is inaccessible to man's speculative reason. Kant thus recognizes that "all attempts of a merely speculative use of reason in respect of theology are totally fruitless and ... that the principles of its nature-related use do not lead to any theology"[8]. Such a position undoubtedly affects the possibility of metaphysics and consequently that of philosophical theology. Kant thus concludes that since the natural use of speculative reason cannot furnish us with any theology,

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 252.
[7] Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 203.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

then rational theology must be based on moral principles. Reason's speculative use provides a mere ideal of the highest being, a perfect concept which is at the pinnacle of human cognition; the objective reality of this ideal cannot, however, be proven by speculative reason; reason in its speculative use does not arrive at the existence of a supreme being. Although human reason is, according to Kant, naturally inclined to transgress the limits of experience and thus provide an expansion of knowledge beyond experience, it contains nothing but regulative principles or transcendental ideas limited to regulative use. The transcendental ideas have thus no immanent use, which use is applicable to objects of experience; they are therefore never of any constitutive use so that concepts of certain objects would be given through them: a concept cannot be provided by our understanding for an object outside of experience. The activity of reason consists in unifying by means of ideas the diverse concepts of the faculty of understanding, which concepts refer to intuitions furnished through the faculty of sensibility. Reason's task is to unify the rules of understanding under principles. The speculative interest which is thus responsible for the speculative use of reason lies in the expansion or elaboration of the knowledge provided by the senses and understanding. In its speculative use, reason seeks the unconditioned which corresponds to the conditioned knowledge of the understanding and which thus completes and perfects the unity of thought. Kant's search for the unconditioned leads to three representations, that is, to three transcendental ideas, all of which are problematic[9]. Reason's speculative interest, in its transcendental use, concerns the will's freedom, the soul's immortality, and God's existence. Since these ideas are of no immanent use, Kant says that "considered in themselves, they are futile and also extremely difficult endeavors of our reason"[10]. The speculative interest of reason is expressed in Kant's question: "What can I know?" Pure reason, in its speculative use, cannot provide any knowledge of God, freedom, and immortality. Kant admits that they can be thought, but not known. As indicated above, however, reason has not only a speculative interest but also a practical one, and it is precisely this practical interest which is at the basis of Kant's theological construction. The practical use of reason consists in determining the will to act; but although the will is dependent on the principles of reason, it is not always in conformity with reason. Now, in order that the will be determined to act, there must be an object or matter that the will wants, and also a motive for which the object is wanted. It is precisely the relationship which exists between the matter and the motive which constitutes the practical interest of reason: reason becomes practical when it wants something and wants it for a given motive. There is, in effect, in Kant an identification of practical reason with the will. If everything in nature occurs according to laws, man's actions are also legislated; however, the laws of human action are represented by reason. The will thus determines itself to act according to the representation of certain laws or practical principles. For actions to be derived from practical principles, reason is necessary; therefore, the will is nothing other than practical reason. A brief analysis of the

[9] Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 206.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

principles which direct the human will provides answers for the principal problems of ethics, namely, What is the supreme principle of morality? and What is the ultimate moral end? A practical principle consists of an object of the will, a motive or a determining ground of the will, and its logical form or universality. A principle is universal and thus objective if it is "valid for the will of every rational being"; if the principle is valid only for the will of a particular subject, then the principle is subjective and termed a maxim. When a principle is not characterized by universality, then the motive or the determining ground of the will is identified with the very material of the will, that is, with the pleasure experienced before the reality of the object. Such a practical principle would be material, empirical, and thus not a moral principle, since we are dealing here with a principle of self-love, of one's own happiness[11]. On the other hand, man acts not only due to sensible motives, that is, due to pleasure; only strictly rational motives for man's acts can provide an objective foundation for morality. When man experiences the sentiment of respect before a principle which orders every rational being, then the determining ground of the will is identified with the form of the universal legislation. A practical principle is thus universal and objective when it presupposes as the determining ground of the will the legislative form, the sentiment of respect, which can only be known a priori by reason. Only this type of practical principle can give rise to moral principles or practical laws; Kant thus proposes as the supreme principle of morality: "So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as the principle of universal legislation"[12]. When an action is willed out of respect for the moral law, then it may be said that true moral interest directs practical reason. Pleasure is not, however, totally excluded from such willing; one can experience intellectual practical pleasure, the satisfaction of having realized one's duty. The sum total of this pleasure is happiness.

Now, given the supreme principle of morality, what is the final objective of the practical interest of reason? Since reason is the faculty of principles, the interest of its practical use lies "in the determination of the will with respect to the final and perfect end"[13]. The formal practical principles are subsumed under the supreme condition which orders the realization of the maximum of moral good, that is, virtue. The human will has in effect two supreme objects: virtue, the supreme object proposed by the practical use of pure reason, and happiness, the supreme object promoted by the empirical practical use of the faculty. Pure reason, in its practical use, however, does not accept happiness as an object unless it is united to the worthiness of being happy, that is, to good moral behavior. In its practical use, as in its speculative use, pure reason seeks the unconditioned which integrates the conditioned: in the highest good are therefore necessarily combined virtue and happiness. The final objective of the use of practical reason is the highest good, which consists in making oneself worthy of happiness through the following of vir-

[11] Cfr. KANT, I., *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck, University Press, Chicago 1949, V, 19-22.
[12] *Ibid.*, V, 30.
[13] *Ibid.*, V, 120.

tue. The interest of practical reason can thus be expressed in the a priori practical principle: "Do what makes you worthy of happiness," or "Further the highest good." It is precisely the practical interest of reason which responds to Kant's question: "What must I do?"

III. Primacy of the Practical Interest of Reason

We have now seen that speculative reason provides no knowledge of the objects which correspond to the three transcendental ideas: through speculative reason, man cannot know if he is free, if his soul is immortal, or if God exists. However, if man is to further the highest good, if the interest of the practical use of reason consists in determining the will to the highest good, then God must exist and man must be free and immortal. There is, therefore, a primacy of the practical interest of reason over the speculative interest; it is precisely the practical interest of reason which answers the most profound questions of metaphysics. If man is to act according to moral laws, then man's will must be free, and if man is to reach the highest good, the conditions which make the realization of this final objective of the will possible are precisely God's existence and the immortality of man's soul.

Kant notes in the *Critique of Practical Reason* the condition of the moral law is freedom. Although man belongs to the phenomenal world and as such may be subject to desires and inclinations which are empirical, he also transcends the laws of natural causality. According to Kant, "Only a formal law, i.e., one which prescribes to reason nothing more than the form of its universal legislation as the supreme condition of maxims, can be a priori a determining ground of practical reason"[14]. Now if the determining ground of the will is not a material principle but rather a formal principle and, as we have seen above, the legislative form, then the will is conceived of as independent from the natural causality of phenomena and is thus free. While Kant admits that this independence is freedom in the negative sense, he recognizes that the "intrinsic legislation of pure and thus practical reason is freedom in the positive sense. Therefore, [Kant adds], the moral law expresses nothing else than the autonomy of the pure practical reason, i.e., freedom"[15]. Freedom or autonomy is, in effect, the condition of the possibility of the moral law. The objective reality of freedom is thus proven in a practical way, not directly, but through the moral law as its condition: man is aware of his autonomy through the moral law which imposes itself by itself[16]. The moral law, the autonomy of practical reason, makes man conscious of being a legislator and thus lifts man above the sensible world. As Kant puts it, "Only the concept of freedom enables us to find the unconditioned for the conditioned and the

[14] *Ibid.*, V, 112-113.
[15] *Ibid.*, V, 33.
[16] Cfr. ROVIRA MADRID, R., *Teología Ética*, diss. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid 1985, p. 70.

intelligible for the sensuous without going outside ourselves"[17]. Reason, in its practical use, enacts laws that are imperatives, that is, objective laws of freedom, which tells us what ought to be done, unlike the laws of nature, which only deal with what does happen[18].

IV. Reason's Interest in God and in Man's Final Destiny

This brings us to Kant's third question: "If I do what I ought to do, what then may I hope?" The question is, as Kant notes, both practical and speculative: it is, in effect, the practical which will answer Kant's speculative inquiry. In the first Critique, Kant says: "All hoping is directed toward happiness, and in respect of matters practical and the moral law hoping is the same as knowledge and the natural law in regard to the theoretical cognition of things. Hoping, finally, comes to the conclusion that something is (which determines the ultimate possible end) because something ought to happen; knowledge, that something is (which acts as the supreme cause) because something happens"[19]. The connection of man's hope to be happy with his continuous effort to make himself worthy of happiness cannot be known through reason, as long as nature alone is presupposed. Happiness as derivative of moral behavior can be hoped for "only if a highest reason which ordains according to moral laws is made the underlying cause of nature." "The idea of such an intelligence, in which the morally most perfect will joined with the highest beatitude is the cause of all happiness in the world so far as it stands in exact proportion to morality (as the worthiness of being happy), [is called] the ideal of the highest good"[20]. The foundation for the practically necessary connection of both elements of a moral world, that is, a world in accord with all moral laws, is to be found only in the ideal of the highest good. Through man's ceaseless striving to make himself worthy of happiness, he may hope to become the participant of a moral world, which is actually for him a future world. "God, therefore, and a future life are two presuppositions that cannot be separated from the obligation imposed on us by pure reason according to principles of that very same reason"[21]. It is clear then that for Kant the conditions of possibility for the realization of the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law, that is, the conditions of possibility for the achievement of the highest good, are the immortality of the soul (the infinitely enduring existence and personality of the rational being) and the existence of God[22]. As Kant notes: "Without a God and without a world invisible to us but hoped for, the magnificent ideas of morality are objects of

[17] *Critique of Practical Reason*, V, 106.
[18] Cfr. *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 242.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 243.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 245.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] Cfr. *Critique of Practical Reason*, V, 121-122.

acclaim and admiration but no motivating springs of resolve and execution, because they do not fulfill the whole end that is natural to every being endowed with reason and a priori determined and necessary for it through that very same pure reason"[23]. Happiness or morality, therefore, cannot be the complete good of a rational being. These goods or ends can only be founded on the presupposition of a highest original good.

In order that man strive toward a final purpose determined for him a priori by the moral law, Kant assumes a moral world cause. In the *Critique of Judgment,* Kant refers to this moral cause as the supreme legislator, but points also to the conformity of this idea with the very constitution of reason: "...*according to the constitution of our rational faculty* we cannot comprehend the possibility of such a purposiveness *in respect of the moral law* and its object as there is in this final purpose, apart from an author and governor of the world, who is at the same time its moral lawgiver"[24]. Kant realizes, however, that the cognition which the highest interest of our reason has attained is not a demonstrated dogma, but rather "an absolutely necessary presupposition in conjunction with the most essential ends of reason"[25]. The moral argument which admits that there is a God does not

> supply any *objectively valid* proof of the Being of God; it does not prove...that there is a God, but proves that if [one] wishes to think in a way consonant with morality, [one] must admit the *assumption* of this proposition under the maxims of [one's] practical reason. We should therefore not say, [as Kant puts it], it is necessary for morals...to assume the happiness of all rational beings of the world in proportion to their morality, but rather, this is necessitated *by* morality. Accordingly, this is a *subjective* argument sufficient for moral beings[26].

Given that man should follow the moral law and that his end is thereby established, there is one condition by which his end connects with all the other ends and by which it is practically valid and that is that there be a God and a future world. In Kant, to hold as true that there is a God is not equivalent to knowing, for God's existence is not held to be true objectively, but only subjectively. According to Kant, "If the holding-to-be-true is subjectively sufficient but at the same time considered to be objectively insufficient, it is called believing"[27]. God's existence is therefore not an object of knowledge, but only of rational moral faith. Kant reveals his intense preoccupation with man's moral destiny and with that which assures it, namely, that there be a God, but is unable to provide

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[23] *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 246.
[24] KANT, I., *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.H. Bernard, Hafner Publishing Co., New York, p. 306, section 88.
[25] *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 248.
[26] Cfr. *Critique of Judgment*,, p. 301, note 15 of section 87.
[27] *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 250.

anything more than a subjective and voluntaristic argument which is, in fact, rather emotionally charged. Kant says:

> As the moral precept is at the same time my maxim (which reason commands it to be), I shall unfailingly believe in God's existence and a future life and am sure that nothing can shake this belief, because otherwise my moral principles themselves would be overthrown, and these I cannot abdicate without making myself in my own eyes despicable. No one can boast that he knows there is a God and a future life. For if he knows that, he is just the man I have always been looking for. No, the conviction is not logical but moral certainty, and since it rests on subjective grounds (of the moral bent of the will), I must not even say: it is morally certain that there is a God, etc., but: I am morally certain, etc.[28]

If it is a duty for man to promote the highest good, it is therefore morally necessary to assume the existence of God; as we have indicated, this moral necessity is subjective, a need of practical reason, and this need leads not to a hypothesis, as with reason in its speculative use, but rather to postulates which are the object of pure practical faith. Since the pure moral law commands every rational being, and since the intention which is suitable to this law is that of promoting the highest good, what makes the latter possible must be presupposed. Therefore, Kant wills that there be a God, that his existence in this world be also an existence in a pure world of the understanding outside the system of natural connections, and finally that his duration be endless[29]. Given that the pursuit of speculative knowledge has here been replaced by practical faith and the existence of God is a need of practical reason and therefore a subjective ground for Kant's moral theology, if man is obliged to act in a given way, it is not ultimately God who so commands him, but rather the pure moral law, the legislative dimension of practical reason; Kant so states: "As far as practical reason has the right to guide us, we shall consider actions as obligatory not because they are God's commands, but we shall regard them as divine commands because we are inwardly obligated thereto"[30]. It would seem finally that there is a disinterest in the existence of God per se, and that it is moral legislative reason that binds man producing, as it were, divine commands. Moral theology is, therefore, only of immanent use: it serves man to fulfill his destination by fitting him into the system of ends, without nevertheless foresaking the legislative structure of reason. The transcendent use of this theology, as Kant puts it, "inevitably perverts and defeats the ultimate ends of reason as much as that of mere speculation"[31].

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[28]Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 253.
[29]Cfr. *Critique of Practical Reason*, V, 143-144.
[30]*Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 249.
[31]*Ibid.*

V. The Focal Point of the Interests of Reason: God or Man?

Given the principal theses of Kant's transcendental philosophy and of his theological construction, it is not surprising that the proof presented have nothing to do with the existence of an object outside of the subject that presents it. The proof speaks rather of the subject himself who accepts it; since the subject who proposes this proof is a moral being endowed with pure practical reason and since the proof only refers to pure practical reason, then we can conclude that God is pure practical reason itself; thus, the realization of the highest good demands the existence of God which is nothing other than the practical use of reason[32]. This constitutes, in effect, the dissolution of Kant's ethical theology: the object sought for, namely God, is subordinated to or absorbed by pure practical reason. Were this not the case, however, the dissolution of such a theological construction seems inevitable due to its internal incoherencies. To finish, I shall mention only three: first, given Kant's bifurcated vision of man and the cosmos, the introduction of happiness into his moral system constitutes reference to an empirical element which cannot belong to the noumenal world or to noumenal man; the inclusion of happiness thus constitutes the introduction of a motive that is not strictly rational and thus a priori. "If the moral law is really to be kept pure, it must have nothing to do with happiness"[33]. If this is so, then there would be no need for the highest most perfect good, that is, for a God who apportions happiness according to moral conduct. In Kant's later writings, the desire for happiness is seen to pervert the moral motives of human conduct, and this, due to the introduction of the notion of radical evil, that is, man's natural propensity, according to Kant, to subordinate the dignity of the law to the desire for happiness, thus making happiness the prime motive for realization of the law, rather than respect for the law. Evil accounts therefore for man's tendency or disposition to will the rejection of himself as a self-determining personality, as a free being, for the sake of himself as a creature of nature[34]. This notion of radical evil, an element which proceeds from Christian theology and which affects the very nature of man, requires divine action for human rehabilitation.

Now it would seem that given the character of Kant's philosophy, which solely analyzes pure concepts of reason, the inclusion of radical evil and its effect on man's nature is not permissible. The notion of radical evil proceeds from Revelation and as such is considered an empirical element known in time and not in reason. In addition, the hope for happiness, to which man tends by nature, could replace his aspiration toward virtue. Man's actions would then be directed toward a quest for sensible goods and as such would become legal but not moral,

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[32] ROVIRA, R. *cit.*, p. 256.

[33] GREENE, T., *The Historical Content and Religious Significance of Kant's Religion*, intro. to the trans. of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Open Court, La Salle 1960, p. lxiii.

[34] Cfr. SILBUR, J.R., *The Ethical Significance of Kant's Religion*, essay preceding Greene and Hudson's trans. of Kant's *Religion*, p. cxiv.

since they would be motivated by an empirical impulse rather than by the worth of the rational law. The concept of God as the connection of virtue and happiness, of the ends of morality and those of nature, is therefore abandoned for the unconditionality of the imperative. The unconditional character of the law prevails over a transcendent God; the only value remaining is the imperative, for given the postulate of God as the connector of ends, then the law, contingent, would become subject to the legislative divine will, and the happiness hoped for could then constitute the motive for action[35].

According to one critic's interpretation of Kant's moral teleology, "One is only obligated to promote moral ends. Moral perfection (virtue) is what one is obligated to promote, and every other end is conditional upon this"[36]. If the highest object of the will is seen to be a strictly moral object, that is, virtue, with no necessary correlation to happiness, then there can be no duty to promote the highest good (happiness in proportion to virtue). Moral perfection does not consist in being rewarded for virtuous conduct, but rather in "purity of one's disposition toward duty"[37], and in the fulfillment of one's duty. If happiness and the notion of the highest good are excluded from Kant's ethics, "then there is no need (...) for the agent to act as if virtue would triumph and be rewarded in a teleologically ordered nature. For the agent does not require the assumption that nature will cooperate with moral purposes. Virtue can be acquired without such cooperation"[38]. In determining whether one is virtuous, what is considered is the extent to which there is goodness of will, or put more simply, one's motive. If the moral agent acts out of respect for the moral law, then the good is derived therefrom. In Kant, the concept of the good is derived from the principles of obligation or, it could also be said that the good emanates from man's very moral identity as an autonomous legislating agent. The good, as an object of the will, is therefore not conceived as something found in nature. "Rather it is the idea of a supersensuous nature, that is, the natural order that would arise if all wills were perfectly in accordance with the moral law"[39]. The maximum moral good, that is, virtue, is therefore the result of rational willing. In thus distinguishing or dissociating natural ends from moral ends, Kant is directing our attention away "from what one gets for virtue and toward *what can be created through virtue*"[40] from a supposedly passive characterization of the subject, around whom objects revolve eliciting his desires, to a more active view of man as a subject constructing objects or creating conditions consistent with his moral identity. The emphasis is on action, on the interest of practical reason and on the autonomous subject, rather than on

[35]Cfr. CORTINA ORTS, A., *Dios en la filosofía trascendental de Kant*, Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, Salamanca 1981, p. 309.
[36]AUXTER, T., *Kant's Moral Teleology*, Mercer University Press, Macon, Ga. 1982, p. 123.
[37]*Ibid.*, p. 124.
[38]*Ibid.*, p. 142.
[39]*Ibid.*, p. 61.
[40]*Ibid.*, p. 184.

contemplation and the interest of speculative reason. The second internal inconsistency which we see in Kant's theological construction leading inevitably to the dissolution of the same can be stated as follows: it would seem that to posit God as Supreme Legislator could not be reconciled with man's autonomy; man's practical reason would then not be autonomous, but heteronomous; man would therefore not be free and since it is precisely freedom in Kant which permits his access to the noumenal world, then autonomy not prevailing, man is not a noumenal being and is thus governed by the laws of nature, of the phenomenal world. It is, I believe, the incompatibility of man's autonomy with God as Sovereign Legislator which leads to identifying God with the very legislative structure of practical reason[41]. The importance of the autonomous subject in Kant cannot be overly emphasized. Without the radical autonomy of practical reason which makes man conscious of being a legislator and also a creator, there would be, in effect, no access to the transcendent. This seems apparent to us in a passage from *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* where Kant speaks about the "mystery" of man's calling to an ethical or divine state, and where he contrasts man's creaturely state and thus his dependence on divine legislation to man's autonomy and therefore to his own legislative capacity. Although a rather long passage, it seems necessary to quote it due to the importance of the juxtaposition:

> We can conceive of the universal *unconditioned* subjection of men to the divine legislation only so far as we likewise regard ourselves as God's *creatures*; just as God can be regarded as the ultimate source of all natural laws only because He is the creator of natural objects. But it is absolutely incomprehensible to our reason how beings can be *created* to a free use of their powers; for according to the principle of causality we can assign to a being, regarded as having been brought forth, no inner ground for his actions other than that which the producing cause has placed there, which, then (and so by an external cause), his very act would be determined, and such a being would therefore not be free. So the legislation which is divine and holy, and therefore concerns free beings only, cannot through the insight of our reason be reconciled with the concept of the creation of such beings; rather must one regard them even now as existing free beings who are determined not through their dependence upon nature by virtue of their creation but through a purely moral necessitation possible according to laws of freedom, i.e., a call to citizenship in a divine state. Thus the call to this end is morally quite clear, while for speculation the possibility of such a calling is an impenetrable mystery[42].

Given the irreconcilability of man as a free moral being and man as a creatu-

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[41] Cfr. CORTINA ORTS, A., *o.c.*, p. 319.

[42] KANT, I., *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. T.M. Greene and H.H. Hudson, Open Court, La Salle 1960, pp. 133-134.

re of nature, it is not surprising then that Kant's insistence on the autonomy of the subject should lead to the immanentization of the transcendent.

The moral predisposition which exists in man, that is, the predisposition to personality, to man as a rational and accountable being, raises man above the desires of nature, above the empirical incentives or determinants of the will, making him thus capable of respect for the moral law "as *in itself a sufficient incentive of the will.*"[43] To have personality is, in effect, to have an idea of the moral law and respect for it. The imperative moral law thus constitutes the highest incentive for man's will; this incentive is not imposed from without but is rooted in the very structure of practical reason: "Were it not given us from within, we should never by any ratiocination subtilize it into existence or win over our will to it; yet this law is the only law which informs us of the independence of our will from determination by all other incentives (of our freedom) and at the same time of the accountability of all our actions"[44]. The moral law thus makes man conscious of his autonomy and of his legislative capacity. When Kant therefore founds religion on morality thus creating a moral rational religion, he is careful to distinguish how the divine legislative will commands: through statutory laws or through purely moral laws. Kant wishes to emphasize that in all our duties, we are trying to conform to purely moral laws. "As to the latter," he says, "each individual can know of himself, through his own reason, the will of God which lies at the basis of religion; for the concept of the Deity really arises solely from the consciousness of these laws and from the need of reason to postulate a might which can procure for these laws, as their final end, all the results conformable to them and possible in a world"[45]. It is thus from the autonomy of the subject that is postulated the necessary hypothesis of the existence of that without which the autonomy of the subject and his final end would be incomprehensible. Kant's purely rational, ideal access to the transcendent does not constitute a true transcending, since God can only be found *in* our own moral consciousness[46]. Kant will thus never say that man obeys moral laws *because* they are divine commands. The motive for following the law would then be external to the law and would render man's actions legalistic rather than moral. Kant does, however, when speaking of moral religion, insist on "the heart's disposition to fulfill all human duties as divine commands"[47]. It is thus possible to create the *illusion* of acting according to moral laws *as if* they were divine imperatives; however, to wish to feel the immediate influence of the divinity when human frailty is confronted with the harshness of the imperative is a pretense which contradicts itself, since as noted above, the idea of the divinity rests solely in reason[48].

If the divine then is absorbed within practical reason, what is man to hope

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[44] *Ibid.*, note, p. 21.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 95.
[46] LLANO, A., *El problema de la trascendencia en el Opus Postumum kantiano*, in "Estudios de Metafísica", 1971-72 (2), p. 119.
[47] KANT, I., *Religion...*, p. 79. Cfr. pp. 142-143.
[48] Cfr. CORTINA ORTS, A., *cit.*, pp. 313-314.

for? This question brings us to what we consider to be a third inconsistency within Kant's theological system. Kant's hope which, as he puts it, is directed toward happiness has as its foundation moral faith. "But if God is not knowable, faith in Him must indeed be blind"[49]. Since the faculty in man which hopes is the will and since Kant's hope is grounded on blind faith, it would then seem inevitable that the object tended toward, hoped for, would be a construct of the human will or of practical reason.In *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Kant speaks of the creation of a God according to man's rational representation of Him:

> Though it does indeed sound dangerous, it is in no way reprehensible to say that every man *creates a God* for himself, nay, must make himself such a God according to moral concepts (...). For in whatever manner a being has been made known to him by another and described as God, yea, even if such a being had appeared to him (if this is possible), he must first of all compare this representation with his ideal in order to judge whether he is entitled to regard it and honor it as a divinity. Hence there can be no religion springing from revelation alone, i.e., without *first* positing the concept, in its purity, as a touchstone[50].

Kant states that in the moral practical sphere, personality, that is, man taken as a rational and accountable being has the power to render his concepts effective. And so, it is personality which *puts* or *positions* the existence of God. As is known, in Kant existence, like essence, is an "aspect" of reality: existence is viewed as effectivity or actuality, whereas essence is viewed as possibility. In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant notes: "It is indispensably necessary for the human understanding to distinguish between the possibility and the actuality of things. The ground for this lies in the subject and in the nature of our cognitive faculties"[51]. God thus becomes actual or effective for the practical use of reason, and this through man's consciousness of the moral law. "God exists, because there is a moral imperative. (...) There is no other manifestation of the divinity outside of what is given in the ethical experience of the rational subject. In order to find Him, we do not have to go out of ourselves, but only seek Him in the depths of our interiority"[52]. The transcendent Absolute is thus only to be found in the immanence of the autonomous subject. As Kant himself says in the *Opus Postumum*: "God must not be represented as a substance outside of men, but rather as the supreme moral principle within me... God is moral practical reason giving laws to itself. Consequently, there is no God other than in me...."[53]. If God is thus interiorized and identified with practical reason, what then is man to hope for? The realm of hope is itself immanentized, for what ultimately seems to be of interest in Kant's rational, theo-

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[49] GREENE, T., *The Historical Content* ..., p. lxxvii.
[50] KANT, I., *Religion*..., p. 157.
[51] KANT, I., *Critique of Judgment*,, p. 249, section 76.
[52] LLANO, A., *El problema* ..., p. 118.
[53] CORTINA ORTS, A., *cit.*, p. 297.

logical construction is not the destination of man's moral actions but rather how these actions are realized: out of respect for the moral law. And it is the pure moral law itself which makes man aware of his supersensuous nature, of the autonomy of his freedom, and thus of his predisposition to personality; in fact, Kant says: "We cannot rightly call the idea of the moral law, with the respect which is inseparable from it, a Predisposition to Personality; it is personality itself (the idea of humanity considered quite intellectually)"[54]. It would then seem that personality has replaced God; the final end has been replaced by the person as the only end in itself. In short, there appears finally to be a practical disinterest in the existence of God; what remains is the subject who thinks in order to know and thinks in order to act as a creative power[55].

[54] KANT, I., *Religion...*, pp. 22-23.
[55] CORTINA ORTS, A., *o.c.*, p. 340.