The Form of Evil

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Introduction

> Thirst overcame me. My eye met an icicle that hung within a hand reach from the window. I opened the window and cut the icicle but instantly a big fat one who wandered outside leaped and crudely took it from my hand. 'Warum?' I asked him in my poor German. 'Hier ist kein Warum' – here one doesn't ask why – he answered and aggressively pushed me back inside.
>
> (Primo Levi, *If This is a Man*, chapter 3)

> Evil . . . can overgrow and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface. It is 'thought-defying' . . . because thought tries to reach some depth, to go to the roots, and the moment it concerns itself with evil, it is frustrated because there is nothing. That is its 'banality'. Only the good has depth and can be radical.
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> (Hanna Arendt, in a letter to Gershom Scholem)

Upon arriving in Auschwitz Primo Levi discovered that rational discourse, in which actions are done for reasons, was left lying on the carriage floor together with his human dignity. By responding 'Here one doesn't ask why', the camp guard succinctly conveys the insight that evil defies reason.[1] This paper examines two studies of evil that are predicated on that idea: Kant's and Augustine's. It argues that their theories share an underlying formation wherein evil remains incomprehensible, except in negative terms as an absence of the reasonable. This deep similarity in the structure of the concept of evil is exceptionally striking if we bear in mind the radical difference in the scope of its application: whereas for Augustine 'evil' is a general metaphysical concept that concerns everything that goes wrong in creation, for Kant it is limited to agents and what they do. My argument is that the privative structure which underlies their understanding of evil stems from a shared belief in the central role of rationality in ethical discourse, and in an absolute dependence of moral responsibility on free will.

Such treatment of the concept of evil is known in medieval philosophy as the 'privation theory of evil'. In some circles, the privation

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415400001485 Published online by Cambridge University Press

theory has a bad reputation as denying the concept of evil of its depth in order to serve a theological agenda. With the purpose of absolving God from the responsibility for creating evil, so the argument goes, privation theories are willing to ignore what we know about suffering and wickedness:

> To treat an evil human will to be the source of an otherwise unnecessary rift in being . . . is to express resentment against the human condition.[2]

> [T]he most influential previous [explanations] . . . try to explain evil by explaining it away. They deny . . . that 'evil facts . . . are a genuine portion of reality'. [They] begin with a world view and then try to fit evil into it. But evil does not fit and this is why they try to explain it away.[3]

But as this paper seeks to demonstrate, under the right interpretation, 'evil as privation' is a philosophical formula which is entailed by the belief in the irrationality of wrongdoing, and can thus be independent of any theistic interests. A privative structure can be uncovered in theories that are predicated upon the transparency of morality to reason (hereafter 'rationalist theories') even when they shed off all the theistic concerns of the medieval thinkers. This is most clearly exemplified by discussions of the possibility of freely chosen immorality. An analysis of the way in which people prefer wrongdoing to goodness touches upon the deepest and most fundamental questions of moral theory: one's beliefs about free will, rationality and personal identity will determine the final outcome. This paper aims to show how Augustine's and Kant's views on these basic issues result in deep structural similarities in their account of the moment when we go for iniquity instead of righteousness. Both offer a formulation that is essentially privative: the choice of bad cannot be comprehended in the same depth as the choice of good – whereas the latter is understood as an expression of free will and rationality, the former can only be accounted for in negative terms of lack and incomprehension.

Immorality is therefore conceived as corrosion of the human. If the essence of humanity is our ability to act on the call of rationality, evil is the distraction and degradation of character. But the definition of evil as a corruption of a logically antecedent good does not imply any underrating of its destructive power; on the contrary. The drama of moral life for both Augustine and Kant revolves around the struggle not to descend into sin. Thus, in spite of its theoretical prominence, the good does not attract as much space as evil in their account of moral life. The good is

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seen as the stepping stone from which a constant uphill battle against the corruption of the soul can take place, or as the point from which the sad deterioration towards evil can be marked. A story of moral life that assumes a concept of evil as privation will therefore take the form of an going campaign against erosion, like the struggle against the salty winds that eats away the walls of the seaside house. Indeed, unlike the fundamental nature of evil which is purely negative (like the damage to the walls), the forces that act in its service can be very forceful indeed: desire, natural inclinations and powerful psychological mechanisms such as self deception and despair can all be the loyal servants of immorality. Defining evil as an absence of good therefore does not underestimate its destructive power. It does imply, however, that only the good can be thoroughly comprehended as a product of reason, and that in that sense it is the only expression of our humanity in full.

1. Evil as an Ontological and Ethical Concept

The metaphysics of evil as privation is based on a close association of being and goodness. Obviously, if 'to be' means 'to be good' then evil must be a non-being. Only the premise of this inference seems false on its face. The equation being = goodness requires farther interpretation. When being is thus identified with the good, how should we understand what is conceived as an abominable created object? A privation theory of evil has to show how what is real is good, while the bad is merely its inversion. Philosophers who endorsed it have to labour hard to refine, qualify, and elaborate the crude formula 'evil is a privation of good' so as to accommodate the use of the property 'bad' in ordinary language.

One famous route from 'being' to 'good' is via the close resemblance of 'good' and 'end', which is noted by Aristotle. Here, a reference is made to the way definitions function in a teleological framework. Basically, X is defined by the end which forms it. We cannot properly explain what a tadpole is without referring to frogs. The closer item X gets to attaining its end, or to realising its potential, the better it is as an X. Thus, the better chess software will win more rounds with better (human) players. Bad-making attributes consist in divergence from the item's end, or definition. An understanding of X begins with recognition of the good-making properties that pertain to it; the relevant bad-making properties can only be inferred through *inversion* of the good ones. Bad properties of an item X are the ways in which it *failed* to achieve its potential, and this reflects the detraction from its full

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potential being. Accordingly, we ask why the tadpole died before it matured into a frog, or why the computer did not achieve victory.

Followers of the Augustinian tradition claimed that the linkage between goodness and being does not refer to the question whether an object *exists* or not, but to the *level of its reality*.[4] In teleological terms, being admits of degrees, while existence is an either/or state. Augustine used the notion of degrees to introduce his famous 'universality thesis': A thing is good inasmuch as it has being. The universality thesis is perhaps best explicated in terms of potential/perfection: everything is good inasmuch as it realizes its potential/attains its perfection. Evil would then be what is missing, or the gap between the object's reality and its ideal. Augustine's concept of sin is based on this kind of an ontological analysis of evil; 'ontological' here, in the sense that the possibility of evil is a question about being in general, and not only a question in ethics.[5] But as we shall see, even when we look at his analysis from a narrower point of view, indeed, as a discussion in meta-ethics, the privation structure remains intact.

When sin is deemed by Augustine to be a 'perversion' he is taking it to be a special case of the ontological status of evil. If evil is a non-being, it was not created. That may exonerate God from being the creator of evil, but then it seems that *we* must be the origin of all moral evil. But for Augustine, if the notion of moral responsibility is to be preserved the roots of evil must be reconciled with freedom: 'The creature, therefore, which cleaves to God, differs from those who do not, not by nature, but by fault.'[6] The doctrine of 'sin as perversion' therefore has to contain the idea that we are accountable for the evil ingrained in us, together with the way evil is taken to be a perversion of our true nature.

This perversion or corruption always comes down to a turning away from love of the primal good, i.e. God, to love of lesser goods, e.g. beauty that attaches to the physical or intellectual satisfaction that is dependent on the appreciation of other people. Evil therefore does not reside in the state of affairs that is being chosen (for it must be conceived by the agent as good if it is to be endorsed as an end) but rather in the act of choice; in the turning *away* and not in its object.[7] By granting us free will the Creator gave us the greatest gift of all, the 'image of God'. However, free will is a double-edged sword – we can (mis)use it to make incorrect choices and turn in wrong directions. And this, according to his doctrine of original sin, is exactly what we did, and do, as humans. The concept of original sin raises many questions in regard to moral responsibility, the boundaries of agency, essentialism, etc. I will discuss

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only one issue which is relevant to our matter – how does Augustine account for the *transition* from innocence to sin?

Evil makes its first appearance in a world which is seen by God as 'very good' (Genesis 1: 31). Against a backdrop of goodness, badness suddenly appears in the form of fallen angels and forbidden fruit. But misconduct, we usually assume, must have a background of misplaced desires, bitter feelings, character flaws, etc. Such an array of internal states seems to be a necessary condition for the first instance of blameworthy wickedness. Augustine was not blind to this problem, and his disputant in *De Libero Arbitrio* raises exactly this question:

> But perhaps you will ask: 'Since the will is moved when it turns itself away from the unchangeable good towards the changeable good, where does *that* movement, which is clearly evil even though the free will must be counted as good . . . come from?[8]

Augustine's ontology of evil as privation invites such a query, for how can a free movement be explained in wholly negative terms? The answer that Augustine offers – or not – is enlightening:

> Perhaps you will be disappointed if, when you question me in this way, I reply that I don't know. I will however have replied truly, for what is nothing cannot be known . . . Therefore since the movement of turning away, which we agreed is a sin, is a defective movement, and since every defect is from nothing . . . you will no doubt see that it does not belong to God.[9]

The disputant is not satisfied. After going through the matter from different angles in the course of Book 3, he still insists that Augustine explain to him 'why [the good angels] did not sin, and why the [evil angels] did sin . . . If there were no cause, there would not be this distinction among rational creatures.'[10] Augustine, however, argues that the question is misplaced. In regard to free will there is no sense in asking for further causes. Had it been otherwise, free will could not have been the origin of all evil:

> Since the act of will is the cause of sin, and you are looking for the cause of the act of will itself, if I were to find this cause for you, wouldn't you then ask for the cause of the cause I found for you? . . . You must not look for anything beyond the root . . . a wicked act of will is the cause of all evils . . . But if you demand a cause of this root, how will it be the *root* of all evils?[11]

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Augustine sticks to his guns in his much later *City of God*. Angels and human beings were created without faults, and 'If the further question be asked, what was the efficient cause of their evil will? There is none.' If evil is blameworthy it must be chosen, and for that, its first cause must be free will. The search for a further explanation is futile.

The ontology of evil as privation and the epistemological precedence of the good that results from it show why the fall from Grace defies comprehension. In chapter 7 of the *City of God* (That We Ought Not to Expect to Find Any Efficient Cause of the Evil Will) Augustine explains that 'to seek to discover the causes of these defections . . . is as if some one sought to see darkness, or hear silence'. The metaphor here is partial but illuminating. Evil is a lack of being and is thus a paradigm of privation, but silence and darkness can also receive a wholly negative definition as a deficiency of light or sound. In the case of darkness, the metaphor goes even deeper, in the sense that light is conceived as a positive entity in itself and as a metaphor for truth.

> Let no one, then, seek to know from me what I know that I do not know . . . our mind perceives intelligible forms by understanding them; but when they are deficient, it knows them by not knowing them; for 'who can understand defects?'[12]

This incomprehensible, or even mysterious, nature of evil is perhaps the most powerful expression of the metaphysical principle of privation. The theme of epistemological asymmetry must therefore be taken on board by any privation theory of immorality. Later we shall look more closely at this point in Kant's analysis.

The case of primal sin, that is, the first incident of evil in the world, is an excellent test case of freely chosen evil. In the Garden of Eden, the factors that usually mitigate the irrationality of the deviation from the good are non-existent. Take ignorance; if the agent is unaware of some central facts that would otherwise guide her choice, we can perhaps say that her actions were done on the basis of subjective reasons (that unfortunately did not converge with what reasons she actually had). But in the state of affairs that obtained prior to the primal sin, ignorance of this kind was impossible – Adam and Eve had a direct knowledge of God, the supreme good, and that was the central fact, if not the only one, that was required for a rational choice to obey his (only) prohibition: 'Thou shall not eat of it'.[13] In a similar way, one cannot argue that our first sinners were struck by 'weakness of the will' (inasmuch as

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this is a coherent concept). This is because the necessary condition for weakness of the will is an internal conflict, e.g. between rationality and passion. But such a conflict, being itself evil, could not have existed in creatures who have not yet fallen from the state of 'very good'. The corruption of the soul must be a result, rather than a cause, of the primal evil.[14]

According to Scott Macdonald, turning away from the supreme good is the result of carelessness in attending to one's reasons. It is a kind of failure of practical rationality, which is not necessarily rooted in a character flaw, and yet can push one down towards a total moral fall.[15] But what I am interested in here is less the specific solution that is (arguably) suggested by Augustine, and more the structure of his argument on this issue. The heavily theological framework of primal sin can also function as a laboratory study of the way in which rationalist discourse of evil is formulated. We will find that the movement *towards* the desired object is better explained than the turn *away* from the good, and that the source of evil is necessarily inexplicable. The next section examines the Kantian parallel of the 'primal sin' and shows how these two formal aspects inform and structure it. We can then move to examine the underlying structure of the analysis of evil as privation as it is exemplified in the way each of them develops a concept of evil.

2. 'Radical Evil' in negative terms

> But now it must not be considered permissible to inquire into the subjective ground in man of the adoption of this maxim rather than its opposite.[16]

The incorporation of imputable evil into his moral theory was a strain for Kant. By the end of the second *Critique* we are left with a tight relationship between autonomy, freedom and the moral law. But is it too tight to allow morally bad actions? Can we be free but evil? Kant's subtle and illuminating discussion of that question culminates in his late book – *Religion within the Boundaries of Reason Alone* (henceforward *Religion*). We can already say that the central question of the book 'Whence cometh evil'? is never answered. The book which Kant dedicated to the problem of evil never reveals the rootstock of wickedness. Behind the semi-religious terminology and the intricacy of subtle ideas lurks an answer to a different problem – the possibility and form of freely chosen evil. Kant's answer to that problem developed over the years and its

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nuances and tensions (some would say inconsistencies) attracted numerous interpretations. The reading which is suggested in the following sections rests, I believe, on a firm interpretative ground. My purpose here is to expose its affinity with the Augustinian concept of evil in particular, and the privation tradition in general. We can then see more clearly why in a theory that strongly rejects the metaphysical and theological baggage of the Augustinian notion of sin, the concept of evil is still defined as an absence of a logically antecedent good.

We must start with a (very) brief review of the way freedom relates to the good. For Kant only when I see myself as bound by moral duty am I genuinely free. That is because the moral law is my law and as such it sets me free from external determination, while offering me an option to act in a way that expresses my true self. To see how obedience to moral duty is actually the only true expression of freedom, consider the way in which we see ourselves when we make a decision on how to act.[17] One cannot see himself as making a decision unless she regards herself as capable of free choice, that is, as in possession of free will. Note that this is not some theoretical belief that is necessary for a resolution to act. Rather, free will is a necessary feature of the standpoint from which choices are made. To be free, says Kant, the will must be affected but not determined by alien causes. Only free will can initiate an independent causal chain for which its agent is morally responsible. The notion of 'cause' here is essential. As a 'rational causality' the will must act on the basis of a law; freedom is not anarchy.[18] But this cause cannot determine the will from outside, for that would be a mere coercion. In other words, free will must be autonomous in enacting its own law.[19] The law of nature is therefore not a good candidate to serve as the principle of free actions. The categorical imperative in the formula of universality is much better. All that the categorical imperative (in this version) demands is that our principles will be of the kind that can be universalized, that is, that they will have the *form* of law.[20] Hence, the categorical imperative is not a constraint over the will. On the contrary: choosing to act according to the categorical imperative precisely says what it means for a will to be free.[21] But now, autonomy, freedom and moral duty are bounded together in a way that seems to leave immorality out of the scheme – and how can we be responsible for what lies outside the boundaries of free will? Evil seems to drop out of the picture.[22]

Yet, framing the question in these simple terms is misleading as it does injustice to the Kantian system. Two further distinctions must be taken into consideration: one regards the structure of the will; the

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other regards the kind of questions that can legitimately be asked in the context of moral responsibility. Let us look first into the two different parts of the will as Kant identifies them. *Wille* and *Willkür* are, respectively, the legislative and executive functions of the unified faculty of volition.[23] The legislative branch (*Wille*) suggests to the executive (*Willkür*) principles or laws which the latter confronts in the form of imperatives (either categorical or hypothetical). When presented with imperatives, the *Willkür* can decide and choose between them.[24] This division of labour between the two 'complementary aspects' of the will forms the will as both autonomous and free.[25] For the *Wille* is autonomous in giving a law unto itself, and the *Willkür* can then freely choose whether to follow the suggested law.[26] The result is a material difference between animal will ('arbitum brutum') and human will – only the latter is affected, but need not be determined, by inclinations, because 'practical spontaneity' allows humans to prefer moral duty to inclination.

The *Willkür* works through the generation of maxims. Maxims are 'the subjective principle of volition', that is, the principle that states the policy behind the endorsement of a certain desire as something that is worth acting on.[27] Good actions are guided by maxims whose *end* is moral duty – correspondence with the demands of morality is not enough, and favourable outcomes cannot do the job either. The concept of maxim is taken on board again in the *Religion*. Here, Kant develops the notion of a *Gesinnung* or a super-principle, which opens the way to a systematic review of the moral worth of individuals. Instead of the disjointed assessment of single acts, which is all that an examination of specific maxims can offer, we now have a notion of an organizing principle that determines the form of each single maxim and, hence, the moral status of every action.[28]

But how can the moral worth of countless actions, done in a variety of circumstances, be subsumed under one super-maxim? This is one of the most important innovations of the *Religion*: bad will differs from good will in the *structure* of this super-maxim and not in the *content* of the various motivations it responds to: '[wickedness] . . . may . . . be called *perversity* of the human heart, for it reverses the ethical order [of priority] among the incentives of a *free* will'.[29] Every maxim generated by our *Willkür* necessarily contains the two possible incentives for action: self-love and respect for the moral law. My maxim regarding deception should therefore look roughly like this: 'I will not deceive (myself or others) even when it is the easy way out.' We can no more disregard our craving for happiness (in the form of 'easy way out' in the

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example) than we can ignore the demands of morality. For those who, like angels, need not fight to subordinate desire to duty, morality as a system of *duties* is irrelevant.[30] In humans, in contrast, we can detect a '*Gesinnung*', i.e. a principle of priority between desire and duty when those pull the person in different directions. This supra maxim and the specific maxims that it informs have a structure of subordination – it either establishes that the incentives of self-love will override the incentive of respect for the moral law, or the other way around.[31] In people with a corrupt *Gesinnung*, even actions which on the surface seem benevolent, are actually intended to promote a personal interest that happens to be served best by obedience to the moral code. To really know the worth of an individual act you must decipher the overall scheme. But now, if every act is an emblem of the regulative principle, any one-off immorality testifies to a corrupt *Gesinnung*, and being what we are, we all come out pretty badly. From here Kant also purports to conclude that all human beings host a 'propensity to evil' from which only a revolution of the heart can redeem them.[32] This might raise a suspicion that Kant is pushed by his own theoretical rigorism straight into the arms of the original sin theology.[33] However, for the purposes of this paper, what matters is Kant's insistence that one's moral makeup is freely chosen.[34] In what follows, we can therefore discuss the nature of this fundamental choice without referring to the possible universality of its outcome, or to the extent to which it determines the moral worth of each and every action we perform.

If we can indeed identify at the centre of agency a single over-arching maxim, then choosing one's *Gesinnung* is the ultimate free act. As the necessary background for this act we find both self-love and respect for the moral law as the natural incentives that result from what he calls 'predispositions to good'.[35] Being 'natural', these incentives to act are givens which precede any act of choice, and hence their presence in persons is not a subject-matter for moral evaluation. The act of free choice that determines our moral standing consists only in choosing the principle of priority among them. But does that mean that freedom of will is epitomized in the *Willkür* deciding between two leading principles, one based on self-love and one on moral duty? Not for Kant. 'Freedom of choice cannot be defined . . . as an ability to make a choice for or against the law.'[36] Rather, freedom consists in adopting a hierarchy of volitions in which the moral law is placed at the top, with other (natural) inclinations playing a subordinate role. But if so, an obvious question presents itself (again): if immorality cannot be a result of a

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genuine free choice, is it not necessarily a result of (either internal or external) coercion for which we are (obviously) not accountable?

One could argue that the will still has the freedom to 'fix for itself the modality of its own heteronomy'.[37] That is, people can at least choose which temptation to give in to – say, pride or aesthetic sensitivities. But this is a rather weak sense of freedom (if at all). The fundamental question remains: can submission to extra-moral incentives (of whatever kind) be free? In order to escape the argument that (for Kant) evil cannot be an object of free choice, evil should be defined in negative terms as a mere surrender, or privation, of free choice. To understand this move we need to introduce, in brief, the Kantian idea of 'double citizenship' in the noumenal and phenomenal worlds.[38] A widely accepted interpretation of the famous distinction between phenomenon and noumenon does not take it to be an ontological distinction. The phenomenal and noumenal are seen instead as two mutually exclusive points of view of 'beings of this world in so far as they are authentically active and the same beings in so far as we are passively receptive'.[39] Our limited access to the noumenal world is dictated by the essence of experience. The experiencing being is *passive* and receptive vis-à-vis the phenomena. As a result it is impossible to have an experience of activity as such.[40] In order to choose and act we must see ourselves from an active point of view, i.e. from a noumenal stance. Each aspect reveals its own set of laws and each set serves a distinctive function: whereas the laws of nature which reign in the phenomenal world describe and *explain* our behaviour, the noumenal law *regulates* our actions. Kant is very clear about this point: his version of compatibalism is based on strict scientific determinism.[41] Only the laws of nature, i.e. the phenomenal set of laws can provide an explanation of certain behaviours; for the purpose of choosing what to do – we must turn to the alternative noumenal law. There is no point then in asking about the relationship between the two worlds; such question is not only unanswerable but incoherent. The concepts which form the discourse of one perspective cannot be applied in the discourse of the other.

'Choice' is one such concept. It is a purely practical concept and hence meaningless from a point of view which is controlled by the deterministic laws of nature; it is strictly confined to the noumenal aspect of our human nature.

Therefore, from the premises [free action = accountable action] and [obeying moral duty is freedom], one *cannot* conclude that [choosing the bad is unaccountable]. This move is nonsensical because it endeavours

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to apply the concept (or methodology) of inference, which pertains to the phenomenal point of view, to a concept that belongs with the mutually exclusive point of view of the noumenon.[42] Recall that freedom is a postulate of practical reason: when we conceive ourselves as acting, we take ourselves to be free. The postulates of practical reason are an object of rational belief, to be sure, but the reasons for the belief are practical and not theoretical. People need this belief as a *condition* for seeing themselves as obeying moral duty, and it is this, combined with the categorical nature of that law, that justifies the belief.[43] The postulate of freedom has the sole function of facilitating actions. As such it cannot be subject to syllogistic analysis.[44] At the end of the day, autonomy for Kant has a dual nature of 'not merely a given . . ., but also a task'.[45] As an attribute of the *Wille*, autonomy is a fact, but the *Willkür* has to *make itself* autonomous. When *Willkür* allows the heteronomous laws of nature to determine it, it fails in the project of freedom: 'only freedom in relation to the internal lawgiving of reason is really an ability; the possibility of deviating from it is inability'.[46]

This is an awkward position to end the story with. What we have in place now, is an explanatory apparatus that clarifies the human volitional structure, and the definitive moment in which its organising principle is chosen. It is an a-temporal moment of self expression that is uniquely free of any circumstances over which the agent has no control. But its explanatory power is limited only to one possible configuration of the organising principle of moral life – the one that gives priority to the moral law. And this, even according to Kant himself, is hardly ever the governing principle that is actually endorsed.[47] The formation of a *Gesinnung* in which self-love is given priority over moral duty gets only an impoverished treatment as a form of absence of free choice and rejection of autonomy. From the *phenomenal* point of view Kant has much more to say about immorality – about what is driving us to this postion, what is keeping us there and the many ways in which it is expressed in the lives of individuals and communities. Yet, choosing one's overall moral makeup is not done by us *qua* citizens of the phenomenal world but rather as agents who are free and hence accountable, i.e. as citizens of the noumenal world. Anthropological, psychological or sociological explanations of evil therefore cannot tell us why the *noumenal* self would reject the purely formal categorical imperative, subject itself to a foreign content (the inclinations of self-love), and in that way surrender its freedom. For Kant, the plunge into evil boils down to an unmotivated move of the noumenal self to give up its freedom. It can only be under-

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stood in terms of passive surrender and submission which can be attributed to the will, albeit not as a full expression of agency. For there is still a (critical) difference between being pushed against another person, and pushing her; between being jailed, and confining oneself to the house. This distinction can be cashed out through the difference between loss of freedom and a surrender of it. In that way, Kant's analysis of immorality from the point of view of moral responsibility runs out one (crucial) step before that of good actions:

> That the ultimate subjective ground of the adoption of moral maxims is inscrutable is indeed already evident from this, that since this adoption is free, its ground . . . must . . . be sought . . . in a maxim. Now since this maxim also has its ground, and since apart from maxims no determining ground of free choice can or ought to be adduced, we are referred back endlessly in the series of subjective determining grounds, without ever being able to reach the ultimate ground.[48]

3. The Choice and the Lapse

We can now see how Kant's discussion of what he calls 'radical evil' has a parallel structure to Augustine's account of moral evil. In both analyses we can recognize two logically distinct parts: One is asking in what sense we can choose a sinful way, while the other offers a phenomenology of transgression. I have here focused on the first part – the nature of the choice to do wrong. But let me say something first about the relationship between the two parts. At the beginning, for Kant, the volitional structure in the form of a *Gesinnung* is (tentatively) fixed within the person. [49] This should be interpreted as the moment (not to be taken as a time-designating term) when people adopt an attitude towards the human condition of struggle against temptation.[50] Unless they choose to struggle and place the moral law over self love their *Gesinnung* formation is incomprehensible as a product of a fully free choice. Nevertheless, Kant proceeds to offer an elaborate and subtle discussion of the kind of person you become as you embark on the way to realize your interests at the expense of moral duty. A whole mental landscape is arranged around this constitutive decision, where psychological mechanisms, emotional and behavioural patterns are developed to support and deepen it. He distinguishes between degrees of evil, depicts the connection between them, and identifies the psychological devices that facilitate them. We can see then that Augustine and Kant

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strive to give us a full account of the phenomenology of wrongdoing,[51] and how they provide us with a nuanced and sensitive picture of the sinner. But at the end of the day both allow the root of evil to remain inexplicable, when they leave unanswered the question *why* do agents embark on the wrong track in the first place. The close connections between morality and reason, on the one hand, and freedom and moral responsibility on the other hand, lead them to construct a moment that can only be spelled out as a privation of good. In the last section I will go back to this asymmetry between the two parts, but now I wish to look at the deep affinity between their views about choices and actions against morality.

The basic feature of the Augustinian account of primal sin is the way he splits the concept of bad choice into 'turning' and 'away'. Acts of choice, he claims, can be logically analysed into the abandonment of good reasons (love of God) and the endorsement of the lesser good (love of the mutable). This division is crucial since a different type of explanation is offered for each component. Agents always turn *towards* a loveable object – be it the proper one, i.e. what is good in the eyes of God, or an improper one, i.e. a transient good. But whereas the appeal of the reasons for deviation is intelligible, the movement *away* is inexplicable. Morally bad choices consist therefore of two analytically separate parts, one of which can be identified but not explained ('when you question me in this way, I reply that I don't know . . . for what is nothing cannot be known') and one that is understandable in and of itself. Kant preserves this asymmetry of intelligibility in the explanatory gap which he opens between the endorsement of a good *Gesinnung* and the adoption of an evil one. For him, choosing to render the categorical imperative superior to the incentive of self-love is the realization of freedom. Only when the incentive of respect for the moral law is sincerely taken into account can the result be a fully fledged action, that is, an initiation of a new chain of causation. In that way, even though freedom cannot be further analysed (as any further explanation would shackle and thus undermine it), the choice of good *Gesinnung* gets a much deeper level of explication than its evil counterpart.[52] All that can be said about preferring the morally bad is said in negative, passive terms: it is renunciation of freedom, abandonment of what makes us human and surrender to the heteronomous laws of nature.

In explaining the inherent inability to provide a satisfactory answer to his interlocutor's question 'where does *that* [evil] movement [of the will] . . . come from?' Augustine, like Kant, resorts to the distinction between

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the deficient and the efficient.[53] The point of constructing the transition to evil as comprising two analytically separate stages is that 'turning away' is deficient and passive, whereas 'turning towards' is efficient and active. The distinction corresponds to the different levels of intelligibility which apply to each part: 'our mind perceives intelligible forms by understanding them; but when they are deficient, it knows them by not knowing them'[54]. It is a distinction therefore, which falls back on the ontological status of evil as privation. Turning towards 'a certain good', even a lesser one, is an action, as it involves a perception of certain positive aspects of the object. 'Turning away' from the supreme good, in contrast, involves no actuality and is nothing more than a negation of being, a refusal to act. By dissecting the concept of sin in this way, Augustine manages to come up with an account where 'the act of primal sin is neither brute nor unmotivated, and what is brute and unmotivated in primal sin is not an act'.[55]

In a very similar way, Kant does not view wrongdoing as an expression of agency in the full sense of the word. Immoral conduct, and the endorsement of a moral makeup that facilitates it, do not amount for him to fully fledged actions. Therefore, in order to explicate the possibility of accountable wrongdoing, he must, like Augustine, resort to a distinction between passive and active. The contrast between choosing a positive *Gesinnung* and falling into radical evil is, as we saw, the difference between freedom and a submission to external laws of nature. If your *Gesinnung* is evil, it means that your moral makeup only makes sense from a passive point of view; it means that you are a slave to external laws of nature rather than the master of your life. The ultimate act of choice cannot therefore be identified with a decision between goodness and immorality. 'Free choice' in the full sense can only apply to the realization of freedom through the subordination of self love to moral duty. Giving up the opportunity to be free and wasting the chance to be an agent is more a failure than an action. In terms of free choice this endorsement has no independent meaning – it is a mere privation of freedom.

It is therefore no wonder that the Kantian construct of the moment when an immoral super maxim is adopted is analogous in a deep sense to Augustine's primal sin. Bear in mind that this event of *Gesinnung*-formation does not occur in time or space – it is an 'act' that belongs with the noumenal, active point of view. It is a construct that functions as the 'ground' of all subsequent wrongs, thus conveying the idea that isolated actions should be interpreted in the context of a unified

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personality. As such, the act of choosing a *Gesinnung* for oneself must be free from determination by any antecedent mental or physical deformities or advantages. As the *Gesinnung* provides the context for all other choices, its own choice cannot have a background; as the bestower of all value, it cannot draw its value from an external source. Recall how Augustine explores the constituting moment of turning away from the best reasons for action to lesser ones; how he is looking for the *source* of all the falsities that enable further sinning and complete downfall. And although we do not find in Augustine's thought a neat hierarchy of maxims that comply with a chosen meta-principle, he does talk about a constitutive choice that informs the moral status of the agent as a whole. The theological background that places the event of sin outside of the ordinary world – in the Garden of Eden – further emphasizes this point. What both philosophers struggle to illuminate is the root, or ground, of evil; both find that it cannot be done.

You could think that awarding such a theoretical supremacy to goodness would lead one to focus his account of moral life around the morally good. If evil is eventually analysed as a mere lack of goodness, it could be expected that it will play a similarly subordinate role in the answer to the question 'what moral life looks like'. But for both Augustine and Kant this is not so. It is not only that they keep their eyes and heart wide open to cruelty and sin around them. The point is that when they get to actually portray the drama of moral life, it is evil, or rather the struggle against it, that takes the central stage. In their phenomenology of morality, good and evil swap places so that the story revolves around the many faces of evil, and what we do (and not do) to combat its assault against the good. Here, their narratives split. Whereas Augustine develops his concept of 'sin as perversion' and a theology of original sin, Kant explores the degrees of self-deception by which one descends into evil, and later elaborates, inter alia, on vices that affect the self and others.[56] But what emerges very clearly from their discussion is that an interpretation of evil in terms of lack of good does not mean that wrongdoing can only occupy a secondary place in a picture of the moral life. Immorality will indeed always be seen on the backdrop of the ideal, but that need not blur its power and allure for concrete agents.

We can now go back to the remarkable structural resemblance between the concepts of evil that are employed by Augustine and in Kant. The similarity, in my view, comes from two central ideas they share: one regards the epistemology of ethics and claims that the morally good is transparent to reason. Ethics is rooted in the universal objective reason,

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and in principle we can use the faculty of reason to discover (at least) its basic tenets. The second is about voluntarism, and the claim here is that moral responsibility can only be attributed to agents who act from free will. A simplistic reading of those two elements together seems to preclude moral responsibility for wrongdoing, for how can one freely will to make a mistake? Miscalculation is typically inadvertent, while the voluntaristic principle appears to require full consciousness as a precondition for moral responsibility. The difficulty which this poses to the theory should not be underestimated. A system of ethics that holds to both rationalism and voluntarism will struggle to find a place for accountable wrongdoing. An interpretation of evil as asymmetrical to a logically precedent good would then be critical for a more nuanced reading of the relationship between the potentially conflicting demands of rationalism and voluntarism. If the morally good is transparent to reason, the bad must be epistemologically deficient, in that it cannot be explained to the same degree as the good. But immoral actions, choices and motivations will also be understood as basically deficient, a mere shadow of fully fledged expressions of agency. We saw how both Kant and Augustine focus their concept of free choice around a notion of an unbound endorsement of the good, rather than a choice between good and bad. For Kant, this interpretation of the concept of freedom is a part, or a consequence, of his perception of the human condition as a state of 'dual citizenship' in the kingdoms of nature and of ends. In such a scheme the relationship between the immoral and the free can only be put in terms of absence of the latter. The fault of evil can thus be referred to as a surrender of one's freedom and abnegation of humanity. Augustine, who lacks a similarly sophisticated apparatus, describes the unfathomable element of the wrong choice as a pure miss, an ultimate 'away'. By analysing the act of choosing against the moral law as essentially passive, and as incomprehensible, accept as submission and forsaking the chance to be a human, they seek to find a place for accountable transgressions of the moral law. The place they find is, indeed, limited. Only moral responsibility for morally *praiseworthy* actions can bear a substantial metaphysical weight.[57] Responsibility for evil, in spite of its utmost importance to the lives of individuals and communities, remains a mere shadow of a concept.

Yet, the structural resemblance should not blur the different aims of these two accounts of evil. For Kant, the 'problem of evil' is one of those questions which lie beyond the boundaries of reason and yet unremittingly entice it. While the theoretical point of view instructs reason to

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investigate the world as it is, the active one posits the world as it should be. Although these points of view can never be united, our hope lies in harmony between virtue and happiness. The ideal world, the world as it should be, is essentially transparent to reason, and this is the source of an incessant need to reach a clarity that can never be achieved in a world where happiness and virtue cannot unite in principle. In this respect, then, Kant's concept of 'radical evil' is profoundly different from the former rationalistic accounts of evil: the intelligibility he saves by resorting to a privation thesis is not that of the phenomenal world. Questions about 'evil' can only be asked from a noumenal perspective, about the field of human action. Leibniz's theodicy, for example, was one effort to save the intelligibility of the world we experience. Given infinite time, he thought, science is bound to demonstrate how what we conceive as evil actually works in the service of the good to constitute the best possible world. But besides the grotesque disregard of our experience that it entails, the project itself is, for Kant, a categorical error.[58] Suffering which comes about by what is regulated by the laws of nature can only be bad, not evil. Therefore, the connection between sin and punishment, that is between 'moral evil' and 'natural or metaphysical evil', which Leibniz and his predecessors like Augustine, worked so hard to expose, is a priori not there. Conceptually, there cannot be a relation between experience of pain, and immoral action, for they cannot be captured by the same point of view. An interpretation of pain as punishment for immorality would require a logically impossible amalgamation of the phenomenal and noumenal perspectives. Taken out of its cosmological-theistic context, the 'problem of evil' is therefore confined to the realm of human action. And the privation thesis, as the rationalist framework for treating the relationship between good and evil, is now a noumenal concept.

Conclusion

The privation theory of evil does not 'explain evil away'.[59] Neither is it a formula which turns philosophy into the maidservant of theology (or theodicy). When a discourse of good and bad features a privative structure it means that its definition of 'bad' is not a mirror of the definition 'good', but is rather a derivative of it. It means that explanations in ethics must start from what ought to be done, intended, willed, etc.; the account of what is bad will then follow in the form of privation, i.e. as the lack of what ought to be. This kind of structure

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characterizes those discourses in ethics which advocate practical rationality and take free will to be the key to moral responsibility. This paper looked at two examples of such a theory: Kant and Augustine's.

The concept of evil is employed by Kant and Augustine in very different way. For Augustine, who accepts that the Creator is the agent of all that there is, the concept of evil applies to everything that goes wrong in the world. The privation structure that underlies his notion of moral transgression is therefore an instantiation of a general principle of being. In the Kantian theory, in contrast, 'evil' pertains strictly to the human sphere – outside it, there is no agency, no responsibility and hence no evil (only morally neutral 'bad'). Nevertheless, for both, 'evil' baffles understanding. In an effort to uncover the root of evil they arrive at an ultimate moment when a person chooses his or her moral character. At this crucial point a gap opens up between the possible objects of choice: the good – freedom for Kant, the Divine command for Augustine – is the intelligible option; the bad, in contrast, is unintelligible as an object of choice. It cannot be explained as the equal opposite choice, but only as forsaking, falling, turning away from the good. It is a mere privation.

Notes

[1] Following the usage of Kant and Augustine, I am using the term 'evil' interchangeably with 'bad' or 'morally bad'.

[2] William E. Connolly, *The Augustinian Imperative: A Reflection on the Politics of Morality, Modernity and Political Thought; V.1* (Newbury Park; London: Sage, 1993), p. 119. And see Charles T. Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 88, for other sources on the view that 'the idea that evil is simply *privatio boni* cannot be sustained', and that 'the reality of evil returns to haunt us in ways that *no* ontology can accommodate' (p. 92).

[3] John Kekes, *The Roots of Evil* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 3.

[4] Augustine's ontology is rooted in the neo-platonic tradition, and should therefore be read in light of the platonic understanding of the connection between good and being. In his famous sun parable, Plato points out the way in which the standard we use to measure 'whether X is good of its kind' also measures the extent to which 'item X matches the concept of X', or, in his terms, how well it also measures 'item X's degree of being'. Thus, a horse that has four legs better matches the *concept* of a horse than a horse with three legs, and it is also a *better* horse than the triple-legged one. And that

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goes in the other direction as well: to the extent that an item shows a low degree of correspondence to the concept which it exemplifies, it is a bad exemplar of its kind. If the good is thus related to being, the bad is associated with non-being. For a discussion of the way in which degrees of being are conceptually linked to degree of goodness in Plato see S. Gerasimos, 'The form of good in Plato's Republic', in *Metaphysics and Epistemology*, ed. S. Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[5] For example: 'It was obvious to me that things which are liable to corruption are good. If they were the supreme goods, or if they were not good at all, they could not be corrupted . . . If they were to be deprived of all good, they would not exist at all . . . and the evil into whose origins I was inquiring is not a substance.' Augustine and Henry Chadwick, *Confessions*, *World's Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. vii, xii.

[6] Augustine et al., *The City of God against the Pagans*, *Loeb Classical Library; No. 411* (London: Heinemann, 1957), XII, 1.

[7] For example: 'Thus the true cause of the blessedness of the good angels is found to be this, that they cleave to Him who supremely is. And if we ask the cause of the misery of the bad, it occurs to us, and not unreasonably, that they are miserable because they have forsaken Him who supremely is, and have turned to themselves who have no such essence', ibid., XII, 7.

[8] *De Libero Arbitrio* 2.20.54.

[9] Ibid., ibid.

[10] Ibid., 3.17.47

[11] Ibid., 3.17.48. The literary genre of a dialogue with a persistent student is taken up seven centuries later by St. Anselm in O*n the Fall of the Devil*. The recurrent question ('why does justice depart from the good angel?'; 'why does he abandon it?'; 'why then does he will?') underscores both the idea that the question is out of place and that nevertheless we can't help but ask it. Anselm's answer, though, emphasizes the uniqueness of the will as its own cause: 'S: Why then does he [the fallen angel] will [to abandon justice]? T: Only because he wills. For this will has no other cause by which it is forced or attracted, but it was its own efficient cause, so to speak, as well as its own effect.' Anselm, Brian Davies and G. R. Evans, *The Major Works* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), section 27.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Genesis 2:17 (King James).

[14] S. Macdonald, 'Primal sin', in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. G. B. Matthews, *Philosophical Traditions; 8* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 119–20.

[15] Page 122 onwards.

[16] Immanuel Kant et al., *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 2nd edn, *Harper Torchbooks. Cloister Library* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 17.

[17] In the *Groundwork*, p. 100 (Ak 4: 454), Kant seems to offer a different

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'deduction' of the concept of freedom. I will concentrate here on his analysis in the second *Critique*.

18 'Since the concept of causality brings with it that of laws in accordance with which, by something that we call a cause, something else, namely an effect, must be posited, so freedom, although it is not a property of the will in accordance with natural laws, is not for that reason lawless, but must instead be a causality in accordance with immutable laws but of a special kind; for otherwise a free will would be an absurdity' (Immanuel Kant, Mary J. Gregor and Christine M. Korsgaard, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 94 (Ak 4: 446).

19 'Reason must regard itself as the author of its principles independently of alien influences; consequently, as practical reason or as the will of a rational being it must be regarded of itself as free', ibid., p. 95 (Ak 4: 448).

20 'Supposing that a will is free: to find the law that alone is competent to determine it necessarily. Since the matter of a practical law . . . can never be given otherwise than empirically whereas a free will, as independent of all empirical condition . . . must nevertheless be determinable, a free will must find a determining ground in the law, but independently of the *matter* of the law . . . the law giving form . . . is therefore the only thing which can constitute a determining ground of the will' (Immanuel Kant and Mary J. Gregor, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 162 (Ak 5: 29)).

21 A. Wood, 'Autonomy as the Ground of Morality', in *O'Neill Memorial Lectures University of New Mexico* (1999), pp. 18–19; Christine M. Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 166.

22 One could think that perhaps reason can generate a maxim according to which what one will always do is the *opposite* of moral duty. In that way we seem to have a maxim that is evil and is yet rooted in reason rather than in any external laws. This Kant dubs 'devilish will'. However, as he explains reason cannot turn against itself in that way. The incentive of the respect towards moral law cannot be extirpated, and such a will undermines the possibility of agency and moral responsibility (Kant et al., *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, p. 81 (Ak 6: 35)).

23 The distinction is initially introduced in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 380 (Ak 6: 226). To avoid the intricacies of translation of these terms into English I will use the German terms.

24 Immanuel Kant, Mary J. Gregor and Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 380 (Ak 6: 226).

25 Bernard Carnois, *The Coherence of Kant's Doctrine of Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 84.

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[26] Kant, Gregor and Korsgaard, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 375 (AK 6: 213–14).

[27] Ibid., p. 380 (AK 6: 225).

[28] As a noumenal notion, the *Gesinnung* eludes all description in temporal terms, and hence cannot be anything but unity. 'We therefore have, on the one hand, a single, timeless disposition that constitutes the definitive feature of one's moral worth, and on the other hand, the worldly manifestation of this disposition in countless acts of maxim-making', G. E. Michalson, 'The Inscrutability of Moral Evil in Kant', *The Thomist*, 51 (1987), 261.

[29] Kant et al., *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, p. 25.

[30] A creature who feels no attraction to prefer self love to moral duty (at least sometimes), would possess, what Kant dubs in the *Religion*, 'propensity to good'. On why this propensity is impossible for humans and its relation to the 'propensity to evil' see Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 155–6.

[31] Kant et al., *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, p. 78 (AK 6: 31).

[32] See ibid., pp. 80–1 (AK: 6: 33) for the questionable empirical proof 'that there must be such a corrupt propensity'.

[33] Goethe wrote about the *Religion*: 'Kant required a long lifetime to purify his philosophical mantle of many impurities and prejudices. And now he has wantonly tainted it with the shameful stain of radical evil, in order that Christians too might be attracted to kiss its hem.' Cited by E. Fackenheim, 'Kant and radical evil', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 23 (1954).

[34] In the case that Kant's notion of universal propensity to evil cannot be squared with the idea that freedom is a necessary condition for moral responsibility, the former must be reinterpreted to accommodate the latter. For the connection between freedom and accountability is a cornerstone of the Kantian system, whereas the universality of the propensity to evil (taken simpliciter), is a late addition that may well be groundless. See Morgan Seiriol, 'The missing formal proof of humanity's Radical Evil in Kant's Religion', *The Philosophical Review*, 114, 1 (2005).

[35] Kant et al., *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, pp. 74–6 (Ak 6: 26–8).

[36] Kant, Gregor and Korsgaard, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 380 (Ak 6: 226). And later in the same section he adds that 'although experience shows that the human being as a *sensible being* is able to choose *in opposition to* . . . the law his freedom as an *intelligible being* cannot be *defined* by this, since appearances cannot make any supersensible object (such as free choice) understandable'.

[37] Carnois, *The Coherence of Kant's Doctrine of Freedom*, p. 86.

[38] Cf. Kant, Gregor and Korsgaard, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4: 450–2. I will not go here into the very complicated question of how responsibility can apply to acts in the phenomenal world. I will assume

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that in principle this is possible, and focus on the special problems which *immoral* acts pose.

[39] Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, pp. 203–5, and see also Allison, who rejects the ontological interpretation of the distinction and says in regard to the transcendental idea of freedom that it 'has a merely regulative, non-explanatory function. What it regulates is our conception of ourselves as rational agents', Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, p. 45. See also Moore for an interpretation in terms of 'ways of making sense of things' (A. W. Moore, *Noble in Reason, Infinite in Faculty: Themes and Variations in Kant's Moral and Religious Philosophy*, International Library of Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 101. Either way, the distinction is not a piece of ontology but refers to the stance of the observer.

[40] See also Carnois, *The Coherence of Kant's Doctrine of Freedom*, p. 88.

[41] Moore, *Noble in Reason, Infinite in Faculty: Themes and Variations in Kant's Moral and Religious Philosophy*, pp. 97–105

[42] '[T]hese practical (moral) laws first make known a property of choice, namely, its freedom, which speculative reason would never have arrived at, either on a priori grounds or through any experience whatever, and which, once reason has arrived at it, could in no way be shown theoretically to be possible'. Kant, Gregor and Korsgaard, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 379–80 (Ak 6: 225).

[43] The same goes for the belief in the systematic connection of virtue and happiness. If we had theoretical knowledge about the connection we would hardly be able to act without instrumentalizing (Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 68).

[44] Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, p. 172.

[45] Carnois, *The Coherence of Kant's Doctrine of Freedom*, p. 79.

[46] Kant, Gregor and Korsgaard, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 381 (Ak 6: 227).

[47] Kant et al., *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, section III: 'The Human Being is by Nature Evil' (Ak 6: 32). Here, and more generally, in the issue of the 'propensity to evil' Kant is expressing a deep Lutheran pessimism towards the moral worth of humanity. It is not the place here to examine whether his system allows him this conclusion; for a discussion see for example Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, pp. 154–7; S. Anderson-Gold, 'Kant's Rejection of Devilishness: The Limits of Human Volition', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 26 (1986); Seiriol, 'The Missing Formal Proof of Humanity's Radical Evil in Kant's Religion'.

[48] Kant et al., *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, p. 71 n. (Ak 6: 21).

[49] Though it is crucial not to interpret this act of choice as one that is made *before* we become spatiotemporal creatures (akin to Plato's myth of Er), but rather as a taken by us *qua* intelligible beings. On any other reading freedom is lost from the moment the decision is taken onwards. For an explanation

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of the *Gesinnung* as an underlying commitment that may never be taken explicitly see Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, pp. 140–4.

50 'He [the person who has gone through a 'revolution'] is a good human being only in incessant laboring . . . i.e. he can hope . . . to find himself upon the good (though narrow) path of constant *progress* from bad to better . . . the change is to be regarded only as an ever-continuing striving for the better', Kant et al., *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, p. 92 (Ak 6: 48).

51 See for example books II and VII of the *Confessions* (Augustine and Chadwick, *Confessions*).

52 '[B]ecause no example of anything analogous [to freedom] can ever be put under it, it can never be comprehended', Kant, Gregor and Korsgaard, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 99 (Ak 4: 459).

53 *De Libero Arbitrio* 2.20.54.

54 Augustine et al., *The City of God against the Pagans*, XII.7.

55 Macdonald, 'Primal sin.'99', p. 133.

56 Kant et al., *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, pp. 77–8 (Ak 6: 29–30) Kant, Gregor and Korsgaard, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 548–52 (Ak 6: 424–8), pp. 581–3 (Ak 6: 465–8).

57 For the view that moral blameworthiness is essentially a superficial concept, see Moore, *Noble in Reason, Infinite in Faculty: Themes and Variations in Kant's Moral and Religious Philosophy*, p. 117, and the sources he cites at note 10.

58 Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*, p. 67.

59 As Kekes, *The Roots of Evil*, argues on p. 2.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415400001485 Published online by Cambridge University Press