

SOME IMPLICATIONS FROM THE PRIMACY OF THE GOOD WILL¹

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There are two opposed tendencies in the interpretation of the good will in its relation to the gifts and other goods: either the interpreters consider the value of the gifts and other goods in isolation or apart from their combination with a good will, which is an abstraction; or they consider the value of the good will completely apart from its relation to the gifts and other goods, which is also an abstraction. I dealt with the first interpretative tendency in an earlier paper,³ by showing that Kant is right in his thesis of the centrality and primacy of the good will in its relation to the gifts of nature and fortune listed in the opening paragraphs of *Groundwork I*.⁴ Here I would like to deal with the second interpretative tendency, which can be seen in authorized Kant's interpreters, such as Karl Ameriks and Allen Wood. In what follows, I will first summarize the main points of my previous article and then move on to draw some implications from the distinctiveness of the good will in order to clear some widespread misconceptions about it.

Reduced to its essentials, my argument is that there is a very widespread misunderstanding of the opening paragraphs of *Groundwork I*. This occurs when Kant's interpreters want to apply to the gifts of nature and fortune the alleged predicate 'conditionally good' or 'good in a conditioned sense', as if such gifts were intrinsically endowed with a peculiar kind of goodness, even when *taken in isolation* or considered in and for themselves, i.e. apart from their combination with a good will. But 'conditionally good' is supposed to be a kind of *relational* predicate. Therefore, strictly speaking, it means that 'good' can be applied to the gifts *only* on the *condition* that they are combined or united with a good will. So, while or insofar as the gifts do not fulfill the condition of being combined with a good will, they are *not good at all*, in *any sense* that the word 'good' may have. This analysis highlights the primacy and centrality of the good will as a necessary, albeit not sufficient, condition of the goodness of the gifts.

I tried to make clearer the primacy and centrality of the good will in its relation to the gifts by appealing to the Aristotelian concept of substance and categories. According to Aristotle, the category of substance has primacy over the remaining categories in the sense of being the condition of application of 'being' to each of them. Thus, we can say of things under the remaining categories that they are only because or insofar as they are *in* the substance, that their being depends on the substance. So, although 'being' *means* something *different* when

applied to each different category, it is always said in reference or relation to a determinate thing, namely, the substance.⁵ That is why Aristotle says that the substance is the *ultimate subject of predication*.

Analogously, in the opening paragraphs of the *Groundwork*, Kant is not dealing so much with the distinction between different senses of ‘good’, but with the relationship between determinate qualities and properties (the gifts of nature and fortune) and a determinate entity or substance, namely, the good will. Kant maintains that their existence in a good will is the condition on which those gifts can be good and receive the predicate ‘good’. Thus, their goodness depends on a relation or combination with a good will, which primarily makes it possible that they can be taken for good. In a word, the good will is the *ultimate subject of value predication*, the ultimate condition of attribution of goodness to whatever could be related to it, such as the gifts of nature and fortune and even our actions. However, it is important to emphasize that those gifts are not good *in the same sense* as the will is good. Instead, each gift is good in accordance with the pattern of goodness or standard of excellence appropriate to it, for goodness or excellence in courage is not the same as in intelligence, or in moderation of passions, etc., and also each gift in its excellence serves different purposes. However, the gifts of nature and fortune can be good in accordance with their own patterns of goodness or standards of excellence, only if they fulfill the condition of being in a good will. Finally, the good will is the only thing which is good, also in accordance with its own pattern of goodness, without depending on any further conditions except those it imposes on itself.

We can understand now that it is an abstraction to confer any positive value on the gifts of nature and fortune taken in isolation, i.e. independently and apart from their occurrence in a good will. In fact, we can also consider in isolation the place a substance occupies, how long it lasts, its quantity, the accidents which inhere in it, etc. But, evidently, this way of considering them is an abstraction, since those things can concretely exist only in a substance. Similarly, according to Kant, courage, health, moderation in passions, happiness, can exist as good things only in a good will.

Now the question becomes why exactly is the good will the necessary condition of the goodness of the gifts of nature and fortune? It is worth noting that, despite their diversity, Kant considers those qualities, properties and states altogether just as “gifts” or “presents”, whether as gifts of nature (*Naturgaben*) or as gifts of fortune (*Glücksgaben*). This is indeed noteworthy, because the existence of some of them in a man is not always entirely due to good fortune or luck. On the contrary, health, riches, power, honor, and even courage or resolution, are in most cases the result of human striving. This means that it is in considering them exactly as mere gifts or presents, i.e. in abstraction or apart from the *activity* of a good will, that Kant takes them to be devoid of any goodness. To understand Kant’s point here, we could adapt the famous incorporation thesis: the gifts of nature and fortune must be *incorporated* by a good will through its *activity* in order to become good things.

Thus, it is in virtue of its activity that a will is the ultimate condition of the goodness of the gifts of nature and fortune. Now, given that the goodness of the gifts depends on their being incorporated by the activity of a good will, the goodness of the latter cannot in turn depend on anything else. So the

specific goodness a will possesses must lie *entirely* in its own activity, or simply in its willing in accordance with the universal moral law represented by us as a categorical imperative. That is why a good will can never be a gift. The thesis of the complete independence of the good will when it comes to its goodness is expressed in a famous passage of the *Groundwork*.

A good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, because of its fitness to attain some proposed end, but only because of its volition, that is, it is good in itself and, regarded for itself, is to be valued incomparably higher than all that could merely be brought about by it in favor of some inclination and indeed, if you will, of the sum of all inclinations. Even if, by a special disfavor of fortune or by the niggardly provision of a stepmotherly nature, this will should wholly lack the capacity to carry out its purpose – if with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing and only the good will were left (not, of course, as a mere wish but as the summoning of all means insofar as they are in our control) – then, like a jewel, it would still shine by itself, as something that has its full worth in itself.⁶

So, the goodness of the gifts of nature and fortune depends ultimately on their relation to the activity of a good will, which in turn does not depend on anything beyond itself and its good willing for its goodness. The goodness of a will lies specifically in its sincere *intention* to achieve the morally good ends it aims at, even if, despite all its activity and efforts made, a ‘stepmotherly nature’ makes it impossible for it to achieve such ends. For, the circumstances in the world in which actions take place, and which determine their success, are usually given independently of the will, and it would not be *fair* to consider the goodness of a will on the basis of something that largely does not depend on it, like its actual success in achieving its morally good intentions.

There are two opposed tendencies in the interpretation of the good will in its relation to the gifts and other goods: either the interpreters consider the value of the gifts and other goods in isolation or apart from their combination with a good will, which is an abstraction; or they consider the value of the good will completely apart from its relation to the gifts and other goods, which is also an abstraction. I dealt with the first interpretative tendency in my previous paper. Here I would like to deal with the second interpretative tendency, which can be seen in authorized Kant’s interpreters, such as Karl Ameriks and Allen Wood.

I begin with the criticism developed by Karl Ameriks in his article on the good will.⁷ The basis of his criticism is the traditional distinction between the alleged predicate ‘conditioned or qualified good’, which means a goodness of a thing, such as the gifts, that, although good in a sense, would not be approved in some context, and the predicate ‘unconditioned or unqualified good’, which means the goodness characteristic of the good will, the only thing that could be approved in whatever context it might appear. Although I reject such a distinction as operative in the opening paragraphs of the *Groundwork*, I must discuss Ameriks’ criticism, because it concerns the alleged primacy and privileged place of the good will vis-à-vis the gifts of nature and fortune.

Ameriks begins discussing one of the possible interpretations of Kant’s seminal concept, namely, the good will as a component in a situation, or as the “particular intention interpretation”. So, in contradistinction to other components in a situation of action, it would

be impossible to conceive of a context where a good will understood as a good intention would not be approved by an “impartial spectator”, while those gifts, or, in Ameriks’ words, the other “value bearers”, such as moderation in passions or prosperity, could occur in circumstances in which its possession would not be approved. Ameriks calls into question such alleged asymmetry between the will and other value bearers, as he finds support in a concession made by Paton, according to which a good will could occur in contexts which as a whole would not be approved. Paton seeks to excuse the good will from being of qualified goodness in such contexts by attributing the badness to another component also present in them. According to Paton, “the harm done by a stupid good man was due to his stupidity and not to his goodness [...] a good will as such cannot issue in wrong actions”.⁸ That said, Ameriks asks why not reverse the argument and “excuse” a quality, such as moderation in passions, and claim that it is the other component of the situation, the orientation of the will, that it is really responsible for the whole context being disapproved, while the quality of moderation would remain as something good in itself? Besides, if Kant maintains that a bad will can turn a gift, like moderation in passions, into something bad, why not once more reverse the argument and claim “that stupidity can turn a ‘good’ man’s will into a bad thing?”⁹ Hence, Ameriks concludes that “there is no clear asymmetry between the good will and apparently good ‘objective’ items”,¹⁰ which means that the good intention is only a mere component among others in situations of action.

In fact, it seems that we have a problem here. For, according to Paton’s suggestion, perhaps we would have to admit that Marie Antoinette may have been a person of good will, and that her infamous suggestion that the poor should eat cake, once they had no bread, should be attributed to her stupidity or ignorance in relation to the real conditions of her people, and not to her character as such. Now, we must once again consider the relationship between the will and the gifts, or, in Ameriks’ words, the remaining “value bearers”, both to answer his criticism and to understand the problems with Paton’s interpretation.

Granted, according to Kant, to have a good will is not the same as to be moderate in passions, intelligent, courageous, and not even healthy or happy, etc., because such qualities or states can also be found in a bad man’s will, which turns them into something bad. However, this does not mean that, as Allen Wood claims, “the good will [can] be treated as something that might exist apart from (or even in opposition to) any or all of these other goods”.¹¹ For, if, as Kant says, some of those gifts “are even conducive to this good will and can make its work much easier”,¹² or “seem to constitute part of the *inner* worth of a person”;¹³ in other words, if, from the viewpoint of a good will, some of those qualities and properties are not *morally* irrelevant, then a good will as such might not be insensitive to lack of them, and still less be in opposition to them. For, if it is an abstraction to consider the goodness of those qualities and properties apart from their relation or inherence in a good will on the one hand, it is also an abstraction to consider a good will apart from the manifold morally relevant qualities which can be related to it on the other hand. This would be tantamount to considering a substance apart from the place it occupies, the time it lasts, their accidents, etc. At this point, Ameriks could then reply that, given that Kant “does allow that properties such as talents and temperaments can have some moral value (a ‘qualified’ value, to be sure) as long as they are founded in a good will [,] what is still unclear, though, is what the original reason is for affirming this claim rather

than saying that a will is good only when grounded in an ‘objective’ nature that is kind, not stupid, etc.”¹⁴

In fact, as far as I understand, Kant only says that the gifts of nature and fortune must be combined with a good will in order to be taken for good. This does not entail that a good will could be good without being combined with at least some of those gifts, insofar as the good will itself acknowledges that they are morally relevant. Granted, as we saw above, given that the goodness of those gifts depends on the combination with the good will, the goodness of the latter could not depend on anything else. That is why the *specific* goodness of a good will must lie entirely in its own good activity, in its mere good intentions, or in the form of its willing in accordance with the universal moral law. But, the expressions ‘to will’, and ‘to have an intention’, are characterized by what Brentano called ‘intentionality’ or ‘directedness to an object, or state of affairs’. So, it is an empty abstraction, only useful for analytical purposes, to consider the goodness of a good will as consisting merely in its morally good intentions, period; because a morally good intention, like any other, must be the intention to achieve something, for instance, to develop those “talents and temperaments” which are morally relevant and praiseworthy. So, *in a sense*, Ameriks is right in saying that a will is good only when, if not grounded in, as he says, it is at least combined “with an ‘objective’ nature that is kind, not stupid, etc”. Indeed, as Kant very consistently claims later, the *complete* goodness of a finite rational being’s will must, *ideally*, include not only morally relevant talents or temperaments, but also happiness, inasmuch as the latter is at least not morally indifferent. For, “to need happiness, to be also worthy of it, and yet not to participate in it cannot be consistent with the perfect volition of a rational being”, or with “the judgment of an impartial reason”.¹⁵ In other words, from the moral point of view of an impartial spectator, a finite rational being’s good will should also be combined with happiness. But, if the complete and concrete goodness of a good will comprises its morally good intentions *plus* what Ameriks calls ‘objective goods’, and even happiness, we should always bear in mind that the latter can contribute to the goodness of the whole only because they are combined with the former in the first place.¹⁶ So, in opposition to Ameriks, the morally good intention is not a “mere component” among others in a situation, but a privileged component in the sense of turning the alleged “objective goods” effectively into something good and capable of contributing to the goodness of the whole in the first place.

But the main problem with Ameriks’ view is that he conceives of the relationship between what he calls “objective goods” and the good will, as it were, in *static* terms. According to his view, we should conclude that a good will in the highest degree will be that one which *happens* to be accompanied of all those morally relevant qualities and properties in the highest degree, as if the presence of the latter *per se* could *aggregate* more value to a good will, while their absence would *degrade* or even completely *remove* its value. However, if Kant is right in claiming that those qualities and properties owe their value ultimately to their combination with a good will, then they would be for themselves incapable of removing or aggregating any value to whatever may be, and much less to a good will. Now, the good will is a substance which has a peculiar kind of activity, namely, an activity in accordance with the moral law. Indeed, according to Kant’s famous definition, the “*will* is a kind of causality of the living beings insofar as they are rational”.¹⁷ So, we should conceive of the relationship between it

and those gifts in *dynamical* terms. Since those qualities and properties can acquire positive value, only if they are combined with a good will, then it is by developing and cultivating such qualities through its peculiar activity, that a will *aggregates or incorporates positive value to itself* in the first place. Reciprocally, as long as a will fails in incorporating or cultivating such qualities through its activity, it removes value from itself, and does not qualify to be a good will. That is why it is even a *duty* for a good will to try overcoming its natural limitations and, as it was said above, developing its morally favorable natural dispositions.¹⁸ In sum, one should not think of the goodness and praiseworthiness of those qualities and properties, as Ameriks does, as if they for themselves could add, aggregate, or even subtract some goodness *externally* to the activity of a good or of a bad will. On the contrary, they must be *internally* incorporated, developed, or even underdeveloped by the activity of a good or of a bad will in order to possess positive or negative value.

Having said that, we are now in a position to see that the situation Ameriks suggests simply might not occur. For, stupidity could not turn a good will into something bad simply because, for conceptual reasons, a person's good will might not be stupid; a person's good will might not be indulgent to stupidity. However, by the same token, Paton is not right in his attempt to excuse a good will by attributing to stupidity a harm done. For, the will is itself responsible for the stupidity it indulges, or does not try to overcome. But, at this point, at the basis of something I admitted above, Ameriks and Wood could object that, despite all the activity and efforts made by a good will, a "stepmotherly nature" could make it absolutely impossible for a morally good intention to "prevail" over its natural stupidity. As a result, I should also admit either that a good will might exist unaltered as a mere good intention along with the non-eradicated stupidity (Wood), or that stupidity could turn a will's morally good intention into something bad (Ameriks). Now, assuming that a person can have absolutely no power or control over his natural stupidity, I would reply that such a handicapped person would be also incapable of even forming the notion or concept of what it is like to have a good will as a morally good intention either. So, again for conceptual reasons, a person's good will could not be stupid, because an unalterable stupid person could not have a good will. Thus, stupidity and possession of a good will are completely incompatible with each other: the activity of a good will must exclude the influence of stupidity, while the presence of an unalterable stupidity must exclude the possession of a good will. Anyway, I think we usually take stupidity to be not mere innate ignorance, like a natural flaw, but rather a moral flaw, a kind of ignorance resulting from a lack of effort in developing natural good dispositions.¹⁹ However it may be, if Marie Antoinette was actually ignorant of the real conditions of her people, either she was to blame for a stupidity which she could have overcome, or she was innately incapable of overcoming it. In both cases, she was not a person of a good will,²⁰ and should have not been the queen of France.²¹ So, I agree that Paton is right in claiming that "a good will as such cannot issue in wrong actions". But it seems that he does not understand that such a claim is correct only because the activity of a good will excludes, for conceptual reasons, the presence or exercise of components, such as stupidity, ignorance or lack of moderation in passions, which are conducive to bad actions. Last but not least, in what concerns the asymmetry between those qualities and properties, or, in Ameriks' words, the remaining "value bearers", and the

good will, which is the core of his criticism, I think that by now it suffices to note that it is an asymmetry analogous to that which exists between the substance and the remaining categories, so that the substance, i.e. the good will, has primacy because it is the ultimate “value bearer”.

Allen Wood argues that Kant’s claim that the good will is good without limitation amounts to what he calls the “nondiminisability and nonincreasability theses”, according to which the goodness of the good will cannot be diminished nor increased by any of its circumstances or effects or by any combination with other goods. Obviously, Wood gets inspiration for his interpretation of the good will from the Principle of the Persistence of Substance in the First Analogy of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: “In all change of appearances substance persists, and its quantum is neither increased nor diminished in nature.”²² Analogously, according to Wood, the quantum of goodness in a good will is neither increased nor diminished by any circumstances or combination with other goods. So we agree in the interpretation of the good will as a kind of substance. However, whereas I use the Aristotelian model of substance and categories to account for the significance of the good will, Wood recurs to Kant’s model of substance. Now, I would like to show that, although Wood’s proposal may seem more desirable from the point of view of Kant’s system, the Aristotelian model of substance I use is more adequate to understand the good will in its relation to other goods.

As I observed above, there are two opposed tendencies in the interpretation of the good will in its relation to the gifts and other goods. Now, Wood’s thesis of the undiminisability and unincreasability of the goodness of the good will is an obvious case of the second interpretative tendency, namely, the tendency to consider the value of the good will completely apart from its relation to the gifts and other goods. However, it is not so easy to show why Wood’s interpretation is mistaken. For when I criticized Kant’s interpreters for estimating the goodness of the gifts in isolation or apart from their combination with a good will, I was simply doing justice to their own concession that such gifts can be taken to be good only on the condition of their being combined with a good will. But I myself have admitted that a good will is the only thing that does not depend on anything else to receive the predicate good. So, it seems that, being unconditionally good, a good will must be good once and for all, and Wood is right in his claim that “the good will is absolutely good, in this sense, because its goodness does not vary with its relation to any other thing, and therefore is possessed entirely in itself or apart from any relation that the good will may stand to other goods”.²³ Now, as Wood makes clear in the sequence of the text, the other goods whose combination with a good will would leave its goodness unaltered are the “effects and consequences” of its actions. For, as he says, “the good will of course aims at good results, and with good fortune achieves them. But they form no part of its own worth, and do not add the least bit to it”.²⁴

So, Wood’s claim amounts to what I call the specific goodness of the good will. Since the circumstances of the world do not depend on the good will, its success in achieving the ends it aims at does not count in our estimation of its goodness, which consists in its willing in accordance with the moral law. In what concerns their specific goodness, i.e., their sincere intention to achieve good results, there cannot be degrees of goodness in a good will, and a good will is as good as any other. So Wood’s interpretation is right as far as it goes. But the

consequences and effects a good will aims at and sometimes, with good fortune, is successful in achieving are not the only goods that can be combined with it. There are other goods whose combination with a good will is not a question of fortune or luck. And such goods do have influence on the amount and degree of goodness of the good will, namely, the gifts Kant mentioned. Granted, taken merely as gifts, as “presents”, whether as gifts of nature (*Naturgaben*) or as gifts of fortune (*Glücksgaben*), the gifts as such depend on good or bad luck. But, as we saw above, considered merely as gifts, they have no value at all. It is only insofar as they are incorporated or developed by a good or a bad will through its *activity*, that they can be taken to be good or bad things. Consequently, the combination of a good or a bad will with such gifts does not depend on good or bad fortune, and can be imputed to a will. Now, this runs against the claim that, as Wood puts it, “no addition of any other good to the good will can increase its goodness”,²⁵ or, alternatively, that the lack of any other good in the good will can diminish its goodness. So Wood would say that the addition of any good, such a gift, by a good will to itself would not increase its goodness and turn it into something better. According to him, given two agents, A and B, if they have a good will, then A’s good will is as good as B’s good will, and the incorporation of a gift by the former would not turn it into something *morally better*. Now, I think that Wood’s suggestion that a good will A could not be *morally better* than a good will B must be mistaken, because Kant talks of a bad will being *morally worse* than another.

In fact, in the beginning of *Groundwork* I, Kant establishes a comparison between two agents endowed with a bad will or, what amounts to the same thing, the same agent endowed with a bad will considered in two different situations. Kant compares a very cool, self-controlled scoundrel (bad will A) and another who is devoid of such qualities (bad will B). Kant shows that, far from possessing some positive value in themselves, self-control and moderation in the passions are incapable of adding anything whatsoever to the bad will A in order to turn it into something good or better than the bad will B devoid of such qualities. On the contrary, in Kant’s own words, without the principles of a good will, moderation in affects and self-control “can become extremely evil, and the coolness of a scoundrel makes him not only far more dangerous but also immediately more abominable in our eyes than we would have taken him to be without it”.²⁶

So the bad will A and the bad will B are equally morally bad, insofar as they have maxims contrary to the moral law. But whereas bad will A is endowed with self-control and moderation in the passions, bad will B is devoid of such qualities. As a result, we must take bad will A to be not only more dangerous but also immediately more abominable than bad will B. According to Kant, the bad will A capable of self-control is more dangerous than the bad will B incapable of self-control, that is, worse in the *prudential* sense, because the former is more able to achieve the bad results it aims at, the reason why we should be particularly worried about it. But the bad will A is also “immediately more abominable in our eyes”, that is, taken apart from its ability to achieve such bad results, it is *morally worse* than the bad will B. Suppose that the bad will A uses all its coolness and moderation of passions trying to actualize a bad end, in fact, the very same bad end that the bad will B aims at. But, in contradistinction to the bad will A, the bad will B is lucky and successful in achieving such bad end. However, in spite of its failure

in actually achieving that bad end, the bad will A still is immediately more abominable in our eyes, in a word, is *morally worse* than the bad will B.

A cool and self-controlled scoundrel is morally worse than a scoundrel devoid of such qualities, presumably because the former executes his crimes without showing any vestige of respect for his victims. But I think that Kant's claim could be perfectly extended to the combination of a bad will with the other gifts he mentioned. In fact, a very intelligent and healthy scoundrel is not only more dangerous, but also immediately more abominable in our eyes than a stupid and unhealthy scoundrel, simply because the former uses otherwise good qualities in the service of villainous deeds. Finally, it seems intuitively plausible to claim that a happy scoundrel is immediately more abominable and so morally worse than an unhappy scoundrel. Indeed, Kant says that "an impartial rational spectator can take no delight in seeing the uninterrupted prosperity of a being graced with no feature of a pure and good will".²⁷ So, it seems safe to claim that happiness and prosperity make a scoundrel immediately more despicable in the eyes of an impartial rational spectator.

Besides, within Kant's moral philosophy, it is possible to establish a comparison not only between a bad will A and a bad will B, but also between two morally bad courses of action. We take as an example Nero's activity during the burning of Rome. As it is famously told, Nero fiddled while Rome burned. What could possibly be the point of Nero fiddling during the burning of Rome? Of course, his fiddling was nothing but the expression of contempt for his people. Now, he could have chosen a different way to express contempt for his people, for example, by holding a private feast in the palace. Such course of action would have been bad enough. But since he chose to express overtly and publicly contempt and disregard for his people by fiddling, Nero became more abominable in our eyes, and, the better he fiddled, the worse, morally speaking, his action was.

Now, if it is the case that a bad will A could be more abominable than a bad will B, parity of reasoning requires us to admit that a good will A could be more praiseworthy than a good will B. Granted, A's good will is as good as B's good will, insofar as their maxims are in accordance with the moral law. However, the good will A does increase its goodness by incorporating or developing more and more morally relevant gifts, thereby becoming morally better than the good will B that fails in such an endeavor. Of course, there are limits to the extent that failure could be allowed in the endeavor of incorporating morally relevant gifts. For, as we saw above, a good will is incompatible with stupidity, with complete lack of moderation in passions, with arrogance, etc. However, there are *degrees* in the way in which such gifts are developed or incorporated by a good will A and a good will B. So the good will A can be more successful, for instance, in developing and maintaining moderation in passions than the good will B, so that the former must be taken to be morally better than the latter. This is so because moderation in passions and other gifts require *experience* to be appropriately developed. So, although a good will is incompatible with stupidity, which Kant defines as "the lack of the power of judgment",²⁸ it is the case that the capacity to judge must be "sharpened by experience".²⁹ So a good will A can be more experienced in the practice of moral judgment and, to that extent, morally better than a less experienced good will B.³⁰ Therefore, the whole

of goodness a good will actually achieves makes a difference in our estimation of it, insofar as success (or lack thereof) is not due to fortune. The more morally relevant gifts a good will actually achieves through its activity, the better it is. Indeed, since happiness is not morally irrelevant, it must be admitted that a good will A combined with happiness is morally better than a good will B that fails in achieving happiness.

The point is that the goodness of a good will should not be conceived as a *fixed quantum*. Instead, as I observed above, we should conceive of the good will as a kind of substance capable of a peculiar kind of causality, namely, an activity in accordance with the moral law. So we should conceive of the relationship between the good will and the gifts in *dynamical* terms. Therefore, the good will in its activity must be conceived as a continuous striving for the morally better, ideally, for the highest good, the summum bonum, it is in principle able to achieve.

In contradistinction to recent interpretations, I have been trying to show that Kant's concept of a (good) will plays a foundational and primary role in his analysis of common moral cognition in *Groundwork* I. However, it is easy to show that that could be extended to the rest of the book (perhaps to the rest of his entire practical philosophy). In fact, the pivotal passages in the other two sections of the *Groundwork* also start from the concept of the will. So, in *Groundwork* II Kant starts from the concept of a determinate kind of causality, a causality of a rational being, which, in opposition to any other causality in nature, "has the capacity to act *in accordance with the representation* of laws, that is, in accordance with principles, or has a will", in search of such principles, among them the one that is represented by finite rational being like ourselves as a categorical imperative. Finally, when he wants to provide a proof that the categorical imperative is actually valid for finite rational beings in *Groundwork* III, Kant appeals to an indirect proof. Accordingly, he shows first that freedom is necessarily presupposed as a property of that capacity or power, namely the will, analyzed in the previous section, from which it follows analytically the validity of the categorical imperative for a will as the law of its freedom.³¹

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ABSTRACT: There are two opposed tendencies in the interpretation of the good will: the interpreters consider either the value of the gifts of nature and fortune in isolation or apart from their combination with a good will or the value of the good will completely apart from its relation to the gifts. I dealt with the first interpretative tendency in a previous paper. Here I draw some implications from my thesis of the primacy of the good will in order to deal with the second interpretative tendency, which can be seen in authorized Kant's interpreters, such as Karl Ameriks and Allen Wood.

KEYWORDS: good will, substance, condition of the goodness, gifts of nature and fortune.

NOTES

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2 Julio Esteves is professor at Northern Fluminense State University and a CNPq researcher. Among his articles on Kant's philosophy are "Mußte Kant Thesis und Antithesis der dritten Antinomie der 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft' vereinbaren?", "The Primacy of the Good Will" and "The Alleged Incompatibility between the Concepts of Practical Freedom in the Dialectic and in the Canon of the Critique of Pure Reason" in *Kant-Studien*; "The Noncircular Deduction of the Categorical Imperative in *Groundwork III*" in *Kant in Brazil*.

3 "The Primacy of the Good Will", *Kant-Studien*. Volume 105, Issue 1, 2014, 83–112.

4 I use the following English translations: *Critique of Pure Reason* (KrV), Ed. and transl. by Paul Guyer & Allen Wood. Cambridge 1998. *Critique of Practical Reason* (KpV), Ed. and transl. by M. J. Gregor. Cambridge 1997. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (GMS). Ed. and transl. by M. J. Gregor. Cambridge 1998. Citations are to the volume and page of the German text followed immediately by reference to the corresponding page numbers in the English translations.

5 Cf. *Metaphysics* 1003 a30-b19.

6GMS, AA 04: 394.13-26.

7 "Kant on the Good Will", in: *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*, Oxford 2003, 193-211.

8 Paton, Herbert. J.: *The Categorical Imperative*. London 1947, 40.

9Ameriks, "Kant on the Good Will", 196.

10See Ameriks, "Kant on the Good Will", 195.

11 See *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge 1999, 22.

12 GMS, AA 04: 393:7-8.

13 GMS, AA 04: 394:8 (emphasis from the original).

14 Ameriks, "Kant on the Good Will", 198.

15 KpV, AA 05:110:92-3.

16 So, completely in line with *Groundwork I*, Kant states in the Second *Critique* "that *virtue* as worthiness to be happy is the *supreme condition* of whatever can even seem to us desirable and hence of all pursuit of happiness and ... is therefore the *supreme good*" (KpV, AA 05:110:92, emphasis from the original).

17 GMS, AA 04: 446:52 (emphasis from the original).

18 Fred Rauscher objected here that in the 3rd example of application of the Categorical Imperative, Kant says we ought to develop those talents for "all sorts of ends". – The appeal to Paton is of no help here. He says that Kant means the development of talents in general, but "particularly those talents which distinguish man from the brutes" (op. cit., p.155). Now, man has distinctively, for example, the particular talent to promote things like the Holocaust. Is it a duty, in Kantian sense, to develop such a talent? Of

course not. This is exactly the point Fred Rauscher is making. But, if one reads carefully Kant's text, one will see that, although he talks vaguely and indistinctly of developing talents "useful for all sorts of purposes", he means thereby only "fortunate natural predispositions" (seiner gluecklichen Anlagen). I think that such "fortunate natural dispositions" are exactly what I referred to as "morally favorable natural dispositions", in my paper. They are called "favorable natural dispositions" because they are not conducive to actions contrary to the call of duty. Of course, such fortunate natural dispositions and talents can serve for all sorts of (morally good) ends, and ought to that extent be developed.

19 Otherwise, the imperative "don't be stupid!", very common in daily life, would make no sense.

20 Fred Rauscher tries to save Marie Antoinette from the accusation of being a person of a bad will, by arguing that it depends on the precise time I judge her action. If I correctly understand his point, he thinks that we may regard her "advice" to the French people as the best she could do at the basis of the knowledge then available to her. – Granted, at the basis of my present state of knowledge, if I witness a person having a heart attack, I will call 911, instead of trying to do something by myself, since I am not trained in CPR. But, given that I am aware that such a thing might happen to me (namely, to witness a person's heart attack, not to have one!), one could justifiably claim that I am blameworthy for not having studied CPR in order to be prepared for such a situation, in accordance with duty of beneficence. Otherwise, I am not eligible to be a person of a good will. However, I could reply in my defense that I am so a clumsy and unskillful person, that, even having studied CPR, I would better call 911 in cases of heart attack. But, imagine Marie Antoinette trying to exculpate herself by arguing that, given her ignorance on the real conditions of her people, her infamous advice was the best thing she could have done. Now, I think that, in contradistinction to a particular skill, like CPR, in which not everyone is expected to be trained, or, once trained, to be able to exercise, a queen is justifiably expected to be aware of the real conditions of her people, because it does not concern to a particular or contingent skill that must be studied, but a talent that every human being has to have, simply insofar as he or she possesses and exercises reason.

21 It should be stressed that I am dealing here with the good will as a particular component in a situation, and not with what Ameriks calls the "the general capacity view" of the good will. As Ameriks correctly says, a good will as a general capacity is compatible with a bad particular intention, and, I add, even with stupidity too, because a capacity is something one does not lose, even when one fails to exercise it in a particular circumstance. As he correctly observes, "it is obviously a general capacity of persons to will that must be meant as the source of [the] value ... that grounds their being respected as absolute ends" (Ameriks, "Kant on the Good Will", 199). So, although she was to blame for her ignorance in relation to the real conditions of her people, Marie Antoinette should not have been so brutally executed.

22 KrV, B/ 224.

23 "The Good without Limitation", in *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Christoph Horn and Dieter Schoenecker, Berlin and New York : Walter de Gruyter 2006, 28.

24 See "The Good without Limitation", 27-8.

25 See "The Good without Limitation", 29.

26 GMS, AA 04: 394:8-12.

27 GMS, AA 04: 393:9-11.

28 KrV, A 133/B 172.

29 GMS, AA 04: 389: 15.

30 I think that such a view is reflected in the proverb: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions". For the morally good intentions of a less experienced good will, when acted upon, may have undesirable bad consequences. - Note that this must be distinguished from the case of Marie Antoinette discussed above. For, being the Queen of France, at that point, she was reasonably expected to have a power of judgment appropriately sharpened by experience.

31 See in that regard my "The Noncircular Deduction of the Categorical Imperative in *Groundwork* III". In: F.Rauscher, D. Perez eds., *Kant in Brazil*. North American Kant Society Studies in Philosophy. Rochester: Rochester University Press 2012, 155-72.

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