



***Kant's Account of Independence as Self-Dependence:
The Noumenal Personality in a Phenomenal World***

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Abstract

In this paper, my aim is to furnish a possible interpretation of “independence” in terms of “self-dependence or dependence on our proper self” in the context of Kant’s philosophy. In order to do this, I will primarily focus on the concept of independence as based on the human being’s noumenal personality and as expression of the human being’s “proper self” (*eigentliches Selbst*). This concept will be contrasted with the one of dependence upon the human being’s animality (*Tierheit*). In this way, I will present independence in terms of the human being’s independence from its sensible, animal nature, but nonetheless as a form of *dependence*: namely, the human being’s dependence on its rational nature.

Keywords

Kant – Independence – Self-dependence – Noumenal Personality – Human Being (*Mensch*)

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0. Introductory Remarks

In this paper, my aim is to furnish a possible interpretation of what it might mean to talk about “independence” in terms of “self-dependence” in the context of Kant’s philosophy.¹ In order to do so, I will shed some light on Kant’s account of noumenal personality. I will argue that the concept of “independence as self-dependence” is grounded in Kant’s way of considering what the “human being” is, which, in turn, is based on the noumenal/phenomenal divide. Against this background, I will primarily concentrate on the concept of “personality” as the expression of the human being’s rational nature. The following argumentative steps will be taken:

1. personality will be presented as the element originating from the human being’s independence from animality (*Tierheit*);
2. independence from animality will be shown to imply the human being’s independence from the mechanism which is the whole of nature;
3. independence in terms of the human being’s independence from its sensible, animal nature and from the mechanism of the whole of nature will be presented as the human being’s dependence on its rational nature, i.e., the human being’s dependence on its proper self (*eigentliches Selbst*).

I will show why, according to Kant, human beings, in order to become independent, should rather become dependent on their (our) “proper self”, i.e., dependent solely on reason.

In contrast to other studies dedicated to Kant’s account of “independence”, in what follows I do not take into consideration Kant’s concept of *Selbstständigkeit*, as it has been defined in the context of legal philosophy,² or in that of philosophy of history.³ A few

¹ I owe my gratitude to Bill Molyneux, who helped with the linguistic revision of my paper and commented on it, and to two anonymous reviewers of the journal *Con-Textos Kantianos*, who helped me to develop my work. Throughout this paper, all passages from Kant’s works are cited by volume, page, and line number in the standard edition of Kant’s works, *Kant’s gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Royal Prussian, later German, then Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, 29 volumes (Berlin, Georg Reimer, later Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1900–). Citations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are located by reference to the pagination of Kant’s first (“A”) and/or second (“B”) editions. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are from the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, i.e., in particular, from the volumes: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998; Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor, with an introduction by Allen W. Wood, Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996; Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, translated and edited by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

² In a well-known passage from the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant notes: “Freedom (independence from being constrained by another's choice), insofar as it can coexist with the freedom of every other in accordance with a universal law, is the only original right belonging to every man by virtue of his humanity. - This principle of innate freedom already involves the following authorizations, which are not really distinct from it (as if they were members of the division of some higher concept of a right): innate equality, that is, independence from being bound by others to more than one can in turn bind them; hence a human being's quality of being

studies have already been dedicated to the treatment of the concept of independence as *Selbstständigkeit* and scholars have already rightly pointed out the political spectrum of this account of independence.⁴

Contrariwise, in what follows, my aim is rather that of furnishing a systematic account of what “independence” as “self-dependence” or “dependence on the proper self” in the context of Kant’s philosophy could mean – and why this counts, if we are to seriously deal with some aporias of Kant’s philosophical account of the human being as rational and sensible at the same time. The idea of “independence as self-dependence or dependence on the proper self” points out Kant’s unsatisfying way of explaining what a human being in its entirety is, in that it shows how Kant’s account always implies a dependence of the *homo phenomenon*, i.e., the sensible, natural, “animal” human being, on the *homo noumenon*, i.e., the rational human being. The core notion of independence as self-dependence will finally turn out to be a striking one – because it is a paradoxical one.

In order to elucidate my argument, I will divide my paper into two parts. In the first part, I will deal with some passages concerning the idea of person and personality from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, and the *Metaphysics of Morals*, in order to show how, according to Kant, “being a person” solely depends on the rational (and not also on the “animal”) part of the human being and is

his own master (*sui iuris*), as well as being a human being beyond reproach (*iusti*), since before he performs any act affecting rights' he has done no wrong to anyone; and finally, his being authorized to do to others anything that does not in itself diminish what is theirs, so long as they do not want to accept it - such things as merely communicating his thoughts to them, telling or promising them something, whether what he says is true and sincere or untrue and insincere (*veriloquium aut falsiloquium*); for it is entirely up to them whether they want to believe him or not”, MS, AA VI: 237-238; Engl.: 393-394.

³ In a likewise well-known passage from *Theory and Practice*, Kant further defines independence as *Selbstständigkeit* in the context of his definition of the civil condition: “Thus the civil condition, regarded merely as a rightful condition, is based a priori on the following principles: 1. The freedom of every member of the society as a human being; 2. His equality with every other as a subject; 3. The independence of every member of a commonwealth as a citizen. These principles are not so much laws given by a state already established as rather principles in accordance with which alone the establishment of a state is possible in conformity with pure rational principles of external human right”. AA VIII: 290, Engl.: 291.

⁴ See Wolfgang Bartuschat: „Zur kantischen Begründung der Trias Freiheit, Gleichheit, Selbständigkeit innerhalb der Rechtslehre“. In: Götz Landwehr (ed.): *Freiheit, Gleichheit, Selbständigkeit. Zur Aktualität der Rechtsphilosophie Kants für die Gerechtigkeit in der modernen Gesellschaft*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1999, pp. 11-25; Reinhard Brandt: „Das Erlaubnisgesetz, oder: Vernunft und Geschichte in Kants Rechtslehre“. In Reinhard Brandt (ed.): *Rechtsphilosophie der Aufklärung*. Berlin/New York, de Gruyter 1982, pp. 233-285; Reinhard Brandt: „Freiheit, Gleichheit, Selbständigkeit bei Kant“. In: Forum für Philosophie Bad Homburg (ed.): *Die Ideen von 1789 in der deutschen Rezeption*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1989, pp. 90-127; Sven Ove Hansson: “Kant and the Revolutionary Slogan ‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité’”. In: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 76, 1994, pp. 333-339; Wolfgang Schild: „Freiheit – Gleichheit – ‘Selbständigkeit’ (Kant): Strukturmomente der Freiheit“. In: Johannes Schwartländer (ed.), *Menschenrechte und Demokratie*. Kehl: Engel 1981, pp. 135-176; Franco Zotta: *Immanuel Kant. Legitimität und Recht. Eine Kritik seiner Eigentumslehre, Staatslehre und seiner Geschichtsphilosophie*. Freiburg, Alber 2000.

dependent on pure practical reason. In the second part, I will concentrate on the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* – and I will shed some further lights on the concept of “noumenal personality”, which I outline already in the first part, and furthermore on the concept of the “proper self”. In order to do so, in this second part I will begin with Kant’s definition of the human being and the human being’s belonging to two “worlds”, i.e., the sensible world of appearances and the intelligible world of the supersensible. I will then underscore how the human being’s personality, which corresponds to the “proper self” upon which the sensible human being is dependent, strictly pertains to only one of these worlds, namely the intelligible world.

In a nutshell, I will show how, according to Kant, “being a human being” and personality are characterized by and grounded in the intelligible nature of the human being, i.e., in its rationality only or in its “proper self”, rather than in both its rational *and* sensible nature, since reason is the sole element that makes the human being’s personality possible. As a consequence of this, it becomes clear why “independence as self-dependence or dependence on the proper self” cannot furnish a satisfactory account of what independence should – intuitively – genuinely mean.

1. Towards the “Proper” Self: The Concept of Personality and the Move from the Theoretical to the Practical Point of View

In the search for a definition of the concept of “person” (*Person*) in Kant’s philosophy, a good place to begin is the section of the Paralogisms chapter that Kant re-wrote for the second edition of the first *Critique*.⁵ In this section, Kant introduces and distinguishes the metaphysical from the practical use of the concept of reason. He notes that the capital error of *psychologia rationalis* consisted in the alleged possibility of analysing the properties of the soul. Kant’s objection is summarized in the well-known assumptions that “through the analysis of the consciousness of myself in thinking in general not the least is won in regard to the cognition of myself as object” and that “the logical exposition of thinking in general is falsely held to be a metaphysical determination of the object”.⁶

As a result of this assessment, no theoretical argument for the metaphysical existence of the soul and of a metaphysical personality can be attained, according to Kant. Kant argues that, from a theoretical perspective, we refer to the concept of “person” only in a “transcendental” sense. As Kant puts it:

⁵ KrV, B 406-432, Engl. 445-458. For an account of the concept of personality in the first *Critique* and, in particular, in the Paralogisms chapter, see, among the others: Georg Mohr, “Der Begriff der Person bei Kant, Fichte und Hegel”, in: Dieter Sturma (ed.), *Person. Philosophiegeschichte – Theoretische Philosophie – Praktische Philosophie*, Paderborn: Mentis 2001, p. 103-141.

⁶ KrV, B 409, Engl. 445.

In thinking my existence, I can use myself only as the subject of judgement, which is an identical proposition, that discloses absolutely nothing about the manner of my existence.⁷

Even if Kant does not further elucidate the concept of personality through the activity of our reason in its theoretical use (*spekulativer Vernunftgebrauch*), the practical use of reason (*praktischer Vernunftgebrauch*) opens up new philosophical perspectives.⁸ A fully developed definition of what Kant means when he refers to the concept of “personality” from the perspective of the practical use of reason is to be found, among the others, in the *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* and in the *Metaphysics of Morals*.

In the first part of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, i.e. the *Doctrine of Right*, Kant writes that a person is “a subject whose actions can be imputed to him”.⁹ From this, it follows that moral personality can be defined as “nothing other than the freedom of a rational being under moral laws (whereas psychological personality is merely the ability to be conscious of one’s identity in different conditions of one’s existence)”.¹⁰ This definition contrasts with the definition of a “thing” as “that to which nothing can be imputed”, that is “any object of free choice which itself lacks freedom”.¹¹

In order to distinguish between a person and a thing, the concept of freedom is needed. In the case of a thing, we are speaking of an object that lacks freedom. In the case of a person, we are speaking of a subject who can act freely. The concept of freedom is grounded in reason, i.e., in the notion of a moral law that functions as a causality in the intelligible (and the sensible) world and distinguishes itself from the causality that rules the sensible world of appearances. This is the concept of freedom as autonomy and self-legislation as we find it best explained in the context of the second *Critique* – an account to which I will come back in the next part of the paper.

⁷ KrV, B 413, Engl. 448. On this point, see Georg Mohr, “Der Begriff der Person bei Kant, Fichte und Hegel”, in: Dieter Sturma (ed.), *Person. Philosophiegeschichte – Theoretische Philosophie – Praktische Philosophie*, Paderborn: Mentis 2001, S. 103-141, here in particular pp. 105-110.

⁸ A similar direction had already been considered by Kant in the pre-critical phase, even though in that period his ideas concerning the so-called Copernican turn still lacked clarity. Cf. for instance Reflexion 4227, AA XVII: 466, and Reflexion 4228, AA XVII: 467.

⁹ MS, RL, AA VI: 223, Engl. 378.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*. For a similar presentation of “personality” from the same years to which the publication of the *Metaphysics of Morals* dates, see Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, in particular: Anthropologie, AA VII: 324-325, Engl. 419-420. On the connection between moral and anthropological perspectives with regard to the concept of personality, see G. Felicitas Munzel, *Kant’s Conception of Moral Character: The “Critical” Link of Morality, Anthropology, and Reflective Judgment*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press 1999.

¹¹ MS, AA VI: 223, Engl. 378.

In dealing the “original predisposition to good in human nature” in the *Religion*, Kant notoriously brings this predisposition under three headings, which are defined as “elements of the determination of the human being”.¹² These are:

1. The predisposition to the *animality* of the human being, as a *living* being;
2. T[he predisposition t]o the *humanity* in him, as a living and at the same time *rational* being;
3. T[he predisposition t]o his *personality*, as a rational and at the same time *responsible* being.¹³

Kant contrasts here personality (*Persönlichkeit*) with animality (*Tierheit*) on the one hand, and humanity (*Menschheit*) on the other. Kant defines animality as “physical or merely *mechanical* self-love, i.e., a love for which reason is not required”.¹⁴ Humanity is rather characterised by “a self-love which is physical and yet involves *comparison* (for which reason is required)”.¹⁵ Contrariwise, the predisposition to personality is defined as

the susceptibility to respect for the moral law as of itself a sufficient incentive to the power of choice. [...] The idea of the moral law alone, together with the respect that is inseparable from it, cannot be properly called a predisposition to personality; it is personality itself (the idea of humanity considered wholly intellectually).¹⁶

The predisposition to personality alone “is rooted in reason practical of itself, i.e., in reason legislating unconditionally”.¹⁷

What happened in the time following the publication of the first *Critique* with regard to the concept of personality? Without considering philological questions – connected particularly to the genesis of the new Paralogisms chapter in the first *Critique* and the consequences for Kant’s further work – it might be sufficient to consider the shift from the theoretical to the practical use of reason. This shift gives us an answer to the question of why Kant provides a new definition of “personality” in the mentioned passage from the *Metaphysics of Morals*. Or, at least, it provides us with a definition of “person” that is grounded in the new, practical use of reason.¹⁸

¹² Rel., AA VI: 26, Engl. 74.

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Rel., AA VI: 26, Engl. 75.

¹⁵ Rel., AA VI: 27, Engl. 75. Incidentally: in this passage, the Rousseauian influence regarding the difference between *amour-propre* and *amour de soi* are crystal-clear.

¹⁶ Rel., AA VI: 27-28, Engl. 76. On the concept of moral feeling and the connection between the Kant’s theory of faculties and respect, see Antonino Falduto, *The Faculties of the Human Mind and the Case of Moral Feeling in Kant’s Philosophy*. Berlin/Boston, de Gruyter 2012.

¹⁷ Rel., AA VI: 28, Engl. 76.

¹⁸ This shift from the theoretical to the practical use of reason, which entails a new philosophical answer to the question of personality, is to be found at least as early as the *Groundwork*, as is often pointed out (GMS, AA IV: 428). For Kant’s definition in the *Groundwork*, see GMS, AA IV: 428, Engl. 79: “Now I say that the

2. “Proper Self” and Independence as Self-Dependence: The Groundwork and the Second Critique

If we want to understand the significance of the “noumenal personality” – and how this concept is linked to the one of “independence as self-dependence” –, we should begin with what is arguably the best-known passage from Kant’s corpus: the Conclusion of the *Critique of Practical Reason*.¹⁹ Let us consider the famous passage in question:

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me [...]. The first begins from the place I occupy in the external world of sense and extends the connection in which I stand into an unbounded magnitude with worlds upon worlds and systems of systems, and moreover into the unbounded times of their periodic motion, their beginning, and their duration. The second begins from my invisible self (*unsichtbares Selbst*), my personality, and presents me in a world which has true infinity, but which can be discovered only by the understanding.²⁰

This passage, written in an unusually felicitous rhetorical style, expresses the consequences of the dualism inherent in the human being, rooted in the distinction between sensibility and reason, and relatedly in the distinction between the spheres of nature and freedom.

human being and in general every rational being exists as an end in itself, not merely as a means to be used by this or that will at its discretion; instead he must in all his actions, whether directed to himself or also to other rational beings, always be regarded at the same time as an end. All objects of the inclinations have only a conditional worth; for, if there were not inclinations and the needs based on them, their object would be without worth. But the inclinations themselves, as sources of needs, are so far from having an absolute worth, so as to make one wish to have them, that it must instead be the universal wish of every rational being to be altogether free from them. Thus, the worth of any object to be acquired by our action is always conditional. Beings the existence of which rests not on our will but on nature, if they are beings without reason, still have only a relative worth, as means, and are therefore called things, whereas rational beings are called persons because their nature already marks them out as an end in itself, that is, as something that may not be used merely as a means, and hence so far limits all choice (and is an object of respect). These, therefore, are not merely subjective ends, the existence of which as an effect of our action has a worth for us, but rather objective ends, that is, beings' the existence of which is in itself an end, and indeed one such that no other end, to which they would serve merely as means, can be put in its place, since without it nothing of absolute worth would be found anywhere; but if all worth were conditional and therefore contingent, then no supreme practical principle for reason could be found anywhere”. On the concept of “personhood” as presented in the *Groundwork* in particular, see (among many others) the more recent papers collected in Stephen R. Palmquist (ed.), *Cultivating Personhood: Kant and Asian Philosophy*, Berlin/New York: de Gruyter 2010.

¹⁹ In one of the first occurrences of the word “person” in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant aims to deal with this concept systematically in the context of the Table of the Categories of Freedom – see KpV, AA V: 66-67, Engl. 193-194. Nonetheless, in this table and its explanation, Kant dedicates only a very brief passage to “personality” and to reconstructing the relation between this concept and those of “duty” and “autonomy” (leaving the reader largely confused).

²⁰ KpV, AA V: 161-162, Engl. 269-270.

These distinctions are not solely due to the requirements of Kant's practical philosophy but also, and most importantly, to the principles underlying his theoretical philosophy.

Kant had already illustrated these in the first *Critique*, most notably in the context of his doctrine of Transcendental Idealism.²¹ There, he lays forth the terms of his Copernican Revolution in theoretical philosophy, which implies the impossibility of cognizing things in themselves and the limitation of possible speculative cognition of reason to mere objects of experience.²² In doing so, Kant is careful not to rule out our being able to think of things in themselves. In fact, as Kant himself writes in the Architectonic chapter at the end of the first *Critique*, the difference between *phenomena* and *noumena* opens a broad horizon for philosophy as the "legislation of human reason" that pertains to two objects: nature and freedom.²³

The dualistic approach underlies the whole of Kant's philosophy – and it is strictly interwoven with the new definition of the concept of freedom as autonomy and self-legislation.

This new concept of freedom as autonomy and self-legislation is not a complete novelty in the history of philosophy. Rousseau had already stated in the *Social Contract* that "the acquisition in the civil state of moral liberty [...] makes the human being truly the master of himself. For to be driven by appetite alone is slavery, and obedience to a law one has prescribed for oneself is liberty"²⁴ However, arguably the most important consequences of this Rousseauian insight are drawn through Kant's philosophy. Kant follows Rousseau in his definition of freedom as autonomy. Importantly, this pushes Kant to admit a strong dualism in the nature of the human being. Kant illustrates these distinctions in the first *Critique*, most notably in the context of his Refutation of Idealism when explicating his doctrine of Transcendental Idealism. There he lays forth the terms of his philosophical Copernican Revolution and, in discussing the solution to the third antinomy (of spontaneity and casual determinism), he refers to freedom by connotating it

²¹ See the sixth section of the Antinomy on the meaning of transcendental idealism, KrV A491-497/B519-525, Engl. 511-514, and Kant's Refutation of Idealism, KrV B274-287, Engl. 326-33. See also the Transcendental Aesthetic, KrV A19-49/B 33-73, Engl. 155-171, and the Transcendental Deduction, KrV B129-169, Engl. 245-266.

²² See KrV BXXVI, Engl. 115.

²³ Cf. KrV A840/B868, Engl. 695.

²⁴ See Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Book I, Chapter 8, "On the Civil State", in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *The Basic Political Writings: Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts; Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men; Discourse on Political Economy; On the Social Contract; The State of War*. Translated and edited by D. A. Cress, with an introduction and new annotation by D. Wootton. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett 2001, here in particular p. 167.

as self-determination. In this way, he opens up the vast discussion about the possibility of true independence in the *aetas kantiana*.²⁵

On the basis of the considerations from the first and the second *Critique*, the human beings are permitted to acknowledge their (=our) place in the world of appearances ruled by the laws of nature, but we are also permitted to refer to our existence as intelligible beings. Kant's idea of freedom thus seems to suggest a new gap: one between our worldly nature and the "second" nature of our intelligible existence. Our reason not only makes clear our visible connection to the world of phenomena but also provides us with a further clue about a world that has "true infinity", disclosed to us by our personality, defined in the quoted passage as the "invisible self" (*unsichbares Selbst*). This invisible self is the proper consciousness of the moral being – a self that is not observable through sensible "intuitions" (*Anschauungen*) but rather consists in the "personality" that derives from the law-giving characteristic of reason.²⁶

This "invisible self" (*das unsichbare Selbst*) corresponds to the "proper self" (*das eigentliche Selbst*), to which Kant refers in the *Groundwork*:

So it is that the human being claims for himself a will which lets nothing be put to his account that belongs merely to his desires and inclinations, and on the contrary thinks as possible by means of it – indeed as necessary – actions that can be done only by disregarding all desires and sensible incitements. The causality of such actions lies in him as intelligence and in the laws of effects and actions in accordance with principles of an intelligible world, of which he knows nothing more than that in it reason alone, and indeed pure reason independent of sensibility,

²⁵ Karl Ameriks: *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000; Paul Guyer: „Zum Stand der Kant-Forschung. Beiträge von Paul Guyer, Dieter Henrich, Beatrix Himmelmann und Dieter Schönecker“. In: *Information Philosophie* 1 (2004), pp. 10-21; Klaus Düsing: „Spontaneität und Freiheit in Kants praktischer Philosophie“. In Id.: *Subjektivität und Freiheit. Untersuchungen zum Idealismus von Kant bis Hegel*. Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog 2002, pp. 211-235; Klaus Düsing: „Spontaneität und sittliche Freiheit bei Kant und Fichte“. In: Id. – E. Düsing (eds.): *Geist und Willensfreiheit. Klassische Theorien von der Antike bis zur Moderne*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann 2006, pp. 107-126; Dieter Henrich: „Ethik der Autonomie“. In Id.: *Selbstverhältnisse. Gedanken und Auslegungen zu den Grundlagen der klassischen deutschen Philosophie*. Stuttgart: Reclam 1982, pp. 6-56; Dieter Henrich: *Grundlegung aus dem Ich. Untersuchungen zur Vorgeschichte des Idealismus. Tübingen–Jena 1790–1794*. Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp 2004; Walter Jaeschke – Andreas Arndt: *Die Philosophie der Neuzeit 3, Teil 2: Klassische Deutsche Philosophie von Fichte bis Hegel*. In: Wolfgang Röd (ed.): *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. IX/2, München: Beck 2013; Otfried Höffe: *Kritik der Freiheit. Das Grundproblem der Moderne*. München: Beck 2015.

²⁶ Obviously, the studies concerning the self in the tradition of transcendental philosophy are innumerable. Among the others, see David Carr, *The Paradox of Subjectivity. The Self in the Transcendental Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press 1999. However, on Kant's theory of the self in particular, cf. at least, among the others, Heiner F. Klemme, *Kants Philosophie des Subjekts. Systematische und entwicklungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Selbstbewusstsein und Selbsterkenntnis*. Hamburg: Meiner 1996; Arthur Melnick, *Kant's Theory of the Self*. New York: Routledge 2009.

gives the law, and, in addition, that since it is there, as intelligence only, that he is his *proper self* (as a human being he is only the appearance of himself), those laws apply to him immediately and categorically, so that what inclinations and impulses (hence the whole nature of the world of sense) incite him to, cannot infringe upon the laws of his volition as intelligence; indeed, he does not hold himself accountable for the former or ascribe them to his *proper self*, that is, to his will [...].²⁷

It is through autonomy that we human beings achieve consciousness of our belonging to an infinite world, which is not visible, observable, or perceptible through the senses. Personality is grounded in this infinite world. Our reason as our “proper self” (*eigentliches Selbst*) opens this infinite world. As human beings, our sensible nature is subjected – and dependent upon – our “proper self”, i.e., our noumenal personality.

As Kant further notes, this second view of the human being begins with the moral law and “infinitely raises my worth as an intelligence by my personality, in which the moral law reveals to me a life independent of animality and even of the whole sensible world”.²⁸ Kant infers this independence from animality and the sensible world “from the purposive determination of my existence by this law, a determination not restricted to the conditions and boundaries of this life but reaching into the infinite”.²⁹

The life that is grounded in my animality, i.e., the life of the human being grounded in sensible presuppositions and reducible to the sensible world, is not what is at stake when we, as human beings, refer to ourselves as persons. It is the moral law, derived from autonomy as the self-legislation of reason, that elevates the human being beyond its finiteness and points to the infinity of another world, namely the world of reason. We are genuinely independent of our animality only if we are completely and solely dependent on our “proper self”, which is reason. In this way, according to Kant, independence should be defined as “self-dependence”, i.e., as dependence on our “proper self” or dependence on our noumenal personality.³⁰

²⁷ GMS, AA 04: 457-458, Engl. 103-104. Some initial, important considerations on the concept of “proper self” are to be found in Heiner F. Klemme: “Eigentliches Selbst (I. Kant) oder ursprüngliches Selbstsein (D. Henrich)? Über einige Merkmale von Kants Begriff des Selbstbewusstseins“. In: Giuseppe Motta and Udo Thiel (eds.): *Immanuel Kant – Die Einheit des Bewusstseins*, Berlin/Boston, de Gruyter 2017, pp. 258-276.

²⁸ KpV, AA V: 161-162, Engl. 269-270.

²⁹ KpV, AA V: 161-162, Engl. 269-270.

³⁰ To understand the full meaning of these assertions in the Conclusion, deeper insight into the concept of personality in relation to the two worlds theory is needed. To this end, earlier passages from the second *Critique*, specifically those at the end of the so-called *Triebfedern* chapter dedicated to the subjective incentives of pure practical reason, come to our aid. Here, Kant underscores that the human being cannot be considered solely as a thing to be relegated to the sensible world. Something else allows him to stand out of this world: this is “nothing less than what elevates a human being above himself (as a part of the sensible world), what connects him with an order of things that only the understanding can think and that at the same

Only one element can elevate humanity and render it independent:

It is nothing other than personality, that is, freedom and independence from the mechanism of the whole of nature, regarded nevertheless as also a capacity of a being subject to special laws – namely, pure practical laws given by his own reason. So that a person as belonging to the sensible world is subject to his own personality insofar as he also belongs to the intelligible world.³¹

On the one hand, the human being is a member of the sensible world, where it considers itself an appearance, a member of nature and, consequently, as acting under the laws of nature, according to a strict natural causality and necessity. On the other hand, the human being possesses personality, i.e., a noumenal personality and, in this way, it can consider itself not only as an appearance in the natural world, but rather also from the perspective of its “invisible” or “proper self”. The human being is a member of the intelligible world and can act under a law it gives itself. It can act according to freedom as autonomy, the self-legislation of reason, as independence from the mechanism of the whole of nature.

Personality introduces the highest vocation of the human being and reverence towards humanity, i.e., a reverence that is due to its characteristic of being the bearer of rationality:

It is then not to be wondered at that a human being, as belonging to both worlds, must regard his own nature in reference to his second and highest vocation only with reverence, and its laws with the highest respect.³²

time has under it the whole sensible world and with it the empirically determinable existence of human beings in time and the whole of all ends” [KpV, AA V: 86-87, Engl. 208].

³¹ KpV, AA V: 86-87, Engl. 208.

³² KpV, AA V: 86-87, Engl. 208. For further consideration of the topic of belonging to two worlds in the second *Critique*, cf. in particular the section dedicated to the *Critical Elucidation of the Analytic of Pure Practical Reason* [KpV, AA V, 89-106, Engl. 211-225], which has been very rarely studied in the context of Kant scholarship (exceptions include Reinhard Brandt: “Kritische Beleuchtung der Analytik der reinen praktischen Vernunft (89-106)” and Eckart Förster, “Die Dialektik der reinen praktischen Vernunft (107-121)”, both contained in the volume: Otfried Höffe (ed.), *Immanuel Kant: Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*. Berlin, Akademie Verlag 2002, pp. 153-172 and pp. 173-186). In the context of the second *Critique*, further confirmation of the fact that the human being’s belonging to the intelligible world is the grounding element of personality and that personality is based on reason as an element outside time is also to be found in the assessments at the beginning of the Antinomies chapter, where Kant refers to the possibility of this personality’s continuing endlessly in order for the highest good to be realized. Cf. KpV, AA V: 122, Engl. 237: “The production of the highest good in the world is the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law. But in such a will the complete conformity of dispositions with the moral law is the supreme condition of the highest good. This conformity must therefore be just as possible as its object is, since it is contained in the same command to promote the object. Complete conformity of the will with the moral law is, however, holiness, a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment of his existence. Since it is nevertheless required as practically necessary, it can only be found in an endless progress toward that complete conformity, and in accordance with principles of pure practical reason it is necessary to assume such a practical progress as the real object of our will. This endless progress is, however, possible only on the presupposition of the existence and personality of the same rational being continuing

The concept of “personality” is, thus, fundamentally dependent on and explained by reference to an infinite world, in which noumenal personality is infinite and grounded on a “proper self” that is unknowable and corresponds to the rational nature of the human being. Reason is the grounding element of this infinite world, and through its connection to reason alone the concepts of personality and independence acquires significance.

“Noumenal personality” and “dependence on the proper self” are the grounding elements in defining what “being a human being” means, such that neither sensibility nor the sensible world need to be part of the foundation of the concept of what a person is – or of what fundamentally constitutes a human being. “Being a human being” (*Menschsein*) in its highest expression involves realising our rational nature and our noumenal personality. No reference to the sensible world is needed. From this, it follows that the concept of “independence as self-dependence or dependence on the proper self” undermines the notion of independence of the human being in its entirety (as both a sensible and, at the same time, a rational being). Then, the sensible human being is not independent at all – but rather completely dependent on the “proper self”.

3. Concluding Remarks

By this stage, I hope to have shed some light on Kant’s concept of personality and on the meaning of “independence as self-dependence or dependence on the proper self”.

According to Kant, personality is fundamentally based on pure reason, and not, at the same time, also on the human being’s sensible nature – or the world of appearances. In the necessary presuppositions for the grounding of the concept of personality, Kant makes no overt claims about the world of appearances, or on the necessity of the existence of fellow human beings, or either on the presupposition of intersubjectivity, when it comes to a proper foundation of the realisation of freedom. Against this background, Kant’s grounding of what a human being is does not have to contemplate any reference to the sensible world, in order to explain what personality or the proper self is – this enterprise is not part of the critical system and its foundation, but it is rather confined to the further part of philosophy, i.e., to anthropology and philosophy of history – and, in this way, beyond the limits of transcendental philosophy.

By focusing on Kant’s concept of personality and self-dependence, the differences between him and other philosophers at the end of the eighteenth century, like Reinhold, Fichte, Schiller, or Hegel, just to mention the most obvious ones, become clear at once. A

endlessly (which is called the immortality of the soul). Hence the highest good is practically possible only on the presupposition of the immortality of the soul, so that this, as inseparably connected with the moral law, is a postulate of pure practical reason (by which I understand a theoretical proposition, though one not demonstrable as such, insofar as it is attached inseparably to an a priori unconditionally valid practical law)”.

Kantian account of “independence as self-dependence or dependence from the proper self” has been questioned by numerous early readers of Kant’s work, who underscored the necessity of giving a more important role to the human being’s sensible nature and the social world as a precondition of the proper realisation of human personality – and of a more genuine and complete account of independence.

In limiting himself to the rational grounding of independence in the concept of the “proper self”, in making independence solely dependent on rationality, Kant put unacceptably strict limits on what the foundation of “being a human being” should be.

The contemplation of the concept of “independence as dependence on the proper self” sheds some light on the limits of Kant’s account of independence, since “being a human being” (*Menschsein*) is presented as fundamentally depending solely on the human being’s noumenal personality – and, in this way, the sensible counterpart in the human being risks becoming completely neglected. Even though Kant refers to the sensible counterpart as “animality” (*Tierheit*) and discusses the sensible constitution of the human being and its belonging to the world of appearances in the context of the grounding of his works (i.e., in the three *Critiques*), and even if he diffusively deals with the necessity of taking into account the realisation of the human being in its sensible world (most importantly in the context of his anthropological discussions in the *Anthropology*), he does nonetheless avoid taking the sensible world into account when it comes to the very grounding of what a “person” (*Person*) and “personality” (*Persönlichkeit*) is. Nor does he refer to the sensible side of the human being when discussing the foundation of what the human being (*Mensch*) is, since the characteristic of “being a human being” (*Menschsein*) in the context of his transcendental enterprise, is exclusively the human being’s rational side – the sensible counterpart is dealt with only in the context of anthropology and, more generally, in the philosophy of history.

The counterposing of Kant and his critics, based on their accounts of the importance of realizing both rationality and sensibility in striving for the perfection of personality, gives us the opportunity to reflect on further implications of the concepts of independence (as self-dependence) and personality. But this certainly constitutes an aim of further investigations.

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