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1. Faith and reason.

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RETHINKING FAITH AND REASON

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The main topic of my conference concerns the possibility to reinforce through a religious faith the right to difference, which is actually a rational right, recognized in and by a positive law. In other words, I try to understand the way of a possible cooperation of faith and reason when both have the goal to affirm theoretically and to defend practically the right to difference. Right to difference consists of the liberal principle that a political community gives anyone the way to look for his or her happiness. A system of laws, which should be democratically approved, allows anyone to choose his way of life, which is to realize his own project of life. The only condition (a typical liberal condition) is that in pursuing his own life goals everybody accepts not to hinder or to disturb everybody else’s goals, which are different from each other, but are also equal in their quality of free life goals. Liberal and democratic societies should on the contrary implement the difference of their members and help them to recognize that the reciprocal difference of their equal possibilities to live, within the boundaries of a constitutional system of laws, in the free pursuit of their goals, produces a growth of spiritual, cultural, social and also economic wealth of the society. This possibility is a ‘right’ and this right is based on the respect of the different natural and spiritual attitudes of the single men and women. This respect leaves, according to the natural law tradition, to the idea that the
difference between the state of nature and the social, civil and political order consists in the transformation of what is only a fact of nature (the difference of often conflicting human beings) into a moral condition, that is into the transformation of the fact of liberty in the value of liberty. This value does not contradict the fact of the natural, free difference of the human beings, but gives a guarantee that the free natural difference will be never destroyed by the simple, violent, superiority of a man over any other. Nature becomes a value - and therefore is not anymore nature, because it has been demonstrated that nature as such can not guarantee freedom. Right and law consist in the recognition of a value. This recognition is a human one, in the strict sense that is a rational one. Nature has become reason, and only as such it remains important for the defence of the right to difference.

Is there any place left for God, when the rational right has been affirmed as the basis of the free living together of different human beings? This question can not for theoretical reasons, and should not for moral reasons be answered negatively. It should not even been rejected, as if the reason in which the right consists of could allow us to deny the role of defence of the right to difference that can be offered by the reign of the sacred, by an idea of God to which even an unbeliever can approach. The goal becomes then for us to make clear why we can introduce theoretical and moral motivations for assigning to the right to difference the help of the God of the religion. There are two main ways to answer the question. The first is to understand that even in the eyes of an unbeliever the unicity of a monotheistic God is the condition itself for spirituality, which any polytheistic notion of God does not have. Unicity of God is the condition for being God the main agency of reciprocal tolerance between human beings, just because God, the only and one God, is the God of everybody, independently from any material, cultural, social, ethnical and even religious difference. Being the God of everybody, and therefore the only one and same God, worshipped through different names by different religions, God makes of the difference of human beings and of their different ways worshipping God itself, a value to which uniqueness is dedicated and, more radically, which builds the basis of this uniqueness itself. God is one because difference covers the world of the creatures who are His creatures; and defence of this difference is defence of God himself from any attack against his being the One. God is for the sake of difference of His creatures. The expression “for the sake of” has a double meaning. He is what He is to guarantee the difference, the multiplicity of His creatures. The contrary is also true, that is, His creatures and their differences provide the essential motivation for God being what He is. God is - thanks to His uniqueness, that goes over the difference of the positive religions and that obliges to consider as the greatest sin against God any form of political conflict
based on religious faith grounds - *God of the difference* in the essential double meaning just remarked. He is *for* difference just as much as difference is *for* him.

This leaves us to meet and appreciate a surprising coherence and concordance between the rational notion of right and the religious notion of a God, who can and should now be accepted also by the unbelievers. The common reference to difference is the main point of this convergence between faith and reason. This is the point to be emphasized: the role plaid in the rational argument that is now given, by the notion of difference among human beings. It is important to understand that the difference as a *fact* is to be essentially as the difference a *value*. It is also important to emphasize that just because we consider difference as the original basis for our argument, which is just because we do not deduce it from anything else, we see that both reason and faith, right and God, are related to difference, while no confusion as to their different nature occurs.

We could say that we are celebrating a sort of a ‘triumph of the difference’, which reveals itself as the precondition of any unification, of any connection in a common, and commonly accepted order. It is through the thought of the difference of human beings to be defended that we can say that between reason and faith there is exactly the rational difference on which is grounded their cooperation. It would be silly, in any case, not to admit that it is reason, not faith, that has driven us to such surprising conclusions. This pushes us to a second step, which is the demonstration by way of the *reasons of the morality*, and not anymore for the *reasons of reason*, that morality asks religion to admit a notion of God as equivalent to the goodness of the moral rules themselves. This is the way followed by Immanuel Kant in his 1793 *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*. It is the moral law that obliges us to think God as necessary and not vice versa. Different institutional and positive religions should not therefore contrast with the freedom postulated by moral law, and should on the contrary help realize the foundation of the “reign of God on the earth”. This is possible, according to Kant, only by each human being leaving the “ethical state of nature”, to become member of an “ethical community”. We have seen that reason drives itself, by its own means, to the admission of the oxymoron of the ‘equal priority’ of the rational right and of the God of the faith for what concerns their common working *for the difference*. We see now that moral reason asks faith to recognize in itself to be moral, which is to be moral just for the fact of being an authentical faith and not a form of external, obliged obedience to the laws of any church. Reason recognizes God, but requires from God to recognize its uniqueness and its spirituality (its living in the hearts of human beings) as the features of its rationality.
There must be, according to Kant, a radical moral evil which drives us not to correspond to the law of our moral feature. The evil that we make derives not from the limit of our nature, but from an original moral evil which realizes the corruption that he himself has made of his good moral principle. This is the reason why the evil is moral and has to be charged on our freedom of choice. Men and women have to make by themselves what they want to become: good or bad. This is why when we assume that both, good and bad, are the results of their own "free will", we assume at the same true that moral evil can be refused, and that men can be corrected. As both good and evil must be charged to him and to his moral responsibility, and are only for this reason moral choices, a bad man can improve and become better and finally good, just because he wants this. His intention must be a good one, if the divine judge in front of whom he is going to present himself, in the same moment and in the same way in which he presents himself to his moral consciousness, can recognize that he has really become a new man. The moral conversion is only represented in the figure of the Savior of mankind. He adopts the new moral intention "in all its purity" as the intention of the Son of God, which is the real configuration of the pure moral intention. For this reason, i.e. is because the Son of God represents the purity of the moral intention of everybody’s consciousness, he can be seen as guilty of all the sins of humanity, as the one that dies for the sins of humanity itself, and finally as the one who - lawyer of the humanity - can justify before of the court of God, it being not different from the court of his moral consciousness. It is easy to understand that we find here the way of the moral and rational interpretation of the religion. This point is very important for us, because in this theoretical field is rooted the important conflict between the will of the moral consciousness, and the will of the clergy of any church, which tries to convince us that morality is the same as obeying the external laws of every different church.

We will see at once that this apology of the moral consciousness constitutes the conclusion of Kant’s book. Let us remark by now that it is exactly when and only when we assume, against any form of clericalism, that our Gewissen, that is our moral consciousness, that is the divine and the sacred in each of us, can not and should not be guided, or directed, because the morality rooted in Gewissen is always guide to itself; that we reach, helped by Kant’s moral philosophy, the main goal for the defence, the divine defence, of the difference between human beings. This happens just because the supreme court to which we are supposed to submit our moral features, our being good or bad, is this absolutely free individual consciousness, that is the consciousness of each of us lighted by the divine light, which allows it to be in its absolute singularity, the only judge of our intentions. The idea of a moral consciousness of humanity does not mean
that it exists in some way a ultra-individual subject, whose morality is independent of the moral will of each of us. It is just what the churches pretend from us: that we do not recognize that “the moral principle of the religion is opposed to the religious illusion” and that the “clerical regime” is the “dominating power in the false adoration of the good principle”. Making each singular consciousness the only moral judge prevent us from depending in the moral and religious orientation in the world, in our big and little everyday’s choices, from a false collective, institutional, conscience. This one conceals to our eyes that “feticistical” feature of this presumed moral court, and drives us to transform the absoluteness of our different consciousnesses, equals each to each other only because each one can not become like any other and is equal in its uniqueness, in the dependence from an official faith that wants us to judge in the way the chiefs of any church have decided. This would be the death at the same time of the moral consciousness and of the difference between the human beings. But this would also mean the death of the moral religion itself.

The real meaning of what Kants itself calls “Aufklärung”, enlightenment, is to keep far from every risk that the moral choices becomes institutional, especially when this happens as the consequence of the reign of a church. Churches destroy the autonomy of the singular moral consciousness because the center of the moral decision is not any more in the absolute multiplicity of the different individuals. A kind of ‘group moral and group faith” takes the place of the moral singularities, each lighted by the light of the real God. What Kant calls the “victory of the good principle over the bad and the foundation of a reign of God on the earth”, can not be as the substitution of another church to another, eventually more spiritual than the first. What connects persons now become independent and therefore moral is just the end of every church, and by this way the end of any conflict between human beings which can derive from the lost of the divinity of the moral consciousness in favour of different clergys worshipping different God. Those Gods could become weapons of wars devastating first of all the liberty of each human being. Each of these becomes the not any more different and autonomous soldier of a religious army which fights against other religious armies, whose priests tell believers what they must believe, which are the only moral truths, and which are the errors of the false faiths that must be destroyed. Destruction of the moral consciousness which is guide to itself, does not need to be proved and is the moral ground of the difference in the whole of the humanity, destruction of the uniqueness of the God which is the warranty of the divinity of each individual and his free soul: these destructions go together and must therefore be fighted together. Kant would probably disagree with this strongly liberal interpretation of his thought. But there is no doubt that the risks that humanity faces today require a
radicalisation of his thought. To make appeal to the irreducible singularity of the moral consciousness is the only way to oblige each person to be the first and only judge of what is good and bad and of the way in which each person can decide to be good or bad. The faith in a God, in the unique God under the many different names, can only help us in finding the only possible way to pursue the free unification of the mankind. But we have to assume that God is ‘God of the difference’, and therefore of the moral unity of men and women.

This is why we have to listen to Kant when he reminds us that are not moral human beings those who give the first place to the observance of institutional laws, conceived as the way to make themselves welcome to God, and not as what they are, the expression of the moral intention. What is “absolutely” welcome to God is depending on the good behaviour, and is deeply different from the “observance as something that can be only conditionally welcome to God”. The divine worship becomes the mere fetishism of a false worship. What is worst for us is that the false worshipping of God includes the wrong and dangerous obedience to the orders of the false worshippers of a false God. False God is any not rational God which is made the ‘spiritual property’ of any singular church. The true enlightenment is therefore in the “distinction” in which all the most important things are at stake. God’s worship becomes in the enlightenment free and therefore moral. This “liberty of the sons of God” is lost when men are submitted to the yoke of a “statutary law”, which obliges to believe in things that are true only historically, not rationally. Consciousness that is the moral Gewissen of each moral being prevents us from believing what is only historically true, as imposed by an external authority. Gewissen does not need any guide, as we have said. Moral consciousness is sufficient to her. It is the only Leitfaden for all the doubts of the moral decisions, Kant says.

Can it be said in a clearer way that no superior authority can be admitted to judge what Gewissen decides? And isn’t it clear that the hypothesis itself of the existence of only one Gewissen for all the human beings, that is the lost of the difference and of the multiplicity, would mean the end of the morality itself, because the one Gewissen would become the only external authority for all the others? It happens the same as in the notion of God. Like God is the unique God of the difference, in the same way the moral consciousness is the unique consciousness of the difference: the place where difference gests its unity and identity, but still remaining a difference. Gewissen is in itself a “duty” which does not need to be proved. If you doubt that something is morally correct, you do not have to do it: like Plinius, quoted by Kant, says “quod dubitas, ne feceris!” . It is not my intellect that is supposed to decide from the outside if the action that I make is or is not morally correct. This means again that there is not
a general, supraindividual, rule which helps us to decide what we have to do or to avoid. Any moral judgement is every time my, his, her, everybody’s judgement. It is at each time a different decision that is made when I (but also he, she) not only judge or believe, but “am sure in my consciousness” that I am going to behave well. The be sure is something individual and different for each person, even if each one is equally sure. No one can take my place when I feel sure that my action is right. All men can say the same, but no one can take the place of anyone else. Moral consciousness is therefore the “faculty of the moral judgement which judges itself”. This means -- and is our final main point where all the reasonings connect -- that we do not simply decide of a fact being or not being submitted to a law, because our reason is obliged to be the judge of her being or not being responsible to herself in the judging of the rightness of its actions. This is the way by which we can deny the moral right to kill a man owing to his personal (and supposed false) religious faith, even in the case in which the law of God declares it possible and necessary. “It is by consciousness sure that it is not right to kill a man for his religious faith”. It is also possible that Gad may have expressed this terrible will, but this is only historically demonstrated. No one can by moral consciousness know if it is really true all what an historical faith assumes: “If it is possible that is not right what a singular faith wants or allows, it becomes a lack of consciousness the decision to obey”. Any single man should decide not to violate “a human duty, certain in itself”.